flock; but can any claim their exertions have sufficed?
        Nor was it only with England and her white colonies
that Berkeley was concerned. His benevolence spread
to all people of the earth, and especially to the
savage natives of America. At a time when these
savages are showing such a want of civic or spiritual
virtue; at a time, moreover, when the darker races
throughout the world are, with honourable exceptions,
a manifest disturbance and threat to Christian
civilization; at a time, finally, when in Berkeley's
beloved Bermuda pound and piety are in contempt, we
can do no better than turn to Berkeley's own excellent
recommendations for civilizing the savages of this
world.
        Thus we turn to *A Proposal for the Better Supplying
of Churches in Our Foreign Plantations, and for
Converting the Savage Americans to Christianity, by
a College to be Erected in the Isle of Bermuda* (1725).

        Berkeley's proposal was widely acclaimed, and
supported by Royalty and Parliament Charter, and was
to train people of the savage race, 'to a life of
civility and religion', that they might then go
among their kinfolk and spread the doctrine and
practice of Christian civil society. Their countrymen

> would be less apt to suspect and readier to
> embrace a doctrine recommended by neighbours
> or relations, men of their own blood and
> language, than if it were proposed by
> foreigners, who would probably be thought to
> have designs on the liberty or property of
> their converts.

(Berkeley, as we have perceived, was sensible of
the analogous role of the Popish hierarchy in
Ireland as a potentially civilizing influence on
its flock).

> The young Americans necessary for this purpose
> may ... be procured either by peacable methods
> ... or by taking captive the children of our
> enemies.
>
> ... young Americans, educated in an island at
> some distance from their own country, will be
> more easily kept under discipline ... than on
> the continent; where they might ... run away
> to their countrymen and return to their
> brutal customs...

Saucy

Clearly, were such a policy to be energetically
practised in the territories over which we have
dominion or influence, it would render superfluous
the expensive and impolitic recommendations of Mr
Powell and his supporters.
        It is unfortunate that in his otherwise excellent
little book on Berkeley (I hear echo that fine
Englishman John Austin), Mr Geoffrey Warnock should
have missed a fine opportunity to enlighten that
nation of which he is such an avid servant to the
contemporary spiritual and civil relevance of
Berkeley's thought. The good bishop himself, after
all, makes perspicuous in his *Preface* that *The
Principles of Human Knowledge* (1710), to which the
modern reader is generally restricted, is pointed

> particularly to those who are tainted with
> Scepticism, or want a demonstration of the
> Existence and Immateriality of God, or the
> Natural Immortality of the Soul.

At a time when the sceptical cancer of materialist
rationalism condemns humble piety, diligence, and
respect with a virulence far in excess of that with
which Berkeley contended while on earth, it is nothing
short of monstrous that the import of his wise and
wide thought is not energetically promulgated by
those teachers and I believe they are not few, who
consider their obligations to consist in more than
the coy handing on of the saucy and subversive
scissors of sophistical skill.

The scapegoat
Sartre on the constitution and embodiment of evil[1]
Roger Waterhouse

The scapegoat is a widespread, perhaps universal,
phenomenon in human societies. He may be a
black, a criminal, a Jew; he may be an individual
cast out by family or workteam: but he always
emerges out of and in relation to a social group.
He is a chosen victim: he fulfils a socially
constituted role. The scapegoat can only be under-
stood in relation to a set of beliefs about the
nature of human beings and society. In the West
the dominant ideology has been well articulated;
within it the scapegoat is constituted as *essentially*
evil - he is irredeemably bad because it is in his
nature to be so.
        If we look critically at this ideology we shall
begin to see why the scapegoat is needed, why he
has to be evil and worthy of punishment, and how
these ideas relate to more fundamental beliefs.
It is my contention that the necessity for having
a scapegoat in this ideology is symptomatic of its
failure to give an adequate account of human nature
and society.
        The account that I shall give derives from
Sartre, and part of my purpose in this article is
to draw attention to that section of his book on
Genet[2] which describes the initial constitution of
Genet as a scapegoat. Sartre's prose is difficult
to come to terms with, but it repays the effort.
Sartre emphasises (I think rightly) the crucial
importance of the dominant ideology in mediating
between the individual and society, and in determin-
ing the ways in which the individual can understand
himself.[3]
        This article falls into four parts. The first
two are expositions of Sartre's analysis; (1) of
the case of Genet, and (2) of the place of the
scapegoat in the dominant ideology. Section (3)
is a reduction of Sartre's account to ordinary
language showing how the ideology generates
commonly expressed prejudices about the scapegoat.
Section (4) is my re-constitution and extension of
the argument at a philosophical level, in terms
slightly different from those of Sartre.

1. The case of Genet

Sartre was involved in a case study of Jean Genet.
The following is that part of his account of
Genet's early history which is relevant to the
present argument.
        Genet was born a bastard, abandoned by his
mother to the Assistance Publique (a state agency
for the care of orphans), and eventually given into
the foster care of a peasant family in the Morvan.
At about the age of ten he was caught stealing by
this family, and accused of being a thief. This
experience, or perhaps series of experiences, was
traumatic for Genet (though not repressed): it
marked a break, says Sartre, between his childhood
innocence and his subsequent consciousness of
himself.
        Stealing is a socially constituted act. It
presupposes the institution of private property, a
legal code, and an ethical system of relationships
between people. A child, for example, may steal
'unintentionally' if he deliberately takes and
keeps something belonging to another, but is un-
aware of the social meaning of his act.
        Before the experience of being called a thief
Genet took things in order to possess them. He
took without asking so as to avoid the perpetual
gratitude which was expected of him, particularly

by his foster family. When he was caught, and accused, Genet was made to realize the social meaning of his act. To the peasant family which held property in such high regard, this act was so awful that it constituted Genet as a social being. For the first time Genet came to have a 'rightful' place in society accepted both by others and by himself - the place of a thief.

Since stealing *is* a socially constituted act, it is not necessarily accompanied by any 'inner feeling' of the sort which accompanies simple picking up. Although Genet searched for some internal feeling which would confirm him in the social being he now recognised himself to have, he failed to find it. Nevertheless, he became convinced of the reality of this self which had been given to him by others, and equally convinced of the unreality of his own inner feelings.[4] In short, the self which was constituted for Genet by this critical discovery was a self-for-others: thereafter his inner feelings were de-realized and he lost the capacity for spontaneously translating his feelings into action.

To say that Genet became constituted primarily as a self-for-others is to overlook the full implications of this social process. It is not merely that Genet is identified as a person who has stolen and is likely to steal again: he is recognised as having a *character* - that of a thief. Thereafter it is unimportant whether he steals or not: there is no act by which he can shed the character he has been given.[5]

Just as the social meaning given to the act is what constitutes the stealing, so the social role given to the man is what constitutes the thief. And of course Genet could no more discover within himself the substantial reality of this self-for-others (which he was now convinced he had), than he could recognise the act of stealing by its 'inner feeling'. It was not possible for Genet to discover this character within himself, for the simple reason that it was in no sense 'within'. It could not even come into being except in relation to, and through the mediation of, another.[6]

The result was that Genet found it impossible to co-incide with what he regarded as his real nature, i.e. that of a thief. When he managed to 'look at himself from the outside', to see himself as another, then he could recognise his 'real' self. But he could not simultaneously feel himself to be both the observer and the observed. He could 'see' his real nature from the outside, but when 'inside' he could not feel it to be real.

Genet thus became an utterly self-alienated being. He had been given a 'character' by his foster parents. In 'discovering' this character 'within' him they had drawn upon commonly accepted beliefs about the nature of human beings, and upon the value system of the society of which they were a part.

2. The place of the scapegoat in the dominant ideology

At this point in his account Sartre asks - by what strange cruelty did those decent peasants make Genet their scapegoat? It is no part of Sartre's purpose to go into a depth analysis of the nexus of this long-dead family[7]; rather, this question serves to indicate a shift in level from the individual to the social. Genet now has to be seen as an Other for the peasants, as having specific meaning as a social being in the small group[8]. What follows is Sartre's critique of the ideology which enables the peasants to constitute Genet as a scapegoat.

All action modifies that which is, in the name of that which is not yet. Action breaks up the old order; it is permanent revolution. Construction entails an at least equal amount of destruction.
Our societies are so unstable and so afraid

of change that they deny this negative moment in our actions. Even the positive, creative moment in our actions is interpreted as mere repetition, as maintenance of the status quo. *'To do one's duty' becomes the social good: the thoughtless performance of repetitious acts.*

But, as Hegel says, spirit is anxiety, horrifying anxiety. The origin of this anxiety is negation. The negative moment of our acts must therefore be denied.

The 'right-thinking man' cuts the negative moment away from his freedom and casts it out. Thus his freedom is cut into two halves.

The first half of his freedom remains within him, and interprets the positive moment as repetition. Good is identified with Being, with what already is. Being is the measure of perfection. 'An existing regime is always more perfect than one which does not exist'. Change is understood as implying no destruction, as passing to a higher perfection, more faithful to tradition. For the right-thinking man to be alone is to be wrong: to isolate oneself is to become finite, to will one's own nothingness. 'His dream is that history may end and that there may come at last the time of happy repetition within the great sleep'. Through ignorance, omission, weakness (the vestiges of his own nothingness) he might fail to get there: and fear of this failure engenders stricter obedience to the imperatives of the group.

The second, negative half of his freedom is externalized, but does not leave him. Though he acknowledges only the positive, the striving after good, he cannot live in the paralysis of Being: history does not stop. He cannot affirm without denying, he cannot fix a limit without envisaging what is beyond it, he cannot make laws without being tempted to break them.

The decent man is thus the negation of negation. He defines himself by obedience, tradition and the automatism of Good. He gives the name 'temptation' to 'the live, vague, swarming which is still himself', and projects it outside of himself. He substantiates it as Evil - as pure negation and the rage to destroy. And if he discovers trades of it within himself, then it must have come from without (since it isn't his real self). It is the intrusion of the willful Other.

Evil is a projection - even the basis and aim of all projective activity. Each of us has his own evil-doer: the man who presents to us in broad daylight and objective form the obscure temptations of our freedom. If you want to get to know a decent man, look for the vices he hates most in others. The evil-doer exists because the good man invented him. In fact, he cannot do without him.

The enemy in wartime is the evil-doer par excellence. *For peacetime purposes society has created professional evil-doers, who are carefully recruited. They must be bad by birth and without hope of change. They must have no reciprocal relationship with decent members of the community (or, 'They might think of us what we think of them'). They must be sought amongst the separated, the rejected, the unassimilable. Candidates include the oppressed and exploited in every category, the foreign workers, the national and ethnic minorities: but these are not the best recruits because they sometimes become conscious of a group identity and begin to reciprocate by personifying their oppressors as evil. The best recruits are the utterly wretched, those abandoned, isolated individuals who are in no danger of uniting in any group because nobody wants them.*

Genet, the abandoned bastard, owned by the Assistance Publique, was the perfect candidate for the embodiment of evil.

It should now be clear that in Sartre's account

of scapegoating there is an unbreakable connection between the individual and the social levels - namely the system of beliefs and values which I have termed the dominant ideology. This ideology has its origins in the need to maintain a repressive political system. It serves the *status quo* by making metaphysical claims which deny the fundamentally historical nature of man and society, and obscure man's capacity to initiate and participate in social change. The central tenet that man is essentially a natural object serves a definite political function: it leads to a doctrine of human character which in the face of social reality results in the good/evil dichotomy. At the social level the doctrine must embody evil in the person of a scapegoat in order to repress and explain social changes which threaten the *status quo*[9]. At the level of the individual this doctrine is self-alienating both for the good man and the evil.

3. Reduction of Sartre's argument and the generation of prejudice

In the foregoing I have attempted to summarise Sartre's account of the Genet case and the general argument upon which it rests. But although the relevant sections of the book on Genet are both lengthy and wordy, what is presented there is really no more than a rough sketch for a general analysis - the argument is loose and lacking in detail. Moreover, the analysis seems to depend upon the prior acceptance of Sartre's Hegelian metaphysics, without which the attack on the dominant ideology seems unable to get off the ground.

In this section I shall reduce Sartre's argument to a 'commonsense' account of scapegoating which neither explicitly assumes the Hegelian propositions nor employs the terminology. I shall then use this to show how the generation of commonly expressed prejudices can be accounted for.

Like every other man the peasant in Genet's case is free to accept or reject, in whole or in part, the social world he finds and its system of values. If he accepts it, he exercises his freedom no less than if he rejects it. His acceptance is an act within history which constantly needs to be repeated. No matter how many times he accepts it, it is always open for him to reject it at some time in the future.

Man is not a passive, inert object, but a social being. He is a subject who cannot avoid acting. All action modifies the present state of affairs, and modifies it in the direction of a future state which may be envisaged, but does not exist. Strictly speaking, it is impossible to 'maintain' the *status quo* - it must constantly be recreated. And true re-creation is impossible - it would involve the cessation of historical process. There is a constant process of change, just because there is human action. The intended future state may be seen as identical with the present; but in practice it can never be quite like that. For this reason, all action, whether intentional or not, is a threat to the *status quo*; it may fail to recreate it.

At the level of society there is a way of dealing with this threat - that is, to deny that it exists, at least as a *general* characteristic of action. Of course, the threat cannot be totally denied, and in any case the society must actively be maintained. But what can happen is that the threat implicit in all action can be displaced and localized in only *some* actions - which can then be subject to social control. The technique is one of denying that all actions have both a destructive and a constructive aspect, and asserting that some are wholly destructive (or evil), and others are wholly constructive (or good), i.e. conservative of the *status quo*.

This manoeuvre now gives us the basis for a value system from which a whole range of social

attitudes and justifications can be derived. The fact that these attitudes and justifications are commonly encountered is evidence that there is a consistent ideology which is intelligible as a response to the destructive threat.

Starting, then, from the belief that acts should be regarded as wholly good or wholly bad, we can argue as follows:

> *Anyone who performs destructive acts is a threat to society and must be restrained. In fact he must be punished, as an example to others who might otherwise be tempted into destructive acts. It is even better if preventative action can be taken. So a man who once reveals himself as capable of such destructive acts - by committing his first crime, say - must from then on' be carefully watched and guarded, and given no quarter. And if we can identify in advance (as surely we can) those who are likely to become criminals, we can stop them before they ever get the chance to begin their destructive work. Any society is justified in taking action to prevent its own destruction, and to prevent the suffering of innocent people. And of course, the groups from which the destructive elements come are the aliens and traitors in our midst; those who, though in our society are not of it, who owe their allegiance elsewhere.*
>
> *If, then, we are serious in wanting to reform our society, in striving to return to the good old days before the rot set in, we must pull out crime by its roots and expel the subtle agents who sow the seeds of economic chaos. We must destroy criminals/anarchists/ Jews/immigrants/blacks/communists etc.*

This reactionary set of social attitudes we would expect to find most predominantly in the social class with the strongest interest in the maintenance of the *status quo*. Typically it would go together with a strain of thinking about personal morality much more explicit in its reference to the threat of change. If we can imagine this view put by a moralist sympathetic to it, it might run as follows:

> *Change is disturbing: after all, it substitutes the world we don't know for the world we know. And even if the world as we know it is not all that wonderful, change demands efforts on our part - we have to adapt, adjust, relearn. And who's to say we shall end up any better off than we are now?*
>
> *Changes in social standards, in values, in moral rules, are particularly disturbing. People no longer behave as you expect them to. What was wrong yesterday they say is right today. You don't know where you are. Nobody knows the difference between right and wrong any more.*
>
> *The substitution of one moral rule for another is bad enough: but to question any and every moral rule, even to say that there are none, is devastating. People with standards know where they are. They know which acts are good and which are bad; what you are allowed to do and what you're not; that you'll be punished for this and praised for that. You know a good man when you meet him (he follows the rules), and recognise a bad one (he breaks them). You know how to teach your children the difference between right and wrong. But above all, following rules is simple. You don't have to worry about the total situation because it's irrelevant. You don't have to go into the psychological niceties of the criminal or wrong-doer: whatever he says about his intentions, what he did was wrong. And if a good act has consequences which are not wholly good, that's just unfortunate, and no grounds for changing the rules or dispensing with them.*

*But once you start blurring the distinctions
and saying that there's some bad in good acts
and some good in bad ones, you make things
impossibly difficult, Instead of getting into
the habit of being good and abiding by the
rules, I'm now supposed to meditate on every
situation. And before I know where I am you're
holding me responsible for effects of my actions
which I never foresaw. After all, I might only
have been doing my duty and now you want to
blame me for what happened. That's just un-
reasonable.*

*No, if the rules are fixed I know what to do.
I can abide by them and go about with a clear
conscience and my head held high. If some-
thing goes wrong I'm not to blame: I'm in the
right and God's on my side.*

*And just look at the broader effects of the
decline in standards. If the country's going
to the dogs, if morality and religion are under
attack, if the workers are always on strike and
the crime rate soars, it's because somebody,
somewhere, isn't following the rules. Worse,
somebody is deliberately breaking them and
subverting them. And it's probably a tightly
knit group of politically motivated men who
are trying to destroy our whole way of life.
Them and the aliens who just don't know what
the rules are; or congenital criminals who are
so degenerate they don't even what what a rule
is at all.*

What has become apparent in these popular
accounts is that the dichotomy between the good
act and the bad allows the decent citizen to be
wholly good, a self-righteous man of principle.
He knows that he is *capable* of being bad and that
he has free will. He has temptations, and he
resists them. The evil that there is is caused
by others, who have temptations and do not resist:
he understands them well. They are weaklings
without moral fibre who deserve everything they
get; or they are demoniacal evil-doers who choose
the bad for preference. These latter are the
scapegoats, the Enemy, for whom no punishment is
bad enough. He doesn't have to meet them to
know them: best to stay away and avoid contamina-
tion. They're cunning, and conceal their evil
selves beneath a mild exterior. They may take-in
do-gooders, but not him.

4. Reconstitution of the argument

In this final section I shall use the reduced
argument of section (3) as a basis for re-constitut-
ing an explicitly philosophical account of scape-
goating. I shall follow the general lines of
Sartre's analysis but also extend it and modify
the Hegelian generalisations.

The human world, whether we regard it at the
level of the individual or the social group, is
essentially temporal. Change is of the order of
things, and human beings have to make efforts to
deal with it.

In any society there are groups whose interest
is to resist change. These are the groups which
benefit from the *status quo,* and which stand to
lose by any deviation from it. They therefore
attempt to preserve the *status quo,* and in doing
so evolve an ideology. In our society the
dominant ideology is one which attempts to deny
the essentially temporal nature of the human world.
Both society and individuals are presented as
static and unchanging in essence. Any deviation
from this stasis is then understood as abnormal
and unnatural - and bad. Adherence to this stasis
is natural and good. The ideology results in the
paradox of the individual or group which is
'naturally' bad - the scapegoats. The paradox is
inevitable, and the scapegoats are necessary to
the doctrine. In terms of the doctrine they are
the only blot on society, the source of all evil
(those forces which threaten the stasis); and with

their elimination the *status quo* will achieve
perfection.

In our society the dominant ideology has recourse
to two manoeuvres in maintaining its doctrine of
stasis. One is the reification of the person; the
other the reification of society itself. In each
case the reification involves interpreting the
human phenomenon on the analogy of a supposedly
atemporal natural object. Natural scientific
theory has obviously been of crucial importance in
providing this atemporal model.

At the level of the individual person, reifica-
tion involves substantiation; that is, the person
is understood as an object within nature (a sub-
stance), having a fixed character (essence), which
'contains' certain characteristics (properties).
These characteristics are potentialities for
action (behaviour), and ideally all action is ex-
plained as following strictly from the essential
character of the person. This model breaks down
at the point where it creates the 'problem' of
Free Will. The problem is insoluble within the
terms of the model, because the essentially temporal
freedom which human beings have becomes anomalous
within the atemporal context of the natural sub-
stance. More sophisticated versions of the doctrine
have therefore to introduce mysterious notions of
'character development' in order to put time back
into an atemporal essence.

The only way of establishing the 'atemporal'
character of an individual human being (or the
atemporal essence of an individual natural object
for that matter), is by reference to the history
of that individual. The history (to use Sartre's
terminology) must be totalized, that is, summed up
in such a way as to reveal its supposedly most
characteristic features. In fact there is no way
of distilling 'characteristics' out of a history,
except in relation to some pre-established criteria
(as, for example, a set of moral rules, or the
ability to perform a certain act, etc).

The difference between the individual human being
and the individual natural object, is that the
human being is capable of totalizing his own history,
and of taking a stance towards it. In particular,
having totalized his 'character' out of his history,
he can either assume it and act in accordance with
it in the future, or he can reject it and in future
behave 'uncharacteristically'.

Within the terms of this doctrine of reification
the individual person can be brought to view him-
self, even to experience himself some of the time,
as a natural object. Both types of self-interpret-
ation involve suspending or suppressing aspects of
his own self-experience, and cannot be maintained
constantly and indefinitely. It is, however,
possible (though difficult - and only at the cost
of isolation) to sustain an understanding of *others*
as merely natural objects. But most commonly the
doctrine of reification is made acceptable by
splitting my own experience of myself and certain
known others off from what I 'know' to be true
about men in general. My experience is labelled
'subjective' and either rejected or accorded
inferior status as a means of access to reality.
My knowledge, which I share with others, is labelled
'objective', and held to be either the only true,
or at least the superior, means of access to
reality. Again, the doctrine of reification pro-
duces a crop of problems which are insoluble in
terms of the model - in fact it creates a whole
new problem area, the 'problem' of knowledge. (It
was not accidental that epistemology emerged as a,
if not the, central discipline of philosophy
immediately after the formulation of the Natural
Philosophy of the scientific revolution).

But it is at the level of society, rather than
that of the individual, that reification can be
more completely sustained, and more powerfully used.
At this level it is society itself which is inter-
preted on the model of the atemporal natural
object. The supposed essential characteristics are
of course much more difficult to identify than in

the case of the individual person, but they are also much less important to the ideology. The characteristics are *not* potentialities for change, but static aspects of some eternal present which can be 'seen' in much the same way that the structure and texture of a leaf can be seen. It is usually assumed that anyone who is *of* the society is as familiar with its characteristics as the gardener is with those of the leaf - so there is not much point in talking about them. ('If "Britain" means nothing to you, if you don't know what I mean by "our way of life", then you're obviously not one of us').

The importance of the model at the level of society is that it provides the basis for a clear system of values. The *status quo* is natural, characteristic and good. All actions which conserve and maintain the *status quo* are normal and good; all actions which threaten to disturb or disrupt the *status quo* are abnormal and bad. The model of course denies the fundamental temporality of all social praxis and process, but it must reintroduce time into this atemporal stasis, if only to explain away the awkward fact that the *status quo* has not always existed - there was a period of history before the present. It does this by interpreting the past as the natural process by which the implicit (and mysteriously pre-existent) characteristics emerge. (cf. the Whig interpretation of History). The present was always on its way. And of course, anything which hastened the emergence of the present *status quo* was progressive and a Good Thing, anything which retarded it was regressive and a Bad Thing.

The characterisation of the *status quo* involves a totalization out of the history of the society. As with the totalization of the 'character' of a person, it is only possible to do this by means of some criterion: in this case the criterion is stasis. And as in the case of the individual, it is always possible for man to take a stance (indeed he must take a stance) in relation to this totalization. He can either accept it, and work to maintain it; or reject it, and work to change it. Any attempt to bring about change threatens the *status quo*. If the reified model of society were in fact valid, this attempt could not represent a real threat - it would be doomed to failure. The model allows only inevitable social process: social praxis is impossible. Thus the fact that attempts at change are treated as real threats reveals the breakdown of the model at the social level, in the same way that the free will problem reveals its breakdown at the level of the person. There is no need to find a scapegoat if the *status quo* is in fact good, and there is no danger of it being overthrown.

The ideology which reifies society generates a value system which is reduced to a set of behavioural rules and institutionalized in a legal system. It is good to obey the law, and bad to break it. This value system is crucially important as the mediator between the social and the individual level. It enables the defence of the *status quo* to be organized, and to be internalized even by those individuals who suffer under the present system. Irrespective of who commits it and why, theft is not only imprudent but morally bad.

A fixed set of behavioural rules is intelligible and appropriate if we are dealing with natural objects. ('Don't strike a light to look for the gas leak'). But the inappropriateness of behavioural rules for dealing with human experience is revealed by their frequent obscurity (you can't observe a theft as you can observe a lightning flash), and the problem of applicability (was it murder, manslaughter or accidental death?). It is because crimes are only socially constituted acts that it is possible for me not to know that I am committing a crime. In fact, in order to see myself as committing a crime, I must not only see myself as a self-for-others, but I must suppress my self-experience to the extent that I can see myself as

a self-for-*any*-other.[10] That is, I must internalize the dominant ideology so that it can determine my self-experience, at least on some occasion. Sartre is wrong in supposing that this is the same as experiencing myself as self-for-Another, where this is a particular other person: but this is only a specific consequence of his failure to deal adequately with any genuine I-Thou relationship.

We have now run up against the problem of the incommensurability of my (subjective) experience with (objective) behaviour. It is not my experience which is problematic, but my 'behaviour'. To understand myself as the sort of entity which can 'behave', as an object in the natural world, I must go through the alienating procedure of self-reification.

To summarize what I have said. The dominant ideology of our society serves the interest of the ruling class by interpreting as natural objects with an essentially atemporal character both society and individuals. This denies the fundamental historicity of human existence. In terms of the static model social change is unnatural and dangerous - as are people who try to bring it about. The model provides the basis for a value system, expressed in a set of rules and internalized by individuals in such a way that even the oppressed work to maintain the *status quo*.

These doctrines generate a number of classic problems which are totally insoluble in terms of the model. More accurately, they do not accord with human beings' experience of their own temporality and freedom.

The doctrine of the scapegoat becomes necessary in this ideology, in order to explain why the theoretically perfect society is not in fact perfect, and to avoid pressure for social change. Since the imperfections cannot be characteristic of the society, they must be due to elements which are in the society but essentially alien to it. Since these alien individuals are bad in their essential character, it is not necessary to establish their responsibility for any specific act. The elimination of these aliens will free the essentially perfect society of its only contamination.

In the case of Genet the peasant morality already embodies the value system of the static society. It only remains for him to be constituted as essentially evil on the basis of an act which threatens the institution of private property. Genet has internalized the peasant morality, so once the social meaning of his act is revealed to him he accepts that he is essentially evil. This self-for-others which he takes to be his real self does not accord with his self-experience. He is caught in the trap of mystification and self-alienation. Since he accepts both the morality and the reality criteria of the society, his guilt is inescapable. He is the perfect scapegoat.

Notes

1 I am grateful to members of the philosophy section of the Middlesex Polytechnic for comments on an earlier draft.

2 Saint Genet, p.33ff, in the Mentor edition.

3 Laing and Cooper, who have otherwise drawn much inspiration from this book, have completely failed to appreciate this mediating function of the ideology between the individual and society, and the way in which it relates to a critique of capitalism.

4 The comparison with Laing and Cooper's schizoprenics is obvious.

5 This ascription of character is analogous to Descartes' substantiation of the 'cogito' in

merely existent and hence dead objectivity ...
capital itself becomes a process. Labour is the
yeast thrown into it, which starts it fermenting...'
(*Grundrisse* pp297-8)

In short, Mepham's Althusser is a mass of confu-
sions. On the one hand he believes in the autonomy
of 'political practice' (and therefore to the
triviality [at best] of 'theoretical practice'),
of there being no need to bring theory to the class
from outside. And on the other hand he wants theory
to be able to point the way to correct political
practice. He accuses Geras of 'humanism' while
adopting much more 'humanistic' (in a bad sense)
positions than Geras. He accuses Geras of using
concepts which encourage class collaboration, when
it is precisely his own and not Geras's concepts
which do this. Finally, he both misunderstands
the difference between the historic dynamic of
capitalism's development and the moment in history
at which the proletariat seizes power, and is
totally confused over the nature of the agency or
subject of change in each case.

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Peter Binns

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the Meditations. From 'I think' he passes
easily via 'I am a thinking thing' to 'I am a
substance whose essence is to think'. Similarly,
from 'Genet steals' the good peasants derived
'Genet is a thief': and the precise meaning of
this for them was, 'Genet is a substance whose
essence is to steal'. In this way the act is
generalized into the propensity to steal, and
substantiated in Genet: and the essence (or
character) so constituted can then be used to
explain the act.

6 Sartre makes no distinction between self-for-
Another (i.e. some particular other person) and
self-for-any-other. See below, page

7 Unlike Laing and Cooper, Sartre is not interested
in this type of analysis - and in any case he
knows virtually nothing about this particular
family.

8 Again, Sartre conflates self-for-Another with
self-for-any-other. The foster parents are
therefore treated as no more than the repres-
entatives of French peasantry (of even French
society) to Genet. Sartre assumes that an
alienated relationship existed between Genet
and his foster parents prior to the act of
stealing.

9 In fact, because it is founded upon inaccurate
analysis of the nature of historical change,
the ideology prevents the most effective
preventative action from being taken.

10 In Heidegger's terminology, 'das Mann'.

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