

TELOS

Number 46

Winter 1980-81

Table of Contents SPECIAL SYMPOSIUM ON THE CRISIS OF THE LEFT

Contributions by Breines, Piccone, Luke, D'Amico, Jacoby

Articles:

RITTERSPORN: *Stalin in 1938*

CASTORIADIS: *Facing the War*

CARLO: *The Crisis of the State in the Thirties*

Notes:

SCHMIDT: *Recent Hegel Literature*

KOGAWA: *Adorno's Strategy of Hibernation*

HOFENER: *Sparks, Insanity and Fireworks*

WOODS: *Black Politics in the Eighties*

D'AMICO, KIM, PICCONE: *Marvin Farber (1901-1980)*

BRONNER: *Tribute to Henry Pachter (1907-1980)*

Reviews:

BOOKCHIN: *Gorz, Ecology as Politics*

MILLER: *Kolakowski, Main Currents of Marxism*

SVITAK: *Mlynar, Nightfrost in Prague*

PACHTER: *Books by Grunfeld, Shorske, Wohl*

CRAVEN: *Berger, About Looking*

FINOCCHIARO: *Sassoon, Gramsci's Politics*

ROELOFS: *Ganassi-Agger, Urban Self-Management*

SHORT JOURNAL REVIEWS

INDEX OF ISSUES 43-46

comeuppance. Hence, Adam Ferguson is claimed to be "typically bourgeois" (are we then to assume that it was common for Scottish bourgeoisie to have ties linking them to the clan organization of the highlands, ties that "typically" estranged them from the commercial society of Edinburgh?), to have a "naïve and elitist" mentality and to have been prevented by his "ethical mentality" from having followed up his penetrating empirical insights with "a critique of capitalist society" (are we to assume that the Edinburgh in 1766 had a capitalist society to criticize?). Hence he remained "ignorant of the implacable mechanisms that he conjured up in the name of Spirit and Humanity" (31) (are we to assume that Ripalda has somehow stumbled onto a lost Ferguson text which includes terms like Humanity and Spirit?). A few pages later Max Weber's hands are slapped for his "belief" in capitalist rationality by recalling how it led to the extermination of seven million Jews and the destruction of Vietnam (37). One looks in vain for the slightest evidence that Weber's manifest ambivalence towards rationalization has reached Ripalda. Conversely, "revolutionaries" get off easier. Lenin's "Concerning the National Pride of the Great-Russians" is hailed as "a document of a new revolutionary nationalism" tied to Renaissance and Enlightenment traditions. "... the horror of the Leninist Machiavellianism," we are told in the completion of the analogy, "arises from a defamatory intention similar to that which persecuted Machiavelli himself" (185) — surely a subtle point, one would have assumed the "horror" that greets Lenin's Machiavellianism had more to do with its later consequences than with a repetition of the desire to get in a few more licks at Niccolò.

These surface annoyances aside — after a while one learns to cease relying on the habitual expectation that punctuation in a book has something to do with its meaning, chuckling over typos provides needed relief from the wilder metaphors, and with a strong enough stomach one can make it through the non-sensical politics which infest the diatribes — the problem with the book basically comes down to Ripalda's effort to turn a fairly responsible article on Hegel's indebtedness to the Enlightenment philosopher Christian Garve in the formation of his early views about politics and culture⁶⁸ into a book which purports to treat Hegel as "nothing but a small element in a process, of which the Enlightenment is only an episode: the process of Capitalism" (5). Somewhere between these two poles — Hegel and Garve and the March of Capitalism, the more genuinely interesting point — the fate of the concept of the "divided nation" — is lost. Hegel's almost total failure to consider in his later philosophy the function which nationality and nationalism (as opposed to the neutral state) could play in world history has been duly noted by a number of authors. Ripalda's tracing of the early discussion of Garve's views on literature in Hegel's Stuttgart writings suggests an interesting tack to take on the question. By focusing on the role "nation" and "nationality" played in the period before the fateful coupling of nation and state, and by trying to account for the indifference in which Hegel holds considerations such as common language or culture in *The German Constitution*, Ripalda would have had a theme worth developing.

What we find instead is an expansion of his earlier discussion of Garve and Hegel (15-70), which remains of interest in light of the enormous impact Garve — virtually ignored in most discussions of Hegel's early period — had not only on Hegel, but also on German Enlightenment thinking in general. Ripalda has also provided an extensive bibliography that lists those books and journals that Hegel is believed to have read during the Stuttgart period. But once the discussion of Garve's impact on Hegel during the Stuttgart period is terminated, the book rapidly loses its focus, rushing

68. It is perhaps a measure of the chaos that reigns in the book that the bibliography gives the wrong citation for even this article! It appeared in *Hegel-Studien* 8 (1973), pp. 91-118.

through discussions of Hegel's Berne, Frankfurt, and Jena periods that contribute little to the existing literature.

The linking of Hegel to capital is remarkably heavy handed, partaking of what Raymond Williams has termed the "epochal" tendency in cruder strains of Marxian historiography. Economic periods and intellectual epochs are lined up side by side, with little more mediation between them than the paste required to splice together the pages of an overly abstract history of ideas with the pages of an economic history. Ripalda, for instance, moves within two paragraphs from a discussion of the limits imposed on philosophy by "the relatively modest stage of development which the new form of production possessed" — an explanation that ignores Marx's more complex account of the relation between intellectual and material production as crystalized in the *Grundrisse* fragment on Greek art — to the following parade of reflexive verbs and abstract nouns: "From Wolff to Garve, the Enlightenment is withdrawing itself more and more from Rationalism. But in reality Enlightenment maintained itself at the fringes of the atmosphere of Rationalism in order to breathe" (38-39). This account, which imparts self-movement to the most abstract intellectual constructs while simultaneously striking materialist poses, will have most readers, before too many pages have passed, screaming "Air! Air!" themselves.

ADORNO'S "STRATEGY OF HIBERNATION"

by Tetsuo Kogawa

"All culture after Auschwitz, including its urgent critique, is garbage. While restoring itself after the things that happened without resistance in its own countryside, culture has turned entirely into the ideology it had been potentially."¹

— T. W. Adorno

Despite its widespread reputation, Adorno's remark is unclear. What is "garbage"? Is it a metaphor for ideology? He would not use such a cheap metaphor. As Adorno and Horkheimer had argued earlier: "The development toward total integration" produced a culture industry as a mechanism of totalitarian administration.² In the era of fully developed capitalism, cultural institutions and mass media have become absorbed by multinational corporations and local or national governments that generously subsidize them. Today, cultural control and administration are much more important than economic operations. Indeed, economic operations cannot effectively function unless they are preceded by cultural efforts.

The destruction of culture as an autonomous sphere was not a sudden accident of National Socialism, but the result of basic tendencies in bourgeois society that had long been antagonistic even toward its own literature. "The claim that Hitler has destroyed German culture is no more than an advertising stunt of those who want to

1. Theodor W. Adorno, *Negative Dialectics*, trans. E.B. Ashton (New York, 1973), p. 367.

2. Max Horkheimer and Theodor W. Adorno, "Preface to the New Edition" in *Dialectic of Enlightenment*, trans. John Cumming (New York, 1972), p. x.

rebuild it. . . . Such art and thought as were exterminated by Hitler had long been leading a severed and apocryphal existence. . . . Anyone who did not play the game was forced into inner emigration years before the Third Reich broke out." Some of these "inner" emigrants sought to dismantle the integrative force of the culture industry, although they remained restricted to literature, arts and human sciences, and did not extend to politics. In literature, these attempts meant the eruption of the avant-garde at the beginning of the century with the concomitant rejection of the fundamental categories of 19th century aesthetics. According to Jens, this revolution radically changed the basic relation between author, character and language. "Finally in 1901, 'once' and 'now' were separated and the 'I' was lost; due to the attack of 'Is,' its power, the object is alienated; the thing determines the character, and takes the 'creation' function away from the author; reality seems not to be bound by the conventional language anymore; the unity is broken."³

The real meaning of this revolution was not understood until the late 1950s, when new interpretations of Freud's psychoanalysis, de Saussure's linguistics and Husserl's phenomenology revealed explicit and implicit relations between their own theoretical innovations and contemporary experimental art works (expressionism, surrealism, formalism, Russian avant-garde, the theater of Meyerhold and Brecht). One of the most paradigmatic problems deals with the reader. The relation between reader and literary work has radically changed in 20th century German literature. Contemporary theory recognized that every literary work is not completed until the reader reads it, in contrast to the traditional assumption that the reception should conform to the author's vision during the creative process. Far from emancipating the reader as subject, this earlier position subordinated the reader to the author. Kafka, on the other hand, destroyed the psychological and authoritarian situation by requiring the reader to adopt a completely different attitude toward his work. In the opening passage of Kafka's *Amerika* we read of a statue of liberty with a "sword" in hand. The attentive reader will notice this conscious substitution on Kafka's part of a sword for the actual torch. In operation here is not only Kafka's humor, but also the indication that the narrator, far from being naive, is at once cunning, mischievous and unreliable. The reader cannot entirely depend upon the narrator, as was the case in the conventional novel. Reading Kafka's work, the reader cannot remain passive, i.e., he must not seek to find what Kafka *really* means, but must actively participate in reconstructing the "incomplete" story.⁴ This approach has rarely been applied to Kafka's work because it contradicts the still prevailing existentialist interpretation of Kafka.⁵

This shift in linguistic experience from the author to the reader presupposes that the reader can bracket the author's authoritarian attempt to transmit a "message" to the reader; conversely, the author must leave the final meaning of the work with the reader. This has profound consequences for the communication between author and reader and the truth of a literary work. Might not everything become the reader's fabrication? If language were an immediate representation of the author, these doubts would be relevant, but the language in question is mediated by technological means, namely *langue*, or more adequately, *écriture*, not *speech* or *voice* (as in Derrida).

3. Walter Jens, *Statt einer Literaturgeschichte* (Pflingen, 1957), p. 62.

4. Wolfgang Iser, *The Implied Reader* (Baltimore, 1974); his *The Act of Reading* (1978) convincingly develops a reader-oriented theory of literature.

5. Cf. my "Reading Kafka Vulgarly" and "From the Psychologic Gesture to the Social Gesture." There I have tried to overcome the existentialist interpretation of Kafka. Both articles are now in my *Changing the Subject* (in Japanese — Tokyo, 1978), pp. 7-52, 91-128.

Today, work (not only the literary work of authors, but also labor in general) is totally mediated by the production-market mechanism, and the worker (not only the author as a creator of work but every laborer) is alienated from his work. The contemporary work has nothing to do with the worker's specific character: the worker does not decide the value of the work. Thus, it is the user, arranger, and mediator of the work who decides its value.⁶ Consequently, to shift the subject of language to the reader constitutes resistance to the situation in which the whole value of work is decided by administrators just as the meaning of a literary work is determined by publishers, ad men and reviewers, not by each reader.

Saussure's treatment of language as a system of signs and linguistics as a science of the life of linguistic signs within society anticipated today's language situation. The relation between signifier and signified replaces concept and sound-image respectively since, according to Saussure, the bond between the signifier and signified is *arbitrary*. "Whether we take the *signifié* or the *signifiant*, language has neither ideas nor sounds that existed before the linguistic system, but only conceptual and phonetic differences that have issued from the system. The idea or phonic substance that a sign contains is of less importance than the other signs that surround it; thus the value of a term may be modified without either its meaning or its sound being affected, solely because a neighboring term has been modified."⁷ Consequently, all linguistic values are determined by the user of signs (the audience), who relates signs within a specific *intersubjective* context. This context can be referred to as the socio-cultural *code* or *system*. And law, custom, principle, mode, public sphere, order, regulation, and rationality can all be replaced by this *code* or *system*.

Hence semiotics casts light on the present situation of language: the same sign can manifest itself both as artistic work and as advertisement. The meaning of the sign depends entirely on the code that the sign refers to.

Broadly speaking, one may distinguish three types of codes: major (or popular) code, minor (or alternative) code, and mass code. The major code belongs to the majority, like custom, and is originally the spontaneous legacy of a people. The minor code is an alternative to the major code. The mass code, finally, is characteristic of modern cultural administration of mass communication and culture industry. Today, the major code and mass code are hardly distinguishable, while former minor codes become marginal, as in the case of vestigial folk traditions confronted with mass culture. For example, despite the expansion of the cinema in the 1920s, the Yiddish theater was still a major cultural institution for the New York Jewish population. Besides the mass culture, the entertainment-oriented Yiddish theater addressed the majority of the subculture while the artistic or political Yiddish theater (Yiddish Art Theater and the ARTEF) were relevant to the intellectual minority.⁸ In the wake of a transition to a fully administered culture, the function of the entertainment-oriented Yiddish theater has been totally replaced by television, film and Broadway. The Yiddish theater in New York, despite a slight recent revival, is marginally isolated, and

6. This situation does not invalidate Marx's analysis of the commodity but does demand the *extraterritorialization* of Marxist economics. Among the attempts to develop the implication of Marx's analysis toward the cultural approach, see Jean Baudrillard, *Le Système des Objets: La Consommation des Signes* (Paris, 1968); and *Pour une Critique de l'économie Politique du Signe* (Paris, 1972). Also, see Dean MacCannell, *The Tourist — A New Theory of the Leisure Class* (New York, 1976).

7. Ferdinand de Saussure, *Course in General Linguistics*, trans. W. Baskin and edited by C. Bally, A. Sechehaye, and A. Riedlinger (New York, 1966), p. 120.

8. See David S. Lifson, *The Yiddish Theater in America* (New York and London, 1965).

no longer is an alternative to mass culture. Thus, in contrast to semiotics' notion of an infinite diversity of codes, only two possibilities exist: *mass code* or *marginal code*. This is the limit of semiotics whose radical potential seems to have been over-estimated.

Benjamin attempted to describe the emancipatory possibility of switching the code, specifically in his elaboration of the method of quotation as a response to the dominant culture situation. For Benjamin, quotation shifts the dominant and conventional code to a new one. Thus, his favorite form of criticism was, as he admits in his letter, "the writing almost entirely of quotations. The craziest mosaic technique that people can imagine. . . ."⁹

In its broadest sense, the technique of quotation is not limited to Benjamin but can be found in almost all radical artists and theoreticians of the first quarter of the 20th century. Kafka created his new literary form by "quoting" the form of Yiddish theater,¹⁰ while Karl Kraus' caricatures are based on citations, to say nothing of James Joyce and Marcel Proust. Similarly in epic theater, quotation has a crucial function. Brecht wrote that "in the first production of *Die Mutter* the stage. . . was not supposed to represent any real locality: it, as it were, took up an attitude itself towards the incidents shown; it quoted, narrated, prepared and recalled."¹¹ Victor Shklovskij's critical technique of parody is a kind of quotation, and Sergei Eisenstein's film technique of montage depends, as he himself admits, on his synthetic understanding of quotation.¹²

These similarities did not grow out of personal collaborations. The method of quotation has, rather, been developed as a reaction against capitalist rationalization and its cultural consequences. In the age of mechanical reproduction, the language of literature is always obsolete unless it is constantly related to a new code, that is, unless it is quoted. Therefore, in a letter to Gershom Scholem, Benjamin likens his method to a "salvage" of "scraps": "the philosophical salvage of surrealism — and therefore its *Aufhebung* — also the attempt to hold the image of history in the most unattractive fixations of being, so to speak, the scraps of being."¹³

Benjamin's use of the term *Abfälle*, or scraps, reminds us of Adorno's *Müll* (garbage). Apparently, Benjamin's scraps and Adorno's garbage indicate a reified situation in which language (the essence of culture) becomes an arbitrary sign. However, Adorno's garbage implies the impossibility of salvage, while Benjamin's scraps seems to suggest a strategy. For Benjamin, scraps that are obsolete as signs referring to old aesthetic values can still provide new value if they are related to some new code, i.e., if they fall into a newly organized social group's hands. Thus, he compares John Heartfield's photomontage and Renger-Patsch's picture: the former transformed the advertising photography into a political instrument, while the latter "succeeded in turning into an object poverty itself, by handling it in a modish technically perfect way, into an object of enjoyment."¹⁴ Benjamin contends that the

9. Walter Benjamin, *Briefe*, Bd. 1, G. Scholem and T. Adorno, eds. (Frankfurt, 1966), p. 366. Cf. Hannah Arendt, *Men in Dark Times* (New York, 1968), p. 202.

10. See the work of Evelyn Torton Beck, *Kafka and the Yiddish Theater* (Madison, 1971).

11. Bertolt Brecht, "In Direct Impact of the Epic Theater" in *Brecht on Theater*, John Willett, ed. and trans. (New York, 1964), p. 57. Also see Walter Benjamin, *Understanding Brecht*, trans. Anna Bostock (London, 1973).

12. As for how "montage" decides the meaning of film, Béla Balazs tells an ironic story that Eisenstein's "revolutionary" cinema, *Battleship Potemkin*, was converted to an anti-revolutionary cinema by a Scandinavian distributor who shifted just one scene — "not a shot omitted, not a title changed." See *Theory of the Film*, Edith Bone, trans. (London, 1952), pp. 119-120.

13. Walter Benjamin, *Briefe*, Bd. 2, *op.cit.*, p. 685.

14. Walter Benjamin, "The Author as Producer," in *Understanding Brecht*, p. 95.

cultural situation can be radically changed only if an alternative social context, i.e., a new collectivity, appears. Only if the mass-oriented capitalist collectivity is switched to the collectivity of a class-conscious proletariat. Hence, he confronted "the fascist attempt to aestheticize politics" with the Communist politicization of art, uniting artistic activity with the workers' movement.¹⁵ Adorno nowhere shares Benjamin's optimism. The new technological means hardly provide the possibility of new and active collective reception of culture. Rather, the capitalist culture industry destroys not only the traditional community but also the basis of almost all authentic collectivity: collective memory or unconscious collectivity. Spontaneous collectivity is increasingly impossible, and is replaced by the artificial organization of the entertainment business and bureaucratic administration: even religious ritual and traditional feasts are no exception.¹⁶

In an apparent reply to Benjamin's thesis, Adorno in his essay "On the Fetish Character in Music and Regression in Listening," in referring to the attitude of the music listening audience insisted that "the new phase of the musical consciousness of the masses is defined by displeasure in pleasure; it resembles the reaction to sport or advertising. Contemporary culture, despite its seeming diversity, has been fundamentally chained to the dominant code. When an audience receives a cultural work (which should be originally free from any code before the association with the recipient), it has little choice in deciding what code it should be related to in accordance with the interests of its own members."¹⁷ In this sense, Adorno argues that "in spite of all the progress in reproduction techniques, in controls and the specialties, and in spite of all the restless industry, the bread that the culture industry offers man is the stone of the stereotype."¹⁸ That is why "all culture after Auschwitz, including its urgent critique, is garbage." At the same time, Adorno is fully aware that no matter how reified culture becomes, it is not totally reified. It always refers back to living subjects. Even in the context of extreme reification, the subject who is conscious of alienation survives, and this critical activity is the subject's final barricade.

Thus Adorno's statement regarding culture as garbage is not an epistemological definition of culture but a strategic critical gesture within the context of the culture industry. His "pessimistic" and totally negative tone reflects this strategy. He is not pessimistic but performs this pessimistic gesture. The philosophical basis of this performance is put forth in *Negative Dialectics*: "In epistemology the inevitable result is the false conclusion that the object is the subject. Traditional philosophy believes that it knows the unlike by likening it to itself, while in so doing it really knows itself only. The idea of a changed philosophy would be to become aware of likeness by defining it as that which is unlike itself."¹⁹ But this does not suggest that he acts *as if* he is negative. He tries to *be* totally negative to the extent that the critical subject *is* essentially negative. If reification constitutes the basic trend of culture, the only possible response is neither a search for an alternative, given the present limited situation, nor an objective description of the status quo, but a strategic exaggeration of the negative element of the trend.²⁰ Accordingly, Adorno finds in Kafka one of the

15. Walter Benjamin, "The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction," in *Illuminations*, Hannah Arendt, ed. (New York, 1969), p. 244.

16. David Gross, "Culture and Negativity: Notes Toward a Theory of the Carnival," in *Telos*, n. 36 (Summer 1978), pp. 127-132.

17. As for the semiological approach to this point, compare the works of Jean Baudrillard mentioned in note 7.

18. Max Horkheimer and Theodor W. Adorno, *Dialectic of Enlightenment*, *op.cit.*, p. 148.

19. Adorno, *Negative Dialectics*, *op.cit.*, p. 150.

20. This strategic gesture, exaggeration may be closely related to Brecht's "alienation effect"

most successful examples of this strategy. Adorno writes in *Prisms*: "As was done thousands of years ago, Kafka seeks salvation in the incorporation of the power of the adversary. The subject seeks to break the spell of reification by reifying itself. It appears to complete the fate which befell it. . . . Immersion in the inner space of individuation, which culminates in such self-contemplation, stumbles upon the principle of individuation, the postulation of the self by the self, officially sanctioned by philosophy, the mythic defiance. The subject seeks to make amends by abandoning this defiance. Kafka does not glorify the world through subordination; he resists it through non-violence. Faced by the latter, power must acknowledge itself as that which it is, and it is on this fact alone that he counts. Myth is to succumb to its own reflected image."

A common line on Adorno is that Adorno's "critical theory does not address any social group, nor can it provide a socialization model translatable into practice."²¹ But as we have already shown, his "strategy of hibernation" was engendered by a socio-cultural situation in a transitional period marked by the overthrow of traditional concepts: "theory," "practice," "individuality," "collectivity," "language," and even "concept," all of which need radically new interpretations — the method of interpretation itself must be fundamentally revised. Given that advanced mass communication and bureaucracy cripple bourgeois individuality and organic collectivity, Adorno's emancipatory strategy cannot count on any kind of conventional practice.²² Although Habermas criticizes Adorno when he writes, "Adorno's thesis can be proven with examples from literature and music, only as long as they remain dependent on reproduction techniques that prescribe isolated reading and contemplative listening, i.e., a mode of reception that leads down the royal road to bourgeois individuation,"²³ Adorno does not depend on bourgeois individualism but only utilizes it in order to overcome both conventional individualism and collectivism. In this sense, he upholds the appearance of both a new individuality and collectivity, which are in turn never separated. His preference for highbrow literature and music is not accidental, and is in fact preferable to the extent that *readership* here is both too *individualistic* for bourgeois individuation and too spontaneous for the existing collectivity. Indeed, an extremely conscious, "individualistic" readership may open up a new collectivity,

(*Verfremdungseffekt*), provided that this theater technique is not received dogmatically.

21. Axel Honneth, "Communication and Reconciliation," in *Telos* 39 (Spring 1979), p. 56.

22. However, can some existing practices implicitly anticipate Adorno's negative dialectics? Alan Wolfe proposes a strategy "to fulfill democratic dreams" — *hoarding*, which he borrows from James O'Connor. Neither Wolfe nor O'Connor intends to trace their theoretical roots directly to Adorno, but their strategy seems to have an affinity to Adorno's "strategy of hibernation." "Hoarding constitutes a first step in the direction of a non-alienated politics, a negative refusal to have alienated power exercised over oneself." "There are degrees of political hoarding. Simple apathy toward the organized political process is one." "Those who engage in cooperative enterprises — such as neighborhood grocery cooperatives, daycare centers, and other social activities — are in a sense hoarding a certain amount of their power from the state, even if their expressed motive is a non-political one. The same is true of those who withdraw into rural areas to produce their own means of subsistence as much as they can. Even though such activities of the 'counter-culture' by themselves do not pose any direct threat against the existing order, they are a form of hoarding insofar as they withdraw from the existing political system's definition of what constitutes the productive 'obligations' of citizenship. When workers go on strike, they hoard their labor power for themselves; an important strategy for political change would involve a 'citizens' strike,' in which people would refuse to participate in the organized rituals that go under the name of politics in late capitalist society." *The Limits of Legitimacy* (New York, 1977), pp. 343-344.

23. Jürgen Habermas, "Consciousness-Raising or Redemptive Criticism — The Contemporaneity of Walter Benjamin," in *New German Critique*, n. 17 (Spring 1979), pp. 43-44.

while the individuals of the administered world are themselves so deeply integrated in the mass collectivity networks that their desultory reading patterns steadily affirm the established mass collectivity. In this sense, Habermas was too optimistic when he argued that "a noticeable development of arts with a collective mode of reception . . . such as architecture, theater and painting, as well as utilitarian popular literature and music with their dependence on the electronic media, points beyond mere culture industry and does not *a fortiori* refute Benjamin's hope for a universalized secular illumination."²⁴ Unfortunately, since 1972, when Habermas made this claim, such "a noticeable development of arts" has turned out not to point beyond culture industry, at least in the North American context, and the socio-cultural context of West Germany is not much different. Despite Habermas' prediction, Benjamin's hope cannot be realized unless it is preceded by Adorno's strategy.

24. *Ibid.*, p. 44.

SPARKS, INSANITY, AND FIREWORKS*

by Heiner Höfener

"Illusion [Wahn] is the deception of regarding the mere representation of a thing as equivalent to the thing itself. . . . Now the consciousness of possessing a means to some end or other (before one has availed oneself of this means) is the possession of the end in representation only; hence to content oneself with the former, just as though it could take the place of the latter, is a *practical illusion*. . . ."¹

The certified "psychograph" of Marx, Arnold Künzli,² believed to have found in Adorno's philosophy a fruitful object for his own trade and adroitly posed the pseudo-Socratic rhetorical question, whether Adorno does not simply provide "the self-justification of paranoia on a high philosophical level."³ The analysis — insofar as it can be called an analysis — latches on to one particular quotation from Adorno that apparently proves Künzli's point: "Dialectics cannot stop . . . at the concepts of healthy and sick. Once it has recognized the prevailing universal . . . as sick — in the literal sense, as characterized by paranoia or pathological projection — it proceeds to take as indications of recovery only that which it itself treats as sick, misguided, paranoid, or even 'insane'; thus today, as in the Middle Ages, only fools tell their masters the truth."⁴

For Künzli, this quotation is conclusive evidence of the "self-justification of

*Translated by David J. Parent.

1. Immanuel Kant, *Religion within the Limits of Reason Alone*, trans. Theodore M. Greene and Hoyt H. Hudson (Chicago and London, 1934), p. 156.

2. Arnold Künzli, *Karl Marx: Eine Psychographie* (Vienna, Frankfurt, Zurich, 1966).

3. Arnold Künzli, "Linker Irrationalismus. Zur Kritischen Theorie der 'Frankfurter Schule,'" in *Aufklärung und Dialektik. Politische Philosophie von Hobbes bis Adorno* (Freiburg, 1971), p. 147.

4. Adorno, *Minima Moralia*, quoted in Künzli, *ibid.*, p. 147.