

THEORY and SOCIETY

RENEWAL AND CRITIQUE
IN SOCIAL THEORY

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BEYOND THE OEDIPUS COMPLEX: A PERSPECTIVE ON THE MYTH AND REALITY OF GENERATIONAL CONFLICT

LEON SHASKOLSKY SHELEFF

Few myths have had such a profound impact on the manner in which people perceive themselves and their social environment as the myth of Oedipus Rex. The sheer drama of Oedipus' inadvertent killing of his father and subsequent marriage to his mother has attracted writers throughout the ages, and several dramatic versions of the myth exist, besides the original Greek dramatization by Sophocles.¹

The myth's dominance in modern life is, however, most of all a direct consequence of Sigmund Freud's revolutionary use of the theme to help lay the foundation of one of the key elements of his theory of psychoanalysis. Freud used the widespread popularity of the Oedipus story to substantiate his contention that children bear incestuous feelings of love for the parent of the opposite sex and, as a consequence of the ensuing rivalry for that parent's love, develop feelings of hostility towards the parent of the same sex, a hostility which reaches its peak expression in murderous impulses towards that parent.

The popularity of the myth, its ability to excite people far removed in both time and place from the events recounted is, according to Freud, a result of each individual's capacity to relate personally to the message conveyed. Spectators watching Sophocles' play are able to identify with the drama of the royal personages because each, in his own life, has known the depth of the love for the parent of the opposite sex and the hatred for the rival parent of the same sex.

Freud incorporated references to the Oedipus myth in much of his major writings, and even when no specific reference is made to the Oedipus complex, its underlying premises are tacitly embraced. In his classic work,

Albert J. Solnit, *Beyond the Best Interests of the Child*, New York, The Free Press, 1973. In this book the authors argue for quicker, easier and more extensive adoption procedures, where the emphasis in decisionmaking would no longer be on the accident of biological parenthood, but on psychological and emotional bonds.

FROM "THE GATES OF EDEN" TO "DAY OF THE LOCUST:"

An Analysis of the Dissident Youth Movement of the 1960s and its Heirs of the Early 1970s—the Post-movement Groups.

DANIEL A. FOSS and RALPH W. LARKIN

Introduction

Despite the obvious significance of social movements as social phenomena, social scientists do not even vaguely agree on a definition of the term "social movement." Many display a pronounced distaste for dealing with the issue at all; at one extreme some researchers employ during the course of social movements the same survey techniques that they had employed during periods characterized by "routine" social behavior, thereby not understanding it as a social movement¹. Others become carried away by the enthusiasms of undergraduate students and do not transcend immediate advocacy and the most superficial analysis.² We also cite the case of an individual of our acquaintance, a sociology department chairman, who told us in all seriousness that according to *his* definition, there were no social movements in the United States during the 1960s.

The historically unprecedented nature of the youth movement of the 1960s seems to have escaped sociologists. The lack of formalized organization and bureaucratic structures made it impossible to study through standardized survey and structured observation techniques. Consequently, research tended to focus on "campus unrest" (The President's Commission on Campus Unrest of 1970), "hippies,"³ "participation in anti-war activities,"⁴ "student radicalism,"⁵ or "communes."⁶

Since the social movement of the 1960s did not fit into the normal sociological categories, there was a great deal of controversy within the ranks as to just what was occurring. Though such terms as "crisis," "unrest," "changing values," and even "counterculture" were used to describe the phenomena,

(1960-65; 1967-69) political and social change appeared to be the most pressing necessity: There were people who consistently favored one at the expense of the other through each successive phase. But 1969-70 was a cultural intensification phase; and it was also the last phase. From this time forward more and more movement participants abandoned any hope for challenging established power but retained faith in the possibility of personal liberation in one form or another. Against them were ranged a growing band of "serious" radicals, Marxist sectarians, and neo-Stalinoids who, dancing on the corpse of the movement, insisted that the revolution must first occur before people are permitted to do as they please—if then.

The hippies had initiated a broadening and deepening of the dimensions of dissidence to include the entirety of everyday life. They sensitized themselves to experience repression in every aspect of the conventional culture; drugs, sex, and hair became political issues in the sense that they involved conflicts about the exercise of power over individual behavior in everyday life. But the 1969-70 phase, by contrast, failed (the feminists aside) to explore new arenas of cultural conflict or to intensify the sense of irreconcilability of freak culture with that of the straights. Although great satisfaction could be derived, as at music festivals, from the sheer number of people now involved in freak culture, the aggressiveness was draining away. Freaks were by now inclined to do as they pleased as if the straights did not exist, relying for security on their numbers; the music festival was again highly symbolic in this regard. There was an ebbing of the passion for "doing your thing" as an act of war against a depraved enemy.

The collective self-satisfaction of the freaks in 1969-70 led logically into hedonism without oppositional content. It also dovetailed into the temptation to psychologize—to focus upon one's "hangups" in isolation from the context of cultural repression and social suppression. To cater especially to the affluent hip and the 'hipified' rich seeking salvation on the personal and small-group levels, new therapies spread rapidly: Esalen, Primal Scream, and Co-Counseling in California; Sullivanian and Reichian therapy in New York. The tendency to psychologize recoiled upon feminism, draining it of the revolutionary vision of its pioneers. As commonly practiced, "consciousness-raising" became more and more exclusively a species of therapy, concentrating heavily upon "relationships" and upon the removal of intrapsychic blocks to success in conventional careers.

By 1970-71 the two greatest cultural idols officially declared the movement at an end. John Lennon announced that "the dream is over," while Bob Dylan sang of his "day of the locust" as he, ideologist to a generation of

Lennon: "I just believe in me / Yoko and me / And that's reality." Dylan: "Build me a cabin in Utah / Marry me a wife and catch rainbow trout / Have a bunch of kids who call me pa / That must be what it's all about."

To retain anything like a coherent version of the freak vision in the absence of an unfolding social movement became progressively more painful for most former movement participants. Most resorted to a number of adaptations to attain painless quiescence. A minority resorted to terrorism or, more commonly, to routine perpetuation of movement activities: There was always another meeting, another rally, another "mobilization," even if one had sworn off ever attending another one, knowing in advance that it would be a waste of time. But another group gravitated toward the indicative minorities of the early 1970s, the post-movement groups. Each of these organizations provided a faith and a discipline which enabled the believers to liquidate or fragment in themselves the vision of the 1960s and to legitimate this process in the language of the 1960s: *either* discovery of the True Self and Transcendence *or* social revolution—but not both. Moreover, some of these groups capitalized on the 1960s cult of pure Experience and channelled it to foster acceptance of hierarchy and asceticism; while others sought to shape experience in accordance with the prescriptions of the sacred texts of Marxism, Hinduism, or Christianity. John Lennon was already aware of the gods of the 1970s and thought he understood their appeal: "God is a concept / By which we measure? Our pain." His long list of deities in which he said he did not believe included "Jesus," "Buddha," "Mantra," "Gita," and "Yoga." He left out Marx, for he was about to worship at that shrine himself after a spell in Primal Scream. But many in his huge audience were unable to follow his advice: "And so dear friends / You just have to carry on / The dream is over."

Post-Movement Groups

Post-movement groups can be classified according to their historical and cultural relationship to the white middle class youth movement of the 1960s. Some evolved organically out of the decomposing youth culture at the end of the 1960s or later. In this category we would include the Divine Light Mission of Guru Maharaj Ji, authoritarian communes like the Lyman Family, the Manson Family, and the Metellica Aquarian Foundation of Amherst, Massachusetts, and the Marxist sects that arose from the ashes of SDS (e.g., the October League and the Revolutionary Union). Other groups were formed at least in part to repudiate some or all the characteristic cultural manifestations of the sixties, either during the movement period or afterward. Such groups include the Tony and Susan Alamo Foundation (a fundamentalist Christian sect), the International Society for Krishna Consciousness (the Hare Krish-

tees. Still other groups antedated the existence of the movement, sometimes by decades. They did not appeal to freak youth during the movement period, but received an influx of former movement participants and younger people after the demise of the movement. Examples of these groups are L. Ron Hubbard's Church of Scientology and the Communist and Socialist Workers' Parties.

Post-movement groups, regardless of whether their manifest goal was to transform the social order through the development of a revolutionary vanguard, as in the case of the Marxist sectarians, or through propagation of the faith as in the case of the religious sects, developed an authoritarian structure, formally articulated with sharp boundary-definition. Most of these groups also developed a cult of personality around a single leader who served as an embodiment of the vision of the membership, and to whom they demonstrated extravagant servility. In the cases of the religious groups, the leader became deified and worshipped. Prabupad (A. C. Bhaktivedanta Swami), the spiritual master of the *Hare Krishnas*, Guru Maharaj Ji of the Divine Light Mission, and Moses David of the Children of God are all examples of such deities. Even in cases where post-movement groups were established on non-religious grounds, such deification occurred. Mel Lyman, the founder of "The Lyman Family," a Boston area freak commune, had proclaimed himself God by 1967. Victor Barranco, the originator of the More Houses in Oakland, California, became the spiritual father of the "marks" (his term) he exploited in a profit-making scheme to rebuild old houses. What makes him so incredible is that he induced young ex-freaks to rebuild houses without compensation and after they finished, charged them \$200 a month to live in them. He also ran the Institute of Human Abilities, which amounted to having his devotees pay up to \$65 for an hour in his presence. In the case of the Marxist sectarians, Lyn Marcus of the National Caucus of Labor Committees (NCLC) was supposed to have the ability to foretell the precise development of world capitalism for the next five years; it would eventuate in a world-wide depression culminating in the mass strike process—in the midst of which the Labor Committee, knowing exactly what to do, will seize power.

Each of these groups is pyramidal in structure, with lines of authority highly articulated from the top down. The NCLC, directed by ex-efficiency expert Lyn Marcus, operates a tightly knit bureaucracy which measures its progress by *the hour!* The Divine Light Mission is rampant with titles, and has developed a centralized bureaucratic structure which spends most of its effort printing, filling out, and filing data processing forms that monitor organizational

manifest patriarchal rather than bureaucratic structures. In these cases, as in the Lyman Family or the Alamo Foundation, the authority comes directly from the leader.

Each group has appropriated a fragment of the freak vision, often using it as the basis of legitimation of the authoritarian structure. The servility of the members is used as evidence of spirituality, ego-transcendence, or even manifestations of peace and love. When members allow themselves to be subject to hierarchical authority, such personal subjugation is *prima facie* evidence of commitment to the propagation of love and peace or the historical necessity of the revolution.

Post-movement groups developed non-conflictual stances toward society-at-large. Like their predecessors, they all believed in the inevitability of radical change; however, unlike dissident youth, they believed that social transformation could not be achieved by immediate action upon and conflict with objective social reality, but must be brought about by the attainment of spiritual perfection by the members and the diffusion of spiritual perfection to broad sectors of the population.¹³ Where conflict did occur, it was not with the larger society, but between competing, post-movement groups either for similar constituencies or over minute differences in doctrine. For example, in mid-1973, the NCLC began "Operation Mop-up," a campaign to destroy the Communist Party by beating up its members. At a Divine Light Mission Festival 30 *Hare Krishnas* were arrested protesting Guru Maharaj Ji's claim to Perfect Mastership.

All post-movement groups break sharply with the notion, widely disseminated in the late 1960s among white middle class youth, that removal of limitations on immediate gratification and rediscovery of the body is inextricably combined with the process of the transformation of the entire social order. Instead, they stand for a reversion to an earlier cultural syndrome: they advocate self-discipline, self-sacrifice, hard work, systematic and orderly living, and renunciation of the pleasures of the flesh.

These groups minutely regulated the everyday lives of their membership. Short hair, conventional dress for men and modest dress for women have been the norms in several groups. Most prohibited the use of substances defined by the conventional culture as "drugs," and many have banned alcohol as well. All or nearly all of these groups have discouraged uninhibited sexuality and many have encouraged sexual abstinence. Among the Jesus Freaks and the Eastern sects, renunciation of sexuality tended to be a sign of spiritual perfection and that one was relying on the source of ultimate satisfaction which lies within: The Holy Spirit; Krishna; The Reservoir of

Mission). Among the Marxist sects, sexual restraint seemed to be taken as a sign that one was "serious." A member of the NCLC once boasted, "I've got no time for girls. I'm too busy doing class organizing." Some groups, such as the Children of God and the *Hare Krishnas*, have not discouraged marriage, but insist that marital sex be intended exclusively for purposes of procreation.

All post-movement groups maintain a fierce exclusivity based on the claims of their doctrines and leaders to embody a monopoly of the truth; however, the similarity of their functions is revealed by the fact that many people pass through several of these groups in turn. The fragmentation of the youth culture is most dramatically demonstrated in such claims of exclusivity. During the sixties, as the vision developed, it was able to incorporate greater varieties of orientations and, because of its subjectivist-existentialist core, became more-or-less universally accepted, since it raised personal experience as the ultimate criterion of validity. Though post-movement groups gave lip service to the criterion of personal experience, those experiences that were the exclusive domain of the group became the basis for the arbitration of Truth. For example, devotees of Guru Maharaj Ji cannot complete a sentence without including the word "experience." However, to them "experience" means experience *in the Knowledge*, which mere mortals who have not been initiated into the secret meditative techniques of the Divine Light Mission cannot possibly comprehend unless they too become devotees. Since the sole purpose of the organization is the propagation of the one and only Truth, the organization becomes the embodiment of that Truth, and membership in the organization is the only means by which one can have access to the Truth.

In accordance with the characterization of conventional society as meaningless by freaks, post-movement groups offer themselves as remedies for the meaninglessness endured by average middle class citizens and drug-soaked hedonistic hippies alike (and those which do not make overt promises also attract members who join at least in part because of a craving for a more "meaningful existence.") Whereas freaks had found meaning in maintaining a position of defiance and opposition to the "plastic world," post-movement groups find meaning in escape from the complexities and incongruities of the material world (or the world of the mind) into a more transcendent simplified view of the cosmos independent of material reality. Jesus Freaks recruit among long-hairs by denouncing the pointlessness of conflict or the hedonistic life and by claiming that the true Christian can stay permanently high on Jesus and obtain greater joy than that derived from drugs or sex ("Try Jesus—God's eternal trip!"). They promise the end of all earthly mental

different words: the material world is illusion, and a life committed solely to activity in the material world is bound to be meaningless and incapable of sustaining true happiness. The mind, preoccupied with coping with the material world, becomes a trap in which the individual becomes entangled. The individual is urged to by-pass or squelch the mind and to "look within" to find the only reliable source of pleasure, such as *Krishna* Consciousness or *Satchitanand* ("truth-consciousness-bliss"). "Give me your troubles," says Guru Maharaj Ji, "and I will give you peace." Marxist sectarians promise a meaningful life by indicating that the individual can either choose to swim with the inexorable tides of history—or against them.

The post-movement period lasted from about 1970–1973. By 1974, the Divine Light Mission had faded from public view after the disastrous Millennium '73 festival in Houston, and conversions declined to 5,797 in 1974 compared to 30,000 in 1973. The Children of God have apparently become a sex-cult, the NCLC faltered, thanks in part to the mental breakdown of its leader, and Jesus Freaks are becoming Baptists.

Conclusion

The cohesion of the white middle class youth movement of the 1960s was based upon a shared subculture of dissidence. So long as this subculture was evolving in the direction of a more intense, more widespread revolt, with broader aims, each successive cultural phase had been spearheaded by an indicative minority which acted out the most profound impulse of revolt within the youth culture as a whole and provided a style to be emulated by those less fully committed. Smaller vanguard nuclei, basically primary groups, crystallized the idealized collective self-image of the indicative minorities into mythical models.

As dissidence subsided and as the vision which imparted meaning to the revolt for movement participants faded away or became fragmented, it was inevitable, in our view, that the evolution of the youth culture toward accommodation should have been spearheaded by a new indicative minority—the members of the post-movement groups. These people were drawn to organizations which systematically combatted the anarchic anti-authoritarianism of the 1960s and combined cultural vestiges of the 1960s (such as rock music, communal living, or the rhetoric of love, peace, Experience, or Revolution) with prescriptions which reversed those of the 1960s culture, e.g., obedience to superiors, short hair, or sexual abstinence. They thus assaulted the content of the movement subculture in part by appropriating some of the forms and

liberation either exclusively in the individual soul or in a revolution to be brought about by the inevitable workings of history rather than by people living their lives authentically.

The leadership strata of the post-movement groups are usually primary groups or networks of primary groups gathered around the person of the leader. These groups are the equivalents of the vanguard nuclei of the previous decade. Their primary group character is frequently obscured by titles and organizational charts. Some examples: Leaders of the Children of God (now in the process of dissolution) were drawn from those who accompanied the founder on a bus caravan from Huntington Beach, California, to Louisiana and Texas after he prophesied the imminent destruction of California by an earthquake in 1968. The executive stratum of the Divine Light Mission is largely comprised of individuals who met Guru Maharaj Ji while seeking Truth in India during 1969–71 or who received Knowledge during the Guru's First World Peace Tour in 1971, and in either case induced their friends to receive Knowledge also. Swami Muktananda's *Shree Gurudev Ashram* displays a similar pattern at an earlier stage of development. The core group of the National Caucus of Labor Committees were closely associated at Columbia University and in the Progressive Labor Party before they became disciples of the founder around the time of the Columbia Strike in 1968. The Revolutionary Union (whose doctrine is "Marxism-Leninism-Mao Tse-tung Thought"—in opposition to Trotskyism and revisionism—and which reveres Stalin) retains its original 1969 leadership when it was known as the Bay Area Revolutionary Union, an SDS sub-faction. The October League, which carries an arcane doctrinal war with the Revolutionary Union, originated as an SDS splinter group called Revolutionary Youth Movement II, and still retains its original leadership.

The Youth movement of the 1960s lasted for a full decade, culminating in wide scale confrontation of dominant society at the psychic, social, and cultural levels, with all aspects of dominant society being defined as negative, oppressive, stultifying, and inimical. Revolt occurred in alternating processes of political confrontation and cultural intensification. The height of the revolt was in 1968 with the advent of the freak-radical (alienated from straight society both culturally and politically) committed to bringing down the structure of dominant society "by any means necessary."

As is the way with social movements, the decline occurred at a much more rapid pace than the intensification. By 1971, almost all forms of youth dissidence had disappeared or had been encapsulated, and various forms of accommodation were appearing on the scene. Post-movement groups were

an uneasy state of "normality:" the rise of "grim vocationalism" and reversion to 1950s privatism. With the demise of the post-movement groups, even fragments of the vision have all but disappeared. Whereas during the previous decade, a time of seemingly boundless prosperity, accumulative personal goals receded in significance, the mid-1970s economic slump brings with it a resuscitation of "getting ahead," though seemingly without the conviction among youth in the absolute validity of doing so.

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NOTES

1. D. Yankelovich, *Changing Values on Campus*, New York, 1972.
2. R. Flacks, *Youth and Social Change*, New York, 1971.
3. F. Davis, *On Youth Subcultures: The Hippie Variant*, New York, 1971; L. Yablonsky, *The Hippie Trip*, New York, 1968.
4. Yankelovich, *op. cit.*; R. Peterson and J. Bilourisky, *May 1970: The Campus Aftermath of Cambodia and Kent State*, Berkeley, 1971.
5. K. Kenniston, *The Young Radicals*, New York, 1968.
6. R. Fairfield, *Communes U.S.A.: A Personal Tour*, Baltimore, 1972.
7. The English peasant revolt of 1381, in N. Cohen, *The Pursuit of The Millenium*, New York, 1970.
8. A "Death of Hippie" ceremony was held in Haight-Ashbury on September 9, 1967; the new phase was inaugurated with the demonstrations in Oakland, California and at the Pentagon, October 16–21, 1967. SDS liquidated itself in Chicago in June, 1969; the new phase was launched at the Woodstock festival in late August 1969.
9. Subjectivist ("If it feels bad, it's repressive"), irrationalist (hero-worship, glorification of violence and destructiveness as ends in themselves), and rationalist elements are present in ideological ambiance of all social movements. However, rationalism may be said to have been paramount in bourgeois and proletarian radical movements of the age of industrialization in the West. Irrationalism was correspondingly prominent in reactionary romanticism and Fascism. Subjectivism was characteristic of the white youth movement of the 1960s as well as of the black and feminist

10. A. Hoffman, *Revolution for the Hell* of It, New York, 1968.
11. K. Sale, *SDS*, New York, 1973, Chapter 25.
12. A. Hoffman, *Woodstock Nation*, New York, 1969.
13. From this we do not in the least exclude the Marxist sectarians, for while the latter claim to be "materialistic" and "scientific," to use the "dialectical method," to be opposed to "anti-intellectualism," and to be striving for a proletarian class revolution on the material plane, they are faced with the undeniable fact that the working class resolutely ignores them: in the terminology of the National Caucus of Labor Committees (recruited like most of the Marxist sects, primarily from middle class students and drop-outs), the workers are "swinish." The proletarian revolution will therefore come about through the inevitable working out of the contradictions of capitalism, which for at least the immediate future, are outside control of the sect members but which, when they should ripen, will make the working class properly class conscious. For this reason, the Marxist sectarians' proletarian revolution has precisely the same subcultural function as the Jesus Freaks' Second Coming of Christ—since the Apocalypse cannot be advanced through immediate action in the material world, it is best to preoccupy oneself with the attainment of the Marxist version of spiritual perfection, i.e., True Consciousness, through the thorough assimilation of the sect's version of Marxism, the study of the sect newspaper and pamphlets, and the rote learning of the writings of Marx, Engels, Lenin, Stalin, Mao, Enver Hoxha, and Kim Il Sung. True consciousness becomes divorced from practice and thus an end in itself.

POWER, THEORIZING, AND NIHILISM

STEWART CLEGG

Introduction

In this paper I will examine some consequences of that mode of theorizing which has come to be called "Analysis." This term is principally associated with the works of Alan Blum and Peter McHugh. Rather than expound what is readily available in their work, I will employ some of what I take to be its key features, in order to address a concrete debate within sociology. This is the "Community Power Debate." My practical reason for doing this is two-fold. Firstly, I want to establish its utility. "Theorizing," as they have construed it, is capable of accounting for the persistence of such debates, without recourse to the crudities of the discourse within which these debates have their life. Rather than enable us blandly to accept that opposing points of view concerning what is ostensibly the "same" phenomenon are the result of "bad" method, it instead allows us to analytically formulate the grounds within which such a charge could have meaning.

My second reason for writing this paper is to display how "theorizing" leads to a narcissistic indulgence with one's self, which is essentially "nihilistic." Nihilism, as a philosophical problem, is the subject of my second argument. But I do not argue merely for the sake of assertion. I seek to confront the nihilism which I describe, by dint of re-thinking what theorizing ought to be.¹

Problematic

McHugh raises the problematic most succinctly. He interprets the later work of Wittgenstein² in order to argue that a concern with the production of what passes for "true" knowledge should focus not on the reality of that deemed