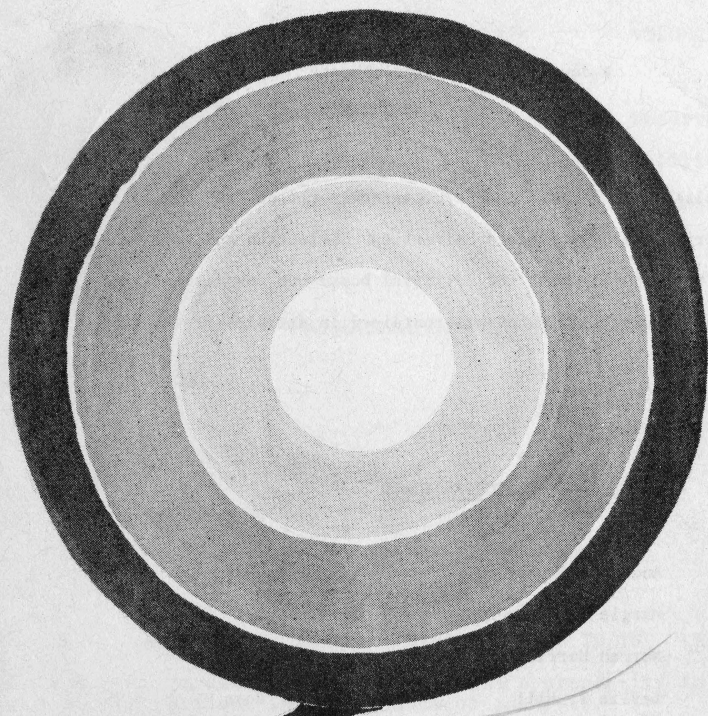


Department of Political Science



# ENDARCH

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A Journal of Political Theory

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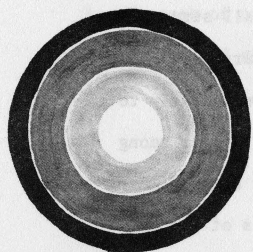
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**ENDARCH**

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## STATEMENT OF PURPOSE

In a decade characterized by the complete atrophy of all struggle from the sixties and the defection of most of the former participants, the principal question must be, why? What has happened consistently to denature and distort incipiently progressive impulses that appear among black people? That question must be answered if we are to build a movement, and it cannot be answered apart from careful analysis of the economic, political and sociological structures and functions of capitalism in all its national and international, social and existential mediations. It is time that the victims move seriously to grapple with Leviathan.

Endarch, as its name would suggest identifies with motion; not any haphazard or desultory movement but movement that is conscious of its origins and destinations. As an embodiment of aggregate but mutually consistent perspectives, this journal seeks to reflect, analyze and generate activity which will ultimately lead toward the expansion, clarification and solidification of Black political thought.

The conscious nature of movement is derived from a clear social and analytic methodology. An approach which views the world as a totality but also diaphanously understands that the components comprising this world are not of equal importance. With this in mind, and given Black peoples historical grounding in oppression and exploitation, Endarch sees of paramount importance those phenomena and groups of phenomena which operate in the system of oppression and exploitation. Recognition of such phenomena must lead to the discernment of those vital elements, the crucial essences of which define and condition the world. Our purpose

is to expose those essences and through their explication to illumine the totality from the vantage point of a specific oppressed people. Such is the task of a critical Black social theory, and it is toward the development of that theory that we aim.

## President Ford's Anti-Inflation Program:

### An Analysis

Since the initial announcement of President Gerald Ford's anti-inflation program, his ten proposals have been submitted to the taxonomical wit of numerous economic observers. The ten point plan is referred to as a classical, neutral and even prudent inflation beating program; all of which is true but hardly correct, for in fact the proposals are merely blatant, do-nothing, self-servient buttresses to a socially retardant economic system. Abetted by a provincial Madison Avenue style psychological campaign to "win the hearts and minds of the people", Ford has manufactured a cosmetic war on inflation in which assumingly we all must enlist. This is merely a diversive tactic by which the frustrations of the people are channeled by displaced aggression toward an imaginary foe, for the enemy is not inflation but capitalism itself.

The ten anti-inflation proposals were not intended to formulate any major redirection of national wealth and resources, which is surely needed, nor do they indicate any desire to instrument petty reforms which could possibly allieviate the dire circumstances of the populace at large, but then one cannot reasonably expect the fettered minds of Gerald Ford and Company to produce anything that smacks of change, be it incremental or revolutionary. The anti-inflation program can be easily summarized as trite, perfunctory re-inforcements of monopoly capitalism, international corporate expansion, and the continued

suffering, depravation and exploitation of the general population. When viewed as an economic model applicable to the curtailment of stratospheric prices during this inflationary/recessionary period, the appropriate concept is found beneath the restive herds in Chicago's stockyards.

The Ford proposals, while being regressive as a whole, have particularly grave implications for Black people in the United States. Though each of the proposals has some impact, whether directly or indirectly, on the status of African-Americans, proposals six, nine and ten warrant closer scrutiny.

In proposal six, as a measure to assist the "casualties of inflation", the President plans to create a community improvement corps to provide work for the unemployed after the unemployment rate has reached 6% nationally. This is not heartening news when one considers the current unemployment rate for Black people which is hovering at 8.9% nationally and in some areas is four times that amount. Aside from the fact that there have always been broad discrepancies in the distribution of national wealth, this is but another in a weary list of examples showing the irrelevancy of capitalist reforms in addressing not only the needs of the Black community but the poor and powerless in general. It is patently clear that the trickling down of a few more jobs does not approach what is necessary to allievate the total condition.

The ninth proposal requests a 5 billion dollar reduction in Federal spending, which necessitates little discussion on the effects of the pithy programs, if they truly exist, serving and/or hindering the Black community. Finally, the tenth proposal, which initiates a 5% surtax on

families in a \$15,000 or more per annum income range, has debilitating aspects on Black life in America. This plan effects 21% of the Black population, which usually reaches this bracket because of multiple family earners, by seriously hindering their ability to sustain the generally larger amount of persons they support. One must remember that \$15,000 today is only worth the purchase value of \$10,000 in 1965 and that since 1969 in terms of constant dollars there has been an increase in average Black income. Yet white incomes have qualitatively risen while inflation has soared. The growth of Black incomes is not a testimonial to the ascendancy of the so-called Black middle-class but merely a reflection of our status as the world's wealthiest slaves. Political, economic and social mobility is not a characteristic of servants. Realizing this, the anti-inflation program is but another manifestation of the machinations of capitalist control over the position of the Black community.

Survival has always been the key issue in the daily lives of Black people in the United States, but it is time that this limited analysis be discarded. Existence or success can not be viewed within the parameters of capitalist society; such a conceptualization does not allow one to move outside of the delimiting effects of capitalism. The ultimate answers can not be found in the reformation of the eccentricities of capitalism. This inflationary/recessionary period elucidates the folly of seeking redress within the confines of a system which inherently rejects positive progression and consistently perpetuates the stymying of qualitative change in human life. More succinctly, the attempt to seek reform is the acceptance of foolishness. There can no longer be a mesmerization with the American Dream which has so many of our people hooked,



houghted and collared with the capitalist mystique. If survival has been the primary question then the answer can only be radical social change.

A Recurring Malady: Imamu Baraka's Move To the "Left"

Norman Harris

An attempt to understand Imamu Baraka and the Congress of Afrikan Peoples' move to the left is dependent on at least two things: an understanding of what his former position was, and, as clearly as we can discern, an understanding of what his new position is as it relates to the concepts brought to mind with the proposition the "left". That is, is what Imamu Baraka and the Congress of Afrikan People doing really leftist? From a utilitarian point of view the role that objective, quantifiable analysis played in this shift is crucial. We ask the question: What occurred in the real world to cause this shift? Was it inflation? The National Black Political Assembly's inability to attract more black elected officials? What was it, or what combination of things was it? And finally, was the shift a natural and predictable phenomenon? It is our position that the lack of any real analysis was the primary reason for the shift and that to the extent that we can isolate this deficiency as the primary cause of a more or less fundamental shift in position within a similar historical context is to the extent that Baraka's move becomes predictable. We will be more specific a bit later.

In terms of ascertaining what his former position was we will look at two things: Baraka's more or less philosophical offerings as presented in various of his social and literary essays; and secondly, the contact with and subsequent influence by Ron Karenga as presented in Baraka's more political writings. (We say "more" because much of his creative work tended to question fundamental power relationships between various segments of society, so that in a broad sense, his creative work was also political).

In so far as his new position is concerned we will look at his apparent adherence to various Marxian concepts (class, the proletariat), the role they are to play in any meaningful change and the apparent role that various African thinkers played in this shift. Particularly Nkrumah, Nyerere, and Cabral, the slain leader of now "independent" Guinea-Bissau.

#### Former Position

Early Imamu Baraka was Leroi Jones, a beat poet. His was an abstracted existence in the sense that his ethnic identity did not appear primary. "Having read all of white's books, I wanted to be an authority on them. Having been taught that art was 'what white men did' I almost became one to have a go at it."<sup>1</sup> This is Leroi Jones writing in 1960. But even then there is the almost unconscious necessity, which Baraka identifies himself, to move, to evolve: "... one truth anyone reading these pieces ought to get is the sense of movement - the struggle in myself, to understand where and who I am, and to move with that understanding."<sup>2</sup>

He tended, by his own admission, to be somewhat removed from what might loosely be considered "the main line black experience": "I live in Harlem with a baby shrew and suffer for my decadence which kept me away so long. When I walk in the streets, the streets don't yet claim me, and people look at me, knowing the strangeness of my manner and the objective stance from which I attempt to love them..."<sup>3</sup>

To be sure, this is not totally a discursive account. However, an understanding, even a vague one, of the highly personal, yet somehow universal, writing of Baraka is enough to convince this writer that a significant portion of the above quote reveals something basic about Baraka's relationship with the Black community in general.

Later in the same book, he writes: "Nothing changed in the passage. The same world The same decisions...I lived in big mansions that were small shacks huddled against the screams of the poor. I lived fantasies in the center of ugly reality. And reality was the feeling I wanted, and escaped to, from a fantasy world..."<sup>4</sup>

And the move culminated, around 1964, '65, in the proposition of Black Art. His escape into "reality" altered his artistic offerings. They became actual attempts at change:

what we want now is ... plays for the Police Department, Jew plays, whether controlling big ass communications or laying southorangeavenue always dough producing swamps.<sup>5</sup>

Baraka ends:

We want a post-American form. An afterwiteneess color to live and re-erect the strength of the primitive. (Plays where history is absolutely meaningful and contemporary.) The first learnings of man. While we fly into the next epoch.<sup>6</sup>

Clearly we can assume from the above quotes that Imamu Baraka was a nationalist, and by this we simply mean that he saw African Americans as a nation in bondage. In what may be loosely called his mature political thought this nation is seen as a cultural entity ("A people together with a common past, a common present and hopefully a common future") struggling to come into existence as a political entity, i.e. a nation with power to create and expand its conception of reality. Nor did his nationalism limit itself to criticizing the artistic offerings of Euro-American culture. He had no problem criticizing African-American activists who seemed to adhere to various conceptions of Marxism and Leninism. Consider these rather pointed remarks that Baraka makes in the article "Negro Theater Pimps Get Big Off Nationalism":

In 1964-5 the concept of Black Art...turned all but the very slow around. And it is good, this year of reconstruction, as the beasts and devils try to crawl back into the

light of day, redefining our lives in 1930's\* dracula style led in by the modern day Yakub, Eldridge Cleaver, who cleaved the movement for the scent of Beverly Axelrod's pussy on his speech gesture finger. Ahh, well, be that as it is, and all the sinister jive still going down, niggers in french hats, jerked around by some deadwords many of our fathers know as bullshit, and the corpses of Marx-Lenin get raised out of the tomb again.<sup>7</sup>

It is safe to say that at the very least Black Art is anti-Marxism-Leninism.

Later in the same article Baraka writes: "we found Maulana Karenga who further defined Black Art as collective, functional and committing..."<sup>8</sup>

So we have a couple of things: a clearer definition of Black Art, and the introduction of Ron Karenga. Black Art, then is nationalistic, anti-Euro-American culture (Marxism is reduced to just another European artifact), it is collective in the sense that it embodies the aspirations of the Black masses, it is functional in the sense that it presents alternative images and it is committing in the sense that it directs Black people to alter their reality.

In order to get a clearer view of Karenga's impact on Baraka we will look at three of Baraka's "political" essays: "A Black Value System" which is probably the most basic representation of Karenga's influence; "The Practice of New Nationalism", an intermediary kind of extension or application by Baraka of Karenga's thought; and "Nationalism, Pan-Afrikanism, Ujamaa, Their Future in America", which, in this writer's opinion, represents the most functional extension of Karenga's thought. To be sure, Baraka has written a number of other similar type essays but for our purposes (highlighting Karenga's influence on Baraka's former political thought), these three are quite enough.

\*Apparently this reference is to the change that occurred in Black social thought in the 1930's when the cultural identity generated during the Harlem Renaissance gave way to Marxist thought. This change will be an important basis for comparison between Baraka and those who had their lives "redefined 1930's dracula style" later in our analysis.

"A Black Value System"<sup>9</sup> is a direct attempt by Baraka to explicate the Nguzo Saba, The Seven Principles : Umoja (unity), Kujichagulia (self-determination), Ujima (collective work and responsibility), Ujamaa (cooperative economics), Nia (purpose), Kuumba (creativity), Imani (faith). He indicates the role and importance that a value system is to play in our culture. "We need a value system to be predictable in our behaviour, Maulana has said."<sup>10</sup> The cultural interpretation is primary throughout the article, meaning that supposed historical trends that have developed among certain people are used to explain their conceptions of how reality is changed: "The decay of capitalism theory is also another aspect of the European attitude of 'world revolution', and do not mistake my meaning. I am talking about the life style of violence."<sup>11</sup>

Later in the article Baraka provides an interesting, if not prophetic, comment on how his thought is to develop. This is a lengthy quote, but an important one:

...If you cannot have faith in Blackness, in the Black mind and the Black man to find a way out of this slavery, you are full of despair, or else emotionally committed to white people. Which is the terrible truth for many of us, even our so-called 'revolutionaries'. They are so committed to whiteness that they must find a way to make white relevant some way. The Right will not save us so the Left will. This group of white people will not do it, but this other group of white people will. (Do not misunderstand, we will take aid from a scorpion, but we must not confuse our identity. Or try to crawl under rocks with scorpions.)<sup>12</sup>

There is certainly no way to know, just yet, whether Baraka has "crawled under rocks with scorpions"; that is, whether or not he has confused his identity with theirs, but we can certainly assert that, in light of his new position, he at least thinks that the left will be beneficial. We will deal more exclusively with this shortly. We can see from this article that Karenga's codification, i.e., the Nguzo Saba, of a nucleus for the development of a national culture certainly affected Baraka's thinking.

"The Practice of New Nationalism" is, as the title would indicate, a tactical piece laying out the now widely circulated and probably widely misunderstood concept of operational unity. The writer is not definitively sure of what is meant by the concept. It apparently means organizing black people around issues that affect the greatest amount of black people. So that various disunifying factors are submerged, thus maximizing the chances for some type of issue oriented unity to be forged. It is essentially this infusion of the aspirations and actions of various aspects of our community into some operational framework that this "New Nationalism" is about. And, of course, at the core of this infusion, the definer of it, is the "New Nationalist" cadre which has as its "focus of sanity a Black Value System", the Nguzo Saba. The piece is tactical, an attempt to apply Karenga's thought as interpreted by Baraka. But where did this application come in contact with the real world? That is, what was the role of systematic analysis in determining how the thought would be applied? From all indications our hero was operating more or less in Hegel's ideal state hovering in a metaphysical balloon, the view from which he erroneously asserts that what is real is rational, thus returning Imamu to the Hegelian confusion of the ideal and the real all of which his new source, Marx, cleared up over a century ago. Consider this:

Newark, New Ark, the nationalist sees as the creation of a base, as example, upon which one aspect of the Black nation can be built. We will nationalize the city's institutions as if it were liberated territory in Zimbabwe or Angola... We will build a "city state", or make alliances throughout the area to develop regional power...<sup>13</sup>

Well, given the rather mandane, but nevertheless real objective condition of the city, i.e., a creature of the state, Baraka's pronouncements whither in the light of reality. This is not to say that the legal relationship between city and state should or should not be contested by the "New Nationalist",

but that, at the very least we would expect the Nationalist's cognizance of this fact to somehow be reflected in his prescription for change. But Baraka, at least at this point has foregone analysis and started making prescriptions. A doctor, for instance, first examines a patient and then prescribes a cure.

The last essay "Nationalism, Pan-Afrikanism, Ujamaa, Their Future in America", is, in this writer's opinion one of the more systematic and functional pieces to come out of this period of Baraka's movement. He says here that America will either partition itself, providing some space for its African "citizens" or it will become a "multinational socialist state".

The first projection, partition, is dismissed by Baraka. He says that such a move would necessitate continual warfare. "...wars would go on year after year, for another century, until the international state was an actuality between the Afrikan continent and the North American continent, pulling in nations and partioned continents throughout the Caribbean, and Central America and South America every few years."<sup>14</sup>

The rest of the essay affirms the following: 1) that the most intensely racist group of whites are leftists; 2) that racism is the central contradiction in America; 3) there is no white proletariat; 4) there is no black middle class.

Having made these assertions, which are loosely supported by a kind of superficial analysis, he at the very least, could start from presuppositions that presumably would not limit him to a mechonistic Marxist Lenninist interpretation of Afrikan American reality. But, as we have already indicated, the positions presented in the essay were not supported by an even partially exhaustive analysis. The essay was systematic only insofar as it posited a number of concepts that seem logically to follow (points one through four, mentioned above).



What can we say then about Imamu Baraka's former position? To what extent does it imply that the leap to the left was predictable? Within his former position lay the seeds for the creation of a black philosophy which would contain a black ideology, as well as the very real possibility of unparalleled backwardness due to a lack of analysis while still prescribing cures to alter reality. Unfortunately, it appears that the latter prevailed.

Let us answer the two questions posed immediately above. Baraka's former position was characterized by: 1) an almost complete denunciation of Euro-American thought and artifacts while at the same time asserting that these forces provided lessons (only that the nationalist could not afford to confuse his identity with the thought and artifacts); and 2) an affirmation of the need to create Black institutions (political, educational, economic, and so forth) which were in fact the concrete manifestations of our new found value system. These two broad propositions best represent the core of Baraka's former position.

In answer to our second question, we assert that Baraka's shift was predictable insofar as he continued to prescribe actions before analysing the conditions in America. And this is crucial: when one subdues or ignores analyses and nuances, which oftentimes are quite important, the chances of one following historical cycles is maximized. In Baraka's case, one can see a rough and uneven parallel between the Harlem Renaissance emphasis on Race at one point and its shift to a Marxist class analysis frame of reference juxtaposed to Baraka's pivotal role in the Black Arts movement and his current move to the left. To be sure, there were many important variables, the depression being the biggest I suppose, between the two periods just mentioned. But there is enough there to allow some similarity to be drawn. Particularly, the shift in social analysis by some Harlem Renaissance writers,

like the shift by Imamu, was not from what I can see, necessitated by any new and revealing analysis of social, political and economic relations in the real world. It is on this basis that an admittedly rough and uneven comparison can be made. We will develop this more a bit later.

#### New Positions

We have seen that in 1971 Imamu Baraka verbally lashed Black revolutionaries who somehow had faith in the Left (see "The Practice of the New Nationalism") and now we will see that in three short years the same man proclaims "...As for the white left and all sincere Revolutionaries and oppressed people, we seek principled relationships based on struggle."<sup>15</sup>

Aside from the near impossible task of locating a white left (the Socialist Workers Party? or maybe SDS and Co.?), one automatically wonders what has occurred in the world to cause this obvious shift. We have already asked the rhetorical questions generated around the shift. Before providing what seems to us some plausible answers, we will first 'highlight' the apparent dominant aspects of this shift; while at the same time, suggesting the origins for said stimuli.

Recent literature by Baraka would seem to indicate that he adheres to at least three classic Marxian propositions: 1) that economics, broadly defined, is the motive force in history; 2) that class analysis is a valid way to understand social relations, broadly defined, in capitalist society; and 3) that the worker in the capitalist society is the agency through which change will occur. More currently of course, there is the affirmation of the so-called 'twin evils', racism and capitalism.

Imamu's new position is also the result of the influence of several great African thinkers and activists: Nkrumah, Cabral and Nyerere.

From Nkrumah, Imamu and countless others extracted and mechanically imposed the concept of neo-colonialism, having already passed on the colonial question, assuming the validity of the colonial model as a means to accurately describe our condition. We have a few words to say about the latter assumption. It is interesting that on the one hand, this model is assumed as valid and on the other hand, one of the primary influences of Baraka -Cabral - has raised serious reservations about the colonial model's applicability in this country. Cabral says:

Once I discussed politics with Eldridge Cleaver. He is a clever man, very intelligent. We agreed on many things but we disagreed on one thing. He told me your condition is a colonial condition. In certain aspects it seem to be, but it is really not a colonial condition. The colonial condition demands certain factors. One important factor is the continuity of territories. There are others you can see when you analyse...<sup>16</sup>

From Nyerere, Baraka got, among other things, the concept that the primary difference between a capitalist and a socialist is attitudinal. That is, a capitalist is anyone who would exploit, including the aspiring capitalist, who, as of yet doesn't have the financial base to do so.

From Cabral, the primary extraction was from the essay "The Weapon of Theory" which pointed out the necessity for clear and comprehensive analysis as a primary aspect of struggle.

If all of these extractions seem, at best, a hodgepodge, it is probably because they are. They have not, as of yet, been synthesized, not to this writer's knowledge, into any kind of coherent world view and ideology. Much of Baraka's latest writings (I'm limiting this to the "Raise" series of essays which appear in Unity and Struggle Newspaper) tend to support my claim. They are on the whole a series of quotes (see Unity and Struggle for Marchi, Juni, and September 1974) without any theoretical linkages and certainly no new and incisive explanations of our situation.

I have been unable to find any objective reason for Baraka's shift. I am reminded that Baraka's relationship with members of Afrikan Liberation Support Committee is a possible reason for his shift. But then, one wonders when this august body has systematically analysed anything having to do with the African-American situation. But in an effort to be as comprehensive as possible, here is an aspect (I say aspect because there is probably a more detailed explanation that the writer is not aware of) of why the shift was made:

... Our struggle to heighten our political consciousness and see the ultimate victory of our people led us to understand that our people's oppression is not isolated (though being in the 3rd World it is dual, Racist and Capitalist) and in fact the masses of our people could never benefit from a purely National Liberation struggle, but would indeed need a Socialist Revolution (to seize the means of production by the working masses). It is with this growing understanding that we began to see our struggle being hooked up with the struggle of all oppressed people in this country and throughout the world.<sup>17</sup>

Probably the single most revealing phrase in this quote is "led us to understand" which implies a kind of a priori solution that one can more or less get to by reflection and action. No analysis, just reflection and action. Nowhere in the quote do we see a phrase like "After having analysed our situation." Somehow Baraka and company have "been lead to understand." So that the prescriptions for action never have to touch ground. And what is ironic is that this being lead to understand is called scientific. Undoubtedly, the thin quality of the shift dictates an attempt to explain it in terms of an admittedly more subjective analysis that is concerned with historical cycles. Specifically, we will attempt to draw a few parallels between the Harlem Renaissance - 1930's shift and the Black Art - Imamu Baraka circa 1973 shift.

The writer has no problems acknowledging the limitations of such a rough

comparison, especially since Baraka and co. claim to have learned from the mistakes of our intellectuals in the thirties so that they will not be re-directed by paternalistic lefties. History will judge that. But I still maintain that the lack of analysis in both cases is more than enough to validate a comparison.

Albert Murray, writing in 1970, asserts:

...the present wave of interest in self-definition and self-determination is not an innovation but a resurgence of the exuberant self-delight that characterized the so called Harlem Renaissance or New Negro movement no longer ago than the nineteen twenties.<sup>18</sup>

Murray continues:

The New Negro Movement was very specifically concerned with black identity and black heritage. Nor was it unresponsive to social and political matters. But its most significant achievements were in Literature rather than in the area of social revolution...During the depression of the nineteen thirties the cultural emphasis generated by the New Negro movement gave way to direct and very urgent concern with abstract economic theory and general politicization of all issues. In consequence (in part at least) black consciousness as such seems to have been deemphasized in the interests of the polemics of class struggle, dialectics, and black culture was redefined in accordance with the integration oriented policies of friendly but paternalistic white liberals, left wing intellectuals, communist party members and other do gooders and supporters of black causes of that period. Blackness as a cultural identity was all but replaced by blackness as an economic and political identity...<sup>19</sup>

This lengthy quotation puts us on firm ground in terms of making a comparison. Admittedly, there are other interpretations of the Harlem Renaissance and the period that followed. Specifically, they may tend to explain the shift of some Harlem Renaissance writers in terms of the depression or their desire to get their work published. But what appears constant is that the shift occurred and that it was not the result of any clear and consistent social analysis. It appears more of a thing of being swept up with the times.

From this basis, we view Imamu Baraka and company. Here we have a man who more than any single other, did much to define the Black Arts Movement. The concerns of this movement were similar to that of the Renaissance inasmuch as both were an affirmation of our blackness. There are differences, of course, the most important being that Renaissance writing was more external (white directed) while the Black Arts offerings were more internal (us directed). But nevertheless we were affirming ourselves. The point here is that there are continuities. We have already shown that there hasn't been any theoretical analysis in either case. And the only other point to be made in this regard is that to the extent that analysis remains dormant is to the extent that we continue to expect new and bizarre prescriptions for curing our ills to be made. This is quite predictable in a broad sense. The exact prescription of our 'scientific' metaphysicians are dependent on what's new (only in a day to day sense, not in a historical sense: like the difference between what Karenga calls the fluid day to day pop culture and the more systematic and predictable national culture) and hip.

It is no surprise then that Baraka's new position has necessitated the closing of the Afrikan Free School:

In our effort to resolve...contradictions and move to support the mass struggle of oppressed people throughout the world, we see it is our revolutionary responsibility to phase out quasi-public schools of the Congress of Afrikan People by January 1, 1975 in favor of struggling for free and public education within the capitalist public school system.<sup>20</sup>

There is no qualitative difference between this position and the traditionally anti-nationalist position of the CP and company. Needless to say, it was not analysis of the capitalist system that necessitated the closing of the school. Apparently, it logically follows the nebulous, unsystematic positions that CAP is affirming. Perhaps something more systematic is

forthcoming. But, as for now, nothing. A flicker of a candle on a moonless night and once again black people are reduced to socio-economic units. Which is, given the Harlem Renaissance and the subsequent shift, a tragic recurrence.

### Conclusion

We have attempted to sketch an almost three hundred sixty degree evolution of Imamu Baraka: from the beat poet (white) to Black artist (Black) to leftist revolutionary (which simply means a mechanized adoption and application of Marxism). Additionally we have seen how systematic analysis was foregone for prescriptions for action. So that we see nothing in the real world to explain Imamu's move from his former position to his new one.

This analysis has been broad due to the many facets of the subject matter. We were specific in areas felt to be crucial.

Finally, we assert that to the extent that a move to the left is equated with unsystematic analysis or no analysis is the extent to which Imamu Baraka has moved to the left. But whatever we call this change is unimportant. The only point is that, in itself, it is a qualitative move backwards.

FOOTNOTES

- <sup>1</sup>LeRoi Jones. Tales (New York: Grove Press, 1967), p. 10.
- <sup>2</sup>LeRoi Jones. Home (New York: Random House, 1966), p. 9.
- <sup>3</sup>LeRoi Jones. Tales (New York: Grove Press, 1967), p. 89.
- <sup>4</sup>Ibid., p. 93.
- <sup>5</sup>Imamu Baraka. Raise Race Rays Raze (New York: Random House, 1971), p. 33.
- <sup>6</sup>Ibid., p. 33.
- <sup>7</sup>Ibid., p. 111.
- <sup>8</sup>Ibid., p. 112.
- <sup>9</sup>Ibid., p. 133.
- <sup>10</sup>Ibid., p. 136.
- <sup>11</sup>Ibid., p. 138.
- <sup>12</sup>Ibid., p. 139.
- <sup>13</sup>Ibid., p. 163.
- <sup>14</sup>Imamu Baraka, "Nationalism, Pan-Africanism, Viamaa. Their Future in America" (unpublished paper).
- <sup>15</sup>Ibid..
- <sup>16</sup>Amilea Cabral. Return to The Source (Longon: African Information Service, 1974), p. 74.
- <sup>17</sup>Unity and Struggle, September 1974., p. 11
- <sup>18</sup>Albert Murray. The Omni Americans (New York: Outerbridge and Drensry, 1970), p. 171.
- <sup>19</sup>Ibid., pp. 171-172.
- <sup>20</sup>Unity and Struggle, September, 1974, p. 4.



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Scientistic Socialism: Notes on the New Afro-American Magic Marxism

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Three years ago, after the Black Panther Party had recanted and returned to the Baptist Church, the only self-styled 'Marxist' political tendency to be found on this side of the veil was that embodied in the Black Workers Congress which, according to its somewhat generous self-assessment, was not only 'Marxist-Leninist' but 'Maoist' as well. Every other tendency among black people was hostile to Marxism. The arguments scarcely need to be recalled : "Marx and Engels were Europeans; what can racist Europeans have to say that is useful to us?" "Why do you have to depend on the white man for your ideology; can't we develop something new of our own?" etc. Of course there was also a great deal of red-baiting going on and even more self-righteous posturing.

Then, not too much longer than a year and a half ago a detectable 'Marxist' embryo was formed within the African Liberation Support Committee. This embryo in its way quickly developed into a militant, hardcore 'Marxist' faction within ALSC, a faction engaged in heavy "ideological struggle" with a 'culturalist' faction perceived by the 'Marxists' as a right wing. This "ideological struggle" harkened images of the internecine Panther/US struggle for control of the UCLA black studies budget. However, perhaps partially because no money was involved, this more recent "ideological struggle" had not been as deadly. Still, battle lines were drawn sharply, and the levels of bombast and factional self-righteousness could not have been much more intense in a real war.

Just as the 'contradiction' sharpened to the point of rupture a major and unexpected blow fell on the 'cultural nationalists'. Their leader, Imamu Baraka, publicly defected at the ALSC national conference in Greensboro last winter.

Despite the joy exuded by the missionaries of "scientific socialism"<sup>1</sup> at his conversion, Baraka's reversal is significant only in a sense that has nothing to do with the likely effects of his action. It must be kept in mind that all of this "ideological struggle" has gone on in a vacuum of outreaching political practice; only Baraka was even alleged to have a popular base, and that allegation was shattered when he confronted Kenneth Gibson and lost ignominiously. So none of this "ideological struggle" has been of practical political consequence.

On the contrary, Baraka's conversion is significant in that it summarizes, as the most dramatic occurrence to date, the genesis of this new, magical Marxism. Beyond that the conversion illustrates a process that has been going on among black radicals since the dying gasps of the Civil Rights Movement -- what might be called a supermarket approach to social theory. What has happened is that the radicals have simply accepted and pushed one political line until some key personality or core group of personalities detects its inherent weaknesses and initiates a search for a new line. A key and classic statement of this process is Carmichael's call for a new 'ideology' just before everyone became Pan-Africanists. To date not one of the shifts of line has generated a systematic critique of the political and social world; at best the old line is denounced in the terminology of the new, a practice whose primary function is exposure of novitiates to the style and lexicon of the new idolatry. As a colleague has noted, black radical practice has not changed in essence since

the Civil Rights movement; only the ideological forms -- slogans, justifications, superficial behavior, etc. -- have shifted. The radicalism has been entirely restricted to posture; the roots of capitalist society have not been penetrated for all the ideological struggles. One simply resigns from the old theology and accepts the new. The magical Marxism presently in vogue is only the current manifestation of the process.

The assertions made here are certain to be denounced by the magicians of "scientific socialism" with charges of 'subjectivism' and 'negativeness' in addition to disputation of historical and analytical accuracy, so I may as well take this opportunity to rebut at the onset. Disputation of accuracy is of course perfectly normal, valid and necessary and should under all circumstances be welcome. The charges likely to be generated fall in another category; yet they are useful in that they are indicative of some of the intellectual grounding of the new Marxism. First of all, I plead guilty to a degree of 'subjectiveness'. To the extent that human beings are not only objects of history but its subjects as well, subjectivity is a natural component of the dialectic of materialist reality. To exclude subjectivity from an autonomous existence is to fetishize history or facticity, which is precisely what the magic Marxists in fact do. In so far as my specific subjectiveness is concerned, I admit to a bias against illusion and an extreme distaste for liberal ideology, especially those manifestations which pretend to be something else.

I also plead guilty in advance to 'negativeness' to the extent that I attempt to utilize a method based on critique. At the foundation of a materialist epistemology are two assumptions: that there is an independent reality which can be known only through removal of the layers of ideological illusion that conceal it and that human beings develop their

visions of what ought to exist primarily by renunciation of unpalatable aspects of actual existence. Each of those assumptions demands the use of negation as an indispensable tool for the understanding-through-transformation which is the essential principle of a materialist theory of knowledge. As far as the moral aspect of 'negativeness' is concerned, I admit to that also. In an objective historical situation in which there is no actually or foreseeably effective challenge to the bourgeoisie I see nothing about which to be positive. The real cynicism is that positive thinking which pretends the trite to be significant and makes up things to celebrate in the midst of an oppressive reality.

At any rate, now that I have admitted my sins, it is time to commit them.

There are three primary objectives at which this essay aims, each of which is largely polemical. One objective is, to use the phrase of another colleague, to "take the covers off" the magic Marxism to analyze its essential elements through critique. A secondary objective is the location of the magic Marxism in an historical context by means of illustration of certain dynamics which I propose have been operative over the last decade of black political thought, and the final objective -- which should give some satisfaction to the Norman Vincent Peales of scientistic socialism -- is some clarification of the general nature of the Marxist theory and method by means of statements about what a materialist dialectical theory is and should be. The key questions are: what is magic Marxism and how does it help to interpret and change the world? How and why did magic Marxism come to be what it is? How must Marxism operate as a critical social philosophy?

To begin with, it is necessary to consider what it is that makes this new black Marxism magical. Ironically, that element of the new

Marxism of which the adherents are most proud, that which they believe to be the qualitative advance over all magic, is in fact the essential kernel which defines this Marxism's fetish character. That element of course is its assumption of science as a suprahistorical category which passes judgement on all that exists within history. To be considered legitimate in the new Marxism, any formulation must be blessed with the label "scientific".<sup>2</sup>

To demonstrate the ways in which science is a fetish in the new Marxism it is necessary first to try to determine exactly what the 'Marxists' mean by science. This task is not that simple, unfortunately, because the 'scientific socialists' are so much in awe of their fetish that they do not bother to explain exactly what it is. But, then, it is always sacrilege for mortals to attempt to analyze God.

Put most broadly, of course, science is taken to mean that method and body of techniques whose careful utilization in analysis produces results which reflect -- accurately if not exactly -- a material reality which exists independently of its perception by human consciousness. The component of this science given most frequently is a certain kind of terminology which is intrinsically more capable than are other terminologies of reflecting 'reality' in a manner that is unencumbered by the subjectivity of the observer.<sup>3</sup>

In addition 'science' includes rigorous definitions which represent the real world with precision. Examples of such definitions are Lenin's stipulation of class<sup>4</sup> with Stalin's definition of nationality.<sup>5</sup> This brings us to our first major problem. It is necessary to ask what makes those definitions 'scientific'? The answer must be that the definitions are scientific because they identify characteristics which can be observed

in the empirical world. On this level, the new Marxism is in accord with the old empiricism, which is only natural since 'science' is the creation of empiricism.<sup>6</sup>

A problem arises immediately, however; those operational definitions given are, like all such definitions, stipulated. Why must a nation be "historically constituted", "stable", etc.? Only because Stalin, for whatever reason, stipulates that it must be. This is not to suggest that stipulated definitions cannot be valid; on the contrary, since they are tautological, they are neither valid nor invalid. Definitions are stipulated in order to facilitate performance of specific operations, systematic aggregation of data along lines determined by the human beings who perform the operations. On that basis such a definition can be neither true nor false, only more or less useful in the given context. If one chooses to commit himself to 'scientific method', then he must also commit himself to that amoral relativism, and it is impossible to appeal to scientific method to resolve disputes about anything that can not be measured.

Likewise, there is no intrinsically 'scientific' language. Words, in the last analysis, have no meanings other than those which specific human beings attach to them. To suggest otherwise is to fetishize language, to attribute an independent autonomous existence to a product of human social relations. The magic of the new Marxism lies precisely in the circumstance that the theory thrives on fetishes.<sup>7</sup>

The examples of language and definitions suggest that the magic Marxists are at least confused about what science is. At best they have succumbed to the popular misunderstanding which identifies all systematic production of knowledge as science. However, the misconception appears to be even more basic.

The adherents of scientistic socialism have taken 'science' as a pre-given category, a set of impartial techniques which might be put to use by either progressive or reactionary forces. In the former case utilization of scientific methods will yield progressive results; in the latter, reactionary ones. The problem is, though, that intellectual systems and frameworks are developed by human beings within society, and to that extent those frameworks and systems must reflect the class reality of the social order. Therefore, since scientism as an analytic frame of reference (rather than merely a number of research techniques) is the product of bourgeois society, the method itself must reflect the biases of bourgeois social organization.

There are only two other possibilities. Either science is the product of a suprahuman consciousness (or is invested with its own), or science already existed as a package and was merely discovered in the bourgeois epoch. In the first case science is mystified, in the latter it is reified. The effect of both possibilities is to make science fetish.<sup>8</sup>

Science cannot be absolutized if it is taken as the product of a given form of social organization. Therefore, science cannot be considered the form of knowledge but only a particular form of knowledge. Moreover, because this form reflects the ideology of an antagonistic social order, it must be partial and insufficient. Habermas<sup>9</sup> notes the attempted separation in bourgeois scientism of the subjective and objective aspects of knowledge via the restriction of philosophy to a metaphysical, speculative ontology and the alleged elimination of values from science.<sup>10</sup>

As should be expected, the confusion of the new Marxists about the nature of science and knowledge is reproduced in their specific propositions about the bourgeois social order. These propositions are very interesting



in as much as they not only demonstrate the existence of the confusion but also expose its peculiar character.

In particular the treatment of the concept of class in scientific socialism demonstrates clearly the wondrous effects of the magic of reification. Classes are perceived first of all as statistical aggregates whose components are classified and counted quite laboriously.<sup>11</sup> The classifications are then further subdivided (e.g. bourgeoisie national and comprador sectors) with the presumption that the political consciousness of these classes can somehow be inferred from their various positions in the social production process.

In fact, the somewhat overly meticulous relabeling provided by Alkalimat and Johnson of census data on black employment and income patterns turns out to be the prelude to identification of a "revolutionary class of Black workers" who must play an "heroic role" in the destruction of capitalism. This role flows from the scientific class analysis which determines that "only the working class is in an objective position to fundamentally destroy capitalist relations, defeat racism, and build a different society ...."<sup>12</sup>

Two problems arise immediately -- one empirical, the other epistemological. First, where is the referent in the real world for a "revolutionary class of black workers"? Presumably, so volatile an entity could not exist without giving off some hints of its existence. Yet there are no signs of even an impending upsurge among black workers, or anyone else for that matter. Certainly there are no indications of revolutionary confrontation between black workers and the capitalist social order unless we accept a conception of revolutionary struggle which would embrace every petty wage demand. If our conception is to be of that sort, then 'revolution'

for us would have about the same meaning as it does in soap powder advertisements.

Still, the magic Marxists project a revolutionary working class as a fait accompli, and there must be some basis for that projection. What the magic Marxists are actually saying is that given the behavior patterns ascribed a priori by 'scientific' class analysis to certain occupation and income aggregates, the black working class is supposed to be revolutionary. Somehow, because the black scientific socialists apparently have not quite had the time yet to master even mechanical materialism, their claim to 'scientific' precision of analysis backs them into a corner.

The 'scientific analysis', actually little more than some fixed propositions memorized and applied indiscriminately, decrees that black workers due to their position in the production process are a revolutionary force. The data from the empirical world hardly supports such an assertion. Yet since this whole dialectical materialism thing is new to the magic Marxists, they are unable to face up to the data. The documents cited here from the Black Workers Congress and the African Liberation Support Committee refer time and again to the existence of a mass black movement led by black proletariat. One look at the world will confirm that no such phenomenon exists. Unfortunately, though, the scientific socialists are not fluent enough in their mechanics yet to give the conventional responses about labor aristocracy, duping, etc. They simply refuse to admit to current reality.

However, it is not only at this point that the 'scientific class analysis' takes flight from reality; rather, at the onset with the initial assumption, it is already gone. This 'scientific' analysis proceeds from an assumption that there are inevitable connections between specific forms of concrete political consciousness and the aggregate stipulated as classes.

This assumption acquires a dogmatic character thanks to corollary assumptions about 'history' and 'laws' which we shall discuss a bit later. At any rate the wholly a priori assumption about the connections of the aggregates and patterns of consciousness not only reifies the aggregates -- in the sense that they are treated as organic, self-conscious things functioning in the world -- but it is also the basis of the second problem.

Put crudely, what is the process by which revolutionary ideas, leap from the wrench to the minds of the workers? That is, how does consciousness arise from class position? More abstractly, what is the relationship of objectivity and subjectivity in the production of ideas and events? Those questions have been among the most salient problems of Marxist theory in the twentieth century, especially since revolution has been vitiated in the Soviet Union and has failed to materialize at all in the industrial West. However, the adherents of magic Marxism seem oblivious to those problems; in fact, what they apparently see as the science in Marxism is dogma to which they try to mold the world, the rote formulae which explain everything. Ironically, for all the sloganeering about scientific materialism, the magic Marxism reveals itself to be the exact opposite.

The factor which appears most immediately responsible for the idealist conceptualizations of scientific socialism is a general perception of science as a body of rigid, inexorable laws. In any notion of laws of social development or social interaction there is already posited some force which exists outside of and governs social relations. A law must have an origin somewhere; and if it is in fact a law which applies universally, then that origin cannot be sought in any specific social situation. These laws are therefore metaphysical in that their content does not change from one society to another or over time; the laws are also idealist in that they are nonmaterial forces

which exist and operate independently of human control.

How can this new Marxism, which wants so badly to be 'scientific', end up as the very antithesis of materialist science? An obvious reason is the mechanical materialism which the magic Marxists espouse. Their mechanical interpretation of social processes stems from a pedestrian reading of Marx's aphorism about being of consciousness, and that interpretation has profound implications for the likelihood of generating materialist theory and, for that matter, revolutionary practice.<sup>13</sup> If the process of production is strictly determinate of attitudes and therefore actions, then that process becomes a force which directs events. In order to do that, the force must stand outside and above society. So it is that a mechanical materialist determinism gives rise to a network of axiomatic, suprasoietal laws which can appear as science in a culture whose popular ideology worships science as the really complete metaphysics (in the bourgeois sense).

This mechanical materialism, however, is only the methodological consequence and manifestation of a prior ontological assumption, one that was hinted at earlier. The magic Marxists read history from the conclusion to the beginning. That is to say, they see history as the inevitable unfolding of the specific present and, for that matter, the present as a stage in the inevitable unfolding of an already determined future. Feudalism inevitably generated capitalism, capitalism will inevitably generate socialism, and so on.<sup>14</sup>

What all this inevitability means of course is that the script of history has already been written; the end is pre-determined. Thus history is transformed into History, an unassailable force which leads us to some pre-arranged destination. This History, through its own machinations, has been revealing it will to us in gradual stages.<sup>15</sup> So we finally come to the bottom of scientific socialism -- the reification of history as an independent process whose motion cannot be altered.<sup>16</sup>

The fetish character of this new Marxism is therefore clearly revealed. At every turn there is an idealist formulation masquerading as its opposite. The magical ideology proceeds from all illusory, quasi-theological assumptions of those 'ideologies' with which the magicians imagine themselves at odds. Hence it is possible to say of this new scientific socialism what Thomas Huxley said of its actual philosophical antecedent, Comtism, a century ago -- it is "Catholicism with Christianity".

Still, it is not sufficient merely to "take the covers off" the magic Marxism and expose it as just another pathetic intellectual paroxysm of the would-be 'radical' section of the black petit bourgeoisie. It is necessary to attempt to ferret out the origins of this aborted effort to break out of chains of bourgeois ideology. I submit that scientific socialism is a product of a certain paradigm that began to develop in response to the self-immolation of Black Power radicalism.

In retrospect the 1960's appear as a period that held great political possibilities for black people in this country. The promise lay neither in a likelihood that realization of the amorphous goal of freedom was imminent nor in signs of theoretical coherence and self-conscious revolutionary praxis. On the one hand, serious prediction about "freedom" was precluded by the circumstance that no one had any idea what the condition of being free was actually supposed to entail, although most people probably felt that 'freedom' referred to something more than integrated water fountains. On the other hand, much of the élan experienced by those who lived the period was a function of -- and in turn reinforced -- the analytical muddle that was general to the 'movement'. Because each experience or action seemed independent of all others and absolutely brand new in the world, fervor was kept high during the decade through all the turns that the 'Movement' made.

In this environment, as the inadequacies of Black Power activism began to drain the elan that it had produced, an uninformed search was initiated for an equation that would keep the movement together and drive it forward. The character of the search, when reflected upon half a decade later, seemed generated at least in part by panic. The call for the search, as well as its nature, seems best summarized by Stokely Carmichael's call for a new 'ideology', defined essentially as a "belief system".

"Ideology" was conceived as a set of axioms -- eight points of Pan-Africanism, seven principles of Kawaida, etc. -- which not only can explain the universe simply and quickly but also can give its particular ideologues something to believe in and a line with which to confront other ideologues. Since the search was eclectic, searchers would just cluster around whatever system came their way first. Then, when trend setters in a particular camp would become bored or dissatisfied and exchange their 'ideology' for a new one, their cluster of epigones would -- as is general in fads -- trail behind them, no questions asked. The old line is dropped; the new one is assumed. There is no discernible transition period, no radical critique of the old.

When that process is taken into account, scientistic socialism appears as no more than the momentary vogue acquisition in the department/store of 'ideology'.<sup>17</sup> This view is reinforced by the circumstance that at no point has any one of the ideologues attempted a root level critique of the ontological and epistemological assumptions that drive bourgeois society. Until that kind of critique is made, our 'ideologues' still simply continue to reproduce in styles that are ever more bizarre and outlandishly confused the metaphysical idealism which constitutes the essential kernel of the bourgeois world view.<sup>18</sup>

There are a couple of final points that should be made about some key conceptions of Marxism. The relation of subjectivity and objectivity in the materialist world view has already been explicated, I think. So has the question of place and meaning of history; Marxism as a genuinely materialist philosophy can allow no reification of the historical process.

Nonetheless, since Marxism is basically a theory of practice and a political practice which aims at social revolution, a bit of attention should be given to clear up as much as possible the muddle about the nature and significance of class. In the first place classes are not things but relations abstracted for purpose of analytical focus from the totality of relations which exist in society.<sup>19</sup>

Class takes on political significance as a conception of "objective possibility"<sup>20</sup>, as a potentially active political force; as a compilation of aggregate characteristics the conception of class has no political significance. Marx himself makes this distinction in his differentiation of class-in-itself and class-for-itself. The former is the bland, abstract aggregate in which the latter exists -- due to the role of the role of the aggregate in the production process --- as an element of latent possibility. Only when the class-for-itself emerges from the class-in-itself does class assume real political meaning.

Drawing on the United States for his example, Colletti<sup>21</sup> suggests that a class can be said really to exist only if its members are conscious of themselves as a class. (On that basis he suggests that workers in this country are objectively no more than a cog of capital.) The times at which one can actually see classes in the empirical world are very rare; in fact only in periods of sharp antagonism and rupture, i.e. only in revolutionary situations.

Therefore, class cannot be treated by us as a "hard" empirical entity whose presence and impact can be rigorously assessed as would so many plants or molecules.<sup>22</sup> Politically, we cannot view classes, particularly the proletariat, as given; our task is to create a revolutionary proletariat from the raw material of workers. Nor for that matter can we bind ourselves to the aggregates of industrial workers as the exclusive raw material from which the revolutionary force is to be built. Factory workers in England in the mid-nineteenth century were seen by Marx as the potential vanguard revolutionary class not simply because they were the majority of the population and gave up surplus value, but because specific relations which they had among themselves and with capitalists suggested the possibility that from the aggregates of factory workers would be most likely to come individuals amenable to making revolutionary social change. Since capitalist social relations have undergone extensive changes over the last century, there is no reason to believe that the mode of intervention of industrial workers in those relations has remained constant. Therefore, the question of revolutionary possibility -- always an empirically based question -- must be asked in light of the present data. Any other approach is theistic and anti-materialist.

Finally, if this essay has no other merit, it is my hope that it affirms the need to take theory to the roots of existence and to aim always for the removal of illusion from reality. Of course that aim entails also the need to be critical of our own assumptions and methods. Unless we press critical analysis to the roots we will only continue to run along the treadmill of fetishism and wish-fulfillment and will continue to be functional ideological agents of the bourgeoisie.



## NOTES.

<sup>1</sup>The term "scientific socialism" serves two important functions for the new Marxists. In the first place it is the method and network of beliefs which distinguishes them from the "idealists" and "metaphysicians". "Scientific socialism" is posited as the antithesis of astrology, religion and all antimaterialist ideologies. As such, of course, this "scientific socialism" becomes no more than a manifestation of the same juju but under a different form. This is not simply a formalist dialectical proposition; "science" in this new 'Marxism', as we shall see, is mystified even more than it is in other ideologies of the bourgeois epoch.

Secondly, 'scientific socialism' provides a fortunate appellation for those among the ranks who want no association with anything European except consumer goods; it would be too agonizing for them to have to declare themselves Marxists. This second function at some point dovetails with the first. In bourgeois society there is a certain awe surrounding affiliation with science, and it is with feelings of great fulfillment and a sense of arrival that one can proclaim, "I am a scientific socialist". Those unfamiliar with the proclamation need only compare it to others like: "I am a Christian", "I am a behavioralist", or among the less serious members, "I am a Kappa". The phrase "scientific socialism" which I use here seeks to identify this alleged Marxism by one of its central fetishes, 'science'.

<sup>2</sup>A few brief references from the theoretical work of the new Marxists illustrate the almost neurotic importance of 'science'. Ronald H. Bailey in the introduction to his paper "Imperialism and Black People in the 1970's" (unpublished) charges: "Let us not for a moment underestimate the importance of a precise and scientific analysis in our struggle for liberation," (p. 1.). Nelson Johnson and Abdul Alkalimat, Toward the Ideological Unity of the African Liberation Support Committee: A Response to Criticism of the ALSC Statement of Principles contend that the new Marxism constitutes a theoretical breakthrough partially because it utilizes "objective scientific language that analyzes objective material reality" (p. 6.). Abdul Alkalimat has subsequently published in pamphlet form an edited version of an earlier speech under the title A Scientific Approach to Black Liberation (Nashville: Peoples College, 1974) in which a clear attempt is made to legitimize the political positions of the new Marxism through appeals to their scientific nature. In the heady document produced by the Black Workers Congress, The Black Liberation Struggle: The Black Workers Congress and Proletarian Revolution (Detroit: BWC, 1974) appears the following assessment: "Today Marxism-Leninism and the Thought of Mao Tse Tung is the only true social science in the world...it is as objective as any of the other sciences like physics, chemistry, etc." (p. 7.).

<sup>3</sup>Alkalimat and Johnson, *op. cit.*, in counter attack against the self-conscious idealists in ALSC provide a list of words and phrases which the authors assert to be "precise and scientific" (p. 13.). Presumably, science also includes methods of procedure and an overarching framework; these probably are respectively historical and dialectical materialism. Within Marxism now there is a great deal of debate over those constructs and their

entailments; yet the scientific socialists nowhere attempt to explicate their position in this debate. Consequently, 'dialectical and historical materialism' are no more than words to magic Marxism.

<sup>4</sup>C.F. Alkalimat, op. cit., p. 3.; Alkalimat and Johnson, op. cit., p. 50.

<sup>5</sup>C.F. Black Workers Congress, op. cit., p. 12.; Alkalimat, op. cit., p. 4.; Alkalimat and Johnson, p. 50.

<sup>6</sup>C.F. Max Horkheimer, Critical Theory (New York: Herder and Herder, 1972), particularly the essays "Notes on Science and the Crisis" and "The Latest Attack on Metaphysics."

<sup>7</sup>At times it appears that the scientific socialists have managed to appropriate the most bizarre and idealistic elements of both empiricism and rationalism. On the one hand, they burn incense to the Great God Science; on the other hand, they continually prate about a certain Mr. History who demands this and will decide that.

<sup>8</sup>A critical look at the development of what has been considered scientific methodology removes these propositions from the realm of deductive logic and gives them a concrete reality. Horkheimer observes that in the early period, when bourgeois ideology was in battle against Scholasticism, the inceptionary scientific method was formulated as a device which would emancipate inquiry. "But by the second half of the nineteenth century this definition had already lost its progressive character, and showed itself to be ... a limiting of scientific activity to the description, classification, and generalization of phenomena, with no care to distinguish the unimportant from the essential." op. cit., p. 5.

Horkheimer notes the static, and thereby reactionary, biases inherent in positivism, the contemporary form of scientism: "Knowledge relates solely to what is and its recurrence. New forms of being, especially those arising from the historical activity of man, lie beyond empiricist theory...All historical tendencies that reach beyond what is present and recurrent, do not belong to the domain of science." Ibid., p. 144. Horkheimer contends that the ideological roots of the positivist style of scientism are to be found in the frightened petit bourgeoisie. Ibid., p. 140.

<sup>9</sup>C.F. Jurgen Habermas, Knowledge and Human Interests (Boston: Beacon, 1971).

<sup>10</sup>While objectivity and subjectivity are not considered antinomies in the epistemology of dialectical materialism to which the magic Marxists purport to adhere, (cf. Alkalimat, op. cit., p. 23.), the latter nowhere explicate what that dialectical materialism is to entail as a methodology. In the face of the reverence for 'science' as a transcendent arbiter of interpretation, however, as well as the recurring drivel about "historical laws", it is impossible to view this magic Marxism as either dialectical or materialist.

<sup>11</sup>C.F. Alkalimat & Johnson, op. cit., pp. 33-49 and Ronald H. Bailey, op. cit., pp. 17-22.

<sup>12</sup>Ibid., p. 57. See also The Black Liberation Struggle, etc., op. cit., p. 6.

<sup>13</sup>C.F. Karl Korsch, Marxism and Philosophy (New York: Monthly Review, 1970), Korsch sees the mechanical, positivist interpretation of Marxism which subordinates human consciousness and action to so called "objective processes" as part of the central problem of Marxism in this century. He traces that interpretation to Plekhanov and contends that that positivist reading of Marxist theory is the root theoretical cause of the opportunism of the Second International. Interestingly, he sees Plekhanov at the foundation of Russian Marxism (through Lenin) and links the latter philosophically with the Second International. In so far as action and consciousness are seen as dependent on economic processes the door is clearly open to economism and pragmatism in general. Rather, objective conditions are themselves the product of a continuous dialectic between material forces and conscious action; hence all talk of waiting for contradictions to mature or imposing impersonal stages on development are no more than mealy-mouthed opportunism and mystification.

<sup>14</sup>One of the magic Marxists with whom I am familiar argued in a seminar at the time of the coup against Allende that the coup was a progressive development to the extent that it demonstrated to the Chilean left the futility of electoral revolution and would therefore--in the long run (the Judgement Day in mechanical materialism) -- facilitate the building of a stronger, more militant revolutionary movement. When asked how he could be so optimistic in light of the grim extirpation of leftists then in process in Chile, he demanded that the individuals be considered separately from the political tendency. The former could be destroyed, but the latter cannot! This anecdote should clear up whatever questions the reader might have had concerning why I have dubbed this peculiar, would-be Marxism "magic".

<sup>15</sup>Dressed up in mock materialist garb this proposition becomes something like: Human awareness of the motive forces in history always corresponds to the level of objective development of the mode of production; prior to the capitalist epoch it was impossible for any human being to think democracy, scientific socialism, or any of the ideologies of the bourgeois epoch. Each stage of development of the mode of production paves the way for the ensuing stage; this process is an inevitable product of the law of contradiction between the forces and relations of production in society."

<sup>16</sup>It is interesting to compare this view with that of Marx: "History does nothing, it possesses no immense wealth, fights no battles. It is rather man, real living man who does everything, who possesses and fights". Cited in E.H. Carr, What Is History? (New York: Random House, 1961), p. 61.

<sup>17</sup>It is instructive in this regard that less than three years ago most of the magic Marxists, at least in the ALSC wing, were Pan-Africanists of the most wildly mystical variety; moreover, they were just as self-righteous and dogmatic about that drivel as they now are about the current drivel. For the ex-Kawaida Nationalists the case is even more dramatic. Less than a year ago they were greater enemies of Marxism than J. Edgar Hoover or Little Orphan Annie.

18That metaphysical idealism is at the base of this process is clear to the extent that the search was begun because we had to develop the ability to 'redefine' our history and condition. This 'redefinition' meant first and foremost the redefinition of an analytic philosophy--a hopelessly abstract and detached shuffling and reshuffling of words. The 'ideological struggle' has never been any more than that, as the battle over terminology in ALSC shows. However, the basic point is that no matter what form the popular 'ideology' has taken, it has been grounded at every turn on the same fundamentally idealist assumptions about humankind and history.

19The notion of class entails the notion of historical relationship. Like any other relationship, it is a fluency which evades analysis if we attempt to stop it dead at any given moment and anatomize its structure. The finest-meshed sociological net cannot give us a pure specimen of class... The relationship must always be embodied in real people and in a real content". E.P. Thompson; The Making of The English Working Class (New York: Random House, 1963), p. 9.

20C.F. Georg Lukacs; History and Class Consciousness: Studies in Marxist Dialectics (Cambridge: MIT, 1971).

21Lucio Colletti; From Rousseau to Lenin: Studies in Ideology and Society (New York: Monthly Review, 1972), p. 235.

22C.F. Thompson; op. cit., pp. 9-11.

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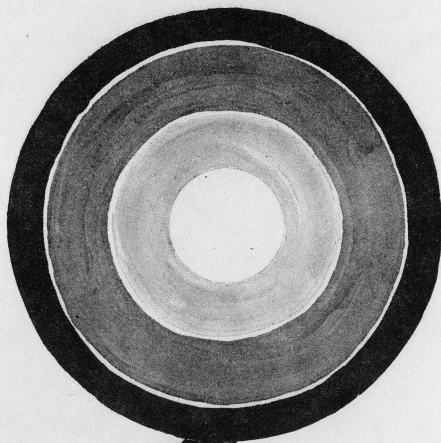
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