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CHRISTOPHER CAUDWELL AND HIS CRITICS: A STUDY OF CAUDWELL'S
PHILOSOPHY OF ART AND THE CRITICAL RESPONSE

City University of New York

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Christopher Caudwell and His Critics:
A Study of Caudwell's Philosophy of Art
and the Critical Response

by Thomas Riggins

A Dissertation Submitted to the
Graduate Faculty of Philosophy
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Advisor:
Dr. A. McLaughlin

ABSTRACT

Christopher Caudwell and His Critics:

A Study of Caudwell's Philosophy of Art and the Critical Response

by Thomas Riggins

This thesis deals with the philosophy of art of the British Marxist, Christopher Caudwell. It begins with a general discussion of the intellectual environment of Caudwell's day -- i.e., the 1920s and 30s in Europe and especially in England. It then proceeds to a presentation of Caudwell's basic philosophical position with major emphasis on his work Illusion and Reality. This is followed by a review of the critical assessment Caudwell's ideas evoked and a number of detractors and supporters are discussed. Special attention is then placed on a review of the aesthetic theory of Socialist Realism and Caudwell's relation to it. Following this discussion the aesthetics of G.W.F. Hegel are analysed and compared to those of Marxism. Caudwell is seen to be in fundamental agreement with the Hegelian and Marxist dialectical approach to the understanding of reality while yet differing on some specific judgments concerning the nature of poetry and artistic creation. Caudwell's relationship to Freud is next taken up, and by concentrating on Herbert Marcuse's Eros and Civilization, as well as Caudwell's critique of Freud, it is determined that Caudwell cannot be classified within the Freudian tradition, but also that that tradition has a more progressive and revolutionary potential than it is usually given credit for. Finally, contemporary critics of Caudwell are discussed, critics dating from the 1970s, and it is established that Caudwell's positions are usually misunderstood and mislabeled due to unfamiliarity with the methods of dialectical thinking on the part of many of the authors who have attempted to classify Caudwell as either a non-Marxist or an inconsistent one.

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INTRODUCTORY REMARKS

This work is primarily about the philosophy of art developed by the British Marxist, Christopher St. John Sprigg (Christopher Caudwell, 1907-1937). Caudwell and his thought became well known in the late 1930s by means of a series of posthumously published works -- Illusion and Reality, Studies in a Dying Culture, The Crisis in Physics, and Further Studies in a Dying Culture. I will focus most of my attention on his first major theoretical work, Illusion and Reality, because, although published first, it represents the most mature expression of his thinking on the philosophy of art.

Over the years since they were first published, Caudwell's writings have been variously interpreted and evaluated but no consensus has been reached regarding their significance or importance.

I intent to defend the thesis that Caudwell's works represent a forceful, original contribution to the Marxist philosophy of art, that they represent an example of Marxist dialectical thinking (and have consequently often been misinterpreted), and that they fall into the mainstream of the Marxist intellectual tradition. I am not however engaging in a wholesale defense of Caudwell's interpretation of Marxism. Caudwell's views will be defended against misinterpretation in order that we can have set clearly before us just what his positions really were. My purpose is to provide an appreciative interpretation of Caud-

well's philosophy of art as it relates to the social context of the 1930s and to clear up misconceptions regarding his thought that have been all too evident in the criticisms directed at it. Thus the detailed defense of this or that Caudwellean position or doctrine is not my intention, but rather it is to fix him as a thinker firmly committed to Marxism and its philosophical methodology, a contention, as we shall see, all too readily denied by many of the critics I shall examine later on.

At this point, I think it is important to make some preliminary remarks at the outset about what I mean by a "Marxist" philosophy of art, while reserving a more detailed discussion for my second chapter.

This is the more necessary as the problem of constituting a Marxist philosophy of art remains unclear since there seems to be no accepted definition of just what such a philosophy of art would really be. Marx and Engels, it is true, developed their own particular philosophical outlook on the world but aside from scattered references they did not provide us with a well thought out specific philosophy of art. In my chapters on Socialist Realism and Hegel this problem is taken up and a proposed solution to the problem is offered.

Here I give a preliminary remark based on the views of David N. Margolies (The Function of Literature) whose thought will be more fully discussed in the body of my treatment of Caudwell. Margolies points out that a Marxist philosophy of art begins with the general idea that "social being determines consciousness." On this basis different Marxist approaches to art have been constructed -- three of which,

Margolies notes, are those of Lukacs, Plekhanov and Caudwell. What is constitutive of Caudwell's originality as a Marxist is his theory of the function of poetry (and by extension, of literature and art in general) and how it works to educate and reshape our emotions.

We shall discover in the course of this study that the key to understanding Caudwell is the comprehension of his use of the dialectic method. He absorbs from Freud, Jung, Richards and others their major contributions, points out what he thinks are the necessary contradictions that they are driven to by their static "metaphysical" approach to reality, and attempts to reconcile these contradictions on a higher level in a new unity. In accomplishing this, Caudwell shows us that Freud is no longer Freud or Richards Richards -- but their insights have been unified on a higher critical terrain staked out by Caudwell himself and stemming from the use of the method first delineated by Hegel and perfected by Marx.

CHAPTER I

The Caudwell Generation: Literary Background and Milieu

I will attempt in this chapter to give a picture of the literary background in which Caudwell's book Illusion and Reality first appeared. The first part of the chapter will rely heavily on two recent works: Maynard Solomon's Marxism and Art and Samuel Hynes' The Auden Generation. Towards the end of the chapter I will try to assess the influence on Caudwell of the theories of I.A. Richards, especially as contained in the latter's Principles of Literary Criticism.

According to Maynard Solomon no specifically Marxist aesthetic writings were produced in England between the period of William Morris in the 1880's and the Popular Front in the 1930's.¹ However, the 1930's produced some important attempts to apply Marxism to the arts. Noteworthy examples are, Solomon points out, John Strachey's Literature and Dialectical Materialism (1934) and parts of The Coming Struggle for Power (1933); articles appearing in The Left Review; Ralph Fox's Aspects of Dialectical Materialism (1934) and The Novel and the People (1937), as well as Jack Lindsay's attempt to combine Marxism and Freudianism in his Anatomy of Spirit (1937).

1. Maynard Solomon, Editor, Marxism and Art: Essays Classic and Contemporary (N.Y.: Vintage Books, 1974). The discussion which follows is based primarily on Solomon's comments.

This is the milieu in which Illusion and Reality made its appearance -- the work in which Caudwell's "theory of poetic creation" -- perhaps his most important contribution, makes its debut. The three major influences on Caudwell, not all of equal importance, were Marxism-Leninism, the Cambridge School of anthropology, and Freud. Besides the works of Marx, Engels, and Lenin (and Stalin, especially his Leninism), Solomon says "Caudwell absorbed Marxism through the framework that Plekhanov and Bukharin had erected."² Caudwell was apparently more influenced by the former -- a view reinforced by Peter Demetz.³ It is probably that he was completely ignorant of writers such as Ernst Bloch, Walter Benjamin, Max Raphael and Georg Lukacs.

If the above mentioned Marxist writers are the first in importance to Caudwell's development, we should not overlook, Solomon stresses, the anthropological influences of Tylor, Frazer, Lang, F.M. Cornford, Gilbert Murray, Jane Harrison, Durkheim and Bronislow Malinowski -- to name a few of the authors who Caudwell used to develop his views and whom he adapted to his purposes. We find, for example, Harrison's Themis and Ancient Art and Ritual, Cornford's From Religion to Philosophy and Durkheim's The Elementary Forms of Religious Life included in his bibliography. Caudwell's views on magic as well as some of his

² Ibid., page 310.

³ Peter Demetz, Marx, Engels and the Poets: Origins of Marxist Literary Criticism (Chicago & London: University of Chicago Press, 1976), page 179. "... Plekhanov turned to the study of ethnology and sketched the foundations of an anthropological theory of artistic development in which the young English Marxist Christopher Caudwell was to support him a generation later."

criticisms of Freud came from Malinowski's Sex, Culture and Myth⁴ and Sex and Repression in Savage Society as well as other works.

Perhaps the most neglected major influence on Caudwell, according to Solomon, has been that of Freud. Although Caudwell mounts an attack on Freud in Illusion and Reality, Cornforth, in his Modern Quarterly assault on Caudwell, accuses him of following Freud too closely to be considered a Marxist at all. Nevertheless, Caudwell rejects Freud's view of the instincts as being repressed to our detriment by the development of culture -- just the opposite happens for Caudwell -- and in so saying Caudwell anticipates Marcuse's argument in Eros and Civilization and, indeed, in many respects makes the later work less original than many who are unfamiliar with Caudwell may think. We will return to these themes in the chapter on Caudwell and Freud.

Earlier, while discussing the milieu in which Caudwell's writings first appeared, the impression may have been given that only Communists or Marxists were taking a political approach to art in the 1930's. This would be a mistaken impression. Caudwell's generation and its relation to literature has been extensively analysed by Samuel Hynes of Princeton University in his The Auden Generation: Literature and Politics in England in the 1930's.⁵ Hynes points out that English literature is essentially middle class in its origins -- and this is especially true of the thirties. "Virtually no writing of literary importance came out of the working

⁴ Though cited by Solomon, I do not find this work listed in the Bibliography of Illusion and Reality.

⁵ Samuel Hynes, The Auden Generation: Literature and Politics in England in the 1930's (New York: The Viking Press, 1977).

class during the decade."⁶ Caudwell was middle class and his approach to Marxism, Hynes maintains, was middle class -- i.e. he was a convert on intellectual grounds. The problems later associated with Illusion and Reality (Cf. The Modern Quarterly debate of the early 50's) stem mainly from the circumstance, according to Hynes, that when Caudwell was writing there was not as yet an "orthodox" line in Marxism, in the sense used by Raymond Williams,⁷ which could be applied rigidly to separate the sheep from the goats -- but this was no longer true in the 40's and 50's.⁸

Hynes writes:

The whole question of what a British Communist would be -- how he would behave, what he would think about art and literature, and what kind he would himself produce if he were an artist -- all these questions were unanswered, even unasked in 1930. The thirties was not a time of political orthodoxy, but a time when orthodoxy was being worked out.⁹

Hynes then presents a brief background sketch of this period.

Caudwell, he writes, was not the only one moved by the apparant contradictions between art and life. Day Lewis's Transitional Poem (1929) reveals the contemporary state of mind -- i.e. "loss of faith, scientific

⁶ Ibid., page 11. Cf. Caudwell's "Modern poetry is capitalist poetry" -- Illusion and Reality: A Study of the Sources of Poetry (N.Y.: International Publishers, 1970), page 55.

⁷ Cf. Raymond Williams, Marxism and Literature (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1977).

⁸ Yet Solomon, op. cit., calls Caudwell's essay published as Romance and Realism (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1970) an example of "proto-Zhdanovism" for supporting socialist realism, economic determinism, and control of the arts in the U.S.S.R.

⁹ Hynes, op. cit., page 12.

ideas, images of the urban, industrial world"¹⁰ and its problems, etc. Hynes also finds this in Auden's Paid on Both Sides (1929) -- "The theme of entropy, the old life running down, emerges again and again in chorus speeches."¹¹ This theme, "a world that seemed to be running down, and entering it without the support of inherited values"¹² is crucial for our understanding of the thirties -- for this widespread feeling entertained by middle class intellectuals brought many of them to the study of Marxism. Even decidedly non-leftists such as Evelyn Waugh in his Vile Bodies envisioned "the accidental and aimless nature of modern life."¹³ That art might have a role to play in making a better world became a widespread idea. Day Lewis, according to Hynes, saw poetry functioning to expose the dead life of the past and to support the future life. The revolutionary will create the world, the poet will "record it."¹⁴

However, the "radical" response was not the only option, as Hynes points out. In Science and Poetry, I.A. Richards defended two basic propositions -- the poet had to function in a world bereft of belief, and hence form became all important for the artist. Thus traditional ap-

¹⁰ Ibid., page 43.

¹¹ Ibid., page 53.

¹² Ibid., page 54.

¹³ Ibid., page 58.

¹⁴ C. Day Lewis, "The Poet and Revolution," Adelphi 4, September, 1932, page 863, quoted in Hynes, op. cit.

proaches to art were superior to radical avant-garde approaches.¹⁵

Auden in "Psychology and Art To-day" (The Arts To-day, 1935, edited by G. Grigson) saw art as basically didactic with the artist individualistically communicating his vision of the truth to the public. Here, as Hynes notes, art takes the lead and can in no way be subjected to political ends. Nevertheless, however individualistic, art still has a role to play in changing the world.¹⁶

By 1936 the view of political action as a necessary concomitant for art was already beginning to fade -- the independence of the artist -- maintained by writers like Stephen Spender, Auden and even Day Lewis (who had joined the CP as Spender would do later) was still forcefully upheld:

The swing in the early thirties toward political commitment and away from 'individualism' had been a deviation from the main thrust of the modern movement, and by 1936 the results of that swing were apparent: political commitment had produced no art of any importance, no aesthetic that seemed adequate to a generation raised on Eliot's essays and the books of Richards; everything of importance in those years had been heterodox and individualistic.¹⁷

And, Hynes adds, 1937 is noted for the last shots in the war against individualism and for political commitment among the Auden generation -- the battle is last heard in

¹⁵ Hynes, op. cit., page 163. This work by Richards is not cited by Caudwell in his Bibliography, but Principles of Literary Criticism is -- a work which strongly influenced Caudwell and which I will discuss at the end of this chapter as a prelude to the discussion of Illusion and Reality in Chapter Two.

¹⁶ Hynes, op. cit., page 169.

¹⁷ Ibid., page 206.

Fox's The Novel and the People, in West's Crisis and Criticism, in Upward's essay in The Mind in Chains, and most elaborately in Caudwell's Illusion and Reality ... and with that burst it came to an end ... the whole art versus propaganda, politics versus poetry debate died.¹⁸

However, it seems to me that Hynes misrepresents the whole issue of "art versus propaganda," especially in putting forth Caudwell as a writer who supported the "propaganda" side of the so-called controversy. Caudwell was committed to the integrity of art every bit as much as Auden, Spender or Day Lewis. The real issue is more fundamental - - i.e., whether art is solely an individual expression of a unique genius, or whether it has a social role to perform and has a basically collective origin. In Illusion and Reality Caudwell writes:

It is important to understand that art is no more propaganda than science. That does not mean that neither has a social role to perform. On the contrary, their role is one which is as it were primary to and more fundamental than that of propaganda: that of changing men's minds ... The whole feeling complex of the poem or the play or the novel is injected into our subjective world. We feel so-an-so and such-and-such. We are no more persuaded of their truth than of the truth of a toothache: but the vividness or social universality of the emotional pattern is announced by the poignancy of the sensation we call Beauty. 19

As a matter of fact, Caudwell maintained that it was precisely bourgeois writers, not Marxist writers, who tended to view art as having a political and propagandistic role to play -- a complete reversal of the conception which Hynes elaborates. What is even more astounding

¹⁸ Ibid., pages 267-68.

¹⁹ Christopher Caudwell, Illusion and Reality: A Study of the Sources of Poetry (N.Y.: International Publishers, 1970), pages 155-56.

is that Caudwell's argument appears in a posthumously published essay which Hynes himself edited before he wrote The Auden Generation.²⁰

In this work, Romance and Realism, Caudwell rejects art for art's sake and individualism as bourgeois concepts. It is, according to Caudwell, a bourgeois notion that the artist is some sort of superlative trend setter with a special individualistically unique contribution to make.

He writes:

The conception of poet as agitator springs from this view. Such a man conceives the artist, quite in the bourgeois manner, to be a free source of energy, helping to bring about the revolution by imposing ideas upon it in attractive dress, according to his own view of Utopia and his own private values.

Such agitational poetry cannot be great poetry because it springs from a divided world-view. It has an obscure bourgeois basis, on which is imposed a mechanical pseudo-Marxist revolutionary formula.²¹

Furthermore, Caudwell notes that using poetry for propagandist purposes is "a perversion of poetry."²²

Both Solomon and Hynes give us a fairly good view of the intellectual life and times in which Caudwell found himself. But just who was Christopher Caudwell? He was born on 20 October 1907 in Putney, England

²⁰ Christopher Caudwell, Romance and Realism: A Study in English Bourgeois Literature (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1970), edited by Samuel Hynes.

²¹ Ibid., page 135.

²² Ibid., page 136. "Agitation is necessary certainly, so is propaganda, but let the poet be a genuine propagandist, not a blank verse propagandist. Is the proletariat made conscious of its goal by rhymed economics? No, verse is not, and never was, the instrument of propaganda in this sense." Ibid., pages 135-36.

as Christopher St. John Sprigg. In 1916, when he was nine years old, his mother (Jesse Caudwell) died. In November of 1922, at the age of fifteen, he withdrew from the Roman Catholic Ealing Priory School and became a reporter for the Yorkshire Observer (a paper his father was also working for). Three years later, in 1925, he moved to London where he made his living as a writer and editor. He helped to support himself by writing a number of detective novels. In the years 1926-28 he was editor of a trade magazine, British Malaya. In 1927 he and his brother (T. Stanhope Sprigg) bought Airways Publications, Ltd. and Caudwell wrote on aviation, eventually publishing several books in this technical field. His father died at the age of 66 in 1932, and two years later Airways Publications, Ltd. folded for want of capital. In 1935 he published his only serious novel (as opposed to his detective fiction), This My Hand, and used for the first time the name "Christopher Caudwell." In the summer of 1935 he moved to Cornwall to study Marxism and there he wrote the first draft of Illusion and Reality -- he also began work on the essays which have come down to us in Studies in a Dying Culture, Further Studies in a Dying Culture, The Crisis in Physics, and Romance and Realism. A major work in genetics remains to be published. A volume of poetry, Poems, was also published in 1939. In November of 1935 he moved back to London, to a working class neighborhood, and joined the Poplar branch of the Communist Party of Great Britain. In July of 1936 MacMillan agreed to publish Illusion and Reality. In December, Caudwell delivered an ambulance, donated by the Poplar branch, to the Spanish Loyalist Army, and he remained in Spain after joining the International Brigade. On 12 February 1937, his first day

in action, he was killed at the Battle of the Jarama River in the defense of Madrid.²³ A few months later Illusion and Reality was published.

Illusion and Reality, the major theoretical points of which are outlined in Chapter II of this thesis, has led to Caudwell's reputation as the most important Marxist-Leninist (or second most important after Lukacs²⁴) theoretician on the arts. The work itself has been, and still is, subject to widely divergent appraisals. David Daiches, for example, considered it only an "historical phenomenon" of the thirties.²⁵ However, it now seems that the consensus on Caudwell's works is better represented by an author such as George Moberg who wrote "Caudwell was the most original and farsighted of the English Marxists of the 1930's. There are obscurities and mistakes, of course ... But this is real creative Marxist

²³ For the battle of Jarama and Caudwell's death, cf. Hugh Thomas, The Spanish Civil War, (New York: 1961).

²⁴ "After George Lukacs, Caudwell is often cited as the foremost Marxist critic, although specific discussion of his work almost never goes beyond the mere mention of it." -- Andrew Hawley, "Art for Man's Sake: Christopher Caudwell as Communist Aesthetician," College English, Vol. 30, No. 1, October 1968, pages 1-19, page 7.

²⁵ David Daiches, The Present Age in British Literature (Bloomington & London: Indiana University Press, 1958). "In the Left-wing 1930's, the sociological and economic kind of causal explanation often came together in a rather vague Marxist way, but England produced no permanently valuable Marxist criticism. Even Christopher Caudwell's Illusion and Reality, which created such a stir when it first appeared in 1937, is immature and fragmentary, and it is now more often regarded as a historical phenomenon than as an illuminating work of genetic criticism." Page 134. The same author's Critical Approaches to Literature (Englewood Cliffs, New Jersey: Prentice-Hall, 1956) gives a slightly more positive evaluation, granting that "some valuable genetic insights have been provided" by Caudwell. Cf. pages 374-75.

thinking, full of ideas relevant to our problems today."²⁶

Before we come to those ideas, in Chapter II, we should briefly turn our attention to I.A. Richards' book Principles of Literary Criticism²⁷ since Caudwell's own view on the nature and function of poetry "although it is clearly his own, is greatly indebted"²⁸ to Richards.

"We pass as a rule from a chaotic to a better organised state by ways which we know nothing about. Typically through the influence of other minds. Literature and the arts are the chief means by which these influences are diffused."²⁹

The above quotation is from Richards' Chapter VIII, "A Psychological Theory of Value." The gist of his theory, as it pertains to Caudwell, is as follows.

We know from the above quotation that the arts will function to give us a better "organized state." How so? Richards maintains that we have two basic types of impulses affecting us -- which he calls "appetencies" and "aversions." Appetencies can be conscious or unconscious, but whichever they are, they are a "seeking after" and we value those things in life which lead to the satisfaction of our appetencies.

²⁶ George Moberg, "Christopher Caudwell: An Introduction to his Life and Work," unpublished Ph.D. dissertation, Columbia University, 1968. page 40.

²⁷ I.A. Richards, Principles of Literary Criticism (N.Y.: Harvest Books, n.d.), first published in England in 1925.

²⁸ David N. Margolies, The Function of Literature: A Study of Christopher Caudwell's Aesthetics (N.Y.: Harvest Books, n.d.), first published in England in 1925.

²⁹ Richards, op. cit., page 57.

The only objection to fulfilling an appetency is that another, more important, appetency would thereby be denied. "Thus morals become purely prudential and ethical codes merely the expression of the most general scheme of expediency to which an individual or a race has attained."³⁰

We are dealing here with a materialist and psychological analysis which impressed Caudwell a great deal.³¹ This type of Utilitarian approach, clearly influenced by Bentham, had its roots in what Marxists call "Mechanical Materialism," but it was certainly more appealing to Caudwell than many romantic or mystical notions often associated with art.³²

Richards also notes that:

Too great insistence upon the quality of the momentary consciousness which the arts occasion has in recent times been a prevalent critical blunder ... The after-effects, the permanent modifications in the structure of the mind, which works of art can produce, have been overlooked. No one is ever quite the same again after any experience; his possibilities have altered in some degree. And among all the agents by which 'the widening of the sphere of human sensibility' may be brought about, the arts are the most powerful, since it is through them that men may most cooperate and in these experiences that the mind most easily and with least interference organizes itself.³³

³⁰ Ibid., page 48.

³¹ Cf. Margolies, op. cit., page 27.

³² "Richards is a materialist and sees a material function for literature, but he is not dialectical and does not see a social function for literature -- and that social function, is precisely Caudwell's contribution to Marxist aesthetics." Ibid., page 28.

³³ Richards, op. cit., pages 132-33. Cf. also the following from I.A. Richards, Poetry and Sciences: A Reissue of Science and Poetry (1926, 1935) With Commentary (N.Y.: W.W.Norton, 1970), page 47. "Poetry is failing us, or we it, if after our reading we do not find ourselves changed;

In Chapter XXI of Principles, Richards outlines his theory of communication. Isolated minds can only have similar types of experiences. In order for communication to take place one mind has to act in some way to bring about an experience in another mind similar to the original mind's experience and in some way also dependent upon it.³⁴ This can only occur in so far as the minds already share a common environment and a whole range of similar experiences. "Without such similarities communication is impossible."³⁵

Richards also distinguishes (Chapter XXXIV, "The Two Uses of Language") between the scientific use of words (the use as references to true and false conditions) and the use we find in poetry and elsewhere -- the emotive use of words.

These ideas will find their echoes in Illusion and Reality -- in Caudwell's use of the term "feeling tone," in his division of the world and our reactions to it into the world of art and the world of science, and also in his contention that poetry, unlike science, is non-cognitive and

Footnote continued from previous page.

not with a temporary change, such as luncheon or slumber will produce, from which we inevitably work back to the status quo ante, but with a permanent alteration of our possibilities as responsive individuals in good or bad adjustment to an all but overwhelming concourse of stimulations."

³⁴ See also Richards' Poetry and Sciences, page 33: "The experience itself, the tide of impulses sweeping through the mind, is the source and the sanction of the words. They represent this experience itself, not any set of perceptions or reflections, though often to a reader who approaches the poem wrongly they will seem to be only a series of remarks about other things. But to a suitable reader the words ... will reproduce in his mind a similar play of interests putting him for the while into a similar situation and leading to the same response."

³⁵ Richards, Principles, page 178.

affects only an emotional, although permanent, reorganization in man's psyche.

While it is clear that Richards had an immense influence on him, Caudwell was far from uncritically accepting Richards' position. Richards' brand of materialism, Caudwell maintained, was too mechanical and led to formalism in the arts. Formalism, he says, upholds the view "that when the devices, technique and 'abstract' qualities of the art which can be examined independently of the artist have all been extracted and reduced to theory, art will have been described in its own terms."³⁶ This leads to subjective concepts, rules, etc., for art. Richards' views lead to what Caudwell calls "a phantom materialism" -- thus "ultimately the aesthetic emotion is reduced to coenaesthesia and this in turn is the excitation of certain nerves."³⁷ Thus, while Caudwell may have been stimulated by Richards,³⁸ and indeed indebted to him for being able to work out his own views in fuller detail, he was not simply a follower of the older man, but radically transformed these ideas into a dynamic vision of art as socially functional rather than, as in Richards, functioning merely to adjust the individual to his life situation.

In this chapter we have discussed the literary background in which Caudwell's work first appeared as well as some of the major influences which conditioned it, especially the influence exerted by I.A. Richards

³⁶ Christopher Caudwell, Illusion and Reality, page 9.

³⁷ Ibid., page 10. As Hawley notes with reference to Richards, "A poem became not a beautiful assertion, but a complex structure of nervous stimuli whose effect was to organize one's impulses in the way most efficient and hence most satisfying way." Hawley, op. cit., page 3.

³⁸ Caudwell "without Richards ... might not have arrived, or at least would not have arrived so quickly" at his own theory. Margolies, op. cit., page 27.

book The Principles of Literary Criticism. We can now turn our attention more specifically to Illusion and Reality and give a fuller treatment of Caudwell's views on art and poetry.

CHAPTER II

Caudwell's Theory in Illusion and Reality

Before outlining Caudwell's main ideas, as presented in Illusion and Reality, a few preliminary remarks are in order regarding what I take to be the minimum requirements for a Marxist philosophy of art. Since many of the issues raised in this work are based, in one way or another, on interpretations of Caudwell which revolve about the seemingly uninteresting question of whether or not his philosophy was "Marxist," it is appropriate to begin this chapter with the following observations.

First, it is well known that neither Marx nor Engels consciously worked out a philosophy of art as part of their general worldview. Nevertheless, they made particular judgments on art and their overall positions on historical materialism (in conjunction with these judgments) have been appealed to by their followers in order to support aesthetic theories which were developed later within the context of the Marxist worldview.

Second, based on the general notions of historical materialism, the social context of art takes on the most important aspect in any Marxist aesthetics. That is to say, approaching art in a materialist spirit, a Marxist philosophy of art bases itself on the social, cultural, and biological factors of man's life as the foundation upon which art arises. This, of course, does not distinguish a Marxist approach from

a materialist approach in general. This further determination can be made when we consider the following.

Third, the dialectical logic inspired by Hegel, as developed by Marx, and the notions of struggle, contradiction, and the overcoming of such at higher developmental levels which still incorporate the basic features of the lower levels are necessarily linked to the basic materialist approach fundamental to a Marxist aesthetic. In this we find the main difference between traditional philosophical materialism and Marxist historical materialism. Traditional materialism, while recognizing the primacy of matter in motion, tended to interpret the world in unchanging mechanistic categories. The materialist philosophers of the French Enlightenment, while disposing of religious, spiritual and mystical explanations for the events of the natural world, had no real theory of historical or natural change and development. The materialist philosophy developed by Marx and Engels on the other hand, by adapting the Hegelian dialectic to materialistically inspired categories of explanation, was able to provide a non-mechanistic explanation of natural and historical change, development and progress. In this combination of materialist philosophy and dialectical method can be found the difference between "materialism" and "historical materialism."

The correct application, as well as understanding, of this dialectical method is one of the most vexing problems in the history of modern philosophy. I do not intend to go into all of the different interpretations which have been given to Hegel's views on this subject. I will, rather,

briefly outline what I consider a useful way of looking at the dialectic as used by Hegel and Marx and Engels and relate this to my claim that Caudwell is a dialectical thinker.

What happens when one makes a mistake in philosophical reasoning? One of the most common occurrences is that we have been guilty of over-generalization or have dealt with our subject without sufficient knowledge which might have affected the outcome of our reasoning. It is the presence of a contradiction in our reasoning which signals that this faulty way of reasoning has occurred. The function of philosophy is to deepen the analysis, make it less general, and overcome the contradiction while at the same time preserving what is true and valuable in the previous view. This method is then repeated on the new views, and on the views that replace them and is continued as long as we can -- this is the Hegelian aufheben which means "to lift up," "to cancel" and "to preserve." Contradictions are not therefore mutually exclusive after all. "It is of the greatest importance," Hegel writes, "to perceive and to bear in mind this nature of the reflective determinations we have just considered [i.e., positive and negative, virtue and vice, truth and error, and one could add, illusion and reality], namely, that their truth consists only in their relation to one another; without this knowledge, not a single step can really be taken in philosophy." ¹ Ivan Soll in his book on Hegel's metaphysics describes Hegel's method in the following

¹ G.W.F. Hegel, Wissenschaft der Logik, translated by A.V. Miller as Hegel's Science of Logic (London: George Allen and Unwin, Ltd. and New York: Humanities Press, 1969), page 438.

terms: "The dialectic preserves parts of putatively opposed categories as the necessary elements (Momente) of more concrete categories. But as necessary elements of a more concrete category their mutually exclusive character is removed or negated. These categories are both preserved and negated -- they are aufgehoben."²

This method was taken over by Marx and Engels and applied to the analysis of history as well as to natural phenomena. The difference in their materialist, as opposed to Hegelian application, is that, as Engels points out, in the former the dialectical oppositions are derived from the actual study of history and nature while in the latter they "are foisted on nature and history as laws of thought."³

When it comes to Caudwell, we see his use of dialectics throughout all the major discussions of Illusion and Reality. Indeed, as Margolies points out, "Caudwell had to take a fully dialectical view of literature, seeing literature not as static works but as a process. Literature and society exist in a dialectical unity and thus not only does social existence determine literature, but literature also influences society."⁴

But Caudwell uses dialectical thinking in other realms besides literature. We shall see in the chapter on Freud and Marcuse how Caudwell

² Ivan Soll, An Introduction to Hegel's Metaphysics (Chicago and London: The University of Chicago Press, 1969), page 139.

³ Frederick Engels, Dialectics of Nature (Moscow: Progress Publishers, 1972), page 62.

⁴ David N. Margolies, The Function of Literature: A Study of Christopher Caudwell's Aesthetics (New York: International Publishers, 1969), page 11.

takes Freud's category of "the instincts" (the source of man's free natural existence) and contrasts it with the category of "the environment" (the source of the repression and crippling of the instincts) and derives the higher category of "civilization" which, Caudwell says, was evolved "precisely to moderate and lessen" the conflict between the other two antagonistic conceptions.⁵

We should further note that illusion and reality, which we create and study by means of art and science are not for Caudwell absolutely contradictory conceptions. It is true, he notes, that in many theories these concepts "play contradictory" even if intermingled roles but they are really unified and reflect different (but equally important) aspects of our common world. "The genotype and the external reality exist separately in theory, but it is an abstract separation." Caudwell continues, "The greater the separation, the greater the unconsciousness of each."⁶

The dialectical method, as used by Caudwell, consists in the refusal to isolate the world into a system of mutually exclusive categories. What appears on one level of analysis as contradictory or exclusive is seen, on a higher level of analysis, to be complementary. We shall see him use this method of argumentation and discussion when he deals with poetry, psychology, epistemology, language, communism, and in virtually

⁵ Christopher Caudwell, Illusion and Reality: A Study of the Sources of Poetry (New York: International Publishers, 1970), page 167.

⁶ Ibid., page 264. Caudwell's use of the term 'genotype' will be clarified in the sequel. For our purposes here we can think of it as the biological foundation of any organism which is both acted on and in turn acts on its environment.

every aspect of his philosophy. It is for this reason that I locate him in the dialectical tradition of classical and contemporary Marxism.

Fourth, one last feature seems to me to be necessary for a Marxist philosophy of art. The fundamental purpose, the raison d'etre of Marxism is to be the leading philosophy of the workers' movement in the class struggle to overthrow the economic system of capitalism. Therefore, a Marxist philosophy of art must, as I define it, link up with the class struggle, directly or indirectly, and, whatever else it may seek to do or explain, provide insights and guidance in that struggle.

These rather general observations should help us to keep our bearings when we deal with Caudwell's critics, especially in the third and seventh chapters.

Caudwell himself is located in a tradition of Marxist philosophers which stems from Plekhanov, Lenin and Bukharin.⁷ The most important of these three, as far as specific works devoted to the philosophy of art is concerned, is Georgi Plekhanov (1856-1918). I propose, in the following few pages, to outline some of Plekhanov's more important ideas in the philosophy of art, especially as regards its origins and functions, as this will make Caudwell more intelligible (by prior familiarity with certain Marxist aesthetic categories). By comparing Caudwell

⁷ Cf. Maynard Solomon, Marxism and Art: Essays Classic and Contemporary (N.Y.: Vintage Books, 1974), page 310.

with Plekhanov we will better appreciate Caudwell's originality and contributions to the development of Marxist art theory.⁸

According to Maynard Solomon,⁹ only Franz Mehring (1846-1919) preceded Plekhanov in the application of historical materialism to the problems of the origins and functions of art. Perhaps his most important pronouncements are to be found in such works as Fundamental Problems of Marxism and Art and Social Life, as well as the essay "The Role of the Individual in History." One of Plekhanov's major theses on art is contained in this essay. This is the view, as expressed by Solomon, "that art arises as a virtually automatic process from the movement of history."¹⁰ In this essay Plekhanov himself maintains that for any given school, movement or "trend" in art to develop and be successful it must first represent the interests of some class or stratum in society and furthermore, the role of that class or stratum will be the major determinate of the the importance or non-importance of the school, movement or "trend" in question. Plekhanov writes, "the depth of any given trend in literature or art is determined by its importance for the class or stratum whose tastes it expresses, and by the social role of this class or

⁸ This presentation of Plekhanov's philosophy is based on his "The Role of the Individual in History," Art and Social Life, Letters without Address, and Solomon's observations in Marxism and Art, op. cit.

⁹ Solomon, op. cit., page 120.

¹⁰ Ibid.

stratum, here again in the final analysis everything depends upon the course of social development and the relations of social forces."¹¹

In his commentary on Plekhanov's views, Solomon further points out that for Plekhanov the mode of production in its historical development creates, on the level of the superstructure, many problems and contradictions to which art addresses itself and attempts to resolve. This view Solomon contrasts to that of Marx for whom "art is a means by which mankind sets tasks for itself to aid it in its progress toward freedom."¹² The contrast, however, despite Solomon's stress upon it, is illusory. The underlined "for itself" is not really an independent category of human action as Solomon would suggest. Mankind's setting of tasks for itself is always, for Marx, conditioned by the historically specific environment -- therefore these tasks, which mankind sets for itself, are the result of both the historical process of the mode of production and mankind's conscious interactions with it. We have only to recall the words of Plekhanov quoted above -- i.e., "in the final analysis everything depends upon the course of social development and the relation of social forces" -- to see that there is no fundamental contradiction between Marx and Plekhanov. That is to say, the tasks that mankind sets itself as a result of the conscious interaction with the mode of production (Marx) and these tasks as revealed and reflected in art based on the relation between social forces and social development (Plekhanov)

¹¹ Ibid., page 127.

¹² Ibid., page 121.

are the same. Thus the assumed contradiction between Plekhanov's approach and that of Marx is "sublated" -- i.e., shown to be but two different aspects of a progressive dialectical unity. As for mankind's "progress toward freedom," this in its most fundamental sense, for Marx, boils down to mankind's greater and greater developmental extension of, as well as control over, the means of production. We shall see this notion further developed by Caudwell, especially when we come to treat of his criticisms of Freudianism and the view that the free instincts are repressed by the requirements of the development of civilization. We shall see that Caudwell's view anticipates some of those of Marcuse, especially his (Marcuse's) ideas concerning "surplus repression."

Another important aspect of Plekhanov's philosophy of art is his view that since history and society create the problems which art attempts to resolve, art is consequently itself a social phenomenon which can be scientifically studied -- hence, as Solomon remarks, "Plekhanov would prescribe nothing for art or the artist."¹³

Solomon's judgment, if unqualifiedly accepted, would actually force me to classify Plekhanov's as a non-Marxist art theory since my fourth qualification above, for a Marxist philosophy of art, insists that art explain and provide guidance to the class struggle. When Solomon writes that Plekhanov's "objective" approach to art "was repudiated from the late 1920s onward by Soviet Marxists who ... attempted to

¹³ Ibid., page 122.

negate Plekhanov's sociological laws by imposing the utilitarian view upon"¹⁴ art, he is in danger of accepting a one sided interpretation of the import of Plekhanov's views. In Art and Social Life, Plekhanov does not, it is true, take sides between two opposite views on the nature of art -- the "art for art's sake" view and the "utilitarian" view -- i.e., the view that art must serve some socially useful purpose or function. Instead, Plekhanov describes the type of social environment, historically produced, which gives rise to one or the other view. In this sense, Plekhanov has no interest in "prescribing" anything to artists -- he is only interested in delineating the types of societies in which these two outlooks on the nature of art occur and predominate. This is what Plekhanov concludes:

"The tendency of artists and of those who have a lively interest in art, toward art for art's sake, arises when they are in hopeless discord with the social environment in which they live."

"... the so-called utilitarian view of art, that is to say, the inclination to attribute works of art the significance of judgement on the phenomena of life, and its constant accompaniment of glad readiness to participate in social struggles, arises and becomes stronger wherever a mutual sympathy exists between the individuals more or less actively interested in artistic creation and some considerable part of society."¹⁵

Now, if on the one hand Plekhanov would only describe and not prescribe, neither would he be able to fault those who did prescribe

¹⁴ Ibid.

¹⁵ Ibid., pages 138-39.

since the prescriptive utilitarian approach to art is just as much the result of the specific historical and sociological factors of a given society as the approach which eschews such prescription -- as he himself pointed out. Recall above where Solomon says that for Plekhanov "art arises as a virtually automatic process from the movement of history." We have seen that this "automatic process" takes two forms depending upon the social forces at play at any given time -- i.e., the art for art's sake and the utilitarian form. Plekhanov's works are to this day still published in the Soviet Union and studied. I think Solomon may here have confused what may be his own anti-utilitarian preference with the idea that Plekhanov too was, after all, prescribing and not just describing. What would constitute a "repudiation" of Plekhanov's views would be a theory of art which denied that there were social causes (or that there were different social causes than those proposed by Plekhanov) for the art for art's sake view as opposed to the utilitarian view. But Solomon makes neither claim. He instead bases his views on the utilitarian theories of art that he finds developing in the Soviet Union in the 1920s and continuing to this day. But this is not a "repudiation" of Plekhanov, it is the result of the "automatic process" of historical development. Thus Solomon's notion that Plekhanov's views were "repudiated" must be rejected as unwarranted. A further consideration is the Plekhanov's "objective" observations delineate movements and attitudes and trends within the philosophy of art applied to his discussions of nineteenth century bourgeois culture. Both of the approaches to art which he de-

scribes were within the context of the analysis he made of tendencies within European nineteenth century civilization, and refer, in fact, to different stages of the development of that civilization and to the relations between artists and intellectuals on the one hand and the dominant bourgeois political and economic structures and their functioning on the other. It is problematical that any conclusions regarding the "negation" of Plekhanov's views, or the "objectivity" which he stressed, can be drawn when the categories of Plekhanov's philosophy of art are mechanically applied to a twentieth century working class state in which bourgeois social and economic relations have been either totally abolished or radically transformed. In any event, we shall see these themes taken up again in Illusion and Reality when Caudwell discusses the function of art in both its theoretical and applied senses.

I conclude, at any rate, that my four criteria for a Marxist art theory are broad enough to include Plekhanov as well as Caudwell. Nevertheless, I do not claim that my definition is the only possible one. I do think it is applicable to so called "orthodox Marxism." We shall see, in the next chapter, that the problem of Marxist "orthodoxy" seriously exercised the first critics of Illusion and Reality. To many contemporary philosophers with an interest in Marxism this question of "orthodoxy" -- so central to many of the discussions of thirty or forty years ago -- may seem today philosophically uninteresting. Escaping from the whole concept of "orthodoxy" or that of "unorthodoxy" is sometimes seen as a prerequisite for any new creative advance in Marxist

aesthetics. Raymond Williams, for one, in a recent work has detailed how he came to overcome the polarity of this distinction in his own evolution as a thinker influenced by Marxism. He tells us that in his reading and study in the history of Marxism and Marxist thought he came to the opinion that there is more than one possible formulation of Marxism.

According to Williams, the Marxism with which we are most familiar, Soviet Marxism, the so-called official form or orthodox version, is based on the work of Engels and Plekhanov as well as "hybridization with a strong native radical populism."¹⁶ Upon realizing that there are alternative forms of Marxism, Williams was led to reevaluate many of the writers, and the positions held by them, that he had formerly interpreted only in the light of so-called orthodox tradition. He singles out Christopher Caudwell for special mention, writing:

It is characteristic that the argument about Caudwell, which I had followed very carefully in the late forties and early fifties, had centered on the question characteristic of the style of that orthodox tradition: are his ideas Marxist or not? It is a style that has persisted, in some corners, with confident assertions that this or that is or is not a Marxist position. But now that I knew more of the history of Marxism, and of the variety of selective and alternative traditions within it, I could at last get free of the model which had been such an obstacle, whether in certainty or in doubt: the model of fixed and known Marxist positions, which in general had only to be applied, and the cor-

¹⁶ Raymond Williams, Marxism and Literature (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1977), page 3.

responding dismissal of all other kinds of thinking as non-Marxist, revisionist, neo-Hegelian, or bourgeois.¹⁷

Much of Williams' characterization of the discussion of Caudwell's work is perfectly true. In terms of Williams' outlook, Caudwell himself would have to be placed within the so-called "orthodox" tradition. The early debate, however, over whether Caudwell was or was not a Marxist, was not, I think, the dreary dogmatic exercise seemingly suggested by Williams. It was itself an example of the dynamics of Marxism, of that "central body of thinking seen as active, developing, unfinished, and persistently contentious."¹⁸ Although the above words are used by Williams to characterize other traditions than the so-called "orthodox" one, it will become apparent when we discuss the "Caudwell Debate" that they fully apply to the participants in this discussion -- the vast majority of whom would be accounted so-called "orthodox" Marxists in William's terms.

It is now time to turn to Caudwell himself and the major ideas of Illusion and Reality -- which "represents Caudwell's latest theoretical development."¹⁹ After reviewing Caudwell's ideas we will be in a better

¹⁷ Ibid. An example of this is J.D. Bernal's comments in the "Caudwell Debate" -- i.e., "... there is only too ample evidence of the truth of Cornforth's thesis, that their (i.e., Caudwell's) formulations are those of contemporary bourgeois scientific philosophy, Einsteinean -- Morganist -- Freudian, and not those of Marxism." "The Caudwell Debate," The Modern Quarterly, Volume 6, number 4, 1951, page 340. We will return to this theme later when discussing Cornforth's critique of Caudwell.

¹⁸ Ibid., page 4.

¹⁹ David N. Margolies, The Function of Literature: A Study of Christopher Caudwell's Aesthetics (New York: International Publishers, 1969), page 14.

position to discuss some of his central contentions, his relation to other thinkers, and finally, his contribution to Marxist aesthetics.

According to Caudwell, man's social consciousness is directly proportional to the interaction he has with his fellow men and with nature -- and this social consciousness is the main tool by which associated mankind attains freedom: freedom being seen as a relation of the degree of control over, rather than subjection to, the environment.

Caudwell sees the origin of poetry as directly related to the way in which associated men first struggled to set themselves upon the road to freedom. He points out that even the most primitive group of men cannot rely on a purely instinctual life -- such as we find in animals -- but must cooperate together in order to secure the survival of the group -- that is, the individual instincts of the members must be made to flow together and to harmonize and be directed to group survival -- i.e., to some form of economic cooperation such as hunting, fishing, or food gathering.

As one example of to what he is referring, Caudwell points to the role of art (poetry, music, dance) in relation to the harvest festivals of primitive societies. He says that the group festival with its music, verse, and dance functions to free and collectivize the emotions of the group -- to direct them towards the future harvest (or hunt). In this way the primitive is led to envision the not yet existing harvest (or game) -- he is thrust into a world of illusion which seems, for a time, as real, or even more real, than his everyday existence. In this way the social

goals of the group are reinforced emotionally in every member, and the festival directly functions to help bring about the socially necessary labor upon which the group is depending for its survival and reproduction. For this reason, Caudwell believes that art is basically economic in both its origin and function. Nor, he points out, does this economic function or role of art occur only during the group or individual ceremonies, rather the effects are long lasting. The individual is socialized by participation in the ceremonies of the group -- i.e., he is educated.

As society develops, increasing its organization and specialization, the old collectivity breaks down and class society begins to differentiate the artist from the rest of the group. Formerly we had tribal poetry -- now we have individual poets. Art is divorced from the nitty-gritty of everyday economic concerns. The epic is replaced by the lyric. (While Homer's poems functioned as veritable encyclopedias of the Greek tradition -- of the collective life of Greece, the lyric poets expressed a more individual and solitary view of their subject matter.)

Further, Caudwell refers to poetry (and by extension art in general) as "the nascent self-consciousness of man" -- a thoroughly Hegelian notion -- not individual self-consciousness, but group consciousness -- what Marx in the Economic and Philosophical Manuscripts would call an historically determinate species-being consciousness.

What, Caudwell asks, is the content of primitive or tribal poetry (art) -- i.e., what is it reflecting, reinforcing, and in a sense, helping to create as well? This content is neither objective material reality,

nor simply an ideal, a wish -- it is social reality, and poetry's function is to direct the individual emotions of each tribal member towards a common goal (harvest or hunt). Caudwell also expresses this by saying art's role is to domesticate the instincts -- i.e., to socialize them and adapt them to group values. Thus he concludes "the fantasy of poetry is a social image."²⁰

In this vein Caudwell also discusses the relationship of art to the development of early mythology and religion -- he has the Greeks in mind primarily, but I would maintain that, in general, his position covers all cases of similar social development (China, India, Egypt, etc.) Caudwell maintains that mythology is in a sense "true" -- i.e., it reflects the "collective emotional life" of the group²¹ and gives meaning to the world as it can best be understood from the level of interaction between man and his environment that has thus far developed. Mythology is the product of undifferentiated tribal consciousness -- as long as it lives and grows it reflects a unified group consciousness in relation to the world. It dies with the coming of dogma and "true" religion -- which, according to Caudwell, represents the beginning of class divisions. Whereas

²⁰ Christopher Caudwell, Illusion and Reality: A Study of the Sources of Poetry (New York: International Publishers, 1970), page 32.

²¹ Ibid., page 36. Compare Hegel's remark that "the peoples at the time when they composed their myths lived in purely poetical conditions and so brought their inmost and deepest convictions before their minds not in the form of thought but in shapes devised by imagination without separating the universal abstract ideas from the concrete." G.W.F. Hegel, Aesthetics: Lectures on Fine Arts, translated by T.M. Knox, Volume I, (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1975), page 311.

mythology reflects the social reality of the group, religion reflects only part of the group -- the social reality of the nascent ruling class. Thought, which was originally united with practice has now become separated from it.

Caudwell holds that originally thought separated itself from practice so as to be a "guide to action" but gradually the group whose function was to guide (supervisors of early irrigation projects in the Near East and elsewhere, coordinators of hunting practices and magical rites associated with them, etc.) became dominant in the society. Fellow workers with specialized functions ended up as exploiters and rulers. The new ruling class uses thought now to justify its domination -- it no longer reflects the united tribal consciousness of a socially undifferentiated group. The phenomenon of "two cultures," as it were, develops. The official or higher culture representing the ruling circles, and the functionaries directly dependent upon them, and folk culture, or common culture, which represents everyone else -- this is the origin of our distinction between highbrow and lowbrow culture.

Caudwell maintains that Religion is a direct method of class domination (i.e., official or orthodox "true" religion) which even the ruling class itself gradually comes to disbelieve because of its "openly exploitative character" -- thus a hardening of the religious line, conjoined to ruling class scepticism, leads to an outpouring of creative activity in the arts, for it is here that the free consciousness of the ruling class finds self-expression. Caudwell also maintains that as the ruling class

delegates more and more of its supervisory functions to overseers, as it becomes more remote itself from actual contacts with the means of social production, it no longer really understands society and mechanically reproduces the artistic formulae of a bygone era when it was itself growing and developing and directly involved with the creative economic life of its society --the ruling class "is no longer truly conscious of reality"²² thus its art perishes in formalism and conventions. Examples of what Caudwell has in mind, that is of mechanical reproduction of past artistic forms by a faltering ruling class, would be the copying of Greek art by the Roman ruling class during its decline or the court art of France before the revolution of 1789. If we view "formalism and conventions" as a kind of apologetics for the status quo, then we can call upon Lukacs to support Caudwell's contentions. Lukacs writes, "After the revolutions of 1848, the June rising and especially the Paris Commune, the ideology of the European bourgeoisie entered upon a period of apologetics ... All initiative, independence and heroism disappeared for a long time from the western European bourgeois world. The writers who attempted to depict the world in a spirit of opposition, could depict only the contemptible baseness of their own social surroundings and thus the reality which they mirrored drove them into the narrow triviality of naturalism ... If they attempted to depict greatness the result was

²² Caudwell, op. cit., page 43.

an increasingly empty, abstractly Utopian, in the worst sense romantic picture."²³

When this situation has developed -- merely formal art and rigidity in religious dogma -- a new class or social group may challenge it for authority -- culturally this is indicated by the growth of heresies, which can either represent reactionary forces wishing a return to the past, or genuine progressive forces representing the future ruling class. Nevertheless, in all these changes Caudwell maintains that the role and function of poetry (art) remains the same -- i.e., to adapt the instincts to the collective social needs of the group, primarily economic or survival needs.

Having dealt with the origins of art (poetry) and its function in primitive society, Caudwell turns his attention to the development of modern poetry. "Modern poetry is capitalist poetry."²⁴ Why, he asks, are Shakespeare, Galileo, Michelangelo, Pope, Goethe and Voltaire comparable to Valery, Cezanne, Joyce, Bergson and Einstein (in the sense of seeming "modern") while Homer, Thales, Chaucer and Beowulf seem remote and foreign to us? Caudwell believes it is due to the fact that the underlying economic base of developing capitalism which the first group represents -- the bourgeois foundation -- is reflected in their art. These artists are spokesmen of their times, times when the feudal world-view was under attack due to the rising power of a new economic

²³ Georg Lukacs, Studies in European Realism (New York: Grosset and Dunlap, 1964) pages 134-35.

²⁴ Caudwell, op. cit., page 55.

class whose values and world outlook are reflected by these artists, and to the extent that our contemporary culture still rests on this bourgeois foundation we can identify with these artistic products.²⁵

Recalling the social function of art already discussed, Caudwell points out, again, that in class society art has separated itself from religion "as the art of a ruling class" and tends to be conservative, "academic" and conventional. We see, for instance, long periods of time, comprising decades, sometimes centuries, in which basic artistic representational techniques remain unchanged (having minor technical improvements) such as the periods of Egyptian, Indian, and Chinese art, the classical canon of Greece and Rome, Medieval and Byzantine art -- yet the art of our own period is constantly changing, developing, and seemingly progressing -- new and radical schools of art flourish, peak, decline, and make way for new schools and experimental methods. How can this be reconciled with Caudwell's theses?

In order to answer this question, Caudwell informs us that we must grasp the "basic contradiction of bourgeois society" -- only then can we understand "the whole movement which secures the development of capitalist culture."²⁶ What is this basic contradiction? Caudwell believes it to be the bourgeois concept of freedom -- the basic bourgeois illusion. Since feudalism determined the relations of man to man by

²⁵ For a slightly different view on modernity see Matthew Arnold, Four Essays on Life and Letters (New York: Appleton Century Crofts, 1947).

²⁶ Christopher Caudwell, op. cit., page 59.

basically hereditary and restrictive means, the bourgeois concept of freedom developed as a counter-thrust -- the absence of "directly coercive relations" based on birth. The feudal notion was replaced by the idea of the nobility or aristocracy of merit (Jefferson) rather than birth --this concept forms one of the foundations of the bourgeois concept of freedom. Every man is free and the foundation of this freedom rests on the right of every man to own private property and to dispose of his own life as he wishes. If he lacks property he may freely dispose of his ability to work by hiring himself out to those who do have property, and if he be frugal and thrifty and honest he can accumulate his savings and eventually acquire property of his own. The bourgeois state appears as a mediating agency over and above society and functions as a referee between the various component parts of the population. The basic contradiction is, then, that "seen from the viewpoint of the bourgeois, bourgeois society is a free society whose freedom is due to its individualism, to its completely free market and its absence of direct social relations, of which absence the free market is the cause and expression. But to the rest of society bourgeois society is a coercive society whose individualism and free market is the method of coercion."²⁷ The worker must enter the capitalist's market or starve.

Caudwell also points out that the basic precondition for capitalism's advancement is its constantly revolutionizing its means of production and the concomitant competition between capitalists. As capitalism

²⁷ Ibid.

develops the alternating cycles of boom and bust affect more and more people and erode the economic foundations of modern society. Small and medium business, and sometimes even giant corporations, fail and are eliminated from the scene. The growth of monopolies also takes its toll on small and medium establishments. Modern art, as a product of this constantly changing society, is not an exception to the general rule expressed earlier. Modern art is not conservative and conventional precisely because the bourgeois mode of production is also non-conservative and non-conventional. The bourgeois falls victim to his own system -- the "free" market can eliminate him and his business -- his illusion of freedom will not save him from the exigencies of the real economic functionings of his market. In addition, the feeling of petty bourgeois powerlessness is likewise expressed in modern literature -- an example is Kafka. "The bourgeois is always talking about liberty because it is always slipping from his grasp."²⁸

The bourgeois looks upon freedom as the absence of feudal restrictions -- democratic freedom evolved historically out of the anti-feudal struggle. But the fact that economic life runs wild and gets out of control, destroying the bourgeois as well as the worker, is one of the great contradictions of the bourgeois idea of freedom -- in reality he is unfree, in theory free. Caudwell writes, "The freedom of society as a whole

²⁸ Ibid. page 61.

consists in its economic products. These represent the freedom man has won in his struggle with Nature."²⁹ But this is only the formal condition for the development of freedom. Freedom from natural necessity (want) is the sine qua non for the development of spiritual freedom. In so far as the bourgeois economy is expanding and developing man's freedom from nature is growing -- unfortunately this freedom gravitates to the pole of the bourgeois leaving more and more unfreedom in society as a whole. "Thus," Caudwell concludes, "the bourgeois illusion regarding freedom, which counterposes freedom and individualism to determinism and society, overlooks the fact that society is the instrument whereby man, the unfree individual, in association realizes his freedom and that the conditions of such association are the conditions of freedom."³⁰

Caudwell contends that poetry (as art in general) in the bourgeois period functions to strengthen those emotional attitudes which reinforce and have survival value in bourgeois society. It is only because of the infinitely greater degree of organizational complexity associated with modern society that different and contradictory artistic movements clash and contend, appealing as they do to different classes and strata within modern society. The function of poetry (art) in any age is, according to Caudwell, to adapt the instincts to the type of social situation men find themselves in or are in the act of creating. Caudwell writes, near the conclusion of his chapter on the development of modern poetry:

²⁹ Ibid., page 66.

³⁰ Ibid., page 67.

"The bourgeois sees man's instincts -- his 'heart,' source of his desires and aims -- as the source of his freedom. This is false in as much as the instincts unadapted are blind and unfree. But when adapted by the relations of society they give rise to emotions, and the adaptations of which the emotions are the expression and mirror, are the means whereby the instinctive energy of man is diverted to drive the machine of society: the machine of society, revolving, enables man to face nature and struggle with her, not as individual instinctive man but as associated, adapted men. Thus the instincts drive on the movement which secures man's freedom."³¹

In his chapter "The World and the 'I'", Caudwell gives his views on the relations between art and science in man's struggle with the external world. Caudwell sees the origin of one of philosophy's most ancient problems -- the subject-object relation -- in man's material struggle to overcome nature -- i.e., to harness nature and make nature work for man. Caudwell believed that the classical philosophical split between the subject and the object was due to the development of class society whereby the ideological and philosophical thinkers became, as members of the ruling class, isolated and removed from the laborers and toilers. The modern history of philosophy from Descartes through Kant and Hegel to Marx is an attempt to overcome the subject-object opposition. Two ways in which this reconciliation can be effected are by science and art. Art is an attempt to achieve freedom in the world of feelings

³¹ Ibid., page 71.

and emotions, science is that same attempt in the world of sense perceptions -- i.e., two methods, one adapted to our inner, the other to our outer reality. But in order to understand how these adaptations occur we must turn our attention briefly to language and the function of the "word." Words, according to Caudwell, "are tied to percepts which are photographic memory-images of bits of reality."³² The percepts are further conjoined to create concepts, language, and the possibility of communication between men. All this allows men to share a common world which is a sine qua non for non-instinctual cooperation. For men to be able to work together, Caudwell tells us, they must have a common changeable perceptual reality ("and by changeable I mean changeable by their actions"³³). The world created by language and the word gives us what Caudwell calls the Common Perceptual World. Besides the common perceptual world there is another, hidden world -- this is the world of the ego, of emotions -- of what Caudwell calls "feeling tones." Feeling tones are the basis of "the Common Affective World" just as the "word" is the basis of the common perceptual one. Caudwell maintains that cooperation and the associated life of men in groups, interacting with and working upon nature, brings about the existence of a special ego or mind so that individuals share feeling tones just as they share the meanings of words.

We have, therefore, two worlds -- the world of science and the world of art. Science has created what Caudwell calls a "Mock Ego"

³² Ibid., page 145.

³³ Ibid.

-- i.e., a sort of universal observer who could create and verify all the laws of chemistry, physics, etc., -- the "any right thinking person" to whom the scientist could appeal for verification of his procedures. Parallel to the "Mock Ego" of science we find an equivalent for the world of art to which feeling tones and emotions can be attributed. Just as the Mock Ego of science tries to understand and integrate the laws governing objective external reality, so the mock world of art tires to integrate the feeling tones and emotions of associated men. They both have a similar function in doing this. They both arise from the social interaction of men and they both strive to achieve freedom for men -- for it is "freedom that man seeks in his struggle with Nature"³⁴ -- freedom from want (food, shelter, etc.) as well as the positive freedoms leading to individual development and expression. And this freedom is the result of hard labor -- "science and art are guides to action."³⁵ It is important to note that while science gives man more control over nature (external reality) "the other world of art, of organized emotion attached to experience, the world of the social ego that endures all and enjoys all and by its experience organizes all, makes available for the individual a whole universe of inner freedom and desire."³⁶ One of the ways art accomplishes this in man is by changing "the emotional content of his consciousness so that he can react more subtly and deeply

³⁴ Ibid., page 154.

³⁵ Ibid.

³⁶ Ibid., pge 155.

to the world."³⁷ Finally, Caudwell declares: "Art is the consciousness of the necessity of the instincts."³⁸

With reference to the social role of art, we can see a solution to the problem raised in our earlier discussion of Plekhanov and his "objective" approach to the understanding of art. The problem we dealt with concerned the "utilitarian" view of art and whether or not it was a violation of Plekhanov's objective sociological approach to give art a utilitarian function. Caudwell's approach provides a solution. Art and science are two aspects of the same process by which associated men try to come to grips with their world. Recall, above, that they are both "guides to action." Thus science and art have the same "utilitarian" function which we arrive at by means of an objective sociological study of the nature of these two modes of human activity. If, however, "utilitarian" is confused with "propagandistic" functioning then it is important to note that art is not propaganda --or at least, Caudwell remarks, no more so than science. Both science and art have a far more important function than mere propaganda --they must actually strive to change the minds of men, to assist in the battle with the blind forces of necessity which we associate with the concept "Nature."

Caudwell further develops the contrasts between art and science in his chapter "The Psyche and Phantasy." He credits Freud with initiating a scientific approach to the study of phantasy, but comments that

³⁷ Ibid.

³⁸ Ibid.

the failure to have a comprehensive world view in which to integrate the empirical findings of the early Freud has led both Freud and his followers to generate more confusion than clarity in the subsequent discussions of man's psychic make-up. Actually, as Caudwell points out, Freud has only rediscovered in the field of psychology concepts as old as philosophy itself -- e.g., the subject-object split, contradictions between mind and matter, freedom and determinism, etc. These ancient problems reappear in Freud as the contradictions generated between the pleasure and reality principles, the instincts of life and death, and the ego and libido. Caudwell goes on to mount an intense criticism of what he regards as "... Freud's bourgeois approach to psychology."³⁹ He traces back Freud's idea that the libido is the origin and source of our "true psychic" reality and that its freedom is impaired by the restrictions placed upon it by our physical and social environment. Clearly referring to Freud's basic premises, Caudwell writes: "the bourgeois philosopher is unable to rise above the standpoint of the individual in civil society. All activity is the product of the freewill and dynamic urge of the individual as it emerges immediately in its own consciousness grappling direct with nature. Since its instinctive center is the source of its freedom any restrictions placed on it by social relations cripple and distort its range of action."⁴⁰ Herbert Marcuse has also remarked that for Freud

³⁹ Ibid., page 162.

⁴⁰ Ibid.

"if absence from repression is the archetype of freedom, then civilization is the struggle against this freedom."⁴¹

Caudwell, of course, considers this view to be diametrically opposed to the truth. In so far as Freud's psychology is adequately characterized by this conception, it perverts the truth about man's psyche and fails to explain how man's instinctual life can actually attain to freedom. Freedom, as Caudwell never tires of reminding us, is achieved through man's association "which makes it possible for him to acquire mastery over Nature through becoming actively conscious of its necessity and his own. This association of itself necessarily imposes certain restrictions, conventions, and obligations, such as those of behavior, language, and mutual aid. But all these things are not fetters on the free instincts (libido); they are the instruments by which instinctive man realizes his freedom."⁴² This further leads Caudwell to remark: "The construction of consciousness is the socialising of the psyche."⁴³ Now, Caudwell grants that man has an "invariant psychic genotype" but he insists that man's consciousness, a product of the genotype's struggle with nature in association with others, being historically conditioned can only be understood if the laws of historical development are taken into consideration. Since, according to Caudwell, Freud leaves these laws out of con-

⁴¹ Herbert Macuse, Eros and Civilization: A Philosophical Inquiry into Freud (New York: Vintage Books, 1955), page 14.

⁴² Caudwell, op. cit., page 163.

⁴³ Ibid.

sideration, he is precluded from achieving a scientific understanding of the origins of neurotic conflicts. If Freud's insights were adapted to a consideration of the entire social environment -- not just family conflicts, a conservative education, etc., -- then they would have a revolutionary potential. (See Chapter VI on Freud and Marcuse for a further development of this theme.) The neurotic conflicts of modern man, the cries of alienation and meaninglessness which are symptomatic of our contemporary Western industrial civilization are the products of an incomplete integration between the social forces controlling our society and the psychic reflection of that society. Caudwell credits this development to the fact that we live in a class society where the now useless and unproductive ruling bourgeoisie limit the further free development of the masses of people -- where, as Caudwell emphasizes, the production relations are hindering man's possibilities of attaining freedom. But all this does not suggest, as Freud would have it, that civilization is the cause of all this distress -- rather, it only points out that new social arrangements must be generated which will correspond to the new social realities. The human problems associated with the decay of feudalism were alleviated by the overthrow of that moribund system and the establishment of bourgeois society -- not by overthrowing "civilization" itself. Likewise, the problems of today are not problems of "civilization" but of a moribund dysfunctional bourgeois society. Its overthrow and replacement by socialism will bring about the solution to these problems.

Caudwell further accuses Freud and other psychoanalysts (Jung, Adler) of being philosophical idealists and resembling, in their outlooks, the world's major religions rather than science. He bases this judgment on his analogy between sin (as seen by the religious) and complexes (as seen by psychoanalysts) -- both concepts, according to Caudwell, emphasize the subjective cause of misery and unhappiness and look to an inner struggle of the will rather than the transformation of external reality as the prime method for achieving a resolution of the conflicts the attempted understanding of which has resulted in the development of these concepts. Caudwell is particularly upset with Freud's dismissal of art as childish and escapist, but sees this view as a necessary consequence of the psychoanalytic focus on the isolated individual and his struggle with reality. The isolated individual tends to use art as an escape mechanism -- "it is this which makes Freudians treat art, one of the instruments of man's freedom, as something childish and escapist in tendency. They do not see that the human conflict between man and Nature (of which the neurotic conflict is only a special form) drives men to free association, and that art is a necessity of this association, the means whereby it remains free, and because it is free reaches heights and depths inaccessible to a coerced association."⁴⁴ This premise prevents Freud and his followers from seeing one of the true functions of art -- i.e., to reinforce man in his free associations with others so that a collective resolution of the problems arising from the struggle

⁴⁴ Ibid., page 169.

to dominate nature can eventuate. The greatest tool yet devised by man in this collective struggle is language. It is language "which makes us capable of appreciating truth and beauty: for truth is a relation between a perception of reality and the common perceptual world, and beauty is a relation between a feeling tone of reality and the common ego."⁴⁵

Art and science are the products of man's active struggle against nature. Art represents man's struggle to socialize his instincts and to be free from their blind operation. Caudwell sees both science and art originating in, and then freeing themselves from, religion -- once they have independently established themselves, "religion no longer plays a useful role."⁴⁶ At the end of the chapter Caudwell returns to the function of language. The function of language is to allow man to communicate a coherent world view based on common experiences which allow for continual change, and associated response to this change, in the world. Caudwell criticizes Wittgenstein's idea of a "perfect" language. Such a language would only mirror the world as it is, it would not, according to Caudwell, have any use at all. It would not be able to express the feelings and emotional undercurrents of associated men in their inter-communication. Wittgenstein's language would be a dead lifeless parody of the original and continuing function of language. Caudwell ends his chapter on psyche and phantasy with these words: "It is not plain that the error of the philosophers regarding language

⁴⁵ Ibid, page 171.

⁴⁶ Ibid., page 192.

springs from the same source as religion -- the cleavage of the subject from object in a class society? Then thought comes to seem merely contemplation and is cut off from the very activity which creates, develops and expresses it. Language and the phantasy which has generated it, and the conscious psyche which is their off-spring, and the men whose struggle with Nature in association, has created all three, are bound together with a relation which MARX was the first to express in those hastily scribbled eleven Theses on Feuerbach that marked the beginning of a new era in human thought: 'the philosophers have only interpreted the world in various ways; the point, however, is to change it.'⁴⁷

The function of poetry is even more explicitly discussed in Caudwell's chapter "Poetry's Dream Work." The two conditions that a work of art must fulfill if it is to live up to its function of integrating the individual ego into the social ego are 1) that the work must be important in dealing with the crucial problems of its age as significant emotional attitudes, and 2) the work must be general -- i.e., the average individual must be able to relate his inchoate emotional attitudes to it in such a way that it helps him to organize them in a way beneficial to his participation in, or understanding of, the social ego. Because of these two conditions, Caudwell thinks that only a materialist outlook will enable us to come to an understanding of art -- i.e., the understanding of the connection between the social relations and their influences upon works of art. He writes that "art lives in the social world and can only be

⁴⁷ Ibid., pages 196-97.

of value in integrating experiences general to men, it is plain that the art of any age can only express the general experiences of men in that age."⁴⁸

Nevertheless, Caudwell points out, art is subjective and linked to the sources of our emotional self-awareness. This source he designates as the "genotype." Thus, he writes, "art cannot escape its close relation with the genotype whose secret desire link in one endless series of all human culture."⁴⁹ He views this genotype under two headings -- the "timeless" and the "timeful" one or, if you prefer, universal and particular. The universal aspect of the genotype leads to the following comment: "...on the whole the genotype is substantially constant in all societies and all men. There is a substratum of likeness. Man does not change from Athenian to Ancient Briton and then to Londoner by innate differences stamped in by natural selection, but by acquired changes derived from social evolution."⁵⁰ Under the other aspect, however, we see the timeful or individual -- i.e., Caudwell holds that individual differences appear within the basic universal genotype due to a genetic "shuffle." Thus individual differences arise, personalities, characters, etc. On the basis

⁴⁸ Ibid., page 203. "For an account of its nature, at once material and individual, the work of art issues essentially from particular conditions of the most varied sort, amongst them especially the time and place of its origin, then the specific individuality of the artist, and above all the technical development of his art." Hegel, op. cit., page 34.

⁴⁹ Caudwell, op. cit., page 206.

⁵⁰ Ibid.

of these observations, Caudwell maintains that poetry represents the universal while the novel represents the individual aspect of the genotype.

But it is poetry, rather than the novel, which is Caudwell's main concern. Poetry helps us to adapt to the objective world which surrounds us. He calls it "an emotional attitude towards the world."⁵¹ Because it adapts our emotions to external reality it "enriches" that reality. For example, the poet gives emotional significance to the contents of the world -- to a part of external reality. "In life this piece of external reality is devoid of emotional tone, but described in those particular words, and no others, it suddenly and magically shimmers with affective colouring. This affective colouring represents an emotional organization similar to that which the poet himself faced (in phantasy or actuality) with that piece of external reality."⁵²

Poetry develops with the development of society and new poets arise from whom we demand a new emotional attitude towards out changing and developing social reality. Great poems, Caudwell maintains, are those which gather up the greatest amounts of the new social realities and place the proper emotional responses upon them. Thus he thinks great poems must necessarily be long ones (to cover the greatest amount of new content and emotional response). But, it is important to note, the purpose of the poem is not to display its content but the emotional

⁵¹ Ibid., page 214.

⁵² Ibid. "A poem's content is not just emotion, it is organized emotion, an organized emotional attitude to a piece of external reality." Ibid., page 216.

or attitudinal structure which the poem organizes and directs towards that self same content. Poetry is just as essential as science in man's attempt to dominate nature and make for himself a human world in which to live. Poetry is the weapon of the genotype in its ongoing struggle to subdue nature -- "to mold necessity to its own likeness."⁵³ Finally, Caudwell suggests that poetry is especially important for materialists in so far as man and his longings can be easily overlooked in the scientific descriptions of the world in which everything is ultimately reduced to atoms, waves, energy particles, etc. "Poetry," Caudwell affirms, "restores life and value to matter, and puts back the genotype into the world from which it was banished."⁵⁴

Caudwell further contrasts the artist and the scientist with the schizophrenic. The growth of class society, according to Caudwell, is responsible for the split in man's psyche between "thinking and being" or "theory and practice," for the diremption between "social consciousness and real life experience." Caught between these two extremes and their disparity the schizophrenic simply retreats into a private world of illusion whereas the scientist and the artist attack the contradiction at hand and attempt to integrate it into a public, social response that can be used by the community.

My life experiences often conflict with my desires and my wants -- it is the job of both art and science to overcome these contradictions

⁵³ Ibid., page 218.

⁵⁴ Ibid.

-- either by changing the world (science) or by changing myself (art). These two aspects are of course interrelated and reciprocally interacting -- or dialectically interpenetrating. Caudwell expresses this relationship in the following manner: "... the method of art is the method of science turned inside out ... One changes himself in order to change outer reality; the other changes outer reality in order to change himself ... Operating with existing consciousness, men change reality to new forms. Operating with existing forms, men change consciousness."⁵⁵

Caudwell now once again turns his attention to the function of art. Art creates in us certain emotions. This leads Caudwell to ask "... if poetry's emotional attitudes pass, what is their value? It is this: experience leaves behind it a trace in the memory. It is stored by the organism and modifies its action."⁵⁶ Science and art are again compared. In the same way that a scientist in the laboratory sets up certain ideal conditions (or projects certain empirical data under ideal conditions to arrive at abstract general laws) so the artist concerns himself with "affective experimenting with selected pieces of external reality" -this ideal or artificial world Caudwell, as we know, calls the "Mock World."⁵⁷

"Here," Caudwell concludes, "science and art together are able to symbolise a complete universe which includes the genotype itself. Each alone is partial, but the two halves together make a whole, not

⁵⁵ Ibid., page 236.

⁵⁶ Ibid., page 267.

⁵⁷ Ibid.

fitted together, but as they interpenetrate man's struggle with Nature in the process of concrete living."⁵⁸

Caudwell's major propositions are, therefore, the following:

1. Art's origin and function is basically economic in so far as it serves to socialize the human instincts in the direction of collective behavior oriented towards the production of food and the social reproduction of the group.

2. As class society develops, so-called official or "high" art begins to reflect the interests of the ruling class while folk art and folk culture reflect the consciousness of the masses of people.

3. In present day capitalist society the interests of the ruling class are fostered by the illusion of freedom -- i.e., that an individual is more or less free depending on whether or not he is subjected to more or less social constraints. Freedom, however, is really attained through association with others. Economic development (and the constraints needed to attain it) is the true measure of freedom.

4. Art and science are complimentary ways by which we attempt to realize freedom -- the former is directed to the world of emotions and feelings, the latter to the world of sense perceptions. We thus arrive at his conceptions of the Common Affective World and the Common Perceptual World.

⁵⁸ Ibid., page 269. I do not intend to discuss Caudwell's last chapter -- "The Future of Poetry" -- which deals with discussions on the relations between petty bourgeois intellectuals, writers, etc., and the proletariat. All the major theoretical points of his system have already been covered.

5. Freud's attempt to elevate the instincts to the position of the sources of human freedom is fundamentally misguided (see Chapter VI).

6. Poetry develops with society and we demand from new poets a new emotional attitude to our changing society (see Chapter IV).

7. Finally, the memory traces left behind in the mind of the emotional experience created by poetry (or any art) modifies the future behavior of a person. This explains, in part, how art can accomplish the task set for it in proposition six above.

In Caudwell we have the first attempt to create a complete theory of poetry based on Marxism.⁵⁹ He was the first Marxist to point out that fantasy plays a major role in bringing about causal changes in both human consciousness and history, and that through fantasy art changes the world by means of individual works of art whose production, by forcing into consciousness previously unarticulated and mute feelings, changes both the artist and the audience. These insights of Caudwell helped him to explain the enduring appeal of the great art of the past which persists because it expresses, in addition to its historically specific emotional articulations, certain basic and common genotypic features which are universal in the human species. This answer to the problem of how the art of one era could appeal to people in another era based on a different

⁵⁹ The following remarks are based on Solomon, *op. cit.*, pages 305-308.

economic and class system (a problem raised by Marx in the introduction to his Critique of Political Economy) was another of Caudwell's contributions to the philosophy of Marxism.

CHAPTER III

The Critical Response to Illusion and Reality

After the appearance of Illusion and Reality in 1937, it was given brief and very favorable reviews in the left press. It was read then seemingly forgotten, as was so much of English left literature of the 1930's, in the maelstrom of World War II. Caudwell, however, had made an impression. Well after the war was over, for example, C. Day Lewis -- no longer a communist and well on his way to the poet laureateship, singled out Caudwell for an appreciation in his Clark Lectures given in 1946 at Cambridge and published the following year as The Poetic Image.

Day Lewis, in fact, grants one of Caudwell's principal contentions -- that the function of poetry, especially primitive poetry, is to educate the instincts. Nevertheless, he points out that modern man and primitive man live in qualitatively different social environments -- the close relationship between instinct, poetic image, and human act is no longer as obvious today as in the past.¹

¹ C. Day Lewis, The Poetic Image (London: Jonathan Cape, 1947). "It was Caudwell's thesis that primitive poetry created imaginative conditions favorable towards action: by forcibly presenting the harvest in phantasy, for example, it gave the unsown harvest a greater reality and thus stimulated the tribe to greater efforts in working for a harvest. Primitive poetry was, in fact, education of the instincts through the imagination, and we may agree that this is still an important function of poetry. But there is clearly a much wider distance today between the poetic image and the human act; the links between the two are attenuated and more subtle ..." Pages 30-31.

Day Lewis was also greatly impressed by Caudwell's dictum "emotions, generated collectively, persist in solitude." That is, the collective social images created by poetry have a permanent effect upon us. The individual alone in his study reading poetry, or appreciating art, is actually participating in the great collective world of our common humanity. Although appreciating Caudwell's views, Day Lewis manages to give a very un-Marxian twist to them by maintaining this collective social world reveals to us "general truths which have eternally bound mankind together."²

In January of 1948 Alick West published the first major review of Caudwell's work.³ West credited Caudwell with a "profound understanding of Marxism" (a view soon to be vigorously challenged by Maurice Cornforth and others). West picks up on Caudwell's ideas concerning the slow and steady advance of human freedom based on man's ever growing mastery of his environment. Only by keeping this progressive movement in mind, West maintains, can we make sense of Caudwell's argument that "Poetry is something economic." Keeping in mind Day Lewis' contentions concerning the function of poetry, we can better appreciate West's analysis of Illusion and Reality when he states that Caudwell actually expressed two different interpretations of the function of poetry in class society. The first interpretation states that poetry

² Ibid., page 144. "The individual is brought, however remotely, into touch with communal experience, general truths which have eternally bound mankind together. He is 'withdrawing from his fellows into the world of art, only to enter more closely into communion with humanity' -- words of Caudwell which echo Goethe's 'we escape the world through art, and art is also our link with it.'"

³ Alick West, "On 'Illusion and Reality,'" Communist Review, Vol. 3, No. 1, January, 1948, pages 7-13.

is merely an expression of the false concepts of freedom developed under bourgeois society. The bourgeois poet still strives after freedom, but it is the false freedom of the "bourgeois illusion."⁴

West thinks another interpretation is possible, one which is more in harmony with other major ideas in Illusion and Reality. West writes:

In another passage Caudwell says that the illusion in bourgeois poetry is 'begotten of the tension between productive forces and productive relations' (p. 104), the tension which drives on not merely the bourgeoisie, but the whole of bourgeois society to future reality ... Bourgeois poetry is bourgeois in the sense that it is the expression of bourgeois society; not of one class only, but of the community made up of warring classes, the capitalists and the workers.

This interpretation allows us to view modern poetry in the same light as we view primitive, as a means of projecting a future state of society. Under the first interpretation the only role of poetry is to express all the incorrect, phantastic notions of the bourgeoisie. I agree with West that the second interpretation gives a much broader scope to Caudwell's aesthetics. Had he lived to revise Illusion and Reality one can only hope he would have concentrated more on this second interpretation of the relation between bourgeois poetry and bourgeois society. Now, rather than simply reflecting false notions, poetry is seen as expressing all the tensions and conflicts of its society and of holding out the promise of eventual satisfactory resolutions of these conflicts -indeed,

⁴ Ibid., pages 11-12: "According to the first and the more prominent, poetry is still a means to freedom, but the freedom is illusory ... According to this interpretation, then, bourgeois poetry is the expression of the false illusion of the bourgeoisie and of the reaction of the bourgeoisie to its falsity."

⁵ Ibid., page 12.

in actually contributing to these resolutions in much the same way as the primitive poetry of tribal society not only held out the promise of the harvest but, by creating and reinforcing a collective emotional attitude towards the harvest, also helped to bring about its realization.

The year 1948 also saw a major evaluation of Caudwell published in the United States. This is the chapter "Christopher Caudwell and Marxist Criticism" in Stanley Edgar Hyman's The Armed Vision. For some reason, perhaps as a result of the Cold War, the chapter on Caudwell was left out of the more easily attainable paperback edition of this book which came out in the 1950s.

Hyman makes two important observations -- which we should keep in mind when we come to the attacks against Caudwell mounted by Cornforth and others in The Modern Quarterly. The first is that Caudwell did not restrict himself to purely Marxist sources, but turned to, and learned from, any different fields of knowledge.⁶ Second, that he was one of the strongest critics of psychoanalysis --even while giving Freud credit as "the founder of scientific psychology."⁷ Hyman's final appraisal was that Caudwell "was probably the best Marxist critic we have ever had."⁸

⁶ Stanley Edgar Hyman, The Armed Vision: A Study in the Methods of Modern Literary Criticism (N.Y.: Alfred A. Knopf, 1948). Hyman writes: "...in the course of his discussion of poetry Caudwell draws upon almost every science, discipline, or body of theory. The theoretical justification for this is his belief, shared by Marx and Engels and taken seriously by only a few contemporary Marxists, that Marxism is a framework able to accommodate and utilize in dialectic interplay the most advanced thought in any field." Page 174.

⁷ Ibid., page 206. "Caudwell has distinguished himself as perhaps the most violent of all Marxist opponents of psychoanalysis..." Page 205.

⁸ Ibid., page 207.

One might well have thought then that by 1950 Caudwell was slowly on the way to securing for himself a solid, unfortunately posthumous, reputation as a major Marxist critic. Besides Illusion and Reality, Studies in a Dying Culture, The Crisis in Physics, and Further Studies in a Dying Culture had all appeared and had been generally reviewed and received enthusiastically.⁹

Nevertheless, 1950 saw a major critique of Caudwell claiming to demonstrate that he was anything but a Marxist critic, but instead had created a hodge-podge of eclectic ideas which placed him solidly in the ranks of bourgeois anti-Marxist philosophers and critics. While this attack, as we shall presently show, was completely unjustified and nowadays has little intrinsic philosophical interest, it is important to review the issues it raised, both as an exercise in the historical background of present day Caudwell evaluations, and to give a full picture of the negative, as well as the positive, responses which Caudwell's works evoked.

One of the ironic aspects of this whole episode is that Caudwell was not taken to task by unsympathetic diehard bourgeois critics, but was assailed by one of the leading intellectual forces within his own party, who, rather than attempting to salvage Caudwell from supposed errors (and thus retain within Marxist criticism the most gifted Marxist

⁹ H. Levy's appreciation in his "Introduction" to The Crisis in Physics is typical: Caudwell "... left behind him a mass of written material of such deep understanding as to make him out, had he but lived to enjoy the society for which he died, as one of our most gifted men (p.v)." He had "a combined social and scientific understanding that would be rare in a scientist of mature experience; to find them in this young man is almost phenomenal." Cf. Christopher Caudwell, The Crisis in Physics, edited with an introduction by Professor H. Levy (N.Y.: Dodd Mead & Company, 1939).

aesthetician to have written in English) rather consigned him to the outer darkness.

"It is very clear indeed," Cornforth wrote, "that Caudwell was unable to reproduce for himself the ideas of historical materialism, because in trying to work them out for himself in his own way he introduced into them a whole set of confusions ... we have to learn mainly from his mistakes."¹⁰

Cornforth claims that Caudwell followed Weismann's bifurcation of the body into the changeable and mortal soma on the one hand, and the everlasting germ plasm on the other, and, based on this rule, Freud's theories of the ego and the id -- the id being the unconscious, everlasting, instinctual basis upon which each individual ego was established. According to Cornforth, all this is un-Marxist and is the foundation upon which Caudwell erects his whole theory of poetry and his notions of the genotype. Cornforth puts it thusly:

The whole idea of the genotype and the instincts is a piece of made up idealist metaphysics. For it supposes that something exists within the organism -- the genotype and the instincts -- which is not susceptible to change; which is not born and modified and developed in the course of the life of the organism, but which precedes it and stamps its own pattern upon it. Thus, however much the outward characteristics of an organism may be modified by external influences, its innermost 'nature' remains unchanged and unchangeable.¹¹

Now, Cornforth's line of reasoning continues, Caudwell's aesthetics claims that poetry functions only in the realm of the instincts and is

¹⁰ Maurice Cornforth, "Caudwell and Marxism," The Modern Quarterly, vol. 6, no. 1, 1950-51, pages 16-34, page 20.

¹¹ Ibid., page 22.

basically a tool by which they are adjusted to match social reality.¹²

Caudwell further, according to Cornforth, follows with major sections of Illusion and Reality devoted to the model of "two-worlds" -- that of inner and that of outer reality, or that of feeling and that of perception. Cornforth states that this is nothing more than re-hashed "metaphysical dualism" and is a far cry from the non-dualistic categories of Marxist materialism. He continues:

So according to this theory of poetry, poetry expresses 'the world within us;' and in poetry we pass from 'rational reality' to an inner world of emotion. Of course, this is no new theory, it is simply the idealist as opposed to the materialist theory of art.¹³ Yet in George Thompson's Biographical Note¹³ prefixed to Illusion and Reality we are asked to accept it as 'the first comprehensive attempt to work out a Marxist theory of art.'¹⁴

¹² Ibid. page 24: "Poetry is then declared to be 'irrational.' Its 'congruence' has no connection with the external world, but is 'congruence with inner reality.' So poetry does not, as Marxists had hitherto supposed, portray in poetic images the reality of the world and of our own life in it." Cornforth arrives at such a non sequitur because he thinks that "inner reality" has no relationship, according to Caudwell, to the "reality of the world" and our life in it. We shall presently see just how incorrect is this view of Cornforth's.

¹³ Thompson was (like Cornforth) a leader of the Communist Party of Great Britain. His reply to Cornforth will be discussed below.

¹⁴ Cornforth, op. cit., page 25. At this point Cornforth quotes Belinsky, but if we keep in mind Caudwell's "harvest model" and West's "second interpretation" this appeal to Belinsky could well support Caudwell. "What is poetry and what does it consist of?" Belinsky asked. 'Common authors presume it to be contained in the inventions of the imagination, but the dreams of a sleeping man and the ravings of an insane man are also inventions of the imagination, yet they are not poetry. Poetry is the creative reproduction of reality as possibility. Therefore what cannot exist in reality is false in poetry too.' Ibid., page 26.

Cornforth counterposes his conception of materialist aesthetics to the so-called "idealist" theories of Caudwell. Marxism, he says, only recognizes one material world -- not two -- not a separate emotional world based on inner energy derived from our instinctual nature. Poetry cannot, therefore, simply relate to a so-called "inner emotional world." Rather, Cornforth stresses, consciousness of external reality and feelings and emotions are linked together and represent a unitary structure which is the subject of poetry.¹⁵

Due to the fact that Caudwell took his conceptions from bourgeois thinkers (metaphysicians and idealists, etc.) he has failed, Cornforth maintains, in his attempts to create a Marxist theory of art -- "... the Marxist theory of art is not to be found in the pages of Illusion and Reality."¹⁶

While, as we shall presently see, none of the above criticisms by Cornforth will stand up to a careful reading of Caudwell, he does manage to make a few points (below) which are not totally unjustified. First, he points out that Caudwell is entirely too general in his talk about the so-called "bourgeois illusion" -- i.e., that man is seen as naturally free and all social restraints are artificial limitations to this freedom. Cornforth accuses Caudwell of being too facile and in not seeing that there is more than one central illusion which directs bourgeois thinking. Hegel, for example, is considered a bourgeois thinker -- yet his philosophy

¹⁵ Ibid., page 27.

¹⁶ Ibid., page 28. One wonders how Cornforth might have reviewed Capital -- it would no doubt have been attacked since Marx used categories and conceptions borrowed from bourgeois thinkers (Adam Smith, Ricardo, etc.) and a method which he admits was inspired by a bourgeois idealist metaphysician (Hegel).

views state imposed social restraints as a guarantor of freedom. How can Caudwell's "bourgeois illusion" theory explain this? Second, he claims that rather than dealing with concrete examples, Caudwell has a tendency to create abstractions, give a theoretical analysis of the abstraction, and then rest content thinking that he has actually described some aspect of concrete reality.

He invents abstractions and tries to describe and to account for what goes on in the real world in terms of those abstractions ... He is forever saying 'the bourgeois does this' and 'the bourgeois does that,' failing to take in account the concrete conditions of real life in bourgeois society and forgetting that 'the bourgeois' has no more real existence than, say, 'the economic man.'"¹⁷

In defense of Caudwell one could point out that for Marxists all (or for the most part) statements purporting to express general laws or categorical statements, are really generalized statements of tendencies, and viewed in this light Caudwell's use of abstractions ("the bourgeoisie") to highlight general tendencies is unobjectionable.¹⁸

Viewed as a general tendency Caudwell's position concerning the "bourgeois illusion" is also unobjectionable. Caudwell did not state that

¹⁷ Ibid., page 29.

¹⁸ Cf. Karl Marx, Capital: A Critique of Political Economy, Volume III: The Process of Capitalist Production As A Whole, edited by Frederick Engels, (N.Y.: International Publishers, 1967) -- first published in Hamburg, 1894. "Under capitalist production, the general law acts as the prevailing tendency only in a very complicated and approximate manner, as a never ascertainable average of ceaseless fluctuations (page 161)." Marx wrote the above with reference to his economic investigations, but in so far as the super-structural activities of art, philosophy, religion, etc., are ultimately based on the economic and productive foundations described by Capital, it seems to me even more obvious that this sort of methodological dictum is applicable to the description of super-structural phenomena.

each and every bourgeois thinker had to manifest the same basic ideas relative to freedom without exception. He merely characterized in a general way the overall direction of thought in a bourgeois period. Hegel too had individual liberty as the goal of history. The fact that he saw this as a development out of the higher organization of the state does not necessarily differentiate him from many natural law theorists who themselves recognized the necessity of the state as a vehicle for mankind's realization of a higher form of freedom (Hobbes, Locke, Rousseau).

It would be an error, however, to think that Caudwell's explanations of general developmental lines must cover every specific case. If this were Caudwell's intention, Cornforth's critique would have been more than justified. However, an even greater error, it seems to me, is Cornforth's approach. It seems totally unjustified to reject Caudwell's thesis in toto because a few counter examples suggest themselves. A detailed comparison of Caudwell's and Hegel's views on aesthetics and freedom has never, to my knowledge, been attempted. Even if such a study should substantiate Cornforth's position, this would not rule out Caudwell's aesthetics as a useful explanation of the general development of art -- it would only require a more sophisticated approach to the idea of the "bourgeois illusion."

The appearance of Cornforth's article marked the beginning of the so-called "Caudwell Debate." The editors of The Modern Quarterly had made Cornforth's article available to a number of prominent Marxists prior to its publication. The responses, published in subsequent issues, revealed that Caudwell supporters and opponents were about equally

divided. I intend to concentrate on what I consider the two major rebuttals to Cornforth and then present his closing remarks at the end of the debate.

George Thompson accuses Cornforth of misreading and misunderstanding Caudwell, and of himself exemplifying a mechanical approach to Marxism rather than Caudwell's being a metaphysical idealist.¹⁹ Thompson credits Caudwell as a major influence on his own views which he developed in such works as The Prehistoric Aegean, Aeschylus and Athens, and Marxism and Poetry.²⁰ In order to defend Caudwell's position as a Marxist critic and philosopher of art, Thompson sets out to destroy Cornforth's two most damaging assertions -- that Caudwell is a Freudian at heart, and that he believed in a genotypical-instinctual man who basically remained unvaried except for minor cultural differences and whose instincts, once given, are invariant and determine how we react to our cultural environment. In order to demolish this Cornforthian

¹⁹ George Thompson, "In Defense of Poetry," The Modern Quarterly Vol. 6, no. 2, 1951, pages 107-135. "... far from convicting Caudwell of metaphysical idealism, Cornforth has exposed his own failure to free himself from mechanical materialism (page 121)."

²⁰ Cf. George Thompson, Marxism and Poetry (London: 1946), Aeschylus and Athens (2nd Edition, London: 1946) and Studies in Ancient Greek Society: The Prehistoric Aegean (First American edition: N.Y.: The Citadel Press, 1965 -- see esp. page 461). Thompson writes concerning Illusion and Reality: "Running through it are two leading ideas which I have found extremely fertile. First, science and art are complementary and mutually indispensable activities of the human mind, both concerned with the extension of man's understanding and control of nature and himself, the one directly, through reason, by changing the external world, the other indirectly, through the emotions, by changing his subjective attitudes to it. Secondly, neither can be understood without reference to their origin and development, and the origin of both is to be sought in the emergence of those two interdependent characteristics which distinguish man from the animals -- tools and speech." "In Defense of Poetry," page 107.

perversion of Caudwell's ideas, Thompson presents a series of passages from Illusion and Reality and Further Studies in a Dying Culture to show that Caudwell's position and Cornforth's presentation of that position are very different. The following is one of the passages, slightly expanded, cited by Thompson to show that Caudwell's views on the genotype were far from mechanical and did take notice of the preeminent role of the environment:

We are born a genotype -- merely instinctive. We become self-conscious and, by interaction with the environment, receive an adaptation of the instincts which determines our infantile consciousness and our infantile hopes, aspirations and aims. Our growth to manhood is accompanied by an enrichment of consciousness -- that is, by a still more far-reaching adaptation of our childish desires to the environment. Our adult consciousness is not determined by our infantile, any more than our infantile consciousness is determined by our instinctive genotype. There is a difference which consists in the difference in experience, and this experience rests on a deeper penetration of the environment as a result of living in society. We have lived and therefore are altered.²¹

In Further Studies Caudwell refers to the instincts as "hypothetical entities" -- (page 112), and Thompson quotes from pages 112 and 108 of this work respectively as follows: "Art, then, conditions the instincts to the environment, and in doing so changes the instincts." "In the evolution of consciousness instinct is experience, gives rise to memory and affect, and is no longer the old instinct."²²

²¹ Christopher Caudwell, Illusion and Reality: A Study of the Sources of Poetry (N.Y.: International Publishers, 1970), page 180.

²² Christopher Caudwell, "Beauty: A Study in Bourgeois AEsthetics," in Further Studies in a Dying Culture, edited with a preface by Edgell Rickworth and reprinted along with Studies in a Dying Culture by Monthly Review Press, New York and London, 1971, page 112.

Thompson ends his defense of Illusion and Reality by remarking that Cornforth's interpretation is untenable and that his claim that Caudwell "accepts all the main Freudian ideas as gospel" (Cornforth's words) is totally unfounded.²³

G.M. Matthews, writing in the next issue of The Modern Quarterly, also takes Cornforth to task for not understanding Caudwell's position.²⁴

Matthews sees Caudwell's theory of art as being derived from man's interaction with the natural environment. Men and animals both interact within this context, but the animals do in fact only have blind instinctual responses, the result of evolutionary adaptations, with which to carry on this interaction. The difference in man is that self-consciousness has arisen as a result of the human development of the productive forces -- and it has superceded the blind instinctual processes common to the animal kingdom. Nevertheless, the same basic needs for food and shelter, economic needs in the widest sense, must be met by man as well as the animals. Man's attempt to master nature has led to, in-

²³ Thompson op. cit., page 120. In fact, Caudwell's discussion of Freud is "the better because he recognizes that there is a place in Marxism for psychology subordinate to history, whereas Cornforth seems to exclude it altogether."

²⁴ G.M. Matthews, "The Caudwell Debate," The Modern Quarterly, Vol. 6, no. 3, 1951, pages 259ff. "The genotype is only 'relatively unchanging' (Illusion and Reality, page 205); for the purposes of discussing poetry it is true that man has had a 'relatively constant biological makeup during historical times' (Ibid., page 16). If this were not so, it would make nonsense of the reasons Marx suggested for the enduring appeal of the Greek epic ... Caudwell nowhere says that it is only the outward characteristics of man that are changed by the environment while his innermost nature remains unchangeable. On the contrary, the instincts do not blindly follow the necessities of any germ plasm (Illusion, page 32), they are 'changed in action' (Ibid., page 170), and art, incidentally, is among the things that change the instincts (Further Studies, page 112)." Ibid., page 269.

evitably, the need to extend and heighten this control to ever higher degrees of mastery. Art has developed as one of the techniques used to further this aim. For Matthews this is a thoroughly Marxian notion and he too, like Thompsen, rejects Cornforth's presentation of Caudwell's aesthetic theories.²⁵

Cornforth, however, was not alone in his negative appraisal of Illusion and Reality. J.D.Bernal, the noted British scientist, maintained that in the works of Caudwell "there is only too ample evidence of the truth of Cornforth's thesis, that their formulations are those of contemporary bourgeois scientific philosophy, Einsteinean-Morganist-Freudian, and not those of Marxism."²⁶ Margot Heinemann, the literary critic, also rejected Caudwell's aesthetic, but seems not to have had a very thorough grasp of it.²⁷ Werner Thierry, another literary critic, had

²⁵ He also remarks, a propos the "bourgeois illusion" that: "Caudwell's great weakness as a Marxist literary critic is surely not that he invented the bourgeois illusion within which all the modern English poets have written, but that he does not study these poets from any other angle than that of the illusion. This makes his criticisms of these poets correct, generally speaking, as far as it goes, but almost entirely negative." Ibid., page 272.

²⁶ J.D. Bernal, "The Caudwell Debate," The Modern Quarterly, vol. 6, no. 4, 1951, page 346. Time has presumably redeemed all three "isms" (with the possible exception of Freudianism) from such negative strictures. "Morganism" was a reference to the fact that Caudwell accepted the gene theory and was not, in 1937, aware of the Lysenkoism which, at the time Bernal wrote, and for another fifteen years at least, distorted Soviet biological sciences.

²⁷ "Central to Caudwell's theory is the extremely sharp antithesis he makes between perception and thought (investigating external reality) on the one hand, and feeling (derived from the 'instincts,' from 'inner reality') on the other. This polar opposition is false because feelings, emotions, equally depend on man's experience of the external world,

a more balanced opinion of Caudwell's achievements and recognized in him, even with his faults, one of the most important literary thinkers of the generation. "It cannot be," Thierry wrote, "the task of Marxist critics to conceal the fact, that Caudwell, in spite of his youthful exaggerations and his 'prevailing sin ... to prefer cut-and-dried schemes,' has created one of the finest instruments of literary analysis in Western Europe during the last twenty or thirty years."²⁸

Cornforth, after reviewing all of the contributions, especially Thompson's, remained unmoved. He completely rejected Thompson's claim that Caudwell had created the first Marxist attempt to construct a theory of aesthetics. Such a view, he thought, would prevent Marxists from trying to create just such a theory since they would be likely to believe that they must build on Caudwellean foundations. Crucial to Cornforth's ideas is the following assertion: "The influence of Caudwell's theories has led not towards socialist realism but away from it."²⁹

Footnote continued from previous page.

of society and of nature, and not on unchanging (or even 'relatively unchanging') instincts in opposition to society, which it is poetry's peculiar task to adapt to social life. Hence thought and emotion reinforce one another in poetry." Margot Heinemann, "The Caudwell Debate." The Modern Quarterly, Vol. 6, no. 4, 1951, page 340. It has already been shown how this is a misreading of Illusion and Reality.

²⁸ Werner Thierry, "The Caudwell Debate," The Modern Quarterly, vol. 6, no. 4, 1951, pages 344-345. Also, "Cornforth does not show the main idea always haunting Caudwell: the demonstration that liberty is a question of social adaptation and conscious activity, not, as proclaimed by all bourgeois post-war prophets, a question of individual independence and emotional spontaneity." Ibid., page 345.

²⁹ Maurice Cornforth, "The Caudwell Debate," The Modern Quarterly, vol. 6, no. 4, 1951, page 354.

In this chapter we have discussed the initial critical responses to Caudwell's work as well as the major debate over his theories in The Modern Quarterly. We have seen that Caudwell has both strong defenders and opponents. In the context of the early 1950's the attack on Caudwell boiled down to Maurice Cornforth's final views in the "Caudwell Debate" claiming that Caudwell's philosophy was un-Marxist and would not lend support to "Socialist Realism." In the next chapter I propose to discuss socialist realism as a Marxist theory of art, and I will attempt to evaluate the cogency of Cornforth's claim.

CHAPTER IV

Caudwell and Socialist Realism

My intention in this chapter is not to give an exhaustive analysis of Socialist Realism, but to present it in outline in order to evaluate the justice or injustice of Cornforth's claim that Caudwell's aesthetic theories lead away from Socialist Realism and are thus "un-Marxist." Cornforth's implied assumption that Socialist Realism is the only form of Marxist aesthetic will be discussed in a later chapter. We should also bear in mind that the theory of Socialist Realism and what Cornforth and others understood that theory to be in 1950 are not necessarily the same. It should be noted as well that if Caudwell's aesthetic was leading away from a certain conception of Socialist Realism held in the last years of Stalin it may have been leading not away from Marxism but towards it.

Before dealing with Caudwell's relations to Socialist Realism, I want to present some preliminary discussion of the origin and major tenets of this doctrine.

In one of the same issues of The Modern Quarterly which carried "The Caudwell Debate" we find Erick Hartley writing that "Socialist Realism rests on (the) principle of the creativity of labour, on the principle that art is an extension and a reflection of that creativity, both mirroring and influencing directly or indirectly, the level and character

of changing social relationships."¹

How is the principle of labor creatively applied in Socialist Realism -- i.e., just what is created? Gorki, one of the originators of the term "Socialist Realism," talks about the creation of a myth which leads to a revolutionary romanticism. It was, after all, from his paper read at the First All Union Congress of Soviet Writers in 1934 that most of the conceptions about Socialism Realism first arose.

At that time, Gorki said:

A myth is a product of the imagination. To produce such a myth means to extract from the sum of real things their fundamental meaning and incarnate them in an image. This is how realism came into being. But if to this fundamental meaning extracted from reality we add something that we desire -- in the same way as we use hypotheses to increase our knowledge -- and thus develop our image further, then we arrive at that romanticism which is the basis of all myths and which is of great value because it favors the birth of a revolutionary attitude towards reality, i.e.,² of an attitude that wants to change the world.

Gorki maintained that progressive nineteenth century bourgeois literature -- i.e., critical realism -- devoted itself to revealing the progressive degeneration and alienation of capitalist life.³

¹ Erick Hartley, "Socialist Realism: One the Role and Character of Soviet Literature," The Modern Quarterly, vol. 6, no. 3, Summer 1951, pages 241-258, page 248.

² Maxim Gorki, "Extracts From a Paper Read to the First All Union Congress of Soviet Writers -- 1934" in Literature and Life: A Selection from the Writings of Maxim Gorki -- introduction by V.V.Mikhailovski, translated by Edith Bone (London: Hutchenson International Authors, 1946), page 138.

³ "The basic and dominate theme of nineteenth century literature was the pessimistic recognition by the individual of the insecurity of his social tenure." Ibid., page 143 -- "A Talk with Young People (1934)"

Gorki noted:

The realism of the 'prodigal sons' of the bourgeoisie was a critical realism. But although it exposed the vices of society and showed up the 'life and adventures' of the individual in the grip of family tradition, religious dogma or legal forms, it could not show men the way out of their captivity. It was easy to criticize everything, but the critics had nothing positive to say except that social life and 'existence' in general were obviously devoid of all meaning."⁴

Socialist Realism, Gorki maintained, identifies "being as doing" and demands that all engage in the creative activity of restructuring the world so that men can develop to their highest potentials and unite into one great family -- art's function, by the Socialist Realist method, is to contribute to this goal.⁵

Gorki stated:

I am not a naturalist. I want literature to rise above reality and to look down on reality from above because literature has a greater purpose than merely to reflect reality. It is not enough merely to depict already existing things -- we must also bear in mind the things we desire and the things which are possible of achievement.

⁴ Ibid., page 144. Also he had noted in his paper at the 1934 Congress that "Without wishing to deny the scope and value of the work done by critical realism and fully appreciating its formal achievements in the art of word-painting, we must understand at the same time that we need this critical realism merely in order to throw a light on the evil heritage of the past, merely to help us combat that evil heritage and completely eliminate it." Ibid., page 140.

⁵ "Socialist Realism looks upon being as doing, and regards existence as a creative activity, the object of which is the uninterrupted development of the most valuable individual gifts of men in order that they might conquer the forces of nature, achieve health and long life, and enjoy the great good fortune of living on an earth which man, in conformity with the incessant growth of his needs, wants to exploit in its entirety as the magnificent dwelling place of mankind united in one great family." Ibid., page 140.

Further, it is necessary to typify the phenomena that we observe.⁶

Besides Gorki's version of Socialist Realism -- which (as we shall see) accords well with Caudwell's own ideas towards literature and art, there was also a version of Socialist Realism presented at the 1934 Congress of Soviet Writers by Andrei A. Zhdanov. A version not so much differentiated by any theoretical motives, but by its practical applications. Zhdanov's views have given rise to the term "Zhdanovism" to refer to all "objectionable" things about Socialist Realism -- the Stalinism, the persecution of artists, the political interference in the creative process, etc. Besides his 1934 speech, Zhdanov circulated an essay in 1946 which had a great deal of influence on the determination of the standards of Socialist Realism. It was, I believe, Zhdanov's views (and a particular interpretation of them) which Cornforth had in mind (not a broad interpretation of the views of Gorki) when he accused Caudwell of being un-Marxist and of leading away from Socialist Realism. What then was "Zhdanovism"?

⁶ Ibid., page 145. "Talk With Young People" -- "Literature's task is to mirror and depict life and labour and to incarnate truth in images, characters, types of men." Ibid. Thus, Socialist Realism, as understood by Gorki, was a continuation of the best traditions of past literature (critical realism), it created images and myths which were to function to inspire, ennoble and uplift mankind by furthering the development of each person's unique individuality while at the same time stressing practical achievable goals. Even as far back as 1914 Gorki was formulating his version of Socialist Realism. "True art," he wrote then, "arises where complete confidence is established between writer and reader. The writer's job is to pour out into the world all that fills that receptacle for impressions which men call the soul. When a writer speaks of the joys and sorrows of our life, of things evil and good, ridiculous or vile, if he speaks from his soul as if he were speaking to his best friend, he will be understood by the reader and accepted as a friend." Ibid., page 132 -- Preface to an "Anthology of Proletarian Writers" (1914).

Maynard Solomon devotes an entire section of his massive anthology, Marxism and Art, to "Zhdanovism" (without, however, including one word by Zhdanov himself) which, he states, dominated Soviet art from the 1930's until 1956.

Solomon writes:

Zhdanovism can be regarded as a temporary aberration of Marxist criticism peculiar to a particular stage of development of the Soviet Union and the world Communist parties. However, its roots extend into the pre-Stalin era, and its reverberations are still with us. It is perhaps more helpful, therefore, to examine the possibility that elements of Zhdanovism represent general tendencies in the attitudes towards art during post-revolutionary periods. Several lines may be stressed: first, the insistence by revolutionary movements on the creation of exemplary myths in art; second, the rejection of complex and advanced styles in art; third, the censorship of the arts and their subjection to repressive modes of patronage.

Solomon stresses the fact that Marx and Engels never advocated the creation of a specific type of art whose function would be the creation of role models or mechanically attempting to inculcate a particular set of ideas. Nevertheless, according to Solomon, it has historically been the case that in post-revolutionary situations the new societal leaders have used every means available to educate and propagandize the population in order to strengthen and further the goals of the revolution. According to Solomon, Zhdanov's method of control of the arts was particularly brutal -- involving purges, imprisonments and worse, as well as the banning and censorship of artistic productions. We have already seen Gorki calling for the creation of "exemplary myths" and,

⁷ Maynard Solomon, Marxism and Art: Essays Classic and Contemporary (N.Y.: Vintage Books, 1974), page 235.

as for the second characteristic given by Solomon -- "rejection of complex and advanced styles" -- it is normal to expect a post-revolutionary government, especially in a backward and largely illiterate country, to insist upon artistic comprehensibility.⁸ The problem of Stalinist "overkill" has been attacked in the Soviet Union itself -- there is certainly no excuse for killing and imprisoning dissident writers on purely artistic grounds. If, as Solomon suggests, Zhdanovism is a merely historically transitional stage for any revolution entering successfully into the period of consolidation, no Marxist would be particularly upset with it once it had passed away (except for its uncalled for abuses). The problem seems, rather, to be to assess its survivals in the next historic period and attempt to eliminate its negative features. Cornforth's critique of Caudwell fell during Zhdanovism's hey-day and was itself a Zhdanovist critique of Caudwell's refusal to see in art a special role as a propaganda instrument, and his creative adaptation of non-Marxist sources in his overall aesthetic theory. One of the more negative aspects of Zhdanovism has been its equation, as with Cornforth, with Socialist Realism itself. This leads Solomon to criticize Socialist Realism when he should, even by his own lights, be attacking only its Zhdanovist incarnation.

He writes for example:

Revived, therefore, in a dialectical reversal, is a Utopian conception of art; for Socialist Realism is a picture of man as he should be (socialist man in the process of 'becoming') rather than as he is; it is a wish rather than a reality

⁸ "Our literature is not a private enterprise calculated to please the varied tastes of a literary market. We are in no way obliged to provide a place in our literature for tastes and tempers that have nothing in common with the ethics and qualities of Soviet people." Andrei A. Zhdanov, Essays on Literature, Philosophy, and Music (N.Y.: International Publishers, 1950), page 25.

which Stalinist patronage calls upon the artist to depict; art (in Nietzsche's phrase) is a 'consecration of the lie,' and the Zhdanovists while outwardly upholding the representation-reflection theory of art as their model, secretly practice the enforcement of ideological deception, of Utopian construct.⁹

At this juncture, before dealing further with criticisms of Zhdanovism, it would be illuminating to see how Zhdanov himself, in his own words, thought of the nature and function of Socialist Realism.

Andrei A. Zhdanov (1896-1948) was born in the Ukraine. During his career he became secretary to the Central Committee of CPSU, was chairman of the Supreme Soviet, Russian Soviet Republic and, as a lieutenant general, was, during the siege of Leningrad, in charge of the defense of the city. The following views are taken from his works mentioned previously.

Zhdanov's basic views can be summed up in this extract from his 1934 speech:

Comrade Stalin has called our writers engineers of human souls. What does this mean? What duties does the title confer upon you? In the first place, it means knowing life so as to be able to depict it truthfully in works of art, to depict it not in a dead, scholastic way, not simply as 'objective reality,' but to depict reality in its revolutionary development. In addition to this, the truthfulness and historical concreteness of the artistic portrayal should be combined with the ideological remolding and education of the working people in the spirit of socialism. This method in literature and literary criticism is what we call the method of socialist realism.¹⁰

⁹ Solomon, *op. cit.*, page 241.

¹⁰ Zhdanov, *op. cit.*, page 12. "Our Soviet literature is not afraid of the charge of being 'tendentious.' Yes, Soviet literature is tendentious, (Footnote continued on next page.)

Echoing Gorki, Zhdanov stresses that a new form of romanticism ('revolutionary romanticism') must be called forth -- but must also be based on a solid materialist foundation -- thus literature must not only depict the given moment -- describe the world as it really is (contra Solomon) but also point to a better future.¹¹

Although Solomon would like to divide Gorki from Zhdanov (he maintains, for instance, that Gorki's views are not Zhdanovist in outlook¹²) I find little or no contradiction between Gorki's speech and Zhdanov's, both given at the same time. This observation is not meant to lower Gorki to Zhdanov's level (as seen by Solomon) but only to point out that Zhdanov's theoretical articulation of Socialist Realism is not substantially alien to Gorki's -- however the two men may have differed in its practical application.

Gorki died in 1936 -- two years after this speech was given.

I want to look now at Zhdanov's 1946 writings on Socialist Realism.

The immediate reason for these writings was a decision of the Central Committee of CPSU regarding what were considered to be errors

(Footnote continued from previous page.)
for in an epoch of class struggle there is not and cannot be a literature which is not class literature, is not tendentious, is allegedly non-political." Ibid., page 13.

¹¹ "Our literature, which stands with both feet firmly planted on a social materialist base, cannot be hostile to romanticism, but it must be a romanticism of a new type, revolutionary romanticism. We say that socialist realism is the basic method of Soviet literature and literary criticism, and this presupposes that revolutionary romanticism should enter into literary creation as a component part, for the whole life of our party, the whole life of the working class and its struggle consist in a combination of the most stern and sober practical work with a supreme spirit of heroic deeds and magnificent future prospects." Ibid.

¹² Solomon, op. cit., page 241.

in the publishing policies of some Soviet journals devoted to literary topics. Zhdanov called for self-criticism and, while not using the word itself, censorship. My purpose, however, is not to look at the immediate concerns of the debates of 1946 -- but to extract from them the major philosophical principles to which Zhdanov appealed in justifying his position. It is my contention that none of these principles are fundamentally at variance with his own, or Gorki's, formulations in 1934.

After reviewing the course of Soviet literature since the time of the revolution, Zhdanov demands that politics must be the guide in the literary field as in all other aspects of Soviet society.¹³ He sees Marxist art theory (specifically literary criticism) as a continuation of the views of Belinsky (hence Cornforth's allusion to Belinsky in his critique of Caudwell), Chernyshevsky, Dobroliubov and Plekhanov -these men, with the exception of Plekhanov an avowed Marxist, were all "revolutionary democrats" who championed "realistic, socially directed art."¹⁴ By basing himself on an appeal to universally recognized nineteenth century Russian scholars and critics, Zhdanov is pointing out that his

¹³ "We demand that our comrades, both those who give leadership in the literary field and those who write, be guided by that without which the Soviet order cannot live, i.e., by politics, so that our youth may be brought up not in a devil-may-care non-ideological spirit, but in a rigorous and revolutionary spirit." Zhdanov, *op. cit.*, page 31.

¹⁴ *Ibid.*, page 32. The revolutionary democrats were seen as anti-thetical to Hegelian approaches to understanding art and nature and to those who like Henri Arvon want to base Marxist aesthetics on Hegel's, present the major objection to considering Socialist Realism as a proper, or the only, form of Marxist philosophy of art. The relation between Marxism and the Revolutionary Democrats on the one side and Hegelianism on the other presents a formidable problem and forms the basis of the discussion in my chapter on Caudwell and Hegel.

views on the control and guidance of literature are neither uniquely Marxian nor alien to the best traditions of the Russian people.

Zhdanov, like Plato, recognized the educational power of art and wanted only the sterner type of poet to influence the masses.¹⁵

Guided by the method of socialist realism, conscientiously and attentively studying our reality, striving to penetrate deeper into the essence of the processes of our development, the writer must educate the people and arm them ideologically. While selecting the best feelings and qualities of the Soviet man and revealing his tomorrow, we must at the same time show our people what they must not be, we must castigate the remnants of yesterday, remnants that hinder the Soviet people in their forward march. Soviet writers must help the people, the state, and the party to educate our youth to be cheerful and confident of their own strength, unafraid of any difficulties.¹⁶

Maynard Solomon is not the only student of Marxism to hold Zhdanovism anathema. But, as pointed out above, his reasons are confused. He wants to reject Zhdanov but not Gorki (although there are no fundamental differences between the two men on the level of theory), he suggests that Zhdanovism is a normal post-revolutionary development, etc. His attack only makes sense if limited to a critique of Zhdanovist remnants in a time of mature socialist advance and when directed against the alleged abuses of artistic policy by a bureaucratic state apparatus.

I want now to look at some remarks made on the theory of Socialist Realism by Henri Arvon in his L'esthétique marxiste (1970).¹⁷ Arvon's

¹⁵ Cf. Plato's discussion of art in The Republic.

¹⁶ Zhdanov, op. cit., pages 42-43.

¹⁷ Henri Arvon, Marxist Esthetics (Ithaca & London: Cornell University Press, 1973), trans. from the French by Helen R. Lane, with an introduction by Fredric Jameson.

book is especially important because its main thesis is that Hegel's aesthetics is the direct ancestor of Marxist aesthetics. In this chapter, however, I am only interested in his Chapter Six, "Socialist Realism." While this discussion may constitute a diversion from my main theme (Caudwell's relation to Socialist Realism and Cornforth's attitude toward him) I believe it is important to point out that views such as Arvon's (and Solomon's) because they are both widely held and erroneous stand in the way of our understanding just what is meant by "Socialist Realism" - - i.e., is it a Marxist aesthetic, the Marxist aesthetic, or is it a perversion of Marxist aesthetics, and if so is this due to its basic theoretical tenets or to its relation to the Soviet Union as an official doctrine towards the arts. Only if this confusion is cleared up can we appreciate better Caudwell's own contributions to the Marxist philosophy of art.

I want to again stress that the theory of Socialist Realism cannot be understood if it is maintained that Zhdanov has perverted its basic theoretical content and that, as a result, Soviet writers and Communist aestheticians are responsible for the creation of a mere device for the political control of the arts. This is the position that Arvon attempts to establish (for whatever reason) and I will attempt to demonstrate that his critique of Zhdanov is based primarily on a mis-reading of what Zhdanov himself wrote and an artificial separation of his views from those of Lukacs, Gorki, and others who, along with him, helped to create and extend the basic theoretical principles of Socialist Realism. We have, I think, already seen what those principles are from our remarks on Gorki and Zhdanov above. What does Arvon have to say?

Arvon refers sympathetically to Gorki's 1934 speech at the Soviet Writers' Conference. When it comes to Zhdanov's role in the Congress, however, Arvon goes out of his way to denigrate it as merely that "of spokesman for Stalin's essentially political views."¹⁸ In an attempt to demonstrate his thesis, Arvon maintains that Zhdanov advocated purely practical here-and-now functions for artists, rejected tradition, and attempted to confine literature to utilitarian ends coinciding with Party dictates. Arvon uses words like "however" and "despite this" in an attempt to divide Zhdanov's speech from the attitudes of both Gorki and Western writers at the conference (a division unremarked by the participants at the time). Thus he writes, with reference to the 1934 Congress, "... a great many speakers, following the example of Marx and Engels, attempt to preserve the cultural heritage of the past by viewing Socialist Realism as the continuation of a progressivist literary tradition rather than a reflection of the current political situation."¹⁹ But is this so different from what Zhdanov himself said? Arvon points to Louis Aragon (from France) who stated that Socialist Realism had roots in Balzac, Zola, Pottier, Valles, Stendhal, Barbusse, Rimbaud, and Peguy and to Johannes R. Becher (Germany) who claimed to find the roots of Socialist Realism in Goethe, Schiller, Weerth and Freiligrath. But we have already seen that Zhdanov, just as the representatives at the Congress from France and Germany saw their national literature as providing sources for Socialist Realism, sought to establish the roots of Socialist Realism in "the continuation of a progressivist literary tradi-

¹⁸ Ibid., page 85.

¹⁹ Ibid., page 86.

tion," namely that of Belinsky, Dobroliubov, and Chernyshevsky. Thus, contrary to Arvon's intent, he has not on this point established an essential difference between Zhdanov and the other participants at the Congress.

In further attempting to discredit Zhdanov, Arvon states that the "Congress sides with Gorky's view that the 'revolutionary Romanticism' of many writers in the first years of the Revolution was 'only a pseudonym for Socialist Realism'" -- this "despite the pronounced anti-Romanticism implied by the notion of realism..."²⁰ But the Congress certainly was not, despite Arvon's attempts to portray it as having done so, siding with Gorki against Zhdanov -- who, as we saw in note II, himself defended the notion of "revolutionary Romanticism."

Finally, Arvon maintains, after 1946 Socialist Realism and "Zhdanovism" became identical. "During these dark days of Zhdanovism, one of the very few Marxists to speak out against this propagandistic literature trapped in the stifling cage of an official political doctrine and a series of monotonous cliches is George Lukacs."²¹

How, according to Arvon, does Lukacs accomplish this? Lukacs explains the backward condition of Soviet literature, as he sees it, as a result of cultural lag between the advanced economic system of socialism and the failure of Soviet artists to free themselves from "the lingering traditions of the decadent bourgeoisie ..." ²² In arriving at this view, Arvon asserts, Lukacs took "precisely the opposite view from Marx and Engels" -- i.e., "Lukacs maintains that it is cultural evolution

²⁰ Ibid., page 87.

²¹ Ibid., page 92.

²² Quoted in Arvon, op. cit., page 93.

that lags behind economic evolution rather than vice-versa."²³ To call this "the opposite view from Marx and Engels" is certainly an oversimplification. Lukacs' position, however, is not all that new. Zhdanov himself, not a likely source for Lukacs' views, had already stated the following: "our literature does not yet come up to the requirements of our era. The weaknesses of our literature are a reflection of the fact that people's consciousness lags behind economic life -- a defect from which our writers are not, of course, free."²⁴

Thus, I think, Arvon's attempt to discredit the theory of Socialist Realism by discrediting Zhdanov fails. On the level of theory Zhdanov here is in no way different from Gorki or Lukacs.²⁵ Where Zhdanovism fails is on the level of practical application. In so far as Zhdanov functioned as an overly zealous political censor he betrayed not only his own stated ideals, but also those of Gorki, Lenin, Marx, Engels and others who contributed to the theoretical development of Socialist Realism. What the practice of Zhdanovism produced was

a crude falsification of contemporary life: it had no basis in the interplay of previous conditions, nor in the matter-of-fact ambitions and doings of ordinary people, but was determined in every case, in form and content alike, by the appropriate directives of the Party apparatus. Since this 'illustrative literature' did not grow out of life, but out of glosses on official directives, the puppets contrived for the purpose

²³ Ibid., pages 92-93.

²⁴ Zhdanov, op. cit., page 14.

²⁵ "Lukacs ... largely (though ambivalently) accepted Zhdanovism ..." Solomon, op. cit., page 239.

could not have -- could not be allowed to have -- any past, like human beings. Instead they had only official dossiers, which were filled in accordance with how they were intended to be viewed, either as 'positive heroes' or as 'vermin.'²⁶

The abuse of Socialist Realism in the Stalin Era is a negative reflection of that era, not a compelling theoretical refutation of a philosophy of art in itself. The relation of Zhdanov to Socialist Realism is much like that of Stalin to the U.S.S.R. -- while condemning his excesses and crimes, there is still a certain respect for some of his theoretical contributions and his political practical accomplishment. We remain ambivalent.

My purpose is not to render a judgement, however, on the overall merits or demerits of Socialist Realism, but to locate Caudwell's theoretical contribution in relation to it. In its broadest outlines, the theory of Socialist Realism points to an aesthetic that

1. Functions to change reality in a progressive direction
2. Realistically depicts the typical experiences of people and events in the past and present.
3. Continues the great artistic traditions of the past
4. Holds forth the model of socialism as the end toward which society is moving.

According to Cornforth, the aesthetic in Caudwell's Illusion and Reality would lead us away from these four principles of the Marxist

²⁶ Georg Lukacs, "Solzhenitsyn and the New Realism," in Marxism and Human Liberation: Essays on History, Culture and Revolution by Georg Lukacs, edited with an introduction by E. San Juan, Jr. (New York: Delta Books, 1973), pages 203-204.

philosophy of art. Let us turn to Illusion and Reality, therefore, to find out how Caudwell stands in relation to each of these four statements.²⁷

We have already, in Chapter II, become familiar with the overall thrust of Caudwell's views. What conclusion can we draw from these views (with supplementations in this chapter) regarding Socialist Realism? First, it is obvious that one of the major functions accorded to art by Caudwell was its ability to change reality -- not directly, of course, but by motivating us to strive to bring into existence those things revealed to us in the presense of great art. "In making external reality glow with our expression, art tells us about ourselves. No man can look directly at himself, but art makes of the Universe a mirror in which we catch glimpses of ourselves, not as we are, but as we are in active potentiality of becoming in relation to reality through society."²⁸ When, for example, we experience poetry the emotional attitudes we

²⁷ In a manuscript that Cornforth was probably unaware of at the time of the "Caudwell Debate," Caudwell wrote: "Freedom is obtained, not by the elimination of the observer or by supressing his role, but by recognising it, by understanding of the determining power of social relations. The world of art is then not closed; it is open in the sense that it includes the observor, because its social relations in all their determinism are overt. This of itself makes it objective, because, on the one hand there is a definite world view, and, on the other hand, the sources of this world view are not concealed but recognised. This fact does not lead to rigidity and stagnation, for this world view recognises the relativity of all values and change of all being. It asserts that the very ingression of novelty, which is the stuff of art, is perpetual, and refuses to recognise and form tradition, dream, hope, moral, aim, illusion, or truth as permanent. This, then, is the proletarian novel which it is the task fo the novelist to create. This is what has been set by Russian novelists as their conscious aim: socialist realism." -- Christopher Caudwell, Romance and Realism: A Study in English Bourgeois Literature, edited by Samual Hynes (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1970), page 119.

²⁸ Christopher Caudwell, Illusion and Reality, *op. cit.*, page 262.

experience "leaves behind it a trace in the memory. It is stored by the organism and modifies its action."²⁹ Thus art can function to influence the development of reality in a progressive direction. Of course, it doesn't have to do this, but Cornforth is wrong if he thinks this major contention of Socialist Realism is alien to Caudwell's views.

Second, the realistic depiction of typical experiences is exactly what Caudwell has in mind throughout his entire discussion of "The Common Perceptual World" -- i.e., "all the percepts of reality mobilized for action."³⁰ It is only by having common experiences and depicting them to one another through their associations with commonly agreed upon words that art, or any type of communication, is possible. A realistic depiction, as opposed to a phantastic, reified, alienated depiction is the common goal for both Caudwell and the Socialist Realists.

Third, Caudwell had nothing but respect for the great artistic creations of the past. His discussions of past artists is in no way dissimilar to that of Gorki which recognises their artistic contributions in the social context in which they worked.

Fourth, Caudwell held the position that under socialism human capacities would develop to hitherto unknown heights -- "This expansion will be evidenced in the fuller content of the new consciousness, which will now be fed by the whole process of human reality and can therefore blossom as organically as a flower, just as it did in tribal society, but

²⁹ Ibid., page 267.

³⁰ Ibid., page 146.

with all the technical elaboration evolved since then. Proletarian art in realising itself will become communist art."³¹

Where Caudwell differed fundamentally from what I take to be Cornforth's idea of Socialist Realism is in his insistence that art is not propaganda and should never be confused with it, as well as his attitude to the individual artist's right to synthesize a personal expression --i.e., "to express by means of language a peculiar experience he has had in life."³² This is the road to a true Socialist Realism rather than to a politically expedient form of art.

Thus, none of the important criticisms leveled at Caudwell by Cornforth bear substantiation after a study of Caudwell's text. We can now leave the "Caudwell Debate" and progress to more fruitful topics in relation to the problems of Caudwell's "contemporaneity."

The next chapter will deal with so-called "Hegelian Marxist" approaches to art -- or non-Socialist Realist Marxist theories of art. The theory to be discussed maintains that while Socialist Realism, in which school I have located Caudwell, may be one form of Marxist aesthetics (although some theorists maintain it is not even that) there are other equally valid Marxist approaches to art. I intend to compare this position to Caudwell's and attempt to determine what relation, if any, Illusion and Reality bears to Hegel's Lectures on Aesthetics and to the Hegelian Marxists who have attempted to synthesize Marx and Hegel.

³¹ Ibid., page 282.

³² Caudwell, Romance and Realism, page 34.

CHAPTER V

Caudwell and Hegel

In the previous chapter we saw that Caudwell's views were basically harmonious with the major ideas of Socialist Realism. In this sense he could, perhaps, even be called a Socialist Realist theorist. It should be stressed, however, that while no basic disagreements exist between Caudwell and Socialist Realism, his own theories, as we have seen them developed in Illusion and Reality, covered more ground and had a slightly different focus than did those of the socialist realists we have discussed -- e.g., his discussion of the function of art and the contrast as well as the similarities between the mock world of science and the common perceptual world. I also pointed out, in the last chapter, that, so far as I know, no detailed comparison of Caudwell's and Hegel's views on aesthetics and freedom had ever been attempted.

Besides the intrinsic interest of such a study, the need for this comparison fairly well forced itself upon me when Cornforth suggested Hegel as a counter-example to Caudwell's views on the centrality of the "Bourgeois Illusion" in modern aesthetics. If the "Bourgeois Illusion" of unrestricted individual freedom is so central why don't we find it in Hegel?

Perhaps Caudwell should have drawn the same distinction between bourgeois philosophers that Marx drew between bourgeois economists

-- i.e., between the really scientific thinkers (Smith, Ricardo, Mill) and those considered to be "vulgar" unoriginal apologists. Armed with this type of distinction, the "Bourgeois Illusion" may well be more pronounced in the "vulgar" and relatively in the background in the "non-vulgar." In any event, the case of Hegel is exceptional insofar as Marxism has always (or almost always) pointed to him as a thinker who was able in many respects to see beyond his own immediate historical surroundings. By his development of the dialectical method he is also seen, as it were, as the Godfather of Marxism itself. It should not then surprise us to discover that Hegel does not fit the mold of the "typical" bourgeois thinker that Caudwell wishes to depict.

I, at least, have found that the more one studies Marxism the more one comes to see that the real heart of it all boils down to the use of dialectical thinking -- and that, therefore, Hegel can be profitably read on almost any subject of interest to Marxists -- a fact long ago pointed out by Lenin in his Philosophical Notebooks (Volume 38 of the Collected Works).

I now propose to give an outline of Hegel's major ideas on the philosophy of art, to show that Caudwell's ideas are not out of harmony with these ideas -- that they indeed complement and extend them -and finally to show that contemporary Hegelizing Marxists, while perhaps unfamiliar with Caudwell, nevertheless arrive at basically the same views on Hegel and his relations to Marxism as I have arrived at with the help of Caudwell.

I think it is important to establish basic points of continuity between Caudwell and Hegel for two reasons -- it allows me to situate Caudwell's views within the mainstream of Nineteenth and Twentieth Century thought thus enhancing my contention concerning the importance of Illusion and Reality to Marxist thought. Correlatively, it focuses attention on Hegel's Lectures on Aesthetics -- in many ways a much more accessible way to come to grips with Hegel's thought than either the Phenomenology or the Logic.

Let me now turn my attention to Hegel's Aesthetics. In his "Introduction" to the Lectures on Fine Art, Hegel informs us that the beauty of art is higher than mere natural beauty since it is a product of the human spirit -- i.e., insofar as humanity values itself and its products over those of nature, just so far is artistic beauty and creation to be valued over natural.

Art has its own role and function to play in human life -- it is not a means to be used for some other end. While not denying the possibility of art being so misappropriated, Hegel's position is that art can attain to its true end only when it is free of such misdirected applications and is thus at liberty to follow its own intrinsic ends.

These ends are, for Hegel, the same as those of religion and philosophy -- he means that of bringing to our finite minds the recognition and comprehension of the Divine, the highest interests of the spirit and humanity. Expressed in a more modern way, we can say that art, like religion and philosophy, functions to reveal to us the true and deepest interests we as human beings have. Art's specific method of accomplish-

ing this aim is to attempt through sensuously created media to reveal these interests to us. Religion and philosophy use other methods to achieve this end but we are now only interested in the general aspects of art and will not deal with these other realms of the "spirit" or their relations to art.

How does art proceed to accomplish its aim? Hegel maintains that the artistic vision catches a glimpse of a supra-sensuous reality -- a beyond in contrast to the immediately given here and now and attempts by means of intellectual reflection to create sensuous reproductions of what was glimpsed. Art's function is similar to that of scientific theorizing which attempts to discern laws and regularities behind the transitory events of the phenomenal world -- the difference being that the reality beyond the world of appearance which art seeks can only be expressed in the material media of sensuous reproductions and not by the constructions of concepts, mathematical formulas, and the like. At least as far as the Idea of our human spiritual nature and interests are concerned, we find that: "The hard shell of nature and the ordinary world make it more difficult for the spirit to penetrate through them to the Idea than works of art do."¹

Art was mankind's first approach to an understanding beyond that of the purely physically given -- a first attempt to discern the universal in the manifold of particulars. However, the progress of civilization has destroyed the community of consciousness based on a feeling of

¹ G.W.F. Hegel, Aesthetics: Lectures on Fine Art, translated by T.M. Knox (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1975), Volume I, page 9.

oneness with nature and the sensuous creations of artistic endeavor.

The development of reflection and abstract thinking have replaced the feelings and the senses as the guides of the understanding and, as a result, Hegel maintains that "the conditions of our present time are not favourable to art."² We no longer relate to art with a simple experience of enjoyment, but subject artistic works to intellectual consideration as well. Thus we arrive at the philosophy of art, at the need for "knowing philosophically what art is."³

To know what art is philosophically is, at the same time, to know what it is scientifically since for Hegel scientific procedure is "inseparable" from philosophy. By this he means that we are not to project our own viewpoints or subjective considerations on to the subject matter of art but to arrive at our understanding of it "according to the necessity of its own inner nature."⁴

Hegel discounts the objection that one cannot scientifically study art since it is the product of feeling and fancy and the capriciousness of human imagination. In his view all the works of art are an expression of the human spirit -- i.e. of a thinking consciousness whose very nature (thinking) allows it to reflect upon the significance of its products, since art is a product of this spirit, and this spirit itself operates according

² Ibid., page 10.

³ Ibid., page 11.

⁴ Ibid.

to its own essential logic or nature, it follows that art is capable of being understood by thought.⁵

At this point, Hegel reminds us of two important considerations. The first being that art products are relative to different peoples and different historical contexts -- they thus have different functions ("purposes") and we should not try to subsume these important differences under too general theories as a way to avoid the difficult tasks involved in analyzing all of the different forms under which artistic production has manifested itself. The second consideration is that it is not the job of the philosopher of art to write "prescriptions for artists." Rather, he must "determine what the beautiful is as such, and how it has displayed itself in reality, in works of art without wishing to provide rules for their production."⁶

Thus far, Hegel has established the three major characteristics of art -- i.e., it is a human not a natural project, it is a sensuous product but created for human apprehension, and it has its end in itself.

Art results from a human need based on the fact that man is a thinking animal -- "i.e., that man draws out of himself and puts before

⁵ "Thus the work of art too, in which thought expresses itself, belongs to the sphere of conceptual thinking, and the spirit, by subjecting it to philosophical treatment, is thereby merely satisfying the need of the spirit's inmost nature. For since thinking is the essence of the Concept of spirit, the spirit in the last resort is only satisfied when it has permeated all products of its activity with thought too and so only then has made them genuinely its own. But art, far removed ... from being the highest form of spirit, acquires its real ratification only in philosophy." Ibid., page 13.

⁶ Ibid., page 18.

himself what is and whatever else is."⁷ Hegel says that unlike natural objects, man's being is twofold -- like natural objects man is a being in the world, but he is also for himself. He is for himself due to the development of his consciousness which comes about in two ways --by theoretical activity and by practical activity. Man discovers himself, therefore, through the intellectual apprehension of the results of practical activity directed towards the creation of art from sensuous forms and materials. "But nevertheless the work of art, as a sensuous object, is not merely for sensuous apprehension; its standing is of such a kind that, though sensuous, it is essentially at the same time for spiritual apprehension; the spirit is meant to be affected by it and to find some satisfaction in it."⁸ The work of art occupies a position midway between brute sensuous intuitions on the one hand and the abstractions of conceptual thinking on the other. Ideas which properly only exist in the realm of pure thought are trying to express themselves (if I may use this way of expressing it) through objects of sense -- "In this way the sensuous aspect of art is spiritualized, since the spirit appears in art as made sensuous."⁹ Now, what according to Hegel is the aim (function, end) of art?

The important thing to remark at this point is that for Hegel, art's function is in no-wise utilitarian -- i.e., its aim and end is related solely to itself -- it is not a means for the accomplishment of some other end extrinsic to art itself -- (such as moral improvement, education,

⁷ Ibid., page 31.

⁸ Ibid., page 35.

⁹ Ibid., page 39.

etc.). This is not, however, to deny that these extrinsic ends may not be furthered by art, that art may not point to them and reinforce them, but they remain extrinsic and as such are at most utilitarian by-products of art. The function of art is not to bring about the furthering or the accomplishment of these non-artistic ends.

Modern man, according to Hegel, is an "amphibious animal" --living in two different and mutually exclusive worlds. He lives in the everyday world of "earthly temporality, borne down by need and poverty, hard pressed by nature, enmeshed in matter, sensuous ends and their enjoyment, mastered and carried away by natural impulses and passions."¹⁰ He also lives intellectually in a world which denies the primacy of the everyday world -- in a world which human will demands be run by logical rules, by laws and moral principles and universal maxims -- this is the realm "of thought and freedom." It is the task of philosophy to reconcile the everyday world with that of the realm of thought -- not by denying their contradiction, but by showing how they are to be 'mediated' on a higher level. This reconciliation and mediation is not something imposed upon these two realms -- but rather something that they themselves bring forth. Philosophy merely "affords a reflective insight" into this process. This is the task of philosophy in any age. It is also the aim and end (function) of art. Art, however, does not proceed by way of "reflective insight" into essences -- but by means of "sensuous artistic configuration."¹¹

¹⁰ Ibid., page 54.

¹¹ Ibid., page 55.

The aim or end (function) of art is thus, according to Hegel, "to unveil the truth ... to set forth the reconciled opposition just mentioned, and to have its end and aim in itself, in this very setting forth and unveiling."¹²

The work of art has no existence (or rather purpose) independent of the *community of consciousnesses for which it is intended*. Hegel says that the work of art is a question addressed to other minds. It is an attempt to lead us to the Idea by means of the perception of sensuous forms. This pursuit takes place in historically delimited stages corresponding to the development of humanity. The more art corresponds to the Idea, the better -- and this is dependent upon the level of consciousness of the artist which is determined by the general level of culture and civilization at the time. The Idea does not appear to human consciousness full blown but is attained through a series of stages. Throughout the ages, artists have struggled to express the aim of art, and Hegel delineates three major stages which have been passed through on this road. The first of these stages he calls symbolic and represents the beginning of art -- a period when the artists are searching for a way to express inchoate glimpses of the Idea by means of artistic forms. This stage is not very successful, from Hegel's point of view, and constitutes what he calls a mere search rather than a fruitful discovery of the proper sensuous formulation of the Idea. Hegel characterizes pre-Greek art under this heading -- i.e., Egyptian, Babylonian, Indian, etc.

¹² Ibid.

The next stage he terms classical. Here the human body, as the bearer of human spirit, has become the subject of art. For Hegel this is a higher stage because spirit is identified with humanity and not abstractly associated (as in the previous stage) with animals and objects of nature. Nevertheless, the human form itself is still a natural object and it is, for Hegel, inappropriate to identify spirit solely with any natural or physical object. Thus we arrive at the third stage of artistic development -- the romantic. Here, Hegel informs us, "spirit is the infinite subjectivity of the Idea, which as absolute inwardness cannot freely and truly shape itself outwardly on condition of remaining moulded into a bodily existence as the one appropriate to it."¹³ Romantic art, therefore, develops along an inner spiritual path. Yet, since it is still art, it still needs to express itself in sensuous forms. Only now it is not welded to the forms as in the previous two stages. The spirit no longer identifies itself with the physical creations of art, but rather uses them as means of better self understanding.

Thereby the separation of Idea and shape, their indifference and inadequacy to each other, come to the fore again, as in symbolic art, but with this essential difference, that, in romantic art, the Idea, the deficiency of which in the symbol brought with it deficiency of shape, now has to appear perfected in itself as spirit and heart. Because of this higher perfection, it is not susceptible of an adequate union with the external, since its true reality and manifestation it can seek and achieve only within itself.¹⁴

¹³ Ibid., page 79.

¹⁴ Ibid., page 81.

Particularly interesting to students of Caudwell is Hegel's position, at the end of the introduction, that the highest and most universal art form is poetry. Because poetry is the product of the "beautiful imagination" and imagination is a requirement of all art forms, Hegel maintains that poetry is involved in all the other art forms and is thus the "universal art of the spirit." It is not totally dependent on outward sensuous materials and rather functions in the inner realm of mind and thought. And, Hegel points out, it is just at this highest level of its development that art "passes over from the poetry of the imagination to the prose of thought."¹⁵

It is important to note that while for Hegel art no longer can play the same role for humanity as it did in previous times, it is not "dead" in any sense. It is still a living and vital human accomplishment and activity -- it is not yet in any sense completed -- i.e., the Idea has not yet fully manifested itself with a correct correspondence to sensuous forms -- the aim and function of art, therefore, will continue striving towards this end, but, as Hegel says, "to complete it will need the history of the world in its development through thousands of years."¹⁶

We have now covered the major ideas which Hegel advanced in his "Introduction" to the Lectures on Fine Art. We must now turn to part one of that work: "The Idea of Artistic Beauty or the Ideal."

Before, however, proceeding further into Hegel, a few propaedeutic remarks, based on Georg Lukacs' The Young Hegel, are necessary. These remarks are required because I want to read Hegel in terms of an impor-

¹⁵ Ibid., page 89.

¹⁶ Ibid., page 90.

tant interpretive method proposed by Lukacs. I want, for example, to equate certain basic Hegelian concepts such as "the Idea," "the Absolute," "God," etc., with a term used by Marx in his 1944 manuscripts -- i.e., man's "species being." Lukacs suggests that this is perfectly legitimate and he bases himself upon a close reading of Hegel's Phenomenology of Mind, especially the "Preface" to that work. Lukacs maintains (pages 468-470 of The Young Hegel) that in this work Hegel attempts to provide "a ladder" by which ordinary non-philosophical consciousness can mount to a philosophical outlook on life. This mounting is to be done historically and not in some abstruse or abstract manner. Hegel goes over the road of human historical development -- "the road of human evolution in general" -- and the Phenomenology thus becomes a guidebook, as it were, to the intellectual progress of mankind. Hegel's book, Lukacs states, is concerned with "the acquisition by the individual of the experience of the species."

I do not intend to give a detailed analysis of the seventy or so pages denoted as "A Synoptic View of the Structure of The Phenomenology of Mind" -- pages 466-536 of The Young Hegel -- nor do I think that my purposes require such a detailed study. The following quotation, I suggest, is sufficiently explicit to justify my citing of Lukacs in support of the equation of the aforementioned Hegelian notions with the idea of "species-being." "The general context," Lukacs writes regarding the Phenomenology, "makes it quite clear that what concerns Hegel here is the relationship between the experience of the individual and this historical experience of the species. He refers ... to the individual

as 'incomplete mind, a concrete shape in whose existence, taken as a whole, one determinate characteristic predominates, while the others are found only in blurred outline' ... And in earlier discussions of the relation of individual to the species he refers to the latter on one occasion as 'the supreme being' (Jena Logic, page 158)."¹⁷ We must bear these observations in mind in the following discussion.

Reiterating ideas he has more fully developed in the Philosophy of History, Hegel reminds us that the highest goal we are struggling to attain is that of Freedom. The human subject achieves freedom when he finds himself not limited or constrained by what he encounters, but rather is the master of it. This is Hegel's principle of Subject-Object identity -- Freedom being obtained when the Subject is finally aware that it is at one with the Object and is thus no longer constrained or limited by it. The Subject, however, is initially only subjectively free -- in reality he is confronted by a hostile and unfriendly objective environment which hinders the accomplishment of his desires. This contradiction, according to Hegel, between subjective freedom and objective limitation, must be overcome. We find this same contradiction, by the way, inside the Subject himself. It is the opposition between reason on the one hand, and the emotions and passions on the other. In the realm of Spirit man thus attempts to win Freedom by developing his rational powers and guiding his will, desires and actions by them. "Free-

¹⁷ Georg Lukacs, The Young Hegel: Studies in the Relations between Dialectics and Economics, translated by Rodney Livingstone (Cambridge: MIT Press, 1976). Especially see the remark "There can be no doubt, then, that the modern reader may everywhere read 'species' for 'mind' or 'spirit' ('Geist')." -- page 534.

dom in action issues ... from the fact that the rationality of the will wins actualization." ¹⁸

It is in the political life of the State, according to Hegel, that this highest actualization takes place. Here the necessity and constraints which the Spirit confronts are of its own making -- are expressions of its own will and understanding. The rational spirit comprehends that this blending of freedom with necessity is the highest attainment of Freedom. Hegel informs us that the "ordinary consciousness" is incapable of understanding this contradiction (between "freedom" and "necessity") in any other way than that of total opposition. It is the philosopher who ultimately makes sense out of this seeming paradox. Hegel writes: "But philosophy enters into the heart of the self-contradictory characteristics, knows them in their essential nature, i.e., as in their one-sidedness not absolute but self-dissolving, and it sets them in the harmony and unity which is truth. To grasp this Concept of truth is the task of philosophy."¹⁹

Now, when Hegel speaks of "Truth" as the "absolute object of consciousness," I interpret him to be saying that this conception of Freedom and its ultimate fusion of all contradictory forms of constraint and permissiveness, obstacles and the overcoming of obstacles, etc., is, in fact, the "Truth." We have already seen how Lukacs, basing himself upon the Phenomenology of Mind, has equated Hegelian usage of such terms as "the Supreme Being," "mind," or "spirit" ("Geist") with the

¹⁸ Hegel, op. cit., page 98.

¹⁹ Ibid., page 100.

term "species." I have found justification for my interpretation of the relations between the concepts of "Freedom" and "Truth" in Hegel's Philosophy of Mind (third part of The Encyclopedia of the Philosophical Sciences).

In the Zusatz to section 382, for example, Hegel writes: "The substance of mind is freedom, i.e., the absence of dependence on an Other, the relating of self to self. Mind is the actualized Notion which is for itself and has itself for object. Its truth and its freedom alike consist in this unity of Notion and objectivity present in it. The truth, as Christ said, makes spirit free; freedom makes it true."

Later on Hegel also remarks (Zusatz to section 440): "The principle of free mind is to make the merely given element (das Seiende) in consciousness into something mental (Seelenhaftes), and conversely to make what is mental into an objectivity. Free mind stands, like consciousness, as one side over against the object, and is at the same time both sides and therefore, like the soul, a totality, and whereas in consciousness, on the contrary, this totality was divided into the 'I' and the object external to it, free mind or spirit, is to be cognized as self-knowing truth."

So, I interpret the conceptions of "Truth" and "Freedom" in human consciousness as essentially the same, and for the purposes of my rendering of Hegel, I shall use these conceptions as virtually interchangeable depending upon the context. The Concept referred to is that once consciousness understands and lives according to its "species-being" it is experiencing "Freedom." Thus, for economy of expression, I will henceforth only use the term "Freedom."

There are, according to Hegel, three major realms which attempt to arrive at Freedom -- art, religion, and philosophy. We already know how art attempts to arrive at Freedom ("sensuous knowing"). Briefly, religion and philosophy attempt to arrive at this concept by means of pictorial and free thinking respectively.

Religion emphasizes subjective feelings and the inner life of the individual -- it is thus removed from the objective world of art. Philosophy, by means of "untrammelled thinking," by means, that is, of conceptual thinking is removed from the subjective pictorial mode of thinking as well as the sensuous mode. "In this way the two sides, art and religion, are united in philosophy: the objectivity of art, which here has indeed lost its external sensuousness but therefore has exchanged it for the highest form of the objective, the form of thought, and the subjectivity of religion which has been purified into the subjectivity of thinking."²⁰

It must be noted, however, that for Hegel art and its reliance on sensuous intuitions is not only a realm of pure externality -- but also has internal presentation. Poetry is the primary example because its appeal is almost wholly to the imagination.

It is again important, I think, to stress that Hegel was not a proponent of any "Art is Dead" school of thought. "We may well hope," he writes, "that art will always rise higher and come to perfection..."²¹

We must now turn to Hegel's idea of "Beauty." "Beauty," as I understand Hegel, is that which renders manifest to us an understanding of our

²⁰ Ibid., page 104.

²¹ Ibid., page 103.

own "species-being." The Idea of beauty is nothing other than what Hegel calls "The Concept." The "Idea" he calls the "unity of Concept and Reality." But just what does he mean by "The Concept"? His ultimate meaning is that "what we call 'soul' and, more precisely, ego is the Concept itself in its free existence."²² The "Concept of Beauty" is thus derivative of this prior Concept -- in its free existence." Thus, the Idea of beauty as the unity of Concept and Reality can only mean that we find beauty in those objects of sensuous apprehension which reveal to us aspects of our own consciousness of ourselves as species-beings. Since Hegel, as an Objective Idealist, believes in the identity of the Subject-Object he can find beauty both in nature (although only imperfectly) and in art (in its highest form). This is because man's consciousness of himself can be reflected back to himself from nature as well as from art. "Everything existent, therefore, has truth only in so far as it is an existence of the Idea. For the Idea is alone the genuinely actual."²³ Remember that the Idea = unity of Concept + Reality, and that Concept = "soul" or "ego." So what we find in "Beauty" is our own consciousness of ourselves reflected back to us, and since I have been materialistically reading Hegel with Marx's category of "species-being" -- the "Beautiful" is that which reveals to us the nature of our own "species-being."

We have a problem, however, with Hegel's Subject-Object identity as no Marxist, Caudwell included, would accept this equation. Lukacs informs us that "the identical subject-object is the central pillar of

²² Ibid., page 108.

²³ Ibid., page 110.

objective idealism just as the reflection in human consciousness of an objective reality subsisting independently of consciousness is the crux of materialist epistemology."²⁴

This means we cannot accept the Idea as the unity of the Concept (species-being) and Reality if we think Reality (nature) is a product of the self-development of our species-being (or Hegel's word "consciousness"). This also means that we could not discover the beautiful (even imperfectly) in nature, since there is no subject-object identity and natural objects will not be reflecting back to us the nature of our own species-being -- only in the world of art, man made creations, will we find the Beautiful as such. Paradoxical as it may seem for a materialistically inspired critique to deny beauty to nature, and we shall have to consider this assertion in greater detail when we look at Cherneshevski's aesthetic writings directed specifically against Hegelianism from a materialistic viewpoint, it is nevertheless the conclusion of the foregoing analysis. Let us return to Hegel.

Art is a mode of human activity in which we attempt to understand and comprehend our species-being by means of sensuous experience. Hegel writes that "the beautiful is characterized as the pure appearance of the Idea to sense."²⁵ What does Hegel have to say about the beauty of Nature?

In order for human consciousness to win self recognition it must first exist -- it must first find itself in Nature. Consciousness only exists

²⁴ Lukacs, op. cit., page 270.

²⁵ Hegel, op. cit., page 111.

for-itself when embodied in individual organisms. The individual both sets himself off from nature (as a self-consciousness) and also sets himself practically within nature by making it an object of use for himself. Life becomes aware of itself, as Hegel remarks, in "ensouled individuals" -- the Idea thus finds itself in the world. And this recognition of "ideality is not at all only our reflection on life; it is objectively present in the living subject himself, whose existence, therefore, we may style an 'objective idealism'."²⁶ Now the individual consciousness sets itself the task of comprehending the external world, but at this primitive level consciousness has no idea of the subject-object identity -- it does not find itself, therefore, in Nature. However, consciousness does have a "sensuous perception of natural forms." Nature begins to appear rational -- i.e., there are laws as well as a rational appearing order between the articulations of the parts of the physical organism and of organisms to one another. This leads Hegel to conclude that:

nature in general, as displaying to sense the concrete Concept and the Idea, is to be called beautiful; this is because when we look at natural forms that accord with the Concept, such a correspondence with the Concept is foreshadowed; and when we examine them with our senses the inner necessity and harmony of the whole articulation is revealed to them at the same time. The perception of nature as beautiful goes no further than this foreshadowing of the Concept.²⁷

Now our species-being is anthropomorphizing nature -- animals, e.g., are called beautiful or ugly not in themselves (such a distinction makes

²⁶ Ibid., page 123.

²⁷ Ibid., pages 129-30.

no sense) but only in relation to our interests. We also find natural objects beautiful because these produce within us moods and emotional experiences. Now our consciousness is explicitly aware of itself -- is, as Hegel says, an object to itself and is able to "manifest itself to others." Nothing in Nature is capable of doing this. In animals we only "surmise a soul." Our species-being is not, therefore, derived from an awareness of Nature, but from our own self-consciousness -- i.e., we can contemplate Nature for an eternity, and we will never become explicitly aware of what we ourselves are -- for this we need both Nature and self-conscious reflection of ourselves. "This is the primary deficiency in the beauty of nature..."²⁸ We are thus driven on from the imperfect beauty of Nature to the world of Art. Here we will find the truth of species-being -- i.e., of self-consciousness, of freedom, of "spiritual animation" -- here we will find beauty qua beauty and not, as in Nature, as a projection of consciousness on to some other thing.

The third chapter of Hegel's Lectures on Fine Art (the last we shall consider in the first volume of his work on aesthetics) is entitled "The Beauty of Art or the Ideal." It is divided into three parts the most important points of which are as follows:

THE IDEAL AS SUCH. Hegel tells us that only insofar as we can find it in external reality does truth (i.e., our species being and our consciousness of it) have any real existence. We find external reality divided up into parts, disparate and separated entities, yet we find a bit of the truth in every part -- i.e., we can learn something about ourselves from

²⁸ Ibid., page 132.

anything in nature which we study and reflect upon. This leads Hegel to declare that Art is a "middle term between purely indigent existence and purely inner ideas"²⁹ -- since the physically existing work is both a part of the external world and yet has been called forth out of the human mind -- it is an attempt at self knowledge by means not of inner reflection on the Concept (philosophy) but by sensuous contemplation of natural objects which have been worked upon by consciousness. Art "furnishes" us with the things themselves, but out of the inner life of mind; it does not provide them for some use or other but confines interest to the abstraction of the ideal appearances for purely contemplative inspection."³⁰

THE DETERMINANCY OF THE IDEAL. We have thus far concerned ourselves with general ideas and arrived at a fairly clear understanding of the major principles contained in Hegel's philosophy of art and beauty. Now we must consider more specifically just how Beauty can manifest itself in "finite existence." Hegel has already pointed out that the major function of art is "to make the Divine the centre of its representations,"³¹ which is a Hegelian way of saying that Art makes us aware of ourselves as self-conscious species-beings. In this section of his aesthetics we should be mindful of Feuerbach's contention that theology is really anthropology. For what we are as men first becomes manifest to us (who,

²⁹ Ibid., page 163.

³⁰ Ibid.

³¹ Ibid., page 175.

as Hegel says, are viewing this development philosophically not necessarily to those who actually lived and experienced the particular moment under consideration) in our religious and mythological development. Thus, Art begins with representations of the gods -- first polytheistically and later monotheistically. "For the whole human heart with everything whereby it is moved in its innermost being, everything which is powerful in it -- every feeling and passion, every deeper interest in the soul - -this concrete life forms the living stuff of art, and the Ideal is its representation and expression."³² At this level of human development, religious themes dominate the determinancy of Art because our self-understanding of species-being has progressed only to this limit. Contemplation of these themes is only one aspect of the function of art. As living subjects with wills and interests we must also act. So the Ideal determines itself also in artistically considering the great actions of the gods and heroes (and later men themselves).

Hegel now begins to consider the relationship between individuality and universality in art. His point being that the Ideal is the universal (species-being as we have been considering it is a universal common to all mankind) but as art it is universal only so far as it is "configured for our vision and therefore still immediately one with particular individuals and their life."³³ This is what Lukacs and other Social Realists mean by typical representations of typical situations. Hegel himself stresses the importance of the situation to be artistically portrayed

³³ Ibid., page 185.

-- it must be one which makes manifest "the profound and important interests and the true content of spirit."³⁴ There is no conflict here with either Socialist Realism or Caudwell.

Hegel next turns his attention to what he calls the external determinacy of the Ideal. He rejects the view that the artist removes us from the real world and tries to bear us off, as it were, to an inner mystical realm far removed from actual life so that we can "disdain" the reality of the everyday world. This is not, for Hegel, the function of real art. For him, the living individual exists only in the here and now -- his life consists of struggling and fighting in a real, determinate (and historically formed) environment. And as this struggle "is to be apprehended, not only as such, but in its determinate appearance, by art, it has to enter (i.e., the Ideal) existence on and in material of this (mundane) kind."³⁵ For the artist does not exist simply for himself. He must address himself to the real external world, Hegel says, because this is where he finds his public:

Now the truly ideal (work of art) is indeed intelligible to everyone in the universal interests and passions of its gods and men; yet since it brings its individuals before our eyes within a specific external world of customs, usages, and other particular details, there arises the new demand that this external world shall come into correspondence not only with the characters represented but equally with us too.³⁶

³⁴ Ibid., page 199.

³⁵ Ibid., page 246.

³⁶ Ibid., page 264.

In line with this, Hegel maintains that art never exists for a few avant garde souls, the literati or savants, or any small circle of aficionados -- "but only to the nation at large and as a whole." Immediate intelligibility (also a Caudwellian and Socialist Realist demand) is something Hegel considers fundamentally important in any work of art. He stresses that "what is valid for the work of art as such is equally applicable to the external aspect of the historical reality there represented. We too belong to our time and our people, and this reality must be clear and apprehensible for us without wide learning, so that we can become at home in it and are not compelled to remain confronted by it as by a foreign and unintelligible world."³⁷ Subjectivistic idiosyncrasies, for Hegel, have no place in a work of art.

THE ARTIST. The artist is nothing more, as artist, than what he creates. The actual work of art is the thing itself. Hegel rejects the notion of a hidden depth to the artist only a part of which is revealed in his actual creation. This is because art has a social base and a universal function as the reflection of our species-being at a particular historical juncture. The artist and his work, Hegel maintains, are ultimately justified only by the rational elements to be found in the subject matter. This rationality is objective in so far as it is an expression of the universal species-being -- this also constitutes the originality of art. When the subjectivity of the artist is united with the objectivity of the situation or world movement in which he finds himself -- then

³⁷ Ibid., page 273.

and only then are great original works produced. "To have no manner has from time immemorial been the one grand manner, and in this sense alone are Homer, Sophocles, Raphael, Shakespeare, to be called 'original.'"³⁸

Finally, I want to highlight some passages from Hegel's chapter on poetry. Since Illusion and Reality is primarily concerned with poetry, it seems appropriate to end our discussion of Hegel's aesthetics on this note as both he and Caudwell considered poetry to be the highest form of artistic production. Hegel's section on poetry is three hundred pages long, so I will only be commenting on a very minute portion of his rather exhaustive analysis. Because poetry uses words and addresses our intellectual selves (since we can read it as well as recite it) with the least amount of sensuous dependence, Hegel sees its function as primarily oriented towards our inner rather than our outer reality. The subject matter is both more directly important in itself and more easily rendered in an objective vein for the "spirit's apprehension." In poetry we first begin, in our ideas, to become objective to ourselves -- inner imagination as well as our intuitions become less dependent on sensuous materials and approach, without ever really reaching, the intellectualistic concepts which are the proper domain of philosophy. "Consequently," Hegel maintains in what is surely one of his most controversial and misunderstood aesthetics pronouncements, "in the case of poetry proper it is a matter of indifference whether we read it or hear it read; it can even be translated into other languages without essential detriment to its value, and

³⁸ Ibid., page 298.

turned from poetry into prose, and in these cases it is related to quite different sounds from those of the original."³⁹

Poetry is the most common educator of mankind -- for to be educated, or to educate, it is necessary to know what reality is and poetry attempts, and in large measure fulfills, this function. Its subject matter is all that stirs in the human spirit -- its major task "is to bring before our minds the powers governing spiritual life."⁴⁰ Hegel says that poetry is older than prose -- it is the original attempt to present truth originating in a time when abstract reasoning had not yet separated the universal from its embodiment in the individual.

Poetry does not deal with the abstracted universal concepts of philosophy, but with empirical, individualized manifestations of the universal. Thus we find it particularized -- i.e. French poetry, Ancient Egyptian poetry, Classical poetry, etc. We can, nevertheless, relate to all these different types of poetry (though it is more natural to identify with the poetry of our own time, interests, and culture) since they all have something in common -- "namely universal human nature and art" -- or, in our way of interpreting Hegel, man's species-being is reflected in them all. Caudwell's "genotype" is also a basic expression of our fundamental human similarities and can be used to replace Hegel's term "universal human nature."

³⁹ Ibid., page 964.

⁴⁰ Ibid., page 972.

We can now summarize the major points of Hegel's philosophy of art as follows:

1. Artistic creation is an attempt to express by sensuous production and apprehension mankind's most fundamental self-understanding;
2. This self-understanding enables us to recognize our true interests and values as human beings;
3. This attempt is limited by historical conditions and the general level of cultural development -- thus art must be approached and studied scientifically (philosophically) in order for us to comprehend its meaning at any one time and its general overall significance;
4. It is primarily by means of the imagination that art leads us to the desired self-understanding.
5. Art is not capable of leading us to the goal of self-comprehension, but it is a necessary stage on the road to this goal which, ultimately, can only be reached by the conceptual understanding characteristic of philosophy.

Let us now turn our attention to Caudwell's writings to see just how far we can go in drawing parallels between his ideas and those of Hegel. I will attempt to show that Caudwell's position is fundamentally in accordance with that of Hegel, although expressed in a very different way. In the first place, however, it must be noted that Caudwell, as a materialist, rejects the subject-object identity characteristic of Hegelianism. Nevertheless, since he is a dialectical thinker, his ideas, as do those of Marx, run parallel to Hegel's when discussing the development of art. One of the main reasons this is so is because of the close relation

between the Hegelian dialectic and the Marxian which is derivative from it. Thus, in attempting to arrive at a Marxist philosophy of art, we can always turn to Hegel for insights and attempt to interpret him in a materialist spirit.

I now wish to consider Caudwell's writings in light of the above discussion of Hegel. We are already familiar with Caudwell's basic views in Illusion and Reality (see Chapter 2) so I wish now to present his position directly concerning "Beauty" as found in his essay "Beauty: A Study in Bourgeois Aesthetics."⁴¹

Caudwell begins with the same fundamental question which we find as Hegel's starting point as well -- i.e., "What is Beauty?" He informs us that beauty appears independent of our individual brains since beautiful objects survive from generation to generation, and in so far as we ascribe beauty to nature, seems even to have existed before man himself. How did mankind arrive at the notion of an independently existing beauty? Caudwell tells us that in the past men began to think of things objectively existing in the environment as opposed to existing only within their consciousness. He gives the example of heat as opposed to a feeling such as happiness or joy. The unpleasant sensation produced by a hot object can, for example, be eliminated by removing ourselves from its presence -- happiness, or anger, or joy we can carry around

⁴¹ Christopher Caudwell, "Beauty: A Study in Bourgeois Aesthetics," in Further Studies in a Dying Culture, edited and with a preface by Edgell Rickword, republished in Studies and Further Studies in a Dying Culture with an introduction by Sol Yurick (N.Y.: Monthly Review Press, 1971).

within us. From conceptions like these we arrived at the idea of an objectively existing beauty. "Like heat, beauty appears or disappears in man's conscious field according as he moves towards or from the beautiful object in his environment, the object itself remaining unchanged during the process."⁴²

Caudwell, however, rejects his own analogy. This may be a reason why men have felt that beauty is objective, but there are fundamental differences between our experiences of heat and of beauty. Mankind's experience, for example, of a hot or a cold object tends to be universal. A glowing hot coal will be perceived to be hot by anyone in any culture, while beauty is relativized from man to man, age to age, and country to country. Here we have a contradiction. On the one hand we have come to think, as Hegel does, that beauty has an objective existence (an environmental property existing independently) yet unlike, say, heat it is differently experienced:

We could only reconcile ... (this view) if there were a triadity in the subject-object relation of man to beautiful object; if in addition to naked subject and naked environment, we had a third mediating term, something which remained unchanged while the subject changed and so could stand to it as environment and account for our projection of Beauty outside ourselves, and yet which changed while the bare environment remained unchanged, which would account for the historic change in what particular⁴³ objects are found to be lovely or made beautiful.

⁴² Ibid., page 84.

⁴³ Ibid., page 86.

We have, in fact, such a third term according to Caudwell -- it is society. In relation to the idea of beauty, society plays the same role for Caudwell as the realm of the Absolute Ideal plays for Hegel. Thus beauty, Caudwell maintains, just as religion or philosophy, has an independent objective existence (i.e., independent of me as a particular individual) -- these values have an objective social existence. Truth is another example he cites. Truth has no meaning independent of true statements -- human products -- but it is independent of the individual -- it is a product of society "a particular relation of the individual, via society, to the rest of the Universe."⁴⁴

Now, it is important to recall from our previous discussion of Illusion and Reality that the emotions, desires, etc., of mankind are just as much social products, in Caudwell's view, as are the scientific theories that are the product of our common perceptual world. We share "a community of instinct as well as a community of cognition."⁴⁵ The community of hopes, fears, emotions and desires is the basis of art just as the community of cognition and perception is the basis of science. These seemingly disparate modes of responding to reality (art and science) are really complementary products of our human situation. There can be no real contradiction between them. Our affective response to our environment, based on our common hopes and desires as represented in works of art, is the basis of beauty. Caudwell proposes the following

⁴⁴ Ibid., page 89.

⁴⁵ Ibid., page 102

definition: '... whenever the affective elements in socially known things show social ordering, there we have beauty, there alone we have beauty."⁴⁶

It is, further, a product of the labor process because, as Caudwell insists, mankind must have ultimate agreement not only concerning the nature of the external world but also concerning the nature and role of desire. We must constantly mold and meld together our desires along with our intellectual comprehension of reality. These views are fundamentally the same as those we have attempted to extract from Hegel. That art is a reflection of our species-being and that its development is a function of the development (through history) of the species. "The artist takes bits of reality, socially known, to which affective associations adhere, and creates a mock world, which calls into being a new affective attitude, a new emotional experience. New beauty is thus born as the result of his social labour."⁴⁷

Art, Caudwell stresses, functions to condition our instincts to adjust to the social reality within which we find ourselves -- in doing so the instincts themselves are changed. "Beauty is the knowledge of oneself as a part of other selves in a real world, and reflects the growth in richness and complexity of their relations."⁴⁸ However, neither Truth nor Beauty are the goals of the social process. They are products, rather, generated by the labor of human beings in the development of the social process. They can never be ends in themselves since they are reflections,

⁴⁶ Ibid., page 106.

⁴⁷ Ibid., page 110.

always, of a more fundamental reality -- i.e., the social world. All of these views, as well as the position of Illusion and Reality outlined in Chapter Two, are in fundamental agreement with the five characteristics of Hegelian aesthetics listed above.

One of the most recent attempts to understand Marxist philosophy of art in terms of Hegelianism is Henri Arvon's L'esthétique marxiste published in English by Cornell University Press in 1979.⁴⁹ Arvon's theories have already been partially discussed in our chapter on Socialist Realism. I now want to present his more specific views on the relations between Hegel and Marxist art theory. While Arvon tends to oversimplify, and thus misrepresent some of Hegel's views, his work is, nevertheless, an interesting introduction to some of current literature relating Marxism to its Hegelian origins. To this end, I will discuss the first three chapters of his book -- i.e., "Marxism and Art," "Dialects," and "Form and Content."

One important point that Arvon stresses is that neither Hegel nor Marx ever thought of art as primarily a tool to bring about political or social change. This problem was previously discussed in our earlier chapters and is especially important in reference to the condemnation of Caudwell by Cornforth. We recall that Cornforth was quoting Belinsky's views in his attack on Illusion and Reality. Belinsky (along with N.G. Chernyshevsky) can be said to represent a radical mechanical materialist (non-Marxist or pre-Marxist) trend in Russian literary history.

⁴⁹ Henri Arvon, Marxist Esthetics (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1973) translated by Helen Lane, introduction by Fredric Jameson.

It is this trend which sees art only in its instrumental uses ("art can redeem itself only by serving the people."⁵⁰) which is responsible for the accretion of dogmatism which is associated with certain phases of Soviet and Communist thinking on the arts during the so-called "Stalin era." We have already seen that Hegel, Marx and Caudwell reject art as being essentially instrumental (in the sense of being the object of political manipulation). Arvon points out that Plekhanov, as well as Lenin, also shared this view. "Esthetics," Plekhanov wrote, "has no orders whatsoever to give art ... it is as objective as physics"⁵¹ -- i.e., it only studies how artistic trends have become standard in different historical epochs. Trotsky's view in Literature and Revolution (1924) seems to me to present the correct Marxist approach to this problem:

It is quite true that a work of art should never be judged, accepted, or rejected on the basis of Marxist principles. The products of artistic creation must be evaluated first and foremost on the basis of their own laws, that is to say the laws of art. But only Marxism is capable of explaining why and how a certain orientation of art came about at a certain period, that is to say the origin and the reason for such an orientation and not some other.⁵²

The problem, however, goes deeper than just labeling tendencies within Marxism to subordinate aesthetics to politics as "mechanical," "non-Marxist," etc. Hegel's dialectic of art leads to the view that art,

⁵⁰ Ibid., page 14.

⁵¹ Ibid.

⁵² Ibid., page 18.

as a reflection in sensuous form of the Ideal (for us man's species-being, for Caudwell the genotype modified by the social realm), has been replaced functionally (as had religion) by philosophy. The Marxist dialectic can quite easily lead to the view that political philosophy is the way to the ultimate intellectual self-understanding of man and thus art, as an alternative and more primitive attempt at this understanding, is necessarily to be guided by philosophy. I think this is in fact true. The point, however, centers on the word "guide." All these attempts, philosophical and aesthetic, are, for Marxists, reflections of our external environmental situation (specifically production modes and relations) in consciousness. Once philosophical understanding has been attained it is only natural to judge all other forms of activity by its standards. It would be undialectical to think that the role art enjoyed in human society in a period before philosophical understanding had been attained would be the same as in a period after such attainment had been realized. This is also a matter of degree -- the augmentation of philosophy's leading role in any period being correlated to a diminution of the leading role of art, especially since both activities have the same ultimate goal.⁵³

⁵³ Arvon sees this too, though not in quite the same way as I have expressed it in this chapter. He writes, for example, "In order for literature to be recognized as the highest art, the theoretician must be persuaded a priori that art itself, far from being the 'contemplation of things that do not depend on the principle of reason' which Schopenhauer speaks of, is simply the sensible appearance of the Idea. This is, in fact, Hegel's view of art. The conclusion that will necessarily follow from this vision of art is foreordained in his system. Just as in his system art is super-

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We have previously discussed this goal -- Arvon supports our views, based on Lukacs, that by replacing the mystical elements in Hegelianism with materialist elements we find that most of Hegel's works lend themselves to a Marxist interpretation. For Marx, "The truth of art then becomes synonymous with self-awareness of the human species."⁵⁴ This is, as we have shown, equally true of Hegel.

Arvon points out that since Marxism stresses the close relation between man's development through social progress and art, it creates an aesthetics which stresses content over form. This is different from Hegel who stressed the unity of content and form. However, he does not provide any documentation for this claim and, since the formal aspects of artistic creation seem to be just as much dependent upon the historical situation as the non-formal elements, I see no reason to make this distinction. Arvon himself suggests that to get a better understanding of our subject we can "stand the Hegelian dialectic 'on its head' and substitute social reality for the Hegelian Idea."⁵⁵ But this substitution would not be possible if Marxism and Hegelianism differed fundamentally on such basic concepts as "content" and "form" and their "unity."

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ceded first by religion and then by philosophy, so that it has rightfully (sic!) been said that all of his Esthetics is merely a funeral sermon on art, so the hierarchy of the arts established by Marxist esthetics on the basis of their intelligibility can lead only to the subordination of art and the artist to the imperatives of a philosophical, or often a purely political, doctrine." Ibid., pages 22-23.

⁵⁴ Ibid., page 27.

⁵⁵ Ibid., page 42.

Arvon then goes on to tell us of what the "prime task" of Marxist aesthetics consists. Marxism, he says, distinguishes between essence (the internal workings of a process) and phenomena (the external manifestations of the internal workings). The task of Marxist philosophy of art is to "reestablish the dialectical unity of the essence and phenomena"⁵⁶ --by so doing Marxist philosophers of art will get a truer picture of the nature of art and of reality by clarifying the relations between events on the surface of society and those occurring deep down (as it were) within the hidden essential inner structures of society and how these two areas or levels of reality are reflected in works of artistic creation.

While Arvon has fundamental criticisms of Marxist aesthetic practice (we saw some of them in the previous chapter) he does appreciate its potential to make new discoveries of a theoretical nature in the fields of aesthetics and criticism. I have also presented his views here to show that the notion of a Marxist philosophy of art growing out of, and being basically compatible with, an Hegelian approach is not an ideosyncratic view but is a position that is becoming more and more accepted. The basic compatibility I have tried to establish between a Caudwellian and a materialistically interpreted Hegelian approach to the philosophy of art is a contribution to the development of this position.

Caudwell, however, was not directly influenced by Hegel, and his critics have never taken him to task for this. They have, however,

⁵⁶ Ibid., page 50.

as we saw in earlier chapters, attempted to diminish his role as a Marxist philosopher by accusing him of being a "Freudian." We must now turn our attention to an assessment of the direct influence Freud effected upon Caudwell's work.

CHAPTER VI

Caudwell, Freud and Marcuse

Caudwell discusses Freud both in Illusion and Reality and Studies in a Dying Culture. Chapter Seven of the latter work is, in fact, a major study and critique of Freud's thought. I hope to show in this chapter that while Caudwell's critique may be a bit dated (formulated as it was in the context of the anti-fascist movement of the 1930s) it is still, essentially, valid and should lay to rest attempts to brand Caudwell himself as a "Freudian" in the sense that he eclectically and uncritically attempted to blend together ideas from Marx and Freud. I have also included a discussion of Herbert Marcuse's Eros and Civilization because this work throws light both on Freud's own thought as well as on Caudwell's criticism. Caudwell in many ways anticipated some of Marcuse's views (such as the stress on the social background of individuals with reference to the type of society they live in) and Marcuse for his part has provided an extension of Freud's theories, based in large measure on Marxist influences, which a reader of Caudwell can well appreciate in large part, even if not accepting many of the more speculative conclusions.

Turning now to Caudwell's critique, we see that he maintains that while Freud is one of the first of the scientific psychologists, he will be remembered more for his empirical contributions than for his theoretical. His scientific discoveries have been presented in a "semi-magical

framework" and he remains confined within the "mythical era" of the development of psychology. Caudwell, in fact, considers Freudianism to be religious in its explanations of the human mind. The complex workings of the mind are symbolized, for example, as the Censor, Ego, Id, etc., which, Caudwell says, are "mind-deities" analogous to the "weather deities who inhabited Greek Olympus."¹ Freud is, nevertheless, credited (as in The Future of an Illusion) for upholding the progressive tendencies of bourgeois materialism against earlier idealistic and outright religious (as in Christianity) formulations of human nature. Freud considers himself a materialist, how then could Caudwell come to call him at heart religious? The key to understanding Caudwell's critique of Freud is to see that Freudianism is essentially a bourgeois psychology. For Caudwell this means that two crucial, and for Marxists false, ideas underpin Freud's theories -- these ideas are not uniquely Freudian but characteristic of bourgeois thought in general. These ideas are "firstly that the consciousness of men is sui generis, unfolding like a flower from the seed instead of being a primarily social creation, and secondly that there is a source of free action in the individual, the 'free will,' the 'wish' or the 'instincts,' which is only free in proportion to the extent to which it is unrestrained by social influences."² According to Caudwell,

¹ Christopher Caudwell, "Freud: A Study in Bourgeois Psychology" in Studies in a Dying Culture, reprinted in Studies and Further Studies in a Dying Culture, introduction by Sol Yurick (Monthly Review Press, 1971) page 159.

² Ibid., page 161.

these views distort Freud's psychology "like buried magnets" and prevent it from rising above the level of myth to that of scientific understanding. The other idea, or fault, according to Caudwell, is Freud's use of a form of the coherence theory of truth -- i.e., Freud accepts any logically coherent connection which accounts for the "facts" as a valid scientific explanation. If the Oedipus Complex or the death wish or instinct can be used to give such a logically coherent explanation of phenomena, then this fact is itself the evidence for the existence of a death instinct or the Oedipus Complex. This helps to explain the growth of rival schools such as Jung's or Adler's since these psychologists also thought out logically coherent systems (the collective unconscious, inferiority complex, etc.) to explain the same data with which Freud occupied himself. All this is, according to Caudwell, uncharacteristic of the development of scientific thought. Note that this view of Caudwell was less likely to be controverted in the 1930's than it would be today.

Scientific thought is characterized by "crucial tests." "If," Caudwell writes, "of two hypotheses one exhibits more comprehensively and less symbolically the structure of the determinism of the phenomena it explains and their relation to the already established structure of reality, that hypothesis will be more powerful as an instrument for predicting the recurrence of such phenomena in real life. Hence arises the crucial test, which decides between one hypothesis and another."³ This leads

³ Ibid., page 164.

Caudwell to conclude that: "No hypothesis, religious or scientific, can have any meaning unless it can give rise to a crucial test, which will enable it to be socially compared with other hypotheses."⁴ It is precisely because Freudianism and its off-shoots are unable to come up with a crucial test that Caudwell, while believing them to be scientific in intent, likens them to religions.

Just what is it that Freud and his followers and rivals are attempting to understand? Caudwell gives us a brief description of our mental life and what is of interest in it. Mental events are the result of nervous activity. In the evolution of life a small, and comparatively recent, set of nervous activity has become aware of itself and is called "consciousness." Of all the different sets of nervous activity consciousness appears as the least determined of the sets -- since it is consciousness in the form of individual "egos" or "subjects" which is analysing and studying all the other sets, including myself. We may call all the other sets, not partaking of consciousness, the "unconsciousness." Instinct, according to Caudwell, is a term we use to label specific unconscious patterns of activated neurons which, in conjunction with environmental stimuli, lead to automatic and predictable behavior. He uses the term memory (which need not refer to conscious behavior at all) to describe the mechanism by which the original instinctual behavior may be modified by interaction with the environment. He admits that this way of talking

⁴ Ibid., pages 164-65.

is not very rigorous -- is, indeed, mythological ("perhaps at present unavoidable") but is dictated by the level of the science.

Comparing the activation of neurons to the striking of a chord on the piano (where the unused strings are as necessary to the overall tone, as is the wood making up the piano, the atmosphere in the room, etc.) Caudwell asserts that any neuron activity is conditioned by and affects the total neuron system as well as the rest of the body. Consciousness thus stands on the ground of the unconscious. It is also important to note, Caudwell insists, that besides the set of recently evolved neurons which seem to be the seat of consciousness (and which are able to be modified in their responses -- are susceptible, that is, to education) there is an older, more primitive, set of neurons which we have received as part of our evolutionary heritage. This set is less modifiable and seems to be the seat of that type of behavior we call "instinctive." In certain extreme situations in which we find ourselves (and also in sleep) this set of neurons is liable to predominate and inundate our consciousness with urges that lead to behavior which our more recent neuron set would never have led to nor which our consciousness would condone.

Caudwell credits Freud with the first pioneering studies to explain the structure and behavior of our mental life and, while acknowledging important empirical contributions made by him, he rejects the theoretical integument in which these discoveries are contained. One of the most serious objections to Freud's views, according to Caudwell, is their dualism.

What kind of "dualism" does Caudwell have in mind here? He is not referring to the traditional mind-matter dualism familiar in philosophy at least from the time of Descartes. He means, rather, that Freud uses two contradictory approaches in his method of analysis -- one method in discussing the individual in relation to mental illness, and another in discussing social and historical problems. Caudwell thinks this is inconsistent and that the same focus should be used in discussing social as individual development. In the first approach, for example, the point of view of individual consciousness is adopted and the unconscious factors in mental life are referred to as "distortions," "mental illness" etc., this, according to Caudwell, is a prejudicial categorization of the unconscious by the conscious whose point of view is here taken by Freud. "Just as mythological and consistent a psychology as Freud's might be written," Caudwell says, "from the point of view of the 'unconscious,' in which, instead of the 'instincts,' the 'experiences' would now play the part of energetic imprisoned demons distorting or inhibiting the stability and simple life of the innate responses."⁵ In this approach the conscious and intellectual is defended against the urges of the unconscious. In the second approach, Caudwell maintains, Freud does just the opposite, i.e., he champions the unconscious over the conscious (hence the unresolvable dualism within Freudianism as Freud developed it, not necessarily unresolvable per se). Freud does this, as we shall see,

⁵ Ibid., page 169.

when he turns his attention to the discussion of the psychological factors behind the developments of history and civilization.

Caudwell's Marxism leads him to apply here the dialectical principle of the mutual interpenetration and identity of opposites. Thus, he rejects the "conscious" and the "unconscious" as two mere abstractions used incorrectly to symbolize our mental life.

Consciousness and unconsciousness are not exclusive opposites, but in any hierarchy of inner-
 vations forming the behaviour of the moment
 we have a certain amount of high mnemonic modifi-
 ability and others with high innate predisposition,
 and the proportion of these may be varying.
 But they are in mutual relations, like positive
 and negative poles of a battery activating a
 circuit, and it is only by abstraction that we
 separate out the complex called consciousness,
 as we might separate out the threads forming
 the patterns in a tapestry.⁶

In the same way that historical materialism has led to the notion that the future will be a product of both the present and the past --not simply the present itself, so our future consciousness will become a part of our knowledge based on our present (the conscious) and our past (the unconscious). Caudwell rejects the preeminence of the one or the other in favor of an harmonious balance. The conscious and the unconscious, being mere abstractions, cannot be pitted against each other. Freud's dualism stems from the fact that he on one occasion champions the conscious and on another the unconscious.⁷ This fictional and un-

⁶ Ibid., page 170.

scientific mode of expressing his ideas resulted in Freud's being confounded by other schools of thought which broke away from his initial system and raised themselves up in opposition to it. There is no scientific way to judge between Freud on the one hand and, say, Adler or Jung on the other. No "crucial experiment" could decide, for example, between Adler's self-preservation instinct on the one hand, and Freud's theory of the libido on the other as to which "really" could explain our observed behavior better. They are both mythological constructs used to explain behavior which we are not yet in a position to describe by rigorous scientific techniques.

In the same way that the conscious and unconscious factors unite to make a whole individual subject, the subject itself is united to its environment. We cannot remain content with just studying all of our innervations as if they were isolated and sufficient unto themselves. Using a musical metaphor, Caudwell likens the "harmony of the psyche" to a reflection "of the harmony of the body's being in reality."⁸ The body and the external world are two poles of an elaborate and interacting structure. If psychology ignores, or plays down, the influence of the environment it can never arrive at a scientifically valid description

⁷ "After showing how the wicked complex devils of the Unconscious distort and obsess the consciousness, Freud goes over to the other side and paints the Unconscious as it would like to paint itself. He shows us the Instincts tortured by the inhibitions of culture, martyrs to the present and to consciousness. Yet the scientist ought in these matters to be impartial, otherwise he will never synthesise these two opposites, past and present, new and old." Ibid., page 173.

⁸ Ibid., page 175.

of man's mental life. Caudwell also maintains that the social environment is the most important (because most rapidly changing) sector of the external world to influence our psyche development. Psychology must be grounded in sociology. Failure to achieve this grounding will lead us to view psychic phenomena as constant over time and we will end up universalizing our own particular historically conditioned psychic life as the psychic life of man. Caudwell asserts that this is just what has happened with all (the then) contemporary schools of psychology.⁹

The bourgeois myth of freedom -- discussed earlier in the chapter on Illusion and Reality -- is at work here in Freud's thought. The "Rousseauism" of Freud consists in the view that culture and civilization hinder man's free instinctual development. The view that the causal laws of nature and civilization hamper our free development is the most important defining characteristic of bourgeois thought for Caudwell. Contrary to Jefferson's dictum that that government is best which governs least, Caudwell would champion the view that that government is best which governs most -- with the reservation that both dicta are functionally dependent upon their own historical periods. In true Hegelian fashion, Caudwell maintains that: "Man is a part of reality, in constant relation with it, and the process of consciousness, in so far as it increases his

⁹ "As it happens, no modern school of psychology has ever studied social relations as primary, as conditioning the consciousness which is generated by them. None study concrete society and its non-psychical basis. No modern school of psychology has ever yet got so far as to formulate its basic approach to the environment of the psyche it studies, continuous interaction with which is the law of psychic life." Ibid., page 177.

knowledge of causality, increases his freedom."¹⁰ For Caudwell the development of culture and civilization increase, rather than decrease, our potential freedom.

Caudwell rejects Freud's use of terms such as "repression" and "inhibition" to describe the mental mechanisms which have developed with the growth of civilization in order to thwart the natural "free" instinctive life of man. Freud, according to Caudwell, completely bypasses the social environment when he describes the evolution of civilization as the byproduct of the struggle of two primary instincts -- e.g., Eros and Death. Freud's discussion of the role of the father seems proto-fascistic to Caudwell. Freud maintains that the danger of social discontent is the result of individuals within a group relating more to one another rather than to a "leading personality." Although Freud's views pre-date Hitler, Caudwell sees here an anticipation of the Fuhrerprinzip. The irony is that facsism seeks to destroy Freudianism and all other forms of non-fascist ideology while Freudianism, and bourgeois thought in general, cannot free itself from its own premises which, Caudwell says, ultimately lead down the road to fascism. "Freudianism, attempting

¹⁰ Ibid., page 179.

to cure civilization of its instinctive distortions, points the way to Nazism."¹¹

In what sense does Freudianism nurture fascism? Caudwell tells us that the consciousness of the bourgeoisie cannot assimilate the new world being created by socialism and thus begins to break up. A consciousness on the verge of breaking up can either go forward and begin to assimilate the newer, larger consciousness (socialist consciousness) which confronts it, or it can regress. Socialist consciousness is seen by Caudwell as "larger" because, in Hegelian fashion, it both negates and overcomes and preserves at a higher level the basic ingredients of the previous conscious level. This is only another way of saying that the world outlook of socialism is "larger" than that of modern industrial capitalism just as the latter is more inclusive, higher, etc., than that of feudalism or slavery. Socialist consciousness itself being the awareness, based on scientific analysis of the economic structures of capitalism, of the new social forms needed to overcome the contradictions and limitations of our present bourgeois society. Freud, according to Caudwell, as a thinker essentially unfamiliar with Marxism and unable to transcend the consciousness of the bourgeois capitalist world was incapable of adapting his theoretical system to the new world outlook -- thus his views represent a regression (since they do not go forward to assimilate

¹¹ Ibid., page 181. "Yet this is the irony of all bourgeois culture, that because it is based on a contradiction, it gives rise to the opposite of what it desires. It desires freedom and individual expression, but, because it believes freedom is to be found in abolition of social organization, it gives rise to all the tyrannies and blind crippling necessities of the modern world." Loc. cit.

the newer forms of consciousness) to more primitive levels of the old system of consciousness.

Here Caudwell is using Freud's ideas on "repression" and "infantilism." To regress is, however, not the answer. Our current situation (i.e., Caudwell's situation in the mid-30s) is entirely different from the situation which was reflected in our earlier level of consciousness -any attempt to resurrect an earlier form of consciousness to deal with our current reality is bound to fail. Freud, according to Caudwell, sees this very well, but since he cannot adjust to the larger consciousness he can offer no answer to the problem of cultural regression which ultimately leads to fascism. Thus, he concludes, Freudianism "after all ... is not a therapy, it is only a diagnosis."¹²

The defense made of Freudianism that it justifiably uses mythological terminology because it is dealing with emotional problems and this way of expressing the relationships of mental phenomena has a powerful therapeutic and emotional effect on the patient is totally rejected by Caudwell. It is precisely because Freudianism relies on myth, precisely because it is unscientific (if not anti-scientific) that it fails utterly, as far as Caudwell is concerned, as a therapy. The Freudians do not understand the true nature of emotion. Emotion is not an individual thing, an individual force within the mind that gets out of control and can be soothed by the psychoanalyst and made to behave. Caudwell

¹² Ibid., page 182.

sees emotion as essentially social -- the product of thousands of years of cultural development --the emotional forces are "the dynamism of society." "Emotion, in all its vivid colouring, is the creation of ages of culture acting on the blind unfeeling instincts. All art, all education, all day-to-day social experience, draw it out of the heart of the human genotype and direct and shape its myriad phenomena. Only society as a whole can really direct this force in the individual."¹³ The failure of Freudianism to recognize that society, not individual therapists must be the instrument for the control of emotional forces vitiates for Caudwell any serious consideration of Freudianism as either scientific or therapeutic.

Caudwell clarifies his critique as follows. He calls the "instincts" purely mechanical innate responses that are capable of being modified by experience -- this includes both conscious and unconscious responses. The psyche is the product of the conscious and unconscious reflexes which are modifiable by our experiences, and it is grounded on, is a development out of, the physiological foundations described above. Social adaptation is brought about by consciousness. Individuals and the environment (physical and social) have a mutual interactive relationship. Every individual both affects and is affected by the environment --however, this interaction is not equally balanced. An individual consciousness finds itself interacting with millions of other consciousnesses which, like itself, have been produced by, and are subject to, the rules of culture, society, language, etc. The influence of the individual on the mass is miniscule compared with the influence of the mass upon

¹³ Ibid., page 183.

the individual. "In psychology, as in mechanics," Caudwell writes, "the reaction of a body on its cosmic environment can be neglected, as compared to the effect of the world on the body."¹⁴

The important thing to recognize in this context, the thing which Caudwell maintains Freud failed to recognize, is that sociology is not to be founded on, or explained in terms of, psychology, but rather psychology is to be understood only as resting upon the foundations of sociology -- and the only truly scientific sociology is that of historical materialism founded by Marx. We cannot understand the growth and evolution of the human psyche independently of the environment of social relations in which it is enmeshed from the moment of birth. Freud, on the contrary, projects the eternal struggle of the unchanging instincts onto the screen of culture and civilization and explains the historical development of mankind in terms of these instinctual desires and mechanisms produced by the psyche to repress and distort their energies. Freud is thus unable to explain the growth and development of civilization in any other but psychological terms. Caudwell likens Freud's enterprise to that of the men chained in Plato's cave and forced to deduce the nature of reality from the shadows cast upon the wall. The true causes of psychic phenomena are as far removed from Freud's psychology as are the true causes of the shadows removed from the dwellers in Plato's cave.

¹⁴ Ibid., page 185.

Caudwell calls Freudianism a preeminently "bourgeois psychology" -- one that can never "advance beyond the viewpoint of the 'individual in civil society.'"¹⁵ The psyche, for Caudwell a creation of the environment, is treated by Freud as a self-subsisting entity guided by mysterious inner forces and urges which alone determine its behavior and development. If we follow the pathway pointed out by Freud we will never arrive at a correct scientific understanding of our mental life. We must first understand Marxism. "The psyche is the organ of adaptation to social relations, therefore for psychology the laws determining social relations are fundamental."¹⁶ It is only within this framework, and upon this ground, that we can hope to achieve a scientific understanding and discover the true path to follow in constructing a psychology which will both explain our psychic life, and lead to a therapy capable of resolving the psychic problems that overwhelm individuals. "We owe much to Freud for his symbolic presentation of the discord between the deep and recent layers of men's minds; but he cannot heal us, for he cannot even teach us that first truth, that we must change the world in order to change ourselves."¹⁷

Before turning to Freud's writings themselves, in order to evaluate Caudwell's analysis, I want to present the views of Herbert Marcuse

¹⁵ Ibid., page 187.

¹⁶ Ibid., page 188.

¹⁷ Ibid., page 192.

as contained in Eros and Civilization: A Philosophical Inquiry into Freud.

Marcuse is important because, like Caudwell, he approaches Freud with an understanding and appreciation of Marxism and attempts to provide the foundations for a theory of social change which Caudwell deemed so necessary and so lacking in Freud's thought.¹⁸ Whether Marcuse's emendations of Freud's thought are reconcilable with Caudwell's outlook is a question we shall deal with at the end of this chapter.

Marcuse sees psychological categories as being primarily political categories resulting from the development of what he calls "industrial civilization" -- a term which Caudwell would look askance upon, no doubt, and replace with "monopoly capital." In any event, terminological questions aside, Marcuse maintains that our current economic and political system has encroached upon what little privacy and independence that our forefathers might have enjoyed as to render whatever private problems of a psychologically important nature which we may be subject to, in reality public problems and symptoms not so much of personal

¹⁸ Marcuse notes, for instance, that "The immense capabilities of the advanced industrial society are increasingly mobilized against the utilization of its own resources for the pacification of human existence. All talk about the abolition of repression, about life against death, etc., has to place itself into the actual framework of enslavement and destruction. Within this framework, even the liberties and gratifications of the individuals partake of the general suppression. Their liberation, instinctual as well as intellectual, is a political matter, and a theory of the chances and preconditions of such liberation must be a theory of social change." Herbert Marcuse, Eros and Civilization: A Philosophical Inquiry Into Freud (New York: Vintage Books, 1955) page xi.

distress as of fundamental disorders in society as a whole.¹⁹

Marcuse begins his analysis by basing himself on what he considers to be one of Freud's principal postulates -- that the human "instincts" must be repressed in order for civilization to exist. Marcuse's argument is that, while this postulate may be true of hitherto existing civilizations, it may not necessarily be the case that civilization qua civilization must rest on repressive mechanisms. Within the framework of Freud's own theory, Marcuse maintains, the question of the identification of repression and civilization must be reevaluated. Marcuse suggests that the dialectic of civilization and repression may "result only from a specific historical organization of human existence."²⁰

Marcuse claims that there is a "hidden trend" to be found in Freud's thought which renders it much more revolutionary than Freud or his followers thought. Freud thus appears to stand in relation to his theory in much the same way as Hegel stood in relation to his own philosophy. In both cases the theoretical elaborations of the thinkers provided grounds for much more radical conclusions and departures than they themselves were aware of.

¹⁹ "The traditional borderlines between psychology on the one side and political and social philosophy on the other have been made obsolete by the condition of man in the present era: formerly autonomous and identifiable psychical processes are being absorbed by the function of the individual in the state -- by his public existence. Psychological problems therefore turn into political problems: private disorder reflects more directly than before the disorder of the whole, and the cure of personal disorder depends more directly than before on the cure of the general disorder." Ibid., page xvii.

²⁰ Ibid., page 4.

In order to arrive at the "hidden trend," Marcuse starts by drawing up a table reflecting two groups of opposed aims -- one group characteristic of man as a primitive pre-civilized animal, the other characteristic of man in society -- the transformation of the first group into the second is, in Freudian terms, the triumph of the reality principle over that of the pleasure principle.

<u>Pleasure Principle</u>	<u>Reality Principle</u>
Pleasure	Restraint of Pleasure
Joy (Play)	Toil (Work)
Receptiveness	Productiveness
Absence of Repression	Security ²¹

Civilization results from the repression of the pleasure principle -- the aims of the defeated principle retreat into the unconscious but they continually seek to breakout into the conscious realm. Marcuse holds that "the return of the repressed makes up the tabooed and subterranean history of civilization. And the exploration of this history reveals not only the secret of the individual but also that of civilization. Freud's individual psychology is in its very essence social psychology. Repression is an historical phenomenon."²² Freud himself recognizes the economic basis of the development of civilization -- scarcity renders it impossible for men to live together by means of the pleasure principle. Marcuse points out that the view which holds "that a non-repressive civilization

²¹ Ibid., page 12.

²² Ibid., page 15.

is impossible is a cornerstone of Freudian theory."²³ Thus, Freud's views not only expose the repressive aspects of our civilization, but justify them and support them -- a charge earlier made by Caudwell.

It is at this point that Marcuse begins to uncover the "hidden trend." He reminds us of the role which memory plays in psychoanalysis. The repressed individual liberates himself from his neurotic symptoms by remembering his primal urges and destroying the repressive mechanisms constructed by his rationalizing consciousness. Marcuse sees this as a form of liberation and maintains that the road to a liberated future lies on the way of concentration on uncovering and understanding the past. He sees regression as essentially progressive. Marcuse thinks this insight of his separates him from Freud, for whom memory was merely the mechanism for adapting us to our present -- not the means for attaining a new and better future. In order to better explicate his views, Marcuse divides the mutually interrelated individual-societal complex into its two abstract components, and proposes to first explain the origin of repressed individuals and then of repressed civilization. In this way he hopes the "hidden trend" in Freud's thought will become manifest.

As far as individual psychology is concerned, Marcuse concentrates on Freud's final systematic presentation of his theory of instincts. Man is controlled by two basic instinctual drives -- life (Eros) and death. At this point, Freud holds to "the fundamental regressive or 'conservative'

²³ Ibid., page 16.

tendency in all instinctual life."²⁴ He holds that man's instinctual life is striving for equilibrium and rest -- for a return to the inorganic world. At this point, the concept of the Nirvana principle is brought forth. The pleasure principle is subordinated to this new principle comprising a more general concept. The unconscious identifies pleasure with this peaceful state of inorganic return -- thus melding together the pleasure principle with the death instincts. Nevertheless, other instinctual drives must be reckoned with -- namely the instinctual drives relating to sexual fulfillment. Thus, Eros arises and a struggle between the life and death instincts emerges. Which of these two instincts is the most fundamental for Freud is a problem that has not yet been solved -- the textual evidence to be found in his last works is vague. Marcuse thinks that it is an open question just what Freud's final conclusions were.

Marcuse is interested in discovering the common source and beginning of these two basic instincts. The dualism which many find in Freud (e.g., Caudwell) is, in Marcuse's opinion, illusory. In his final works, Freud's insistence on the conservative aspects of all instincts coupled with his view that it was difficult, if not fruitless to point to any drives that were not ultimately linked to Eros suggests to Marcuse the incorrectness of all dualistic interpretations of Freud's final position. Indeed, he thinks Freud's last formulation has "a suspense and depth which make it one of the great intellectual ventures in the science of man. The quest for the common origin of the two basic instincts can no longer be silenced."²⁵ If we look more closely at the "death instinct" we see

²⁴ Ibid., page 22.

²⁵ Ibid., page 26.

it is basically a flight from repression and an unhappy existence. "The death instinct is destructiveness not for its own sake, but for the relief of tension. The descent towards death is an unconscious flight from pain and want. It is an expression of the eternal struggle against suffering and repression. And the death instinct itself seems to be affected by the historical changes which affect this struggle."²⁶ The instincts as historically determined, rather than as innate immutable drives (cf. Caudwell) will be better understood, according to Marcuse, by looking at Freud's final views on the structure of personality.

It is in his last formulations of the theory of the personality that Freud introduces the famous triad of id, ego, and super-ego. These three terms are sufficiently well known as not to require any special explanation -- they should be kept in mind as reference points with regard to the discussion which follows.

Marcuse addresses himself to one of the major criticisms of Freud's thought. This is the position that he has generalized the cultural restrictions of his own time into universal instinctual repressions and urges valid for all times and places. The developing Ego, Marcuse points out, is faced with a specific historical condition confronting it -- "an historical world" -- and the reality principle which underpins the Ego is thus of a specifically historically conditioned nature. Freud's treatment of these situations tends to transform historically contingent conditions into biologically determined ones. Marcuse holds that this criticism

²⁶ Ibid., page 27.

is by and large just, but it overlooks a real truth that Freud was trying to express -- namely, that heretofore all forms of the reality principle have led to the repression of man's instinctual nature. More simply put, Marcuse says Freud "expresses the historical fact that civilization has progressed as organized domination."²⁷

Marcuse's position is thus based on Freud but reworks his notions into an historical interpretation rather than a biological one. He maintains that what we discover when we read Freud are historical developments that have been "reified" into biological developments. This must be kept in mind as we pursue our exploration of Marcuse's thought.

He introduces two of his own terms at this point -- "surplus repression" and "performance principle." Let us first look at what he means by "surplus repression." We know already that in order for men to live together in civilization (or culture -- neither Marcuse or Freud differentiate these concepts) their instinctual drives must be repressed to the level necessary for social intercourse. We also know that it is due to scarcity that society is organized in the way it is. Here is where Marcuse separates himself from Freud. Repression is not always the result of scarcity per se as Freud would have it -- but rather, as Marcuse emphasizes, of "a specific organization of scarcity." The influence of Marxism begins now to show in Marcuse's views. Different civilizations and different historical periods within the same civilization have organized the

²⁷ Ibid., page 32.

distribution of scarcity in various ways -- as many ways, so as many different forms of the reality principle. Not only this, but "the specific historical institutions of the reality principle and the specific interests of domination introduce additional controls over and above those indispensable for civilized human association. These additional controls arising from the specific institutions of domination are what we denote as surplus-repression."²⁸ The question which immediately arises is -- is it possible to construct a society in which human beings can freely associate, which lacks domination and thus surplus-repression, and in which man and civilization can be finally reconciled? We shall return to this question.

The other new term, "performance principle," denotes the specific form of the reality principle which, Marcuse says, exists in modern times. He says that "under its rule society is stratified according to the competitive economic performances of its members."²⁹ The forces which drive on Eros are harnessed towards the goals of modern industrial society. Man finds himself in an "alienated" state, Marcuse says, since the major portion of his time is directed not towards his own ends but towards the social ends determined by the nature of his society and directed by the dominant groups controlling power. Repression thus functions to adapt the individual to the needs of the status quo and to condition him into their acceptance. The super-ego thus acts as an internal representative, not of morality or values as such, but as the specific repre-

²⁸ Ibid., page 34.

²⁹ Ibid., page 41.

sentative of an historically conditioned performance principle. As society becomes more complex the need for regimentation and repression increases. The balance between the life and death instincts becomes upset. The ego's function of controlling the fantastic desires of the id becomes more complicated as the super-ego demands ever more repression. Marcuse says the super-ego becomes ever more destructive vis-a-vis the ego as it orders increased psychic energy be expended to deny the id its gratifications in order to satisfy the increasing demands for conformity and regimentation as society advances along the road of technical advance. Following Freud, Marcuse holds that, due to its life denying and repressive functions, the super-ego becomes the general headquarters for the forces of the death instinct. Thus a super destructive potential begins to build up within the individuals of advance technological society. We are now no longer on the grounds of individual psychology but of social psychology. We must at this juncture turn our attention to the origin of repressed civilization.

Marcuse begins by summarizing Freud's views on the origin of civilization as he presented them in Moses and Monotheism -- the theoretical part of which is based on his earlier researches into the field of ethnology and published as Totem and Taboo.

Freud's position is that present day civilization is strongly affected in its origins in prehistory because we carry about within us "memory traces" based on the experiences of our ancestors. We thus have an "archaic heritage." This heritage is so influential that, as it were, it programs the later development of the ego. Marcuse remarks that Freud's theory of the archaic heritage and his schematization of the development

of civilization -- i.e., primal horde, clans, matriarchy, etc., (we shall return to this) has been, to put it mildly, strongly attacked and finds little present day acceptance. "The difficulties in scientific verification and even in logical consistency are obvious and perhaps insurmountable."³⁰ Marcuse is only interested in its "symbolic value." We can treat Freud's theory, then, as myth, rather like those we encounter in reading Plato -- its value does not lie in its historical veracity but in its heuristic value alone.

In the beginning, then, was the primal horde dominated by one male who maintained exclusive sexual rights with all the women and kept the other males at bay -- rather like a walrus colony. The dominant male (the father) thus set up patterns of restraint and subjection to authority in the inchoate psyches of the other members of the horde. This "primal patriarchal despotism" sets the course for all future civilization. It doesn't last long, however, as the other males kill off the horde despot and eat his remains (to assimilate his power and authority). This is the point "civilization" begins. The victorious males rule jointly by means of the "brother clan" and by means of "guilt feelings" institute prohibitions and taboos in order to consolidate and perpetuate the group. With the death of the despot and the sharing of power within the brother clan, the status of women and their importance in the regulation of

³⁰ Ibid., page 54

communal life began to increase. Women did not share in the original guilt of the killing of the despot and were slowly defered to in questions of child rearing and clan organization. The matriarchate is established. With the advancement of technical progress and the importance of war and hunting gradually coming to the fore, the matriarchate is "replaced by a patriarchal counter-revolution, and the latter is stabilized by the institutionalization of religion."³¹

It is important to emphasize that Marcuse is not claiming that this sequence is actually historical. Nevertheless, something more or less similar must have happened or at least must be postulated to have happened if we are going to arrive at any understanding of the origins of the type of repression in civilized societies that Marcuse is attempting to explain. This is primarily the repression of the sexual instincts and the placing of them in the service of the reality principle.

Marcuse remarks that Freud saw this paradigm -- the overthrowing of authority and its reinstitution in other forms -- as "re-enacted" in each generation and in each individual in the course of their development. It is on this basis that the hidden trend in psychoanalysis is to be understood, since Freud accounts for this perpetual recurrence in terms of the idea of the "return of the repressed."

But how can these repressed emotions, arising from a prehistoric past, possibly be operative today? Freud's answer -- that we carry about "memory traces" in our unconscious mind, seems much too mythical

³¹ Ibid., page 59.

and unscientific -- it has been almost universally rejected, as Marcuse points out. However, it may be possible to explain this concept of "the return of the repressed" without resorting to innate "memory traces." Marcuse suggests that this can be deduced from Freud himself. The reinforcement of repressions against the innate drives and instincts builds up over the generations and would, according to Marcuse, produce the same effects with or without any "memory traces" from the primal horder lingering about in the unconscious. More to the point, the complete externalization of these ancient events in terms of poetry, mythology and the verbal traditions of primitive peoples allows the "memory traces" of the events to enter into the psyche of each new generation without the need of postulating any genetic carrier of this information. Marcuse maintains that, as history has developed, the image of the primal despot, or father, has merged "with duly constituted authority. Domination has outgrown the sphere of personal relationships and created the institutions for the orderly satisfaction of human needs on an expanding scale. But it is precisely the development of these institutions which undermines the established basis of civilization. Its inner limits appear in the late industrial age."³²

In order to understand what all this means we have to turn to Marcuse's chapter on the dialectic of civilization. Here Marcuse points out that with the increasing complexity of civilization the repressions against our aggressive tendencies must become more intense -- but

³² Ibid., page 70.

this can occur only if the forces of Eros can be increased, for only Eros, "can effectively 'bind' the destructive instincts."³³ And, Marcuse stresses, it is just this increase in Eros which our civilization is incapable of producing since it is based on "intensified regimentation and control." From this point on, in my opinion, Marcuse's discussion alternates between interesting extensions of Freud's theory and dubious speculations of his own mint. While it is true that "late industrial civilization" has dramatically increased the powers of destruction and oppression and at the same time provided by scientific and technological development the possibility of eliminating destruction and oppression, it is not so obvious that this increased destructiveness and oppressiveness can be explained primarily in terms of "instinctual roots." While not ruling out entirely the psychological theories previously discussed, a reader of Caudwell might, at this point, expect some discussion along Marxist lines dealing with modes of production, the development of capitalism, etc., to round out the picture. Marcuse, however, sticks to his psychological categories. He reiterates his distinction between regular and "surplus" repression, and says that the civilization with the least amount of surplus repression is also the least repressive. If we remember that repression functions to restrain our instinctual gratifications in the interest of a common political and social life, and that the increased demand made upon individuals by the growing complexity of civilization as it develops automatically increases the amount of repression required, we can see why

³³ Ibid., page 74.

Marcuse concludes that "the necessity of repression, and of the suffering derived from it, varies with the maturity of civilization, with the extent of the achieved rational mastery of nature and of society."³⁴ Surplus repression functions solely on the side of the ruling class as it is that extra amount of repression individuals must internalize in order to be content with the particular ruling group that is culturally in place -since this group lives by exploiting the majority, the majority has a built in acceptance of the status quo.

The still prevailing impoverishment of vast areas of the world is no longer due chiefly to the poverty of human and natural resources but to the manner in which they are distributed and utilized. This difference may be irrelevant to politics and to politicians but it is of decisive importance to a theory of civilization which derives the need for repression from the 'natural' and perpetual disproportion between human desires and ³⁵ the environment in which they must be satisfied.

The question, then, is -- must repression and surplus repression continue on into the future as they have in the past? Must civilization become more and more repressive until the forces of repression become so oppressive that instinctual drives can no longer tolerate them and break forth in an orgy of self-destruction and annihilation? The answer is to be found in Part Two of Eros and Civilization. The question, as Marcuse phrases it, is "whether the continued rule of the performance principle as the reality principle must be taken for granted (so that the trend of civilization must be viewed in the light of the same prin-

³⁴ Ibid., page 80.

³⁵ Ibid., page 84.

principle), or whether the performance principle has perhaps created the preconditions for a qualitatively different, non-repressive reality principle."³⁶

Marcuse maintains that Freud essentially equates the reality principle as such with what Marcuse has called the performance principle. If Marcuse is right about the historically conditioned nature of the reality principle then, he says, Freud's "dialectic of civilization would lose its finality." Marcuse also stresses that the historical nature of the reality principle would also historicize the instincts since the life and death drives would be different when operating in the context of a different reality principle. The greatest argument against his view, as Marcuse sees it, is Freud's position on the unalterable nature of the basic instinctual drives -- if being destructive is a "primary instinct" then the main thrust of Eros and Civilization is "idle speculation."

Marcuse reminds us that the death and life instincts work in tandem and that as long as life is developing and growing it is the libido which ultimately governs our instinctual drives. This being the case, the nature of the death instinct (and the heretofore existing nature of human destructiveness) could be modified if there were a qualitative change in the essential characteristics of libido. Marcuse must now point out how it would be possible, in the period of late industrial civilization, to bring about a change in the libido so that it would be free of the repressive structures with which it is now encumbered. The discussion now focuses

³⁶ Ibid., page 117.

upon that portion of our mental life which is relatively free from bondage to the performance principle.

We find such an area of mental life, Marcuse notes, as Freud himself recognized in the realm of phantasy. Phantasy is a pathway which leads from the unconscious to one of the most developed areas of conscious life -- that of artistic creation. Here then is a bond between illusion and reality which "preserves the archetypes of the genus, the perpetual but repressed ideas of the collective and individual memory, the tabooed images of freedom."³⁷ In the development of individuals the realm of phantasy comes to existence during the process of our early growth when the reality ego gradually supplants the pleasure ego. Phantasy and imagination represent the drives and goals of the ego before the triumph of the reality principle in conscious life -- before, Marcuse says, the individual becomes cognizant of himself as a separate entity counterposed to other individuals. The truth to which the imagination is committed is different from that to which the reality principle adheres. "Imagination envisions the reconciliation of the individual with the whole, desire with realization, of happiness with reason."³⁸ It is, to use Caudwell's term, in the creation of the mock world of art that the truths of the imagination manifest themselves and become a form of knowledge. The power behind our aesthetic understanding is the claim of the imagination for a "harmony of sensuousness and reason" -- it is "the eternal protest

³⁷ Ibid., page 128.

³⁸ Ibid., page 130.

against the organization of life by the logic of domination, the critique of the performance principle."³⁹ We must now remark, as Marcuse says, that one of the most important functions of the performance principle is to repress the pleasure principle in the interests of society's needed work, as exemplified by the length of the working day. If the work day could be reduced a vast amount of repression currently applied by the performance principle could evaporate leading to the overthrow of that principle itself as it is currently structured. If this could be accomplished, a real growth in human freedom could be anticipated. It should here be noted that Marcuse thinks that this can only be accomplished by reducing the living standards in the late industrial states. This, however, is arguable. The reduction of the extravagant standards of our ruling groups (for which surplus repression exists) along with the concomitant increase in the standards of the deprived may actually bring about an over-all increase in the living standards found in our civilization as a whole. Be that as it may, Marcuse fails to mention that it is just this reduction in working time, the overthrow of the performance principle if you like, in the interests of developing human personality and freedom, that Marxist thinkers, Caudwell among them, have put forth as the theoretical end result of the establishment of communism.

The major objection, as Marcuse sees it, to his notion of overthrowing the performance principle is the argument that there will always be some amount of unpleasant work to be done in order to maintain civilization and, since the basic instincts always push for immediate

³⁹ Ibid.

gratification, there will thus always be the need for a certain modicum of repression. In order to overcome this objection, Marcuse has to make a case for the substitution of the term "instinctual liberation" for "instinctual repression" in the Freudian sequence of repression, necessary labor, civilization. Marcuse reminds us that, in his view, the repression associated with the performance principle is really surplus repression based not on the necessity of labor per se but only on particular historically conditioned forms of its social organization. "If this is true, the emergence of a non-repressive reality principle would alter rather than destroy the social organization of labor: the liberation of Eros could create new and durable work relations."⁴⁰ Marcuse, however, does not commit himself to the view that a new civilization will eventually emerge based on these principles. It is enough to point out the possibilities of such an occurrence and to demonstrate that even in the context of the Freudian analysis of human nature and civilization the seeds for such a transformation can be discovered. Having uncovered the "hidden trend" in Freud's thought is Marcuse's contribution to this task. We will thus take our leave of Eros and Civilization with this final observation on the possibility of a non-repressive reality principle --one freed from the necessity of oppressing the free development of libido, and this conception -- Marcuse's major point -- can implicitly be discovered in Freud's own writings and those of some of his followers -- this is the

⁴⁰ Ibid., page 140.

"idea of civilization very different from that derived from repressive sublimation, namely, civilization evolving from and sustained by free libidinal relations."⁴¹

Marcuse's interpretation of Freud goes beyond what Freud himself explicitly formulated -- yet is reconcilable with his basic outlook. Caudwell's Freud and Marcuse's Freud are not at loggerheads. I hope the above discussion of Eros and Civilization will throw some light on what follows.

Caudwell derived his understanding of Freudianism from six basic works (listed along with the Collected Papers in the bibliography of Illusion and Reality) -- they were The Interpretation of Dreams, Introductory Lectures on Psychoanalysis, Totem and Taboo, Group Psychology and the Analysis of the Ego, The Ego and the Id, and The Future of an Illusion.

Let us remember that Caudwell held that Freud made great empirical advances in the science of psychology -- such as are discussed in the Interpretation of Dreams -- i.e., the discovery of an ordered mental life within the unconscious -- and the Introductory Lectures. Nevertheless, according to Caudwell, Freud's theoretical elaboration of his empirical discoveries is not warranted -- in the earlier part of this chapter we

⁴¹ Ibid., page 189. Marcuse also notes that "Geza Roheim used Ferenczi's notion of a 'genitofugal libido' to support his theory of the libidinous origin of culture. With the relief of extreme tension, libido flows back from the object to the body, and this 'recathecting of the whole organism with libido results in a feeling of happiness in which the organisms find their reward for work and stimulation to further activity.' The concept assumes a genitofugal 'libido trend to the development of culture' -- in other words, an inherent trend in the libido itself toward 'cultural' expression, without external repressive modification. And this 'cultural' trend in the libido seems to be genitofugal, that is to say away from the genital supremacy toward the erotization of the entire organism. These concepts come close to recognizing the possibility of non-repressive sublimation. The rest is left to speculation." Ibid., pages 189-90.

have seen how he considers Freud's theory to be a form of bourgeois idealism. If we turn to Freud's works themselves we see the justice of Caudwell's remarks. None of Caudwell's criticisms of Freud, however, are related to Marcuse's development of Freud's basic ideas, nor should we forget that Freud's works are full of reservations which explicitly recognize the tentative nature of his conclusions. The later theoretical works, which Caudwell found so untenable, Freud himself acknowledges as speculative. Nevertheless, Freud's theory labors under the restrictions of bourgeois individualism to such an extent that it is understandable why Marxists, especially in the 30s when fascism was the major problem of the day, so heartily rejected it and why Caudwell's few appreciative remarks were taken out of context and his critical reservations overlooked by some Marxist thinkers (earlier chapters have dealt with this). The following quote from The Future of an Illusion (1927) will exemplify this:

It is just as impossible to do without control of the mass by a minority as it is to dispense with coercion in the work of civilization. For masses are lazy and unintelligent: they have no love for instinctual renunciation, and they are not to be convinced by argument of its inevitability; and the individuals composing them support one another in giving free reign to their indiscipline. It is only through the influence of individuals who can set an example and whom masses recognize as their leaders that they can be induced to perform the work and undergo the renunciations⁴² on which the existence of civilization depends.

At first sight the critics of Caudwell, Freud and Marcuse are likely to be reinforced in their negative judgments -- "Aha, here is contempt

⁴² Sigmund Freud, The Future of an Illusion (N.Y.: W.W.Norton, 1961) translated by James Strachey, pages 7-8.

for the masses of working people, an appeal to a fascist notion of 'leaders' and a view that people are always going to be the same and must be subjected to coercion. What more need be said to substantiate the position that Caudwell by flirting, even critically, with Freud's ideas has departed from Marxism?" In fact, this is just the criticism to which Caudwell was subjected, as we saw in the chapter on the "Caudwell Debate." A closer reading, however, of Freud's book provides the grounds for rejecting this first impression. Freud claims that the above characterization is a "purely descriptive judgement"⁴³ based on "an investigation for which our own long-consolidated civilization affords us material."⁴⁴ That human nature must remain the same, Freud admits "I do not know"⁴⁵ -- but by changing our social environment (primarily by means of education -- Freud is, after all, not a Marxist) he maintains that it would be possible, perhaps, to "succeed in achieving a state of things in which life will become tolerable for everyone and civilization no longer oppressive to anyone."⁴⁶

These quotations show the undercurrent in Freud's thought that Marcuse put so much stock in and it also gives us some idea as to why Caudwell did not reject some of Freud's ideas out of hand. A more detailed discussion of Freud is not warranted in a work primarily concerned with

⁴³ Ibid., page 49.

⁴⁴ Ibid., page 9.

⁴⁵ Ibid., page 48.

⁴⁶ Ibid., page 50.

Christopher Caudwell, indeed, I may have spent too much space on Marcuse's ideas in this chapter. There are three points, however, I hope to have established. First, that Caudwell, while influenced by Freud, was in no sense a "Freudian" nor did he uncritically and eclectically try to blend together Marxism and Freudianism. Second, that Marcuse's attempt to interpret Freud in a Marxist manner is in no way contrary to the spirit of Freudianism and provides the basis for a better Marxist understanding of both Freud's theory and Caudwell's criticisms of it. Third, that Caudwell's views on Freud are due to his initial reading of Freud in the context of the 1930s anti-fascist movement and that Marcuse's emendations allow us to better appreciate both Freud and Caudwell.

We have traced Caudwell's major ideas and their interpretations and evaluation from their inception nearly fifty years ago up to the threshold of the 1960s and 70s. The next chapter will present contemporary evaluations of Caudwell's achievements. Like the chapter on the "Caudwell Debate," a number of articles from journals will be discussed -- unlike the previous chapter these articles do not share a common theme -- a focus of debate. Nevertheless, the question of Caudwell's "Marxism" still seems to be at issue, and dominates articles appearing in such disparate publications as New Left Review and The British Journal of Aesthetics.

CHAPTER VII

Contemporary Critical Assessments of Caudwell

We have traced Caudwell's development and the influences and reactions of and to his ideas over the past thirty or so years. While, in general, journal articles and studies of his work have been few and far between, there have recently appeared, in the 1970s, several articles dealing specifically with Caudwell and at least one related article which deals with the problem of constructing "a uniquely authentic Marxist aesthetics" which sheds a great deal of light on the previously discussed debate on Caudwell's "orthodoxy" or lack of "orthodoxy." This particular article, "The Impossibility of a Uniquely Authentic Marxist Aesthetics," published in the British Journal of Aesthetics in 1976 by James P. Scanlan, I intend to discuss at the close of this chapter.

The major portion of this chapter will deal with three recent articles on Caudwell which I will analyse in detail and criticize point by point in an attempt to show that Caudwell cannot be understood if he is divorced from his own context of 1930s Marxism. All three of these articles share a common theme which is that Caudwell did not understand Marxism and that consequently whatever perspective underlies Illusion and Reality it is not a Marxist one. Thus we see the 1970s repeating the charges made against Caudwell in the 1950s by Cornforth and others. In the following discussion, in which I focus a great deal on the individual

arguments presented in these three articles, I want to show that by failing to see that Marxism is the basic theoretical outlook and integument of Caudwell's position the critics do not understand him and that attempts to show that Caudwell did not, in effect, understand his own position are simply not warranted. It is from this perspective, therefore, that the following critical assessments are to be viewed. At the close of this chapter I will summarize just what I take to have been Caudwell's contribution to a Marxist understanding of the arts.

The first article I wish to discuss is "The Marxist Aesthetics of Christopher Caudwell," by Francis Mulhern, which appeared in 1974 in New Left Review.¹ In this article Mulhern first summarizes what he considers to be Caudwell's major points and offers his own appraisal and conclusions. Many of the ideas Mulhern expresses in the first part of his paper will be familiar from my chapter outlining Illusion and Reality. I am presenting some of them again since they function in the nature of a brief review of Caudwell's aesthetics and it is important to have them freshly in mind in order to properly appreciate Mulhern's critical remarks in his appraisal.

Mulhern maintains that Caudwell's theory is based on two basic theses -- an epistemological one and an historical one. In the first, Caudwell contends that there is a dialectical unity between subject and object, i.e., nature as object is confronted by a subject which works

¹ Francis Mulhern, "The Marxist Aesthetics of Christopher Caudwell," New Left Review, no. 85, May-June, 1974, pages 37-58.

on it and in this way creates itself.² For Caudwell "concrete living" comes before speculation and abstraction. In the second thesis (the historical one) we find that history (or sociology) studies "concrete living" and formulates the laws regarding the transition from one type of living system to another. For Caudwell, the contradiction which drives on economic development is the struggle between man and nature -- the aim of all history and society is liberation from the powers of nature.³ These general remarks of Mulhern's are all right as far as they go, but it must be remarked, contra Mulhern, that for Caudwell there is a more crucial contradiction responsible for driving on economic development. Society comes into existence as a result of the contradiction between man and nature (i.e., "between instinct and cultural environment") but this is not what drives on economic development. Caudwell clearly states, following Marx, that "class divisions rend society in twain, and

² Ibid., page 40.

³ Christopher Caudwell, Illusion and Reality: A Study of the Sources of Poetry (N.Y.: International Publishers, 1970): "This contradiction between instinct and cultural environment is absolutely primary to society. Just as the specific form of it we have been analysing drives on the development of capitalist society, so this general contradiction drives on the development of all society. In language this contradiction is represented by the opposition between the rational content or objective existence expressed by words and the emotional content or subjective attitude expressed by the same words. It is impossible to separate the two completely, because they are given in the way language is generated -- in man's struggle with Nature. But science (or reality) is the special field of the former, and poetry (or illusion) the domain of the latter. Hence poetry in some form is as eternal to society as man's struggle with Nature, a struggle of which association in economic production is the outcome." Page 125.

yet are the only means by which society can pass to higher stages of productive development ..."⁴

Mulhern further reminds us that in order to understand contemporary capitalist society from Caudwell's view we must introduce a third thesis -- that of the "Bourgeois Illusion" -- i.e., that freedom consists in "individualism," in the breaking of social obligations and ties, in the notion of "me" against the world, etc. The bourgeoisie saw in the market the freedom from feudal relations it sought for -- it saw only relations between a man and things -- but Caudwell points out that this is an illusion. The market is a blind relation between men disguised to look like relations between men and things. This is also known as "commodity fetishism." Bourgeois society thus destroys human togetherness. Mulhern thinks these notions of Caudwell's should be compared to those of Lukacs in his early History and Class Consciousness -- but Caudwell and Lukacs are both only echoing The Communist Manifesto and the first volume of Capital.⁵

The idea of the "Bourgeois Illusion," as we have seen elsewhere, is the red thread of Caudwell's criticism in many diverse fields -- he uses it, Mulhern points out, against Freud (free the instincts from culture), D.H. Lawrence (the instinctual self), Shaw (who avoided collective

⁴ Ibid., page 37.

⁵ Cf., Section 4 of Chapter I of Capital, "The Fetishism of Commodities and the Secret thereof" -- pages 71-83 in Karl Marx, Capital: A Critical Analysis of Capitalist Production, Volume I (N.Y.: International Publishers, 1967).

thought for that of the enlightened individual -- "intellectual Samurai" who would paternalistically educate the masses), and Wells (the free intelligence).⁶ Caudwell makes a distinction between the hero and the charlatan -the hero leads people, however dimly, towards the future, while the charlatan leads them back to old and hopeless solutions. Lenin was the model of the hero -- he knew his job and what he could do -he acted in accordance with Engel's idea of "freedom" -- i.e., the recognition of necessity.

Mulhern further emphasizes that in Illusion and Reality Caudwell tries to create a Marxist poetics -- this leads to a study of language as a social construct needing dialectical and historical materialism for its explication. The Marxist approach allows us to view both concrete living and the ideological constructs of a given society. Caudwell, according to Mulhern, hoped, upon this basis, to study poetry. Mulhern deals with two aspects of Caudwell's theory: 1) the development of language, and 2) the primordial function of poetry.

Language is a product of society -- it uses words, and a word both tries to name a reality and to carry an emotional response to that reality. The struggle between man and nature produces language so that language not only pictures the world but describes an attitude towards it -- it has an objective and a subjective function. We are already familiar with the terms Caudwell uses to characterize these two functions of

⁶ There are separate studies devoted to Shaw, Lawrence, Freud and Wells in Christopher Caudwell, Studies in a Dying Culture reprinted in Studies and Further Studies in a Dying Culture (N.Y. & London: Monthly Review Press, 1971).

language. Its objective function or role is to present the common perceptual world -- a correct reflection of material reality -- its subjective role is to present the common affective world by means of communicating "feeling tones" based on a common social experience. Science (reality) and Art (illusion) thus develop. Man's consciousness of the world is a result of the unification of both these outlooks -- the result of the dialectic of affect and cognition. Science tends towards a purely objective description, free of emotion, while art stresses the emotional needs of the "I" -- each consciousness is made up of both drives as it were. To meet this demand (for unification) science introduces the mock ego. "Poetry's purpose," Mulhern writes, "is to define and transmit affects, to socialize them by inclusion in the Common Affective World."⁷ Poetry thus constructs a mock world for us to share in.

All art is functional in a social way according to Caudwell. "Only those things are recognized as art-forms which have a conscious social function."⁸ In dreams the importance of the "I" is first (not always the case in waking life) and new ideas can be tested unbothered by the actuality of the material world -- thus the dream state can also release tensions and socialize the individual. The transfer of these functions, Mulhern explains, from the dream-state to the waking-state is the creation of poetry. The poet brings to consciousness new feelings, etc., and it is his job to incorporate them by means of art into the common affective

⁷ Mulhern, op. cit., page 46.

⁸ From Studies in a Dying Culture, quoted by Mulhern, Ibid.

world. "Thus poetry is the psychological agent in a general historical movement: by harmonizing instinct and environment it facilitates the struggle of man against Nature. 'The change of the ego' for the purposes of social production 'is the value, purpose and mode of generation' of poetry."⁹

Mulhern mentions Arnold's view that the notion that the Idea is everything vis a vis poetry is wrong (a direct contrast to what Hegel maintained as we know from the chapter on Hegel) since poetry cannot be translated due to the fact that specific poetic emotion is lost in translation. This incidentally, is also a major difference between Hegel and Caudwell.¹⁰ In translation poetry loses its untranslatable 'glow' or 'affective' part -- poetry is irrational with respect to the environment but not so with respect to the emotions. A symbol is a transitive sign -- poetry is not symbolic, it is concrete -- it has no external only internal symbolism, that is to say, unlike science and its different theories, the works of art do not contradict one another -- however, if we were to see scientific theories as paradigms in Kuhn's sense they too would no more contradict one another than would art works.¹¹ Along these lines it may be possible to draw closer parallels between "science" and "art." At any rate, poetry is concrete since emotions are ultimately tied to real objects. "Aesthetic objects are such only 'in so far as they arouse emotions peculiar not to individual men but to associated men.' Thus, the first person singular of poetry denotes not 'the individual in civil society' but 'the "I" common

⁹ Mulhern, op. cit., page 47. Cf. Illusion and Reality, page 236.

¹⁰ Cf. our chapter 5 on Hegel.

¹¹ Cf. Thomas S. Kuhn, The Structure of Scientific Revolutions, 2nd enlarged edition (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1970).

to all associated men's emotional worlds."¹² "In sum," Mulhern writes, "poetry is an untranslatable verbal structure, irrational, rhythmic, fictive and characterized by condensed affects."¹³

Caudwell's discussion of the sociology of English literature gives one example of the struggle between man and nature as reflected in poetry. He divides modern poetry -- i.e., English modern poetry, into three periods. Mulhern will refer to the first and last periods to illustrate Caudwell's method. Three periods are: 1. Primitive Accumulation, 2. Industrial Revolution, 3. The Decline of Capitalism.

The first period has Shakespeare (also Marlowe) as its greatest representative -- this period is marked in poetry and drama by unfettered individualism. By the Nineteenth Century art had become a mere commodity. Caudwell says that art pour l'art was a reaction to this development but that this Aestheticism itself was only the commodity-fetishism peculiar to the tribe of artists. Finally, Surrealism with its free association retreated into private phantasy, became non-social, and therefore art ceased to exist. Caudwell thought of the Surrealists as the last of the Bourgeois revolutionaries. Thus, Mulhern reiterates, all art expresses a stage in the struggle between man and nature. "We end where we began, with the struggle between man and Nature, 'first and only mover' of the Caudwellian universe."¹⁴

¹² Mulhern, op. cit., page 48. Cf., Illusion and Reality, page 135.

¹³ Ibid.

¹⁴ Ibid., page 51. We have already seen how inappropriate is Mulhern's use of the word "only" in this context.

Thus does Mulhern summarize Caudwell's achievement. How does he evaluate it? He thinks Caudwell has made three major advances over previous English Marxists. First, he broke with the traditions of English philosophy which had supported the positivist separation of Subject and Object. Following Marx's lead in Theses on Feuerbach, Caudwell rejected all such dualities. (I would like to add, however, this does not imply that he had an idealist view of the unity of subject and object, but rather that he was advocating the Marxist view of their dialectical unity within a materialist context.) Second,

Having restored the unity of consciousness and reality, Caudwell was able to repudiate the notion of literature as object in favour of the more fertile idea of literature as practice. In Illusion and Reality, poetry is seen not as reflection, but as a specific mode of formulation of the real: it is in no sense a transcription either of individual subjectivity (expression) or of 'Reality' (representation); rather, it co-operates in the production of historically necessary forms of social consciousness.¹⁵

Mulhern points out that Raymond Williams has also advanced this view.

Third, poetry as practice differs from phenomenology (whose "I" of experience is central) because of Caudwell's "I" being a socially constructed ego founded by the common affective world. Hence, "the artist does not express himself in art forms, he finds himself therein."¹⁶ Mulhern likens these views to those of the new textual Semiotics and to Lucian Goldman's notion of the "transindividual subject."¹⁷

¹⁵ Ibid. Cf., Illusion and Reality, pages 152, 195-96.

¹⁶ Ibid., quoting page 43 of Studies in a Dying Culture. Cf., Illusion and Reality, pages 150, 220.

¹⁷ Ibid. Mulhern also refers to Lucian Goldman, The Human Sciences and Philosophy, pages 27-28, 125ff.

For these reasons, Mulhern considers Caudwell's views to have been a radical advance in terms of Marxist theory.

Mulhern now turns his attention to what he calls Caudwell's "Historicism." He suggests that no literary theory will be more adequate than the notion of historical materialism underlying it -- in Caudwell (as Marx) this theory is implicit in his works and not explicitly formulated.¹⁸ Mulhern maintains that Caudwell's theory is historicist in Althusser's sense, and he gives the following quotation from Reading Capital:

It constructs a social whole that is 'reducible' to an inner essence, of which the elements of the whole are no more than the phenomenal forms of expression, the inner principle of the essence being present at each point in the whole, such that at each moment it is possible to write the immediately adequate equation: such and such an element (economic, political, legal, literary, religious, etc.¹⁹ in Hegel) = the inner essence of the whole.

However, Mulhern notes that Althusser's critique of historicism is "generic" and is not all that useful when applied to specific instances. Caudwell's work cannot simply be dismissed because of charges of "historicism." Mulhern continues:

For Caudwell, the 'subject' of the historical process is the economy, which is constituted in the struggle between man and Nature. This polar contradiction reproduces itself at every social level, in a series of homologous, epiphen-

¹⁸ Anyone familiar with the opening from the preface to Contribution to a Critique of Political Economy, would be less than enthusiastic in calling Marx's theory only implicitly stated.

¹⁹ Mulhern, op. cit., page 53. Cf. Louis Althusser and Etienne Balibar, Reading Capital (N.Y.: Pantheon Books, 1970), pages 186-87.

omenal oppositions: subject/object, affect/cognition, art/science, Beauty/Truth. Together they compose a unitary social practice, the historical aim of which is freedom from the forces of Nature.²⁰

Much as Cornforth before him, Mulhern maintains that Caudwell's theory of the "Bourgeois Illusion" will not stand the test of empirical examination -- he cites as counter-examples Hobbes and Arnold as well as Rousseau, and suggests that perhaps Rousseau never held the illusion of freedom that Caudwell ascribes to him as a classic proponent. Again I can only remark with respect to this criticism what has already been said on this account in the chapter on the "Caudwell Debate" -- i.e., that Caudwell is generalizing and not maintaining that each and every bourgeois subscribes to the same theory -- only for the most part this is the trend of bourgeois thought and one of its dominant, indeed perhaps its most dominant, characteristics.

Mulhern continues in a Cornforthian vein, criticizing Caudwell's views on the instincts and stressing his overdependence on Freud. "The master-contradiction between man and Nature is registered psychologically as the opposition between instinct and environment. Frustratingly 'instinct' which lies at the heart of Caudwell's psychologism is the most labile of all his concepts. Nowhere does he provide a conclusive definition."²¹

Nor should we be surprised, after having analyzed Caudwell's critique of Freud, at the lack of a "conclusive definition" which so disconcerts

20 Ibid.

21 Ibid.

Mulhern. We have only to recall that Caudwell himself attributed this to the "state of the art" -- to the fact that psychology was just beginning to find its scientific feet and that many of its terms, "instinct" among them, were only provisional terms which indicated in a lamentable, but necessary, way the real phenomena being discussed. The continuing advancement of scientific knowledge in this field, Caudwell thought, would eventually allow for a more precise and "conclusive" notion. After all, Illusion and Reality was a pioneering work, and to criticize it for not being more "conclusive" than the science of its day is hardly warranted.

Mulhern further says that Caudwell introduces a non-Marxian notion into the heart of his theory -- which may show his having been overly influenced by Freud at the expense of Marx and Lenin:

On the whole, Cornforth was correct to argue that Caudwell favors the notion of a practically unchanging instinctual structure, what Caudwell himself described as 'the unchanging secret face of the genotype which persists beneath all the rich superstructure of civilization (IR:203).'²² Two consequences follow from this. Firstly, Caudwell's system introduces an element alien to Marxism, the notion of a fixed human nature, in this case a recalcitrant, ultimately unalterable instinctual man. Secondly, this notion injects a fundamental timelessness into the core of history: the forms and conditions of struggle may vary, but the struggle remains the same. Furthermore, in a number of passages this struggle is said to be between instinctual and cultural man (IR: 124-5). History thus becomes the clamour of an unending psychomachia.²²

What can be said about these all too familiar misinterpretations of Caudwell's thought? I have already shown in a previous chapter ('The

²² Ibid. page 54.

Caudwell Debate') why Cornforth's interpretation is not warranted. Mulhern's, based upon Cornforth, is equally suspect. Once it is shown that Caudwell did not adhere to a concept of unchanging human nature (i.e., "unalterable instinctual man") Mulhern's two consequences melt away. Mulhern sides with Cornforth on this issue but does not explain how such concepts as "practically unchanging" (thus allowing for some change it would seem) and "fixed and unalterable" human nature are to be reconciled. It seems to me that Mulhern is guilty of not using the very forms of dialectical thinking which he claims it was Caudwell's great merit to have practiced. Mulhern puts the "instincts" on one side and "environment" on the other and explains that for Caudwell the former lurks behind the latter as an unchanging foundation. Nothing could be farther from Caudwell's mind. We have previously seen how Caudwell criticized Freud (by whom he is supposedly overly influenced) for just this lack of a dialectical approach to reality. The following quotation from Illusion and Reality expresses perfectly Caudwell's attitude towards the "instincts." Here, in criticizing Freud's notion of "mentation" he writes that Freud fails to understand that

here exactly, as in the field of knowledge as a whole, the same interpenetration of environment and instinct takes place, and it is never possible to separate any mentation as specifically instinctive and in no way conditioned by the environment. The attempt to do so, to discard as 'additional' or 'sublimated' all mentation which bears the stamp of the environment, involves excluding layer after layer of consciousness as secondary and unreal until one reaches as

the only true psychic reality something vague
and formless, a mere name -- libido --"²³

that Freudian reservoir of the unchanging basic instinctual nature of man. Bearing in mind the complete interpenetration of these two concepts (instinct and environment) for Caudwell will go a long way in helping to avoid overemphasizing one or the other when we read Caudwell and, hopefully, discourage us from onesidedly viewing him as a Freudian and as "un-Marxian."

Mulhern finds fault with Caudwell on other grounds as well. He maintains that Caudwell's views are related to symbolist aesthetics and that what Caudwell defines as poetry is true only of a particular period yet he elevates this definition to a supra-historical category as a result of his views on language and poetic function. Caudwell's view, according to Mulhern, is that "the function of poetry is to effect the psychological adaptation in the genotype which will equip it for its changing tasks in the struggle against nature."²⁴ Mulhern criticizes the fact that Caudwell always reverts to primitive examples (the harvest, etc.) when making his point. This is because, Mulhern asserts, Caudwell sees historical change as a surface change only (we have already seen Mulhern's error on this score) basically his conflict is timeless and ahistorical, he therefore confuses the function of poetry with a function historically conditioned by primitive society. Mulhern suggests that Caudwell fails to see that today poetry has many different functions which his theory

²³ Caudwell, *op. cit.*, pages 161-62.

²⁴ Mulhern, *op. cit.*, page 56.

cannot account for. Unfortunately Mulhern does not discuss any of these "many different functions." Of course, if Caudwell really maintained that poetry was nothing more than the primitive harvest song so that once we understood the function of primitive poetry we understood poetry qua poetry and needn't bother ourselves anymore, Mulhern's critiques would be both cogent and illuminating. A close examination of Caudwell, however, dispels this idea. Mulhern has confused the function of primitive poetry as a mode or expression of a more general function inclusive of other forms of poetry, including those of "today," with the function of poetry in general. Caudwell, however, did not deduce the "function" of poetry from that of primitive poetry, but rather saw primitive poetry as an exemplification of a function much more general in nature. It is true that Caudwell does see a general function to poetry which relates all species of poetry to one another. "Poetry," he writes, "colours the world of reality with affective tones ... Poetry soaks external reality -- nature and society -- with emotional significance." The poetry of today, like that of primitive times, still has the function to "give us new emotional attitudes to a new social environment."²⁵ Mulhern, I think, has confused the many different sub-functions of poetry (as epic, lyric, educative, commemorative, etc.) and failed to grasp the larger function with which Caudwell was dealing -- i.e., of emotionally colouring our world. Mulhern's misapprehension stems, I think, from his insistence on the incorrect notion that Caudwell only sees historical development as a "surface change" -- a view I have criticized many times before.

²⁵ Caudwell, op. cit., page 217.

According to Mulhern, Caudwell's view of language is a dualism of affect/cognition. "Science," Mulhern writes, "utilizing the cognitive dimensions of language, investigates the environment; poetry, utilizing the affective and aspiring to the wholly non-rational condition of music, aims to know and effect transformations of the instincts."²⁶ This forces Caudwell towards a quasi-symbolist aesthetic.

What is at issue is the theoretical failure (sic) that brought him to this pass. Marx insisted on the crucial distinction between general and historically specific concepts. A theory of poetry-in-general is the pre-condition of an understanding of determinate forms of poetry; and vice versa. but this, precisely, is a distinction which historicism is unable to grasp; if the specificity of an historical event is finally absorbed into a timeless 'essential principle,' such a distinction is at best unreal and at worst a snare.²⁷

However much Mulhern may like to think otherwise, Caudwell does not appear guilty of any such absorption. He gives many specific examples of poetical development from primitive times to past and present English poetry. Mulhern appears to concentrate overly on "specificity" and the historically specific concept. He is certainly correct in warning us against molding the historically specific in such a way to a general theory that we pervert and falsify it, but Caudwell has made no Procrustean bed for poetry. If we take the historically specific to be so uniquely specific that we cannot subsume it under general principles at all we might as well abandon any hope of arriving at overall theory of any kind and simply devote ourselves to cataloging art works.

²⁶ Mulhern, op. cit., page 57.

²⁷ Ibid.

Mulhern also says that Caudwell cannot point out what is specifically aesthetic in poetry. He equates art and emotion and maintains that aesthetic objects appeal to associated and not individual man. According to this view, for Caudwell language is used to express affects and contains all the emotion known to the social world -- there is no non-social emotion capable of linguistic expression. Thus, Caudwell cannot distinguish between aesthetic and non-aesthetic effects. "Art is emotion. Poetry is a psychological instance, and Caudwell has failed in his stated project (sic): the provision of a knowledge of art that was not psychology or politics."²⁸ Mulhern bases this evaluation on Caudwell's statements on pages 11 and 12 of the "Introduction" to Illusion and Reality. Are Mulhern's criticisms warranted? I think a careful reading of the Caudwell text in question gives grounds to suspect that they are not. Caudwell never simply equates art with emotion when he discusses the emotional function or role that art has. One might as well bring the same charge against Aristotle's theory of catharsis and equate tragedy and emotion. Nor did Caudwell have as his project providing a knowledge of art free from psychology and politics -- although he did want such a knowledge that was not simply psychological or political. In the terms in which he himself stated his project he did not fail. How did he state it? "As regards this study of poetry," he wrote, "we reject from the outset any limitation to purely aesthetic categories. If anyone wishes to remain entirely in the province of aesthetics, then he should remain either a creator or an appreciator of art works ... The criticism of art

²⁸ Ibid.

differs from pure enjoyment or creation in that it contains a sociological component."²⁹ Caudwell intended to appeal to many fields of knowledge to arrive at his ideas of art "without falling into eclecticism or confusing art with psychology or politics."³⁰ We have seen that Caudwell has been very precise as to what he means by art and its social function. This does not preclude him from discussing political, social, historical and even psychological factors involved with the functions of art, but this does not mean a la Mulhern, that Caudwell's views are simply psychological and political views and nothing more. Caudwell's project, after all, was to provide an historical materialist view of the sources of poetry and not to create and "aesthetic." We cannot, therefore, accept Mulhern's conclusions as in any way definitive.

Three years after the appearance of Mulhern's article "Caudwell's Theory of Poetry: Some Problems of a Marxist Synthesis," by S.V. Pradhan appeared in the British Journal of Aesthetics.³¹ In this article, Pradhan outlines what he takes to be the major ideas of Caudwell's theory, attempts to show how he integrates affectivism with cognitivism, and comments on the synthesis. Caudwell, as we know, believes that men in purposive action discover the "common perceptual world" and the "common affective world." Freedom equals the recognition of necessity in these worlds, and art equals the recognition of necessity in the emotional world. These two worlds have a dialectical relationship:

²⁹ Caudwell, op. cit., page 11.

³⁰ Ibid., page 12.

³¹ S.V. Pradhan, "Caudwell's Theory of Poetry: Some Problems of a Marxist Synthesis," British Journal of Aesthetics, Volume 17, no. 3, Summer, 1977, pages 266-74.

These two worlds are not separate and divided. They interpenetrate, with the result that the 'emotions are only found in real life adhering to bits of reality ...' (IR page 153). This peculiar interdependence of the two worlds is reflected in language, which is the product of the collective human struggle 'to make environment conform to instincts.' (IR page 134). Caudwell says: 'Always, given in the word, is a certain subjective attitude (emotion) towards a certain piece of reality.' (IR page 152).³²

Pradhan points out that for Caudwell communication depends on the common affective world and only therein is individuality and poetic creation possible. The poet tries to bring to new levels the common affective world for everyone. Experience must be related in a social form -- the "I" of poetry is the "I" of the common affective world. Pradhan quotes Caudwell's contention that "Aesthetic objects are aesthetic in so far as they arouse emotion peculiar not only to individual men but to associated men. From this arises the disinterested, suspended and objective character of aesthetic emotion."³³ Pradhan has the following comment to make on Caudwell's assertion. "The common emotional world," he writes, "is a concrete world of instincts shared by a large group of people whose lives are governed by certain relations of production which in turn determine their social relations. The poet must recognize these social relations and come to terms with them in order that his

³² Ibid., page 267. The quote is from Illusion and Reality.

³³ Caudwell, op. cit., page 135.

individual experience may evoke the common emotional world successfully and thus become accessible to others."³⁴

Rhythm induces common feelings -- "'Herd commonness' brought about by rhythm returns men to the 'genotype,' i.e., 'the more or less common set of instincts in man which is changed and adapted by outer reality in the course of living.'"³⁵ The common affective world is really experienced and leads us to the genotype -- the illusion of art resides in the cognitive world of art -- in an idealized 'mock world.' Pradhan follows this observation with a quotation from Further Studies in a Dying Culture ("Beauty"): "The artist takes bits of reality, socially known, to which affective associations adhere, and creates a mock world, which calls into being a new affective attitude, a new emotional experience." Caudwell, Pradhan says, believes that poetry is made out of words not out of ideas or external reality -- if we translate poetry we lose emotions -- i.e., the meanings associated emotionally with just these words (and rhythm)."³⁶ In the same way that dreams equal veiled satisfaction, so does poetry equal satisfaction by expression.

Pradhan says that stress on the common affective world is bourgeois while the stress on the common perceptual world is Marxist and suggests that these two components may not 'cohere' in Caudwell's thought. He then turns to Caudwell's ideas on language. Language, he says, for Caudwell comes about from the transformation of the cry into a word.

³⁴ Pradhan, op. cit., page 268.

³⁵ Ibid., page 269.

³⁶ This is a major difference from Hegel.

In the beginning the value of the cry is instinctive, and it results from 'the relation of the genotype to habitual environment.' Later the value of the cry becomes arbitrary for it results from the relation of modified genotype to artificial environment in economic production. Thus as a result of 'association for economic production' the cry becomes the word. The word therefore has an instinctive as well as a perceptual aspect, both aspects being 'more precise and complex' than they were for the original cry.³⁷

These ideas on language are Caudwell's answer to I.A. Richards' view (which we discussed in an earlier chapter) that all language has an environmental aspect of reference -- but whereas Richards' views come from his notion of the "Symbol" as related to Reference and Referent, Caudwell gives a Marxist twist to these ideas. Caudwell says the illusion of poetry leads to a Mock World -- unlike Richards who says the poem tells us nothing. Pradhan points out that Caudwell's views are "only a short step away" from "the insistence of the New Criticism on the autonomy of the art world."³⁸ A view, however, that Caudwell as a Marxist would never ascribe to.

Many think, Pradhan writes, that affectivism and cognitivism cannot really go together -- but Caudwell, who follows the mimetic view of art, sought to strike a balance between these two views.

He says: '... the emotional content does not float about fluidly in the mind; it is firmly attached by a thousand interweaving strands to the manifest content -- a piece of external reality' (IR page 216). Thanks to these 'thousand

³⁷ Pradhan, op. cit., pages 270-71.

³⁸ Ibid., page 271.

interweaving strands:' 'Poetry soaks external reality -- nature and society -- with emotional significance' (IR page 217). In this interesting synthesis of environment and emotion the affective and cognitive views of art are held in balance.³⁹

Pradhan maintains, however, that Caudwell's actual criticism does not live up to his theory -- that he criticizes art as if it were a reflection of reality -- good or bad -- and not a Mock World at all. Perhaps, Pradhan says, this shows that one cannot blend bourgeois aestheticism (affective theories) with Marxist socio-economic criticism. Pradhan states that Caudwell

did not realize, for instance, that the philosophical implications of his theory of illusion or aestheticism are idealistic and therefore incompatible with the materialism of his socio-economic analysis. Nor did he realize that such a 'synthesis' would be unacceptable as much to a materialist as to an idealist. It would be unacceptable to an idealist because its Marxist component confers primacy on material reality; and it would be unacceptable to a materialist because its aestheticism minimizes the importance of the artistic world as a reflection of reality.⁴⁰

These criticisms of Caudwell are not, to my mind, correct. There is no contradiction in Caudwell between "reflection" and "Mock World." Caudwell's "Mock World" is not something purely illusory with no relation to reality as such. It is an emotional world created out of language and reflects the realities of our emotions which are themselves products

³⁹ Ibid.

⁴⁰ Ibid., page 272.

of the material world. There is no "unacceptable synthesis" going on here at all. We need to have a proper idea of what Caudwell, as a Marxist, means by reflection. Then we can understand why Pradhan's statement regarding Caudwell's "aestheticism" minimizing art as a reflection of reality and thus being unacceptable to materialists (specifically historical materialists but Pradhan does not make this specification) misses the point. Pradhan, based on his analysis, thinks that Caudwell had an "unsure grasp of Marxism."⁴¹ I hope to show, rather, that it is Pradhan's grasp that is unsure.

It is only if we think of "reflection" as some sort of mirror held up to nature and reproduced almost photographically that it makes sense to say that Caudwell's "Mock World" is non-reflective or that Caudwell minimizes art as a reflection. Pradhan is using, it seems to me, a mechanical materialist notion of reflection, not a notion which is essentially Marxist and certainly not one applicable to Caudwell. Caudwell himself is partially responsible for this confusion. On page 145 of Illusion and Reality, for example, he says that "percepts" are "photographic memory -- images of bits of reality" -- but this one statement should not be taken out of context and isolated from his general discussion of "the reflection in men's heads of the real world." Actually, rather than photographic images, the "percepts" and the words used to describe them are "symbols" of external reality -- this is Caudwell's real position. In this same discussion (pages 145-46 of Illusion and Reality) Caudwell

⁴¹ Ibid.

maintains that the world reflected in our heads -- i.e., in consciousness "is always and necessarily a reflection which has an active and significant relation to the object, and it is this activity and significance, and not the projective qualities of the reflection, which guarantee truth." This rules out, I think, any idea that Caudwell held a passive mirror image concept of reflection. In fact, this conception is thought by Caudwell to be decidedly bourgeois. In his discussion of language, Caudwell says that the idea of language (and by extension this applies to his theory of poetry since poetry is constructed out of language) as picturing the world like a mirror is to be found among his contemporaries in Russell and Wittgenstein. Wittgenstein's ideas (in the Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus) about creating a "perfect" language which only asserts or denies facts, which is a "picture" of the world, is thought by Caudwell to be fundamentally wrong. It ignores one of the major functions of language -- namely that it "reflects" the relations of men as "feeling men and perceiving men in association for economic production."⁴²

This historical function of language, explains why existing languages are so far from the 'perfect' language postulated by Wittgenstein. Such a perfect language would be perfectly useless. It would be a picture of the world, standing in the same relation to external reality as a mirror-image to the thing mirrored. But then it would be an inferior thing to the thing imaged and would be a useless construct. It would have no hidden power over the world or the subject ... Language expresses not merely what reality is ... it expresses also what can be done with

⁴² Caudwell, op. cit., page 196.

reality -- its inner hidden laws, and what man wants to ⁴³do with it -- his own unconscious necessities.

The mistake that Caudwell thinks he has here exposed is, he says, the result of the separation of the subject and the object which, he maintains, is a result of class society. This separation ends up viewing thought as nothing but contemplation. Caudwell rejects this notion since he views man's associative struggle with nature as the real source of consciousness, language, and art, all three of which strive together to develop each other in even higher and more comprehensive forms. Marx, Caudwell writes, was the first to see this relationship and to renounce the view of thinking as merely contemplation. Even Hegel in the "Preface" to The Philosophy of Right says that philosophy "is its own time apprehended in thoughts." Marx overcame this viewpoint, however, in "those hastily-scribbled eleven Theses on Feuerbach that marked the beginning of a new era in human thought: 'The philosophers have only interpreted the world in various ways; the point, however, is to change it (Illusion and Reality, page 197)."

Pradhan views Caudwell as a theorist divided between bourgeois aestheticism (the mock world) and Marxist realism. "As we have already seen," he writes, "art, according to Caudwell, remoulds external reality to the likeness of the genotype's instincts⁴⁴ and thereby enriches itself

⁴³ Ibid.

⁴⁴ Caudwell says just the opposite -- "art adapts the genotype to external reality" -- Ibid., page 263.

in addition to making the reality more true and interesting."⁴⁵ However, "the emphasis on society as the great matrix, while characteristic of Marxist aesthetics, is foreign to affective theories of art."⁴⁶ Pradhan, I think, misinterprets Caudwell's thought because he is continually dividing it into two parts -- one dealing with material reality and the other dealing with the affective world -- the world of illusions for Caudwell. But Caudwell does not say that poetry and the emotional complex from whence it derives is circumscribed by the either/or of the real world and the affective world. Nor does he mean, when Pradhan says that art remoulds the world to the genotype's instincts, that these instincts are "biological givens." The environmental complex that produces art is neither simply the material reality nor the ideal illusions of artists. He calls it rather a social reality. "These instincts have generated these emotions just because they have not blindly followed the necessities of the germ plasm, but have been moulded by the objective necessities of collective action to a common economic end. The phantasy of poetry is a social image."⁴⁷ Caudwell's "affectivism" is not a species of bourgeois affectivism, but a Marxist account of how affects function in the total integration of human existence, emotional and non-emotional, within a social context. It is not so much that art remoulds reality to suit

⁴⁵ Pradhan, op. cit., page 272.

⁴⁶ Ibid.

⁴⁷ Caudwell, op. cit., page 32.

the instincts of man as that "It changes the emotional content of his consciousness so that he can react more subtly and deeply to the world."⁴⁸

From our previous chapters we know that Caudwell ruled out any role for art as an instrument of propaganda. Propaganda is a "persuasion to action, a pressure to be or do differently" and this is not art. Pradhan says in this Caudwell appears to be in agreement with Marx and Engels. Yet since, according to Pradhan, for Caudwell the affective reality is all -- the cognitive reality a mock world -- he differs from Marx who would never have admitted this distinction. But a close reading of Caudwell dispels this so-called bifurcation of reality. "The genotype and the external reality exist separately in theory, but it is an abstract separation."⁴⁹ All these "separations," "distinctions," and pidgeon holeing of Caudwell's concepts stem from a failure to understand what Caudwell himself calls "the dialectic of concrete life." Art has both affective and cognitive components -- as does science.

"Finally," Pradhan tells us,

the thrust of Marx's theorizing is not in the direction of some abstract human potential such as Caudwell's concept of the genotype implies. Marx would have considered such 'abstract human potential' to be a petty bourgeois device for glossing over class struggles and the angularities of class characteristics in an effort to cherish the myth of eternal, unchanging 'human nature.' One must conclude, therefore,

⁴⁸ ibid., page 155.

⁴⁹ ibid., page 264.

that Caudwell's view of art is far too emotive to square well with the environment-oriented aesthetic, such as it be, of Marx and Engels.⁵⁰

I think it is fair to say, from our presentation of Caudwell's theory, that he neither supported the myth of an unchanging human nature nor has he ignored the role of the environment, as Pradhan suggests. One must conclude, therefore, that Pradhan's interpretation of Caudwell is not entirely correct. He sums up his position as follows:

Caudwell definitely adopts a few outstanding affective views and seeks to assimilate them to the historical materialist frame of reference. However, the attempted synthesis reveals itself to be a mixture rather than a fusion of the views that are, in the ultimate analysis, inspired by the contrary philosophies of idealism and materialism. Moreover, contrary from what one would expect from his affective theoretical stance, in his practical criticism Caudwell argued like a good historical materialist rather than an affectively oriented aesthetician.⁵¹

Pradhan's critique, like Mulhern's before him, fails to hit the mark and for basically the same reasons as we have previously pointed out -- chief among them the tendency to polarize Caudwell's concepts and the failure to see that he uses them in a very fluid manner.

The year following the appearance of Pradhan's article saw another study devoted to Caudwell published by the British Journal of Aesthetics.

⁵⁰ Pradhan, op. cit., page 273.

⁵¹ Ibid., pages 273-74.

This was Robert Currie's "Christopher Caudwell: Marxist Illusion, Jungian Reality."⁵² This is in many respects an interesting article, but it leads to conclusions which are not supported, in my opinion, by Caudwell's text.

Currie will argue that Illusion and Reality, while having a Marxist "cast," nevertheless gets its central doctrines from Jung's analytical psychology. One of the reasons this has been overlooked, Currie implies, is that many of Caudwell's notions go back to classical German philosophy -- notions not only important to Marxism but also to analytic psychology, which likewise can be traced back to classical German philosophy. Caudwell, Currie tells us, turned to psychological theory to elucidate his ideas about poetry as an economic activity.⁵³ While influenced by Freud, Currie continues, Caudwell thought that he lacked any "material causes" in his explanations, thus Caudwell turned to the psycho-anthropological theories of Jung. Currie's position does not follow from a reading of Caudwell's text -- why would Caudwell turn to Jung to find "material causes" absent in Freud, when Caudwell himself says with reference

⁵² Robert Currie, "Christopher Caudwell: Marxist Illusion, Jungian Reality," British Journal of Aesthetics, Volume 18, no. 4, Autumn, 1978, pages 291-99.

⁵³ Note, however, that Caudwell, in supporting Aristotle's theory of mimesis which he says "is fundamental for an understanding of art," adds that "Aristotle ... was more interested in the created thing, e.g., the play -- than in the man who was influenced by it or who produced it. Thus his angle of attack is aesthetically correct; he does not approach literature like a psychologist or a psychoanalyst." Op. cit., pages 48-49.

to both Freud and Jung that, "Their therapy is a therapy of will-power and mystic mind-control. In neither do material, i.e., environmental causes of mental disease figure candidly and openly ..." ⁵⁴

Currie, however, continues:

Jung argued that what Levy-Bruhl called a participation mystique marked primitive man's social being, his 'collective personality' as Jung saw it. In these conditions, man's surplus of 'psychic energy' could give rise not to organized economic activity but only to the 'natural phenomena' of semi-animal life. According to Jung, two simultaneous psychological developments transformed this primitive man into the economic, social man of history. On the one hand, the emergence of certain attractive symbols, beginning with the religious symbols of agricultural fertility cults, 'canalized' surplus psychic energy into productive labour; and on the other, the psychic functions which were most highly adapted to productive labour (especially 'thinking') were developed, and others (especially 'feeling') were suppressed into consciousness as 'inferior functions.' Man thus attained an individual differentiated conscious personality, which was organized about 'ego-consciousness,' and expressed to society, no longer within the participation mystique, but through the relationship of one man's determinate, socialized 'persona' to another. ⁵⁵

The persona, Currie continues, was "nothing real" but an outward socially determined mode of relating. The problem for Jung is that the inner person is replaced by the persona. Jung said we must be related to others and be whole men -- to this end we must return to our own

⁵⁴ Caudwell, op. cit., pages 166-67. He writes also that "Freud is representative of empiricism with its reductive method, while Jung tends towards a more eclectic and mystical point of view." Ibid., page 160.

⁵⁵ Currie, op. cit., page 294.

individual consciousness and "to the 'archetypes' that contained, in the collective unconscious of all individuals, the springs of psychic energy which flowed so freely in the collective personality of primitive man."⁵⁶

Art for Jung, Currie concludes, could be a therapy to attain this end.

Currie's position is that the major views of Illusion and Reality are based on these doctrines of Jung. Caudwell, he says, postulates as a common base for all men, the 'genotype' which is adapted by history into a 'social ego.' The individual can be pressed into a mould and made into a type economically determined by the needs of society, i.e., a lawyer, a miner, etc., the role conflicts with the total personality and thus a form of unease and neurosis can develop. "Thus Caudwell converted the Marxist theory of the development of class-society through the division of labour into a Jungian theory of the psychologically-problematical evolution of personal and ego-consciousness."⁵⁷

Currie further sees two aspects to Caudwell's views on Freedom:

Since the social-ego is necessary for modern man, his freedom must consist in 'consciousness of the determinism of the environment and of man,' and 'of the society which expresses their mutual struggle.' But since the 'type,' the persona, arises solely from a dysfunction of social differentiation, namely class society, a rectification of that dysfunction raises man to a consciousness of a higher necessity, so to speak, in which the type may be superceded by full realization of 'the genotype stamped

⁵⁶ Ibid., page 295.

⁵⁷ Ibid., page 296.

with all the possibilities and grandeur of mankind.⁵⁸

Currie maintains that the above views are the foundation of Caudwell's aesthetics. The genotype as an instinctive element affectively represented by art -- poetry appeals to an 'instinctive, emotional element in man,' and this view, Currie says, is not Marxian -- it is Jungian. The idea of a "feeling tone," Currie says, attached to words was borrowed from Jung as well. Besides rational laws, Currie continues, derived from external reality, man also has Affective laws due to a basic instinctual make up. This is the basis for the common ego whereby we can affectively communicate with our fellows through art. As a result of these ideas, Currie says, Caudwell has modified the epistemology of art away from a Marxist viewpoint to a Jungian, and completely abandoned Marxism in his functional analysis. Currie continues as follows: "David Margolis stated that 'Caudwell's outstanding contribution to Marxist aesthetics is his theory of the function of literature;' yet that theory is derived, in details as well as in outline, from Jung. For Caudwell argued that art both canalizes individuals' energies or emotions into socially productive channels, and individualizes those individuals' personalities on a properly individual, properly collective basis."⁵⁹

Currie further writes that "Caudwell claimed that 'change of ego is the value, purpose and mode of generation of art works:' a strikingly

⁵⁸ Ibid.

⁵⁹ Ibid., pages 297-98.

unMarxist doctrine."⁶⁰ Currie thus traces back Caudwell's "common ego" to Jung's "collective unconscious" -- but it takes more than a surface similarity of terms to make a Jungian out of Caudwell. Caudwell by reading Jung, as he did Freud, Richards, and numerous other major "bourgeois" thinkers, and attempting to rework some of Jung's ideas into his own Marxist outlook, naturally borrowed some of the terminology from the subject matter he was investigating. He himself gives his own evaluation of Jung's work and explicitly rejects Jung's premises and conclusions, while also saying he, Jung, has made some particularly good observations which must, however, be reformulated in Marxist, not Jungian terms. Beginning on page 232 of Illusion and Reality, Caudwell evaluates his relations to Jung's ideas. This occurs in his chapter on "Poetry's Dream Work" where Caudwell has discussed psychology and mental illness under Capitalism and refers to Jung's book Psychological Types. How, Caudwell asks, does his own discussion of this theme differ from that of Jung? He enumerates three major differences which he has with Jung. First, Jung "does not allow for the difference between a theoretical and practical approach to life, and the existence of some fields in which a man is theoretical, others in which he is practical, and others where he shows a balanced unity." Second, Jung "regards sensing and intuiting as in some way unconscious forms of feeling and thinking, although he uses the word irrational." Caudwell rejects the idea that feeling and thinking can both be subsumed under the concept

⁶⁰ Ibid., page 298.

of the "irrational." Third, "Jung has no adequate definition of consciousness and unconsciousness except a reduction of 'psychic energy' which makes the unconscious contents sink below the threshold."⁶¹ Caudwell calls this a "crude and unhelpful theory" and says that his own view that the tensions of life lead to the "desocialization" of ideas in our consciousness which results in their becoming unconscious is more to the point. Nevertheless, though differing sharply with Jung and, as with Freud, rejecting the theoretical foundations of his views, Caudwell still has praise for some of his accomplishments. Within the context of the bourgeois world view, Caudwell says, Jung has produced "the deepest study of the psyche possible" with regard to the question of how men attain or fail to attain self-realization and freedom in the world of "concrete living." This is a long way, however, from being a "Jungian."

The last article I want to discuss does not bear directly on Caudwell but has an important indirect bearing on our previous discussions, especially with regard to the question of Caudwell's Marxism or lack of Marxism in his aesthetics. This article is James P. Scanlon's "The Impossibility of a Uniquely Marxist Aesthetics."⁶² This was a paper read at the Conference of the British Society of Aesthetics, September, 1975. Scanlon points out that neither Marx nor Engels ever elaborated a theory of art. Interest in their early works centered around the notion that evidence

⁶¹ Caudwell, *op. cit.*, pages 234-35.

⁶² James P. Scanlon, "The Impossibility of a Uniquely Marxist Aesthetics," *British Journal of Aesthetics*, Volume 16, no. 2, Spring 1976, pages 128-36.

for a theory of art would be therein detected, but Scanlan says this expectation has not been fulfilled. "Socialist Realism" constructed out of historical materialism, and incidental comments by Marx and Engels, by Stalin and Gorki is one possible construction of a Marxist aesthetics -- but we are not forced Scanlan says to maintain that this version is the only possible construct consistent with Marx and Engels' writings. Scanlan, while suggesting that something like Socialist Realism is no doubt logically implied from the works of Marx and Engels, will nevertheless argue that "a single coherent Marxist aesthetics is not possible."⁶³

Any theory of art based on historical materialism must, Scanlan writes, be compatible with the following three theses: 1) Economic Determinism: "the view that societies are shaped primarily by economic forces, of which cultural phenomena such as art are relatively inefficacious derivatives."⁶⁴ This is, of course, wrong on the part of Scanlan who seems at this point to ignore the strictures against "economic determinism" (a bourgeois theory) which were made by Marx and Engels -- who were also, by the way, far from seeing art as inefficacious. What we are seeing here is Scanlan's idea of what historical materialism "must" imply, but we are not seeing what it does imply according to Marx and Engels -- this vitiates an important part of Scanlan's article. 2) Aesthetic Partisanship: "The activity of artists is inherently and essentially partisan, in the sense of representing particular economic class interests." This

⁶³ Ibid., page 129.

⁶⁴ Ibid.

may be true of some Marxist theories, but it is not, as Scanlan himself points out, a logical inference or necessary conclusion from historical materialism. 3) Aesthetic historicism: art is class-bound -- a class "determines the character of an age, produces its own aesthetic values and preferences, which have no broader historical applicability." Since Scanlan himself maintains that Marx and Engels did not themselves hold this view, his theory of what historical materialism "must hold" seems poor -- but it is more obvious that since Marx and Engels did not share these views, that Scanlan is not warranted in holding that they are views which necessarily derive from, or are fundamental in some sense to, historical materialism. The views of Marx and Engels on art, such as they may be, must be taken into account in arriving at an adequate view of historical materialism -- not put to one side and then contrasted to an historical materialism formulated without their insights in the first place.

With reference to partisanship, Scanlan points out that Marx and Engels thought it was consistent with art, but not an essential feature as Scanlan's own presentation of historical materialism would have it. And by partisanship, Scanlan appears to mean boldly asserting your viewpoint -- which is of course not at all necessary. Scanlan thinks Engels' well known praise for Balzac is in contradiction not just to some versions of socialist realism, but to historical materialism per se. "Marx and Engels' unwillingness to identify the aesthetic with the function of promoting a cause may be at odds with Marxian historical materialism, but it is entirely consistent with and indeed receives a theoretical justification in Marx's early writings."⁶⁵ With reference to aesthetic historicism, which Scanlan says commits historical materialism to the view

that the art of one age has no applicability to another age, he points out that neither Marx nor Engels themselves held any such view. Instead of abandoning his own view of historical materialism (a view that is not even to be found in the Gorki version of Socialist Realism as we have seen, let alone in Marx and Engels) Scanlan uses the differences between his interpretation of historical materialism and the positions of Marx and Engels' as evidence that their views are in contradiction to historical materialism with reference to art. Scanlan thinks the themes for an aesthetics in keeping with the views of Marx and Engels are to be found in the Paris manuscripts.

Scanlan points out that in the manuscripts Marx deals with alienation which perverts the true human essence: "That essence, as we also know from The German Ideology, consists in creative, productive activity: the true life of man is a life of free production, of transforming or 'working up' ... his environment in accordance with his own conscious conceptions. Emanating from man's own inner or natural needs, such productive activity is spontaneous and uncoerced."⁶⁶ Marx also discusses the "laws of beauty" or at least refers to them in the Economic and Philosophical Manuscripts according to Scanlan. He draws two conclusions from all this regarding Marx's views on art. "First, that Marx in these passages

⁶⁵ Ibid., pages 132-33.

⁶⁶ Ibid., page 133.

envisioned genuine artistic activity as an end in itself, free of partisan and every other 'interested' or functional consideration. Second, that man the artist as envisaged by Marx is neither a prisoner of his own anthropocentric vision nor confined to his own region or epoch..."⁶⁷

Scanlan continues, "Man can create according to the 'standards of every species' -- a standard which moreover is 'inherent' in the object. The laws of beauty, then, grounded in these standards -- whatever exactly they may be -- must have been thought of by Marx at this point as timeless and universal."⁶⁸ Scanlan maintains that:

The argument of the Paris manuscripts is not that communism will introduce new aesthetic standards but that capitalism, by dehumanizing human activity, has subverted the aesthetic standards timelessly appropriate to mankind: it has dulled the senses and turned attention from the intrinsic character of objects and products to their use value. Communism will restore man to himself and reestablish the category of the aesthetic with its enduring laws.⁶⁹

Finally, Scanlan concludes his observations with the following:

If we are to have a Marxist aesthetics we must construct one, since none comes ready made in the writings of Marx and Engels. But two conflicting starting points are available for such a theoretical construction. We may, with the Soviets, develop further the implications of the general theory of history and society to which Marx and Engels gave their enthusiastic blessing. Or we may, with the French Marxist Roger Garaudy and others, take our start from

⁶⁷ Ibid., page 134.

⁶⁸ Ibid.

⁶⁹ Ibid.

the actual statements about art found in the Paris manuscripts and other works. Both starting points are genuinely 'Marxist,' but the two lead in opposite directions. Hence to construct a Marxist aesthetics we must develop certain Marxist themes and tendencies at the expense of others; we cannot consistently develop them all.⁷⁰

Garaudy or Marx? I think Scanlan's article goes a long way in explaining the basis of so much of the controversy surrounding the works of Caudwell. Aside from the downright misinterpretations of his position which we have discussed, there has always been a reluctance on the part of some Marxists who do understand his position to credit Caudwell with having written a 'Marxist' work. Historically, those Marxist critics of Caudwell were, at the time of their criticism, following a rather rigid interpretation of "Socialist Realism" and "Marxism" which developed in a period which has since become known as the "Stalin Era." At the present time, Caudwell's work has begun to attract a modest amount of interest. With the passing of rigid "super-orthodox" views on what is and is not Marxism, with the expansion of various different starting points for Marxist analysis (as pointed out by Scanlan above) Caudwell's contribution to Marxist thought should, in the years to come, become more widely respected and more influential. Nevertheless, it must be emphasized, that Scanlan's article has not established, in my opinion, the position that a uniquely Marxist aesthetics cannot be formulated. Scanlan's conclusions rest on artificially setting up a version of "historical materialism" which no one calling himself an historical materialist has,

⁷⁰ Ibid., page 135.

to my knowledge, ever seriously held, and then contrasting this artificial version to some ideas gleaned from Marx's early note-books -- some of them written before Marx himself adopted a consistent materialist viewpoint. The question, therefore, of a uniquely consistent Marxist aesthetics is, I think, still open.

Another reason I think it still open, in addition to what has been said above, is that I cannot accept Scanlan's thesis that the "two starting points" (the Paris manuscripts and the theory to which Marx and Engels "gave their enthusiastic blessing") are both "genuinely Marxist." Of course, if you defend both of these approaches as such, then it follows (on Scanlan's reading) that a uniquely authentic Marxist aesthetics is impossible. If, on the other hand, you see the Paris manuscripts as the youthful writings of Marx as he first attempted to work out his philosophical position (even before he had himself adopted a consistent materialist stance) then there is no ground for contrasting these writings to the later works of Marx and Engels (the mature works) and it becomes simply meaningless to say that both approaches are "genuinely Marxist." This is not to say that Scanlan's position on the vitality of different starting points for a Marxist analysis is necessarily wrong.

CONCLUSION

One of the striking things about Caudwell's work is the way in which its appreciation has been shaped by the political events surrounding it. When Illusion and Reality was first published it was warmly received and favorably reviewed -- this was a time of political cooperation between communists and non-communists in the face of the fascist threat to European civilization. In the late 40s and early 50s, Caudwell began to be attacked (especially by the left, although some of his most ardent defenders at this time were also from the left) -- this was a time of "cold war" and isolation and non-cooperation between communist and non-communist forces. Also, in a growing climate of fashionable intellectual anti-communism, Caudwell's works were ignored by non-left intellectuals and studies about him even began to be deleted from texts. In the 1960s, a time of "thaw" and improvement in international relations, Caudwell again began to receive sympathetic treatment from non-left as well as left points of view. In the '70s, when anti-Sovietism and anti-communism once again became intellectually fashionable, articles once again appeared critical of Caudwell's methods and achievements. I have attempted to show that all of these various evaluations of Caudwell, while illuminating many somewhat obscure details of his work, do not succeed in establishing that he was anything other than what he claimed to be -- i.e., a Marxist art theorist. As I have suggested in the body

of this dissertation -- these various interpretations and critiques stem from the fact that Caudwell has attempted to integrate some of the great discoveries of so-called "bourgeois" science and philosophy into a Marxist framework. This led to a two-fold attack upon his ideas - - from the left that his use of non-Marxist sources led him away from Marxism, and from the right that his use of Marxist sources only disguises his true (non-Marxist) philosophy -- be it Freudianism, Jungianism, or what have you.

Both groups of critics were agreed, however, on one thing -- Caudwell was not a "real" Marxist. His defense was based on two points: 1. that a close reading of his texts showed that his opponents had not fully understood his position, and 2. that many insights gained from "bourgeois" science are perfectly legitimate for Marxists -- had not Marx himself availed himself of "bourgeois" economic conceptions, not to speak of Engels (Anti-Duhring, etc.)? The second defense, though timely in the 1950s when dogmatism was running high on both sides of the Marxist-non-Marxist fence, has become today basically outmoded and unnecessary. It is in fact a sign of progress and intellectual maturity on the part of left critics that they no longer react negatively to the mere use of non-left sources per se. Today, therefore, an evaluation of Caudwell must be determined in the first way -- i.e., a close reading of his texts.

In attempting to give such a close reading, I have found it useful to compare Caudwell's views with those of Socialist Realism to see

if any critical dissimilarities could be determined which might have justified some of the negative evaluations of Illusion and Reality on the score of its supposed relationship, or lack of relationship, to what was considered, in the 1940s and 50s, the only proper Marxist philosophy of art. Without attempting to determine whether or not Socialist Realism is the only, or merely one of many alternative, Marxist philosophy of art, I have shown that nothing in the text of Illusion and Reality conflicts in any essential way with the ideas of Socialist Realism as propounded by its major spokesmen, especially Gorki.

Since most of the criticism of Caudwell, in my opinion, stems from a tendency to view his analytical categories in rigid and one-sided terms (and thus fails to appreciate the subtle ways in which they interact and influence one another) I thought it would be interesting to compare Caudwell's philosophy of art with that of Hegel. While there are some major differences between a few of Caudwell's and Hegel's conclusions, there are no major differences in method. Caudwell does not seem to have been a close student of Hegel, judging by the bibliography of Illusion and Reality; nevertheless as a close student of Marx and Engels as well as Lenin, he had learned to think and write in a dialectical manner. Discounting the differences between the Marxist dialectic and the Hegelian from which it evolved, I have attempted to show that dialectical thinking (so well exemplified by Caudwell) is a prerequisite for any Marxist philosophy of art. Another major point I have supported is that, due to the "identity in difference" (if I may so call it) of the

Marxist and Hegelian dialectics, a materialist reading of Hegel can fruitfully illuminate many areas in philosophy -- not only the philosophy of art -- and serve as a guide to thinkers interested in Marxism who are attempting to work in areas where no significant Marxist investigations have previously been made.

Two other chapters are devoted to close readings of Caudwell. The first deals with Freud and Marcuse. Here an attempt is made to demonstrate that only a close reading of Caudwell's works will permit us to see that the charges leveled against him of being a mere follower of Freud (and an uncritical follower at that) are completely unfounded, as is the view that since Freudianism is a totally reactionary philosophy any interest in it at all on the part of Caudwell must be reflective of his underlying non-Marxist philosophy. By analyzing Marcuse's revision of Freudianism in terms of some of the categories of Marxism, and showing that Caudwell's critique of Freud foreshadowed some of the aspects of that of Marcuse, I hope to have demonstrated that Marcuse's opinion concerning the revolutionary potential of Freudianism not only escaped Freud, but also escaped many of the critics of Caudwell.

Finally, in the second of the two chapters mentioned above, I have turned to some recent evaluations of Caudwell published in academic journals. As my bibliography shows, Caudwell has never been a popular subject for the professional journals. Nevertheless, several articles did appear in the 1970s concerning his philosophy of art. In the last chapter of my dissertation I have analyzed them in an attempt to show

that recent critical work on Caudwell has failed to demonstrate either major inconsistencies in his outlook or that his work can be divorced from the Marxist tradition. That the authors of these articles, namely Mulhern, Pradhan and Currie, could have arrived at the conclusions I have contested is due not to careless reading (with the possible exception of Currie) but to a tendency to ignore the dialectical interactions of Caudwell's categories. This tendency manifests itself by one sidedly analyzing a particular concept -- such as "instinct" or "nature" -- and then taking this analysis as the fundamental aspect of Caudwell's views, drawing forth contradictory consequences or attempting to demonstrate incompatibility either with other of his concepts or with the author's particular interpretation.

I have tried to show that Caudwell if read in this manner cannot be fully understood, that his categories are fluid and can be used to cast light on obscure areas of Marxist philosophical interest, but that they are really only guides to be used in attempting to arrive at a satisfactory understanding of our subject matter. Caudwell would have been the last to have maintained that Illusion and Reality or his other works provided a definitive answer to all the questions of a Marxist theory of art. I hope I have shown, however, that the path Caudwell has hewn out before us is, when correctly followed, leading in the proper direction to a fuller and more satisfying understanding of the relation between Marxism and the philosophy of art.

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