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 kind and spread the doctrine and practice of Christian civil society. Their countrymen would be less apt to suspect and reader 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 Papish hierarchy in Ireland as a potentially civilizing influence on its flock).

The young Americans necessary for this purpose may ... be procured either by peaceable 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 exiled 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 Immortality 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 widely thought 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

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 fulfills a societally constituted role. The scapegoat can only be understood 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 two 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 determining the ways in which the individual can understand himself.

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 exposition 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 unaware 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 him 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. 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. 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 the others identified him as a person who has stolen and is likely to steal again: he is recognized 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. 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 recognize 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. 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 recognize 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 on a real plane.

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; 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. 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 other; 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 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 always 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 fear and obedience to the imperatives of the group.

The second, negative half of his freedom is externalized, but does not leave him. 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 to obedience, by 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 represents us in broad daylight and objective form the obscure temptations of our freedom. If we 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. 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 reflections on the roles of man in our society 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 to a lesser extent 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 not foreseen. Strictly speaking, it is impossible to 'maintain' the status quo - it must constantly be recreated. And true re-creation is impossible - it would involve an act 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 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 actions and justifications are commonly encountered is evidence that there is a consistent ideology which is intelligible as a response to the destructive threat.

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 best avenues of the bourgeoisie and the proletariat; 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 as you longer behave as you expected 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 acts should be totally denied, 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: what he really says about others and 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 ground for changing the rules or dispensing with them.
4. Reconstitution of the argument

In this final section I shall use the reduced argument of section (3) as a basis for re-constituting an explicitly philosophical account of scapegoating. I shall follow the general lines of Sartre's original and shall develop and modify the Hegelian generalisations.

The human world, whether we regard it at the level of the individual or the societal group, is essentially temporal. Change is 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 status is then understood as abnormal and unnatural - and bad. Adherence to this status 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 ideology results in the designation of the atemporal natural object. 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 himself, even to experience himself some of the time, as a natural object. Both types of self-interpretation involve suspending or supressing an aspect 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 into an atemporal essence (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 substance. 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.

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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 a 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 con­

vall reality of all social praxis and process, but it must reintroduce time into this atemporal stasis, disrupt the status quo; or reject it, and work to change it. Any attempt to bring about change threatens the
current epoch before the present. It does this by interpreting the past as the natural process by which the implicit (and mysteriously pre­
to insist on its way. And of course, anything which
disruption of the model at the social level, in
does not much point in talking about them. ('If we look at the system this way, people can be 'behaved', as an object in the natural world, I must go through the alienating procedure of self-reification.

As with the totalisation of the 'character' of a

person, it is only possible to do this by means of

some criterion: in this case the criterion is

model. More accurately, they do not accord

to the system. This is the case of the individual person, but it is also the case of society and individuals. This denies the fundamental

interpretation of History). The present was

always on its way. And of course, anything which

still character of the status quo was progressive and a Good Thing, anything which

threaten to disturb or disrupt the status quo are abnormal and bad.

The model of course denies the fundamental tempora" 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 applicable 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 socially constituted acts that it is possible for me to not 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 but reproduce my self-experience to the extent that I can see myself as

a self-for-any-other. 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 prepared the way for the incommensurability of the subjective experience with (objective) behaviour. It is not my experience which is problematic, but my 'behaviour'. To understand myself as the model of society 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 away the awkward fact that the
equality of the society, they must be due to elements which

are abnormal and bad.

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

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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 confusions. 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 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.

Peter Binns
December 1973

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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 representatives 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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