

## TOTALITY, TEMPORALITY, AND PRAXIS: EXISTENTIAL PHENOMENOLOGY AND CRITICAL POLITICAL THEORY

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Initially this article presents three key concepts: totality, temporality, and praxis. Praxis is understood in terms of the dialectics of *totality* and *temporality*. *Praxis* as a concept of history as lived, requires an emphasis on the temporal basis of all dialectical projections of historical totalities (e.g., U.S. corporate capitalism). While time as a dialectical dimension of the totality is subject to dissociation and reification, time is more fundamentally the form and ground of praxis. Praxis is a counter-concept to *hegemony* as the reference to reification implies. Ideology critique is the chief mode of praxis adopted by this article. Given the Frankfurt support of ideology critique, the focus of criticism becomes *instrumental rationality*. In other words, just as ideology critique is considered a fundamental mode of praxis, so is instrumental rationality portrayed as the dominant mode of the *hegemonic liberal tradition* (or "mainstream" culture) of the United States. The resulting argument is that a dialectical understanding of praxis in the United States clarifies not only the major institutional setting of industrial capitalism but also the latter's dominant cultural horizon, the *technological world-view*. Instrumental rationality as the favoured method of American liberal thought must be situated historically in relation to the subject-object dualism of the technological world-view, particularly as dualistic modes of experience are structurally mediated by the corporate capitalist state. This fundamental cleavage of the objective dimensions from the subjective in human experience entails the reification of time (whatever the milieu: alienated labour, trivialized leisure, etc.) which in turn facilitates the techno-bureaucratic appropriation of action. This struggle over the shaping of temporal experience is of vital importance to emancipatory theory. Among the latter's tasks is understanding praxis and critique in terms of the integral *life-world* and its temporal horizon out of which concrete totalities are discovered and projected from the tensions of essence and appearance in the politics of experience. A major problem, both practical and theoretical, is that "life-world" is often misunderstood in subjectivist terms.

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Appropriately this paper's introductory emphasis is on the human space-time *as lived*, of our being-in-the-world, or in other words our participation in *time's body* — granting access to the pre-objective temporal ground which allows development of derivative formations of time as a categorical construction of the self, as a typical modality of the cultural system, and so on.

My pursuits in the study of American political economy and culture have led me to search the works of twentieth century phenomenology, hermeneutics, and dialectics for perspectives that illuminate a genuinely critical theory of our industrial society and its political tradition as the horizon of our cultural self-understanding and misunderstanding.<sup>1</sup> The sense of *interplay* among certain perspectives in these three fields of theory (especially those of Merleau-Ponty, Ricoeur, and Kosik) has opened up a most promising yet challenging path for the project. One of existential phenomenology's most fundamental contributions to the development of a critical social science is summed up in Georges Gusdorf's observation that all "understanding of a human fact assumes a prior comprehension of human space-time."<sup>2</sup> It is the phenomenological comprehension of lived time and space in human activity and experience to which I call the attention of political theorists.

Numerous studies in phenomenological psychology and philosophy have clarified the fundamental role of pre-objective temporality for historical human life and, in particular, the situation of culture as the dialectical process of time-binding, or forming, grounded in the historical condition that characterizes human existence.<sup>3</sup> John O'Neill has come to speak of this dimension as the universal culture of "time's body".<sup>4</sup> But the hidden infrastructure of intersubjectivity which provides the foundation for the human sciences is never *discovered* except in the multiple contexts of concretely historical social and political institutions and personal situations. No recent philosopher has sounded the interface of phenomenology and the social sciences more deeply than the late Maurice Merleau-Ponty and it is on O'Neill's rendition of one of his human development perspectives that I invite reflection:

Human behaviour, which is essentially symbolic behaviour, unfolds through structures or gestures which are not in objective space and time, like physical objects, nor in a purely internal dimension of consciousness unsituated with respect to historical time and place.

Merleau-Ponty calls the objects of perception "phenomena" in order to characterize their openness to perceptual consciousness to which they are not given *a priori* but as "open, inexhaustible systems which we recognize through a certain style of development." The

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matrix of all human activity is the *phenomenal body* which is the schema of our world, or the source of a vertical or human space in which we project our feelings, moods and values. Because the human body is a "community of senses" and not a bundle of contingently related impressions, it functions as the universal setting or schema for all possible styles or typical structures of the world. These, however, are not given to us with the invariable formula of a *facies totius universi* but through the temporal synthesis of horizons implicit in intentionality. "For us the perceptual synthesis is a temporal synthesis, and subjectivity, at the level of perception, is nothing but temporality, and that is what enables us to leave to the subject of perception his opacity and historicity." The cognitive approaches to child development overlook the *tacit* subjectivity which does not constitute its world *a priori* nor entirely *a posteriori* but develops through a "living cohesion" in which the embodied self experiences itself while belonging to this world and others, clinging to them for its content.<sup>5</sup>

This rich passage provides a basis for understanding Merleau-Ponty's profound development of the *life-world* as the central theme of phenomenology which involves, among other accomplishments, a radical reworking of the intentionality concept of idealist phenomenology. His interrogation of the field of perceptual presence between the mind's body and the world involved transposing the format of intentionality into the essence of an indeterminate corporeality, thus rendering to theoretical consciousness the latent intersubjective symbolism grounding our existence in a common historical world. His thematization of corporeal intentionality involved an investigation of that primordial "kinship" between the being of the earth and that of our bodies which Husserl *began* in his later writings by sketching the description of those pre-objective *forms* which are the correlates, the invisible hinge that is the consequence, and the guarantee of our belonging to a common historical world.<sup>6</sup> Previously intentionality for classical phenomenology had been a transcending of the sensible; it now "becomes a power of the sensible", as Alphonso Lingis so aptly says.<sup>7</sup> The import of Merleau-Ponty's explorations of the sensuous aspect of things (our perceptual openness which he put in continuity with our openness to the cultural world and its instruments) is partly that he deepens some insights of Marx into the socio-cultural history of the senses and the roots of praxis. In the working notes for *The Visible and the Invisible* he speaks of the "*sensible world*" as "this perceptual logic, this system of equivalences . . .";

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the "perceived world . . . is the ensemble of my body's routes and not a multitude of spatio-temporal individuals."<sup>8</sup> Merleau-Ponty's reflections may make more sense when considered, for example, in terms of psychologist Frank Barron's agenda for an "ecology of consciousness" which, in its own way, is mindful of the temporal process of:

Forms characteristic of the earth itself (which) are inherent in the design of man. Man's being emerged out of a cosmic matrix whose morphic aspects man himself expresses. These forms and their functional interrelationships are the very conditions of consciousness.<sup>9</sup>

At first this may be perplexing for those of us reared in our liberal-utilitarian culture, the socialization processes of which have put such unique valuation on modes of instrumental rationality and objects-of-use. This is not surprising, for any theory of fundamental social change (and a serious ecological movement) must situate precisely this culture as a crucial dimension for transformation. We are back at the neglected interface of Marx's work and that of Merleau-Ponty; we confront the difficult and treacherous path to the realm of politics (in Lukacsian language, the problem of totality). Merleau-Ponty, exploring what he called the "transcendental geology" of the bond of temporality and incarnation, illuminated this path — also taken by Ricoeur and Paci — of time as freedom's *endeavor*, of time as the essential form of praxis. In my article on critical phenomenology, dialectical anthropology, and the problem of foundations for social change, I have formulated this perspective on the meaning-structures of consciousness as essentially:

*instituted* (better to say than "constituted") in this presence of the perceiving body to the world, with its active and passive syntheses. Beneath the order of the idealized or categorical constructs of cognition, the other person and I, as body-subjects (embodied subjects), are perceptually open, through fundamentally similar modes, to a shared world.<sup>10</sup>

O'Neill's reference to the modes of embodiment at the foundations of inter-subjectivity as a "prepolitical suffrage"<sup>11</sup> indicates the critical significance of this level of analysis in a hermeneutics of the temporal forms of the body politic

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as existential structures of political experience. I hope to make the significance of belabouring this level of analysis more apparent by outlining my concept of political education as the recovery of temporality and the dis-covery of the totality in the socio-historical dialectics of praxis. But it must now be emphasized that the latent intentional modalities in question are not *identical* to the intentional representations of common sense in everyday life.<sup>12</sup> What is required of the understanding is a sense of the levels to the modalities of the life-world whose time-forms provide the "texts" for our critical hermeneutics of the body-politic. The multiple levels to the structures of the life-world must be understood further in terms of a dialectic of sedimentary forms and spontaneous meaning.<sup>13</sup> There is also the dialectic of essence and appearance which my previously cited article sketches in the conflictive configurations of the play element of everyday life that are manifested in the contemporary politics of time. The significance of this "play element of everyday life" for the emancipatory *telos* of critical political theory lies especially in its proximity to the polymorphous space and time of the infrastructure of intersubjectivity.<sup>14</sup> Critical theorizing applied to emancipatory interests will generate dialectical perspectives that avoid the dissociation of cognitive and sensory modes of the life-world.

A post-modern theory of political change will — against the immense technocratic pressures of scientism, professionalism, and so on — assume "its conventional debts to the great traditions of our senses, manners, and natural reason."<sup>15</sup> But such debts are not to be "repaid" except through historically specific projects of dialectical praxis which reconstitute the pre-scientific and pre-organizational forms of everyday rationality in effective structures of political action and social change. In other words, the "move from ontology to political practice" is a question of the concretely historical dialectic of the temporal formations of the life-world as these are intertwined with projects of socio-historical praxis. "Theory and action are grounded in time as an intersubjective hinge *beneath the subject* for whom it affords the basis of an historical world, and *beyond the subject* as a network of intentional strivings."<sup>16</sup> The *Lebenswelt* then is a temporal structure of experience that is reified when reduced to its partial aspect of subjective appropriation. Dialectics of temporalization and totalization are fundamental to the life-world as a *forum* of the politics of experience.

The life-world is so elusive to reflection because it is the open or ambiguous dialectical structure of inter-sociality centered by the subject through which we may simultaneously discover the sense of the world as totality and recover our sense of self as temporality a totalization in process that is both concrete and infinite. What should be made explicit here is the critical phenomenologist's warning against any notion of the totality as a system of closed temporality. The pre-dialectical ontological legacy of representational thought has embalmed

the totality concept of much Marxist theory of mechanistic or structuralist varieties.<sup>17</sup> As Karel Kosik put it, when "historicity was not consistently linked with the individual . . . Marx's most important philosophical discovery, the notion of Praxis, was interpreted more or less as a social substance *outside* the individual and not as a structure of the individual himself and of all individuals."<sup>18</sup> The problem, as illuminated by Lukács, Kosik and Gabel, as well as by Merleau-Ponty and Ricoeur is not only to discern time as a dialectical dimension of the totality subject to dissociation and reification, but also to advance the meanings of time as the form and ground of praxis.<sup>19</sup>

In this age of extremes, radical critics of reification sometimes have been driven to picture man (or most people) in an "iron cage" cut off completely from their history. In the journals, *Dialectical Anthropology* and *Cultural Hermeneutics*, I have attempted to formulate the general requirements for a dialectical critique of reification and hegemony at the fundamental levels of temporality and totality. Let me recall the essential thrust of these arguments by quoting Paul Ricoeur discussing history and hermeneutics and then Karel Kosik on praxis or what I think of as the dialectic of totality and temporality. Ricoeur observes "that, in fact, human relations throughout history are, to a considerable extent, reified to the point that the course of history is no longer distinguished from the flow of things, defines history's misfortune, not its primordial constitution."<sup>20</sup> How may we account for the growing modern blindness to the roots of praxis in lived history: its processes of primordial constitution? Modern capitalist and technocratic institutional designs and policy emphases on nature as nothing but the *other* of freedom have promoted the loss of our capacity for dialectical sensibility with nature as its *primordial mediation*.<sup>21</sup> Ricoeur's hermeneutical phenomenology of history, nature, and freedom helps to account for the deformations of the concept of praxis (e.g. "praxis" reduced to labour or to technology) as discussed in Karel Kosik's *Dialectics of the Concrete*. As Kosik puts it, "In the concept of praxis, socio-human reality is discovered as the opposite of givenness, i.e. at once as the process of forming human *being* and as its specific form." Later, in articulating the sense in which man is "an anthropo-cosmic being," Kosik adds: "Praxis is not man's being walled in the idol of socialness and of social subjectivity, but his openness toward reality and being."<sup>22</sup>

The roots of praxis lie in time as humanly experienced, and it is from this level of history's primordial constitution that the forms of praxis are generated. But in the modern era the temporal basis of dialectical projections of the totality has been clouded over by the technological world-picture. (We refer to the dominant cultural horizon of industrial elites, not a "mere philosophic doctrine" but a complex historical process of various but closely related institutional formations. This should give pause to any so-called Marxists inclined to trot out a narrow or naive label such as "superstructure".) The technological

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world-view rests upon an objectivist ontology of dead being that sacrifices man to the ontological status of subjectivist self. "Domination of nature" was the goal or bargain, but to the extent that the active meaning of being has been lost, we have thrust nature outside the scope of genuine freedom and action, i.e. praxis. A truly dialectical theory for socio-historical praxis cannot get by with a one-sided concept of subjectivity, but must "account for the 'element of otherness' (Adorno) in terms of a non-subjectivist theory of 'subjectivity', i.e., the theory of the lifeworld and material, concrete *a priori*." <sup>23</sup> That "element" (or, better said, the dialectic of nature and freedom) must be illuminated within the *outer horizon of the lifeworld* in the cultural objects of everyday life, in the dialectic between the mode of the real and the mode of the possible, hence avoiding a rigid differentiation of the negative and positive aspects of the dialectic.

The radical theory of social change must integrate its critique of the technocratic approach to nature and the liberal concept of subjectivity, and seek its developmental norms in the lifeworld's infrastructure of inter-subjectivity. <sup>24</sup> The totality as projected in the technological world-view involves much more than what a contemporary psychologist once described as the theorist's "epistemological loneliness", for this is but a symptom of the modern Western drive to uproot praxis from its seedbed of human space-time. Merleau-Ponty's political phenomenology must be seen as an attempt to uncouple Western Marxism from this tendency.

Merleau-Ponty's phenomenology of embodiment and its modes opens up the Hegelian-Marxist dialectic of critical theory to that inter-subjective field of time "beneath the subject" which conditions and passively constitutes us and yet provides the pre-objective ground of our situated freedom and its projects. Merleau-Ponty's work, along with that of other twentieth century European scholars such as Helmuth Plessner, Erwin Straus, and Paul Ricoeur, constitutes a post-modern response countering those developments in modern science and philosophy in which:

the living body became an exterior without interior, subjectivity became an interior without exterior, an impartial spectator. The naturalism of science and the spiritualism of the universal constituting subject, to which reflection on science led, had this in common, that they levelled out experience: in face of the constituting I, the empirical selves are objects. <sup>25</sup>

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But in the critical phenomenologist's post-modern perspective:

knowledge and the communication with others which it presupposes not only are original formations with respect to the perceptual life but also they preserve and continue our perceptual life even while transforming it. Knowledge and communication sublimate rather than suppress our incarnation, and the characteristic operation of the mind is in the movement by which we recapture our corporeal existence and use it to symbolize instead of merely to coexist (in the sense of "live side by side").<sup>26</sup>

We must thank Merleau-Ponty, Paci and Baudrillard for a fuller or deeper sense of language as a sedimentary praxis which renders *possible* the renovation of the meaning and function of our modes of production and their reconstitution in the intentional structures of inter-subjective life. Nonetheless, the linguistic code which operates in our institutionalized modes of science, technology, and economy prevails this side of its master sign of Nature as an implacable necessity, "the alienation of man's own body." For example, the "standard of living" fetish in American culture hides this fundamental separation. Interest group squabbles over the distribution of rights of ownership seldom shed light on the fundamental reifications of the body as productive *machine* and as sexual *property*, beyond which lies that "other world" of Nature as the inter-subjectively shared "inorganic body of man". But insofar as we can recapture the sense of these conflicts in the dialectical language of "body politics", we should be more thoughtfully on the way to truly emancipatory dimensions of political encounter and coexistence.

The modern difficulty in conceiving of the body (or of the body-politic for that matter) as anything other than a pure object must be read as a key chapter in that continuing work of instrumental rationality dramatically staged as the "domination of nature" on the set of the technological worldview with its historically-specific institutional conditions. This drama involves a fateful recasting of the temporal horizon of the life-world (of its actors), according to which its author, Man, is translated as outside the rest of the production of Nature — the essential elements of which are projected as a mathematical structure. Not concerned to deny the capitalist institutional auspices for the modern version of this drama, Horkheimer and Adorno opened up dialectical critique to the "pre-history" of this totality, its archaeology of enlightenment *and* domination. What must be underscored in their work is the probing of the mythical roots of the *Dialectic of Enlightenment* as a form of authoritarian de-



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mystification facilitating domination. The U.S. social sciences' support for instrumental or technical rationality is integrated in a structure of authority that has not only a horizontal dimension (corporate state structures) but also a vertical dimension (rooted deeply in western religion and myth) clarified brilliantly by Horkheimer and Adorno. This is why the Frankfurt "critique of instrumental rationality" is best understood, not as a replacement for the critique of corporate capitalism, but as a fundamental contribution toward a genuinely dialectical theory of this system and its deep-structured cultural horizon which overshadows (at certain thematic levels) the so-called "anti-capitalist" bloc as well. What has yet to be thoroughly understood is the achievement of the first generation Frankfurt School in helping to show that the institutionalization of a critical, democratic socialism removes the cultural yoke (or horizon) of the technological world-picture.<sup>27</sup>

The hegemony of the power systems that dominate world politics is oriented toward technological world-domination through the "conquest of nature", the bureaucratization of reason, and the industrialization of culture. This fundamental perspective must be maintained along with an appreciation of the historically specific socio-cultural forms by which these systems have institutionalized the technological world-view and its dualistic modes of instrumental rationality. Indeed, this concept of the technological world-picture as the predominant cultural horizon of contemporary elites deepens comprehension of the historical dynamics of industrial capitalism as a totalizing force in the world arena. Wherever radical democratic praxis engages the hegemonic structures of the world's techno-corporate states, its emancipatory telos must be transformation of the time structures of human-historical life as well as its social spatial conditions.

*Dialectic of Enlightenment*, understood in this perspective, illuminates common historical depth-levels of technocratic Marxism and technocratic liberalism. Up to this point my discussion has emphasized the temporal foundations of the problem of totality as it is manifested in technocratic Marxism. The problem of totality (and praxis) instituted in the hegemonic liberal tradition of the United States, upon which we now focus, was also clarified by *Dialectic of Enlightenment*.<sup>28</sup> However what is needed on the American Left is a critical hermeneutics that combines dialectically the *demystification* of the dominant ideological tradition and system of power, and a *restorative*, re-interpretative movement of recovery and *renovation* of the pre-categorical, temporal intersubjective foundations of culture and politics.<sup>29</sup> There are definite limits to which the American experience of the early Frankfurt School thinkers may be taken as a theoretical model for praxis.

Hence it is from a critical phenomenological perspective on the "body-subject" and the body-politic that we can best comprehend what amounts to Horkheimer and Adorno's exploration of the depth-levels of the institu-

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tionalization of the technological world-view with its mediations of historically variant forms of the subject-object dualism. Beneath and beyond these mediations of today's techno-corporate state lie the temporal horizon of the life-world within which its fundamental meanings may be disclosed. How we participate in the body-politic's dialectic of meaning and violence is crucially related to our capacity for situating instrumental acts within the dialectical totality as temporal horizon. To the extent that this horizon is eclipsed for the collective historical consciousness, we have lost — or better said — misplaced the normative basis for genuinely political life. A growing number of critical studies of the American social sciences' response to protest in the last decade and their relationships to public policy in the era of Vietnam and Watergate confirm a process of degeneration into technocratic apologetics and an academic "grab-bag" of "strategic specialties" which has contributed to the larger culture's dialectic of technologism and moralism. The situation in political science merits special attention.

Mainstream political science in the United States may be thought of as a house with foundations set squarely in the tradition of American liberalism — our variant of that essentially bourgeois ideology so uniquely ascendant in American history. For the most part, the disputes between mainstream political scientists and the Caucus for a New Political Science (founded in 1967) have been arguments between "conservative" landlords and "radical" tenants of this common house of liberal theory. Both groups are aware that the foundations seem to be crumbling, that there is a "crisis of American political legitimacy." Among both groups it is not difficult to find articulation of the sense that the American polity may be in a momentous era of transition. Fundamental questions and choices of professional identity and political ideology seem to be lurking in the shadows of socio-cultural change. Yet these issues of identity and ideology, of science and politics in their most fundamental meanings, seem stubbornly resistant to analytical dislodgement from their larger, concealing matrices of psycho-cultural and intellectual change.

Part of the problem has been that prevailing concepts of "ideology", "liberalism" and "crisis" have been shallow, too close to the surface of change and chaos. In fact, these concepts have tended to reflect the fragmented public dimensions of our social life-world. It has not been appreciated by the mainstream "landlords" or by many of the Caucus "tenants" that the crisis of liberalism as a legitimization system for the United States in its advanced industrial or late capitalist phase of development is the leading manifestation of the crisis of the technological world-view with its dialectic of enlightenment and domination now engaging the possibility of universal destruction. Conventional assumptions about the "political" and the "ideological" fail to tap these deeper roots of the crisis. The critique of liberalism, inasmuch as it has seldom been genuinely radical, has failed to probe these levels.<sup>30</sup>

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The problem of developing a critical concept of ideology and the difficulties in focusing the critique of liberalism on fundamental levels of analysis are complementary facets of a common problem. This problem may be thought of as the weak sense of the *totality* in American social science which seems to testify to the domination in our modes of perception, conception, and evaluation of the pattern of *instrumental rationality* which de Tocqueville identified as central to the American method of orientation and thought. It also serves as the underlying socio-cultural link in the recent *technocratic* turn of liberalism as the appeal of scientism has grown in face of the increasing difficulties of traditional political methods. These difficulties in the broadly defined liberal tradition and the social science grounded by it — with major themes of the “totality” such as “alienation” and “community” — are integrally connected with problems of socio-historical time and collective memory. The critique of the hegemonic modes of *instrumental rationality*, as institutionalized in the life-dualizing terms and demands of the corporate state and its favoured horizon of technological world-domination, enables the dis-covering of the totality. But this discovery involves a dual movement: the historicizing of the concrete totality *and* a simultaneous recovery and renewal of inter-subjective temporality as the ambient of social praxis and human development. Now I shall outline a few implications of this concept of political education for a critical social science:

We need a program of critical political education that grapples with conditions of the techno-corporate state such as the inability of “most policy professionals . . . to deal with the rhythms and moral aspirations of everyday life, save as abstract values to be plugged in after a strategic calculus is completed.”<sup>31</sup> Graduate study in politics instead often seems to cultivate development of more “hyperstrategic personalities” who have little sense of any but an instrumentalist concept of the body politic. It is not the social or political behaviourist’s infatuation with computer, calculator, etc. technology *per se* that is the problem, but rather the impoverished theoretical conception of its applicability. In short, it is a problem of acquiescence to a mode of instrumental rationality which begs fundamental questions of totality and temporality in politics and education. The political behaviourist’s commitment to instrumentalism is generated out of his ensnarement in the dialectic of objectivism and subjectivism which is the dynamic principle of configuration for the structure of authority and domination within which he acquiesces as one more functionary.

Phenomenological critics of scientism sometimes stress the problem of ontological objectivism over the issue of subjectivism. However, a critical phenomenology will have nothing to do with blanket appeals to “subjectivity” as the “way out.” The behaviourist’s stance within the horizon of the technological world-view — from which the deployment of instrumental modes of intelligence follows — is a subjectivist posture unable to account for itself in terms of the field it purports to master. The behaviourist attempt to

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reduce political studies to a quantitative research project of instrumental rationalization has generated disconnected bodies of so-called technical knowledge insufficient for hermeneutical engagement with the socio-historical forms of consciousness expressing the symbolic-communicative life of the general public. As Charles Taylor put it, "What the ontology of mainstream social science lacks is the notion of meaning as not simply for an individual subject; of a subject who can be a 'we' as well as an 'I'.<sup>32</sup> The immediate point is that the movement of political theory "beyond objectivism" must also involve a movement out of subjectivism as we rediscover the *life-world* auspices of our activities and responsibilities as theorists of the body-politic.

In the hermeneutic phenomenological perspective, the polity may be thought of as a transpersonal, transtemporal form of coexistence. Political participation always implies a sharing of a larger system of temporality. The time of the polity enables history, the history-making activities that someone had in mind when they said that democracy is an attempt to make the world safe for the telling of stories. But from a critical perspective it may be added that a socio-cultural system of political economy oriented in quest of a timeless, mechanistic polity undermines the capacity for historical and critical consciousness of social life and political change. Nevertheless, past and future are constantly undergoing reconstitution in and out of the present, the "living present", as comprehended by the founders of twentieth-century phenomenology. "Political science", in one vital aspect, must be regarded as a hermeneutics of the polis. The temporal character of social and economic history calls for a political science that is hermeneutic. This would facilitate critical validation of the relations of *power* and justice with which it is concerned.

The way in which politics is grounded in society is shown through thematizing socio-historical time as the formative medium of consciousness and action in which society is constituted as a structure of identity and coexistence (on the level of consciousness by embodied minds) and materially instituted as socio-cultural space (on the level of action by minded bodies). Our society is constituted or reconstituted by us through temporal forms which are integral to our own self-formation developing in a society already constituted although never in any finally fixed way. At the same time, we exist in a temporally irreversible structure of needs and satisfactions; our conscious life is *embodied* through a series of institutional matrices or "modes of production of material life" which dialectically mediate the constitution of our intersubjective and subjective relations with nature and with others. Political theorizing must engage the concretely intentional structures of meaning by which the "living body of language" illuminates the intersubjective relations of man, work and nature in the politics of time.<sup>33</sup>

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In an earlier work I attempt to develop the theme of mainstream ideology as a hegemonic system of modes in the politics of experience in our liberal/technocratic capitalist society.<sup>34</sup> Here I am exploring American political culture as a system of historically and temporally constituted *modes* for perception, conception, and evaluation of "the political" in the politics of experience. One version of this topic or task is stated in the following terms:

Existential Dimensions of American Politics: Some American Modes in the Politics of Experience

1. The American Life-World: The Self and Its World
2. Americans and Nature: The Self and its Environment
3. Americans and Machines: "Technological Egos" and Machine Ideals in Utilitarian Culture
4. Americans and "Un-Americans": The Intergroup World of the Visible and the Invisible
5. Americans and Other Peoples: Inter-National Dimensions of "World-Openness": The Questions of "Counter-Revolutionary America" or Toward Cultural Tribalism or Renovation?

A phenomenological hermeneutic analysis, integrated with more commonly understood critical-historical methods, requires "excavating" and examining the historically constituted modes for "being-in-the-world" which are central to the ongoing social construction of political reality and national identity patterns. Concepts of "institutionalization", "sedimentation", "reinterpretation", and "modalization"<sup>35</sup> are useful to examine major ways in which historic sources of influence have been reconstituted in; (1) meaning-structures grounding the institutional routines and activities of everyday life; (2) the assumptive forms persons acquire and develop for perception and orientation within changing experience; and (3) symbolic patterns of historical self-interpretation, e.g., collective time imagery and memory schemata. One version of this topic or task follows:

Origins: Intellectual and Psycho-cultural Foundations of American Political Consciousness

1. Metaphysical Foundations of American Ideology as a Cultural System: The Mechanistic World-Picture

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2. Puritanism, Possessive Individualism, and the "Agentic Strategy": Formation of Modern Work and Citizenship in Capitalist Society
3. The Lockean-Liberal Ideology as a Cultural System: Its Paradigmatic Role in the Social Construction of Political "Reality" and National "Identity"
4. Swimming Against the "Mainstream": The Agony of the American Left and the Problem of Cultural Hegemony and Political Domination.

The re-examination of "origins", as analyzed and clarified in various noted works by Tocqueville, Marx, Weber, Whitehead, Burtt, Merton, Hartz, Gramsci and others, will be made with special attention to the background of the crisis of order in the early development of modern industrial society. Surprisingly, studies of American political culture have yet to benefit to the extent they might from this perspective. Summarizing drastically, there will be a treatment of the patterns of belief legitimating and stimulating the development of an industrialized, bureaucratized, "secularized" way of life. In particular, the concern will be with the new cultural "logics of decision" and rationale systems and new conceptions of human action and social organization. The discussion will attempt to focus in more significant ways on the early modern background to fundamental political and moral problems of twentieth century science and technology and their ongoing institutionalization. Especially challenging will be the question of the development of modern modes by which nature, rationality, objectivity, control, efficiency, self, and other concepts and forms of life have been typically constituted. Those major presuppositions and themes of the historically hegemonic ideology which has provided the primary cultural foundation for variations in response to the shifting dimensions of the crises of legitimacy in our capitalist system of political economy will be traced throughout. Thus one task will be to indicate how the conceptual synthesis of historical origins of influence is mediated by systemic processes with the life-world modes of experience. From critical primary observations and a variety of disciplines engaged in social, political, and literary criticism, it is possible to draw out the modes and structures of existence in everyday life. Obviously, the challenge is not a descriptive summary of the immediate appearances of daily life and the typical patterns of the social life-world. Rather, the phenomenology of American culture as a system of modes in the politics of experience that I have in mind has as its *telos* the critique of any aspects of the politico-economic tradition and current discourse that are *ideological* in the sense of concealing or contradicting those universal, essential structures of the

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life-world on which the real achievements and potential projects of the American people have been or may be founded. An important dimension of this task will be to demonstrate how the ideological patterns fail to adequately account for and communicate the deeper social forms of our human development and cultural strivings. This ideology critique of the meaning-structures of everyday life and the "common sense" modes of social interpretation aims at facilitating critical, historical consciousness of that fundamental existential, perceptual field in which our institutions were born, and on which their reinterpretation and democratic transformation depend.<sup>36</sup>

From such historical sources as ascetic Protestantism, possessive individualism and Newtonian mechanistic science, the culture of an emergent industrial capitalist society increasingly constituted the milieu for the institutionalization of the *subject-object dualism* (or "dialectic of subjectivism and objectivism") grounded in the technological world-view. Any critical phenomenology of the life-world modes of experience, political modes manifesting the turgid play of meaning and violence, must thematize and interpret the dialectical relations through socio-cultural space-time of the institutional features of industrial capitalism and their dominant cultural horizon, the technological world-view. Note that this world-view as the *dominant* cultural horizon does not exhaust the symbolic order out of which fundamental processes of institutionalization and de-institutionalization proceed or change. Neither are the temporal forms of the life-world ever completely institutionalized, which is *not* to say that they are "unsocialized", that behind the model or concept of "socialization" there lurks the "state of nature" of liberal theories of social contract. A critical phenomenology tills the fundamental spatio-temporal ground, or what O'Neill calls "time's body", out of which persons and groups may cultivate a situated, perspectival or non-sovereign freedom to transform the social meanings of vocational time and public life in a more or less open dialectic of conscious historical change. In more familiar terms, the institutionalization of science and technology is ultimately grounded in the socio-historical temporality of the life-world. However, after Marx, Lukács, and Husserl the point to stress is that the mediations to this dialectic of totality and temporality obscure its meaning-fundament insofar as they successfully promote (1) the subjectivization of individual self-understanding and expression and (2) the reification of existing institutions. As I have argued in *Cultural Hermeneutics*:

Critical political theory pursues these mediations which found reifying processes . . . in the totality, thus giving the lie to the technocratic celebration of instrumental rationality (as hypostatized 'technological imperatives' and so on) as the basis of social progress. In the critical recovery

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and reconstruction of these mediations there is disoccluded the intersubjective foundation developed partly through science and technology from which, under the sway of domination and its knowledge, intentional, emancipatory social development has been sidetracked.<sup>37</sup>

A fundamental project of phenomenological analysis has been a certain indecisive illumination of the universal structures of human projective life, orientation, and action: lived-space, lived-time, the elementary structures of face-to-face situations, the biographical-historical subscript to all experience and so on. However, this task is inseparable from that of a critical analysis of the *historically variant* patterns of the social life-world *typical* of American political culture as manifested in everyday life. It seems that only if the philosopher could leap over his shadow might we dispense with a fundamental ambiguity in the politics of experience. As Merleau-Ponty put it in *The Visible and the Invisible*, there is no space or time of culture surveyable from above and no "essences without place and without date" (geography and history). ". . . I the seer am also visible."<sup>38</sup> The question for political theorists is how we will participate in the vertical/horizontal/dialectical formations of this underlying structure of intersubjectivity or "interexistence" rooted in primordial, pre-objective time. As Merleau-Ponty commented in "Phenomenology and the Sciences of Man", I have to:

discover a temporality and a historicity that I am. My reflection is taken over from preceding reflections and from a movement of existence which offers itself to me. But, Husserl said, it always involves a certain degree of naivete. It never lifts itself out of time.<sup>39</sup>

Reflectively engaging the body politic's problems of "accumulation" and "legitimation" from our historicity *embodied* in its intentional structures, we take over "cultural operations begun before our time and pursued in many different ways," which become our responsibility to "reanimate" and "reactivate".

In his essay on Max Weber, Merleau-Ponty makes two comments that state succinctly the situation of the political philosopher. "Knowledge and action are two poles of a single existence. . . . History is a strange object, an object which is ourselves."<sup>40</sup> Elsewhere, he does speak of philosophy as "action at a distance". But what I wish to emphasize here is the connection between his in-



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terest in Weber's renewal of the concept of "historical matter" and in Husserl's phenomenology of the material *a priori* which situates our historical responsibilities for the crucial linkages of economy and polity including issues of "accumulation" and "legitimation" which a truly dialectical critique refuses to bifurcate between "base" and "superstructure". His interrogation and reinterpretation of Weber's work explores a significant *opening to the base* and leads him to generously conclude that it is this "Weberian Marxism" that allows new insight into the "adventures of the dialectic."<sup>41</sup>

Perhaps the disquietude this occasions for the political and social theorist reared in American liberal culture is that Merleau-Ponty has situated the political dialectic of meaning and violence within the ambiguous origins of truth and justice where the birth of reason from unreason allows the oppressed a principle of hope but one that finds its ambit in temporalizing praxis. The norm of intersubjectivity does not have for Merleau-Ponty (or for us) the status of a law of history that at some "point in time" (sic) enables us to dispense with the essential ambiguity of political action. According to Merleau-Ponty, these are the great lessons to be learned from Machiavelli and Marx. Social and political theorists still courting, however coyly, the modern ideal of total objectivity and starting out with the categorical antithesis of fact and essence fail to confront Merleau-Ponty's "phenomenological alternative" when they ask for a "positive vision that would definitely give . . . the essentiality of the essence."<sup>42</sup>

According to Merleau-Ponty, Husserl — in his last years and especially in the unpublished manuscripts:

perceived that philosophical activity cannot be defined as reflection concerned with essences, as opposed to practical activity concerned with existence. In order to see things more clearly than he had been able to see them in the past, what was of primary importance now seemed to him to be historicity.<sup>43</sup>

While phenomenology begins to focus the essentially universal structure of the human way of being-in-the-world as central for genuine understanding of concrete historic facts, it does so through deepening the correlation of reflection and historicity in the life-world dialectics of totalization and temporalization (involving sedimentation, modalization, institutionalization, reinterpretation, etc.). But these dialectics of praxis, while they may and do jeopardize and overcome specific structures of the totality, never once and for all take leave of the

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tension between essence and appearance, reification and recovery, or the fundamental questions of the politics of human experience. This is at least *a* direction of Husserl's thought, for it is the path taken by Merleau-Ponty, and trod today by critical phenomenologists such as Rovatti<sup>44</sup> and O'Neill. From this phenomenological perspective, *ideology critique* of the relations of economy and polity promotes resistance to external and internal domination by temporalizing social space and political life through the imaginative *recovery and renewal* of the world-in-common which we bear intersubjectively in our co-constitution of it as historical beings. As John O'Neill puts it, the task "is to relate particulars to wholes, which are masked in inessential relations that determine immediate practice, but which can be seen historically to be disproportions . . . of the true development of man."<sup>45</sup>

The essential tasks of "ideology critique" flow from the focus on those operative forms of institutional mediation of the culture's symbolic order interpenetrating the primary perceptual experience of persons which foster the reification of human space-time, primarily through the instrumentalization of work and the controlled trivialization of play, in the interest of the structure of power. Of particular interest within this process of cultural reproduction is the development of those typical or dominant modes of political "reasoning" which also serve as the basis for dimensions of a collective or national "identity" assumed by individuals. For example, the so-called "pragmatic genius of American politics" must be laid open to reveal the bourgeois-liberal roots of corporate state hegemony, roots running much deeper than most of our radicals have ever realized. So we may find in the experiential structures of mainstream politics the interplay of instrumentalism and moralism, pluralism and patriotism, scientism and subjectivism.

One important dimension to these processes is the symbolic violence promoting the deterioration of historical consciousness which has attended the repression of incipient groups attempting to find the communal roots of socio-historical praxis with its essential temporal forms.<sup>46</sup> At the same time, it must be added that one tragi-comic aspect of the "agony of the American Left" (Lasch) is the cultural production of an ideological type that is perhaps characterized succinctly as the "Lockean Marxist". As Merleau-Ponty put it, "The destruction of beliefs, the symbolic murder of the others and of the world, the split between vision and the visible, between thought and being do not, as they claim, establish us in the negative; when one has subtracted all that, one installs oneself in what remains, in sensations, in opinions."<sup>47</sup>

But if that is where the radical intellectual finds the rag-tag American Left today, then that is one place to begin seeking the roots of *new* forms of political praxis. Not, in other words, by "Waiting on History" while castigating the alleged ahistoricity of the everyday. But by helping generate the counter-hegemonic projects that will destroy, as Kosik says, the "pseudoconcrete of the

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alienated everyday life . . . through *estrangement*, through *existential modification*, and through *revolutionary transformation*.'"48 As O'Neill has perceived, the "waiting" and the "withdrawal" are actually complementary modes, and what remains to be done is take up our situation in Merleau-Ponty's "*intermonde*". Tasks of critique and remembrance engaged within a "structure of care and concern" for "time's body" are most likely to generate or facilitate forms of praxis reducing violence and exploitation.

The hegemony of a historical power bloc is *fundamentally* changed through the socio-historical transformation of *both* institutional setting (totality — largely of industrial capitalism) and cultural horizon (temporality — chiefly bounded by the technological world-view).49 I am well aware that analysis of the structural dimensions of the institutional matrix has been largely presupposed, for the task conceived here is to reopen to critique precisely those issues which have been mystified by undialectical notions of "superstructure", "subjectivity", and so on. A "critique of political economy" unable to probe the deepest roots of hegemony is unlikely to issue in an effective "philosophy of praxis", as Antonio Gramsci argued.

As Marek Siemek's argument for the relevance of phenomenological hermeneutics to critical Marxism shows, the question is whether the latter "is not only a *theory of history* but also *self-knowledge of the historicity* of its own thinking and acting."<sup>50</sup> The great unrealized legacy to which Marx and Gramsci made essential contributions, and which Merleau-Ponty's interrogations seek to put on our political agenda, lies not in terrorism or in structuralism but in a temporalizing praxis forming communities of human development and dialectical sensibility beyond the shadow of the technological world-view and the institutions embodying it.

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## Notes

1. Three recent studies in which these pursuits are reflected are: "Toward a Post-Modern Theory of American Political Science and Culture: Perspectives from Critical Marxism and Phenomenology", *Cultural Hermeneutics*, Vol. 2 (August, 1974), 91-166; "Ideology Critique and Problems of Student Consciousness in the United States", *Ibid.* Vol. 3 (1976), 217-244; and "Critical Phenomenology and the Dialectical Foundations of Social Change", *Dialectical Anthropology*, Vol. 2 (1977), 107-130.
2. Georges Gusdorf, "Project for Interdisciplinary Research", *Diogenes*, No. 42 (1963), 119-142, at p. 137.
3. In the words of Cornelis A. van Peursen, "The structure of time draws the furrow of human history through the field of the world. Nature becomes fruitful as culture, and the domain of reality turns out to be real precisely through this intense relationship with man." *Phenomenology and Reality* (Pittsburgh: Duquesne University Press, 1972), p. 234.
4. See *Making Sense Together* (New York: Harper Torchbook, 1974).
5. John O'Neill, "Embodiment and Child Development: A Phenomenological Approach", in Hans Peter Drietzl, Editor, *Recent Sociology No. 5: Childhood and Socialization* (New York: Macmillan, 1973), pp. 69-70.
6. See Maurice Merleau-Ponty, *Themes from the Lectures at the College de France, 1952-1960*, translated by John O'Neill (Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 1970), Chapters 8 and 9, especially pp. 82-83, 86-87, and 98; and Merleau-Ponty's unfinished work *The Visible and the Invisible*, translated by Alphonso Lingis (Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 1968).
7. Alphonso Lingis, "Intentionality and Corporeity", in A.T. Tymieniecka, Editor, *Analecta Husserliana*, Vol. I (Dordrecht: D. Reidel, 1970), p. 84.
8. *The Visible and Invisible*, p. 247. One of the best studies of Merleau-Ponty's social phenomenology is John O'Neill's *Perception, Expression and History* (Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 1970). See especially Chapter 4 on "Corporeality and Intersubjectivity."
9. Frank Barron, "Towards an Ecology of Consciousness", *Inquiry*, Vol. 15 (1972), pp. 95-113. In my 1977 *Dialectical Anthropology* article, I have called attention to the significance of Edith Cobb's studies of "The Ecology of Imagination in Childhood" which is reprinted in *The Subversive Science: Essays Toward an Ecology of Man* edited by Paul Shepard and Daniel McKinley (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1969), pp. 122-132. Barron's theme, as I have presented it, has its obverse in the horrifying vision of Jules Laforgue:  
Earth's course is run, its loins are able no more.  
And its miserable children, thin, bald, and pallid.  
With pondering the everlasting problems too much.  
Contemplate with empty eyes . . .  
As quoted by Sylvia Ashton-Warner in *Spearpoint: "Teacher" in America* (New York: Vintage Books, 1972), p. 41.

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10. "Critical Phenomenology and the Dialectical Foundations of Social Change", p. 125.
11. O'Neill, *Perception, Expression, and History*, pp. 71-72.
12. For a strong criticism of notions of the life-world "as a one-level reality" and a keen affirmation of the life-world's "universal historicity", see Gerd Brand, "The Structure of the Life-World According to Husserl", *Man and World*, Vol. 6 (May, 1973), 143-162.
13. See, for example, the important study by Robert Welsh Jordan, "Husserl's Phenomenology as an 'Historical' Science," *Social Research* 35 (Summer, 1968), 245-259.
14. "Critical Phenomenology and the Dialectical Foundations of Social Change," pp. 122-126.
15. The phraseology is from John O'Neill's *Making Sense Together*, p. 48. It is a misunderstanding of O'Neill to assume that he is appealing to some "conventional wisdom" of people *per se*. The thrust of his argument is twofold, first, to emphasize the dependence in public life of science upon rhetoric and, second, to cultivate a creative interplay between public rhetoric and a critical social science attuned to "the collective focus of seeing and being seen", an obvious rendition of Merleau-Ponty's understanding of intersubjectivity in *The Visible and the Invisible*.
16. "Critical Phenomenology . . .", p. 122.
17. Cf. my discussion of the "dualistic pattern of modern representational thought" in "Ideology Critique and Problems of Student Consciousness in the U.S.", p. 220.
18. Karel Kosik, "The Individual and History", in Nicholas Lobkowitz, Editor, *Marx and the Western World* (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 1967), p. 188.
19. The time dimension is emphasized by Joseph Gabel in *False Consciousness: An Essay on Reification*, translated by Margaret and Kenneth Thompson (New York: Harper and Row, 1975).
20. Paul Ricoeur, "History and Hermeneutics", *Journal of Philosophy* LXXIII (Nov., 1976), pp. 688-689.
21. See Paul Ricoeur's "Nature and Freedom" translated and reprinted in David Stewart and Joseph Bien, Editors, *Political and Social Essays* (Athens: Ohio University Press, 1974), pp. 23-45, and my reconstruction of the theme in "Critical Phenomenology and the Dialectical Foundations of Social Change."
22. Karel Kosik, *Dialectics of the Concrete*, trans. by Karel Kovanda with Jas. Schmidt (Dordrecht: D. Reidel, 1976), pp. 133-140.

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23. This is drawn from my appreciative critique of Adorno in *Dialectical Anthropology*, Vol. 2 (1977).
24. Compare my appreciative critique of Habermas in "Critical Political Theory and Moral Development . . ." (with E.J. Yanarella) in *Theory and Society*, Vol. 4, No. 4 (Winter, 1977).
25. Merleau-Ponty, *Phenomenology of Perception* (London: Routledge Kegan Paul, 1962), p. 56.
26. Merleau-Ponty, *The Primacy of Perception* (Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 1964), p. 7.
27. For further development of this discussion of Horkheimer and Adorno, see my *Dialectical Anthropology* article previously cited and my commentary on Habermas in the *Theory and Society* essay which focuses on the question of moral development.
28. For the critique of instrumental rationality in American culture, see my "American Social Science in the Politics of Time and the Crisis of Technocorporate Society", *Politics and Society*, Vol. 3 (Winter, 1973), pp. 204-211 especially, and an article in the *Review of Politics* (with E.J. Yanarella) Vol. 37 (July 1975) entitled "Political Science and the Post-Modern Critique of Scientism and Domination."
29. Cf. my discussion in the concluding section to "Critical Political Theory and Moral Development", *Theory and Society*, Vol. 4, No. 4 (Winter, 1977).
30. I have presented some materials for this project in *Up the Mainstream: A Critique of Ideology in American Politics and Everyday Life* (New York: David McKay, 1974).
31. Josiah Auspitz and Clifford Brown, Jr., "What's Wrong with Politics", *Harper's Magazine*, Vol. 248 (May, 1974), 51-61. See also Marlis Krueger and Frieda Silver, *Dissent Denied: The Technocratic Response to Protest* (New York: American Elsevier, 1975).
32. Charles Taylor, "Interpretation and the Sciences of Man", *Review of Metaphysics*, Vol. 25 (September, 1971), p. 32.
33. Cf. Herbert G. Reid, "The Politics of Time", *The Human Context*, Vol. IV (Autumn, 1972), 456-483, and the concluding section to the *Review of Politics* article.
34. See Part I of *Up the Mainstream*.
35. A brief but enlightening discussion of some of these concepts will be found in Robert Welsh Jordan's *Social Research* previously cited. For example, he notes the interplay of "modalization" and "sedimentation" in the life-world.

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36. Cf. the discussion of ideology critique and political education in the United States system of higher education in the *Cultural Hermeneutics* article with Randal Ihara (1976).
37. "Toward a Post-Modern Theory of American Political Science and Culture", p. 133.
38. *The Visible and the Invisible*, pp. 105-129.
39. *The Primacy of Perception*, pp. 92-93, 88-90.
40. *Ibid.*, p. 195. The essay is, of course, "The Crisis of the Understanding."
41. *Ibid.*, p. 210, p. 95.
42. *The Visible and the Invisible*, p. 112.
43. *The Primacy of Perception*, p. 88. The passage appears in one of the late essays "Phenomenology and the Sciences of Man."
44. As, for example, in Pier Aldo Rovatti's "A Phenomenological Analysis of Marxism: The Return to the Subject and to the Dialectic of the Totality", *Telos*, Number 5 (Spring, 1970).
45. John O'Neill, "The Responsibility of Reason and the Critique of Political Economy", in Maurice Natanson, Editor, *Phenomenology and the Social Sciences*, Vol. 2 (Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 1973), p. 285. O'Neill develops this point (out of Marcuse) in "Critique and Remembrance" in his collection *On Critical Theory* (New York: Seabury Press, 1976).
46. See my *Up the Mainstream*, especially Part IV.
47. *The Visible and the Invisible*, pp. 105-106.
48. Kosik, *Dialectics of the Concrete*, pp. 48-49.
49. See my argument — drawing upon Gramsci — in "Toward a Critical Theory of Peace Research in the United States: The Search for an 'Intelligible Core' ", *Journal of Peace Research*, Vol. XIII, No. 4 (1976), pp. 315-341 (with E.J. Yanarella).
50. Marek Siemek, "Marxism and the Hermeneutic Tradition", *Dialectics and Humanism*, Vol. 11, No. 4 (1975), p. 92.