BUILDING A NEW LEFT FORMATION

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BUILDING A NEW LEFT FORMATION: CONFRONTING ALIENATION IN LEFT UTOPIAN AND TOTALITY POLITICS

Utopian visions and totality-oriented standpoints are being developed across a spectrum of left formation building organizations today. These standpoints serve important political, organizational, psychological, inspirational and solidarity building purposes. Although hopes for greater Left unity through the vehicle of party building have long eluded a spectrum of social movements and progressive to revolutionary organizers and intellectuals in the U.S., it rarely happens that the aspirants to unity consider how the elements that inspire vision, solidarity, and revolutionary confidence, simultaneously divide and alienate them.

In this essay, the second of a three part series, I will contrast and tease out psychological, programmatic, and political dimensions of totality and utopian organizing standpoints and unity building strategies as generated by Left revolutionary and party building organizations. The essay focuses on inspirational theory, terms and languages common to four revolutionary organizations, and considers how these elements that inspire and bind the member's revolutionary commitment can also submerge their best intentions for societal transformation in undertows of immortalizing, rationally-amoral, and totalitarian feelings.

In the first part of this three part essay the utopian and totality standpoints of Stanley Aronowitz's party building proposal were analyzed, in regard to their inspiring and undermining organizational, programmatic, political and psychological dimensions. As Aronowitz projects it, this would be a formation or pre-party organization that was independent of the Democratic Party, intransigently anti-capitalist and large and dynamic enough to be the hope of "the future of human kind, even the planet".[1]

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[1] Aronowitz, Stanley. 2006. *Left Turn: Forging a New Political Future*. Boulder, CO: Paradigm Publishers. pp. 167-168,171,197.

In part three, I plan to bring these two analytical currents together and develop a similar approach to analyze the World Social Forum as seen through the lens of one of its advocates, Boaventura deSusa Santos. Taken as a whole the three parts of this article seek to constructively critique, bring together, and consider left formation and unity building possibilities in organizational psychologies, politics and program — in relation to these three left formation building traditions.

PARTY IN FORMATION

In order to recapitulate from part one of my intervention, Stanley Aronowitz in *Left Turn: Forging a New Political Future* has made an appeal for the formation of a broad-based U.S. left party (sometimes called a left formation in a pre party form). This book marks a culmination of years of study, activism and much critical research and provides a rich historical and comparative analysis about how to build a broad based party in the United States. Aronowitz points to the difficulty of building such a party with the type of longevity and power that some left, labor, socialist, anti-capitalist, communist parties and social movements have attained in other countries.

Against a trend of anti-intellectualism on the Left, he highlights the importance of the role of intellectuals as activists in building a new left formation. He asserts that before a party or left political formation can become a mass organization, some number of people must come together to create a basis to bring others into a single organizational form. Aronowitz's main appeal is to people in the worldwide oppositional movements, as well as "new" social movements, the global justice, anti-war, environmental, left academics and labor/workers movements among others, which he also indicates are part of the worldwide oppositional movements.[2]

Developing creative theoretical and strategic thinking about political organization entails forms utopian and totality-oriented thought that could be called pragmatic.[3] He argues for example, that a guiding standpoint for

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[2] Op. cit., 2006: 106, 195-197.

[3] One way of defining a totality oriented analytic, at first blush at least, is to consider it as is synchronic snapshot (where for example, everything is connected to everything, e.g., a 100% banning of autos and conversion in cities and countryside to a low polluting mass transit systems would relate to reducing global warming, which could slow the melting of the polar ice caps and so on). When developing such an analytic one might focus on envisioning a whole and its vast/ infinite interconnections as a sort of — conceptually frozen net of a moment — whether that

the formation of this party is one that holds, "that the present is the time to consider the 'not-yet' of an egalitarian democratic society, and that the movement in its internal life must be prefigurative of the new society".[4]

This perspective would inspire people to think and act politically in relation to developing a holistic understanding of the world, particularly perceiving those glimmers of what is emerging that is emancipatory. Aronowitz links this understanding to multiple utopian-inflected traditions and projects, including those developed through anarchist, socialist, and communist traditions.[5]

Additionally, holistic ways of understanding capitalism as a totality of involvements and problems are developed, and one is able to see alternatives to capitalism arising in the cracks of the social formation.

On a practical-utopian and strategic level Aronowitz's proposal involves a praxis-oriented analytic standpoint. That standpoint is of a mobilized powerful U.S. left — and the imagining of such (which is a key utopian orientation at present, since there is no such movement today) — as a basis to understand how even apparently non-radical reforms can become effectively radical and enduring, i.e., when understood as part of a powerful left party and social movement "in motion". More than this, if the party became powerful this utopian inflected standpoint could provide a more coherent and tractable sense (than now exists) to party activists, leftists, and masses of people as to what it would mean to be a leftist.[6]

The two interrelated analytics of utopian and totality thinking that Aronowitz employs mutually excludes totality paradigms — of revolutionary left organizations among many other Left traditions. Simultaneously he claims the absence of totality standpoints among the worldwide opposition forces (a

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whole is society, capitalism, or racial formation for example (and all of these totalities/snapshots can also be considered as embedded in other totalities; although an overdeterministic read of such a conceptualization would acknowledged the multiplicity of simultaneously — similar but always different/e.g., subjective — totality conceptions, i.e., as many as there are people thinking them).

Comparatively speaking the analytic orientation of utopian thinking uses totality oriented framing and analytics, but is more diachronic, i.e., oriented to conceptualizing a whole/e.g., an ideal society, and its vast/infinite interconnections as changing in and over time, e.g., vis-à-vis conceiving it in relation to linking past, present, and future. Aronowitz often integrates these standpoints in his work. (see, e.g., Aronowitz, 2006: 188)

4 Op. cit, 2006:177.

5 Op. cit.. 177; 199-219

6 see, e.g., op. cit. 106, 110.

claim that is shown to be problematic in Part One), while ironically, these are the very forces that would constitute the party he hopes will develop. Because of such factors, the totality standpoint he asserts as necessary unintentionally seeks a hegemonic position in Left party building politics and psychologies, thereby undermining, through ostensibly inspiring means, his party building project. In part one of this essay I explained how that was so.

MOVING BEYOND THE CONTRADICTIONS OF ARONOWITZ'S TOTALITY STANDPOINT: DIALOGIC STRATEGIES FOR BUILDING A LEFT FORMATION

Many constructive insights can be gleaned from Aronowitz's important party building writing, and a number of strategies can be extracted. One of those strategies starts with the following comparative observation: Because of the prime role Aronowitz accords to the party's totality standpoint (regarding, e.g., its centrality in building and defining a left with significant power) he would not want to see all such standpoints, his included, marginalized from the party building process he projects. Yet he spends much time asserting the *implied* hegemony of his given standpoint while excluding constructive discussion of all others. What is one to do therefore, if taking his standpoint alone as the right one for today's party building conditions, creates conditions — well beyond the implied hegemony of its own place of privilege — that are destructive of party building?

In contrast to sticking to a more one-only approach, there is the second alternative strategy of emphasizing no particular totality standpoint, or emphasizing a commitment to anti-totality thinking. This alternative however would not produce a key basis of unity that Aronowitz persuasively indicates is central to building this party, and that basis concerns the imperative of having a totality standpoint (as outlined in Part One). And as I will explain in part three, when examining the totality and utopian unity building strategies of the World Social Forum (WFS) as articulated by Boaventura deSusa Santos, while this approach has inspiring elements, it has serious Left formation undermining dynamics too.

A third alternative is to find extended ways for a large spectrum of interested individuals and groups — to work out how to reconcile/merge standpoints, if not also, to determine which standpoints should be reconciled. Given the level of *mutual exclusiveness* in Left political experience today, which finds leftists at a place where not only Aronowitz but other major theorists of

diverse Left traditions do not widely or constructively debate any standpoints even in one off situations, this alternative, appears challenging, to say the least.[7] That the notion of totality and utopian thinking does not get much general attention by activists, would seem to mean that prospects are limited for making such a project central to unity building processes.

Such prospects notwithstanding, the first alternative above would lose one thing Aronowitz persuasively asserts is vital, i.e., a totality analytic. And as I will explain, the second — anti-totality, totality building alternative would assert the compelling, yet also self-undermining hegemony of an ostensibly negative totality. I will focus on the challenges of the third alternative — of reconciling different standpoints. By this means we will see what emerges as helpful for integrating the three traditions and offering imprints — and one might also say the organizational-psychological impressions — for a practice of building a new left formation in the United States.

OVERCOMING CONTRADICTIONS IN LEFT PARTY BUILDING POLITICS: EXCAVATING PROBLEMS WITH LANGUAGE AND OBJECTIVISM IN REVOLUTIONARY STANDPOINTS

By exploring the ironic dimensions of Left standpoints and utopian visions we can move more conscientiously towards integrating Left formation building elements of these important traditions. And in the process we can unpack some barriers to such reconciliation processes.

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[7] In Part One I developed this notion as a core analytical concept. I developed it for example in terms of how Aronowitz posed the worldwide oppositional (left leaning) forces as separate from the Left formation and party he hopes they would eventually be a part of. In this framework, I moved from the explanation of the *exclusivity* and hence separateness of the party formation from the worldwide oppositional forces (as embodied in, e.g., a negative-positive dynamics that Aronowitz applied to the comparative analysis of the forces and the formation, i.e., the party will save the planet, the oppositional forces have no totality analytic). I then moved from the implied exclusiveness of each entity (formation and forces) to an explanation of the *mutual exclusivity*, asserting that it is this relationship that Aronowitz less intentionally imputes to these entities.

The notion of *mutual exclusivity* therefore, indicates something inspiring yet also enduringly alienating about the way Aronowitz characterizes the exclusive relationships between party and forces. This concerns relationships where he implicitly, for example, *frames* each force, party and oppositional forces, as desiring each other to be what the other cannot. Aronowitz poses each entity more antagonistically/ironically, as needing each other in supporting and undermining ways, e.g., the oppositional forces need to be part of the Left formation/party to save the planet, otherwise, they will not save the planet. Yet the oppositional forces stand in a negative state — e.g., not understanding what a totality standpoint is, to what it is they are alleged to need, a Left formation, which in turn sets up a more dubious if not hostile basis to hope that people in these forces would feel positive about their total lack of totality understanding, of which they will allegedly move towards the opposite state, i.e., by joining the formation. Aronowitz thus poses each force somewhat antagonistically, as needing each other in supporting and undermining ways.

In this respect, I look at four revolutionary organizations: the Socialist Equality Party, Freedom Road Socialist Organization, the Committee of the Fourth International, and the International Socialist Organization, respectively.

> 1. The Socialist Equality Party bases its activity on an analysis of the *objective laws of history*… The socialist revolution, which signifies the *forcible* entrance of the masses into conscious political struggle, portends the greatest and most progressive transformation of the form of *man's* [sic] social organization in world history — the ending of society based on classes and, therefore, of the exploitation of human beings by other human beings. A transformation so immense is the work of an entire historical epoch.[8]

> 2. The multinational working class has an *objective* interest in ending capitalism in this country.[9]

> 3. Alongside the political and personal intentions of those founding a party, objective factors also play a role in its emergence. A new party can apprehend subterranean social changes, articulate them and so prepare the future. Or it can be a reaction, becoming a political obstacle for the development of the masses. In the first instance, the party will be energetic, decisive and bold; in the second, conservative, marked by half-measures and ambiguities. The "Left Party" [in Germany] belongs clearly in the second category. At its birth, it already bears all the characteristics of old age.[10]

> 4. [Bookchin's anarchist inflected theories in favor of local counter-capitalist institutions of participatory and

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[8] Documents of the SEP [Socialist Equality Party] Founding Congress: Statement of Principles. International Committee of the Fourth International (IFCI), publisher http://www.wsws.org/ articles/2008/sep2008/prin-s25.shtml. (Accessed on August 01, 2009). Italics added.

[9] Documents of the SEP [Socialist Equality Party] Founding Congress: Statement of Principles. International Committee of the Fourth International (IFCI), publisher http://www.wsws.org/ articles/2008/sep2008/prin-s25.shtml. (Accessed on August 01, 2009). Italics added.

[10] Schwarz, Peter. 2007. German: What does the "Left Party" want to achieve? World Socialist Website 18 June. http://www.wsws.org/articles/2007/jun2007/left-j18.shtml. (accessed on January 17, 2008). Italics added.

cooperative democracy] is another example of how prefigurative politics fails. Only *after the capitalist state is confronted and defeated* can we begin to reorganize society and allow local communities to flourish.[11]

Every one of the quotes implicates utopian and totality standpoints. For example, they utilize fairly sweeping totality and utopian insinuating phrases, such as "ending society based on classes", "defeating the capitalist state" to "reorganize society". They also indicate something of how these standpoints encompass the revolutionary — life on the line — commitment. They do this for example, by using terms that connote the forceful overthrow of particular wholes, i.e., capitalism.

REVOLUTIONARY USES OF THE EPISTEMOLOGY AND ONTOLOGY OF OBJECTIVITY

What is demonstrated in the quotes from these four revolutionary organizations is how core standpoints become embedded, vis-à-vis the revolutionary commitment organizers ascribe to them, and by implication, in regard to why it might be hard to open them up to a larger Left formation building debate.

Phrases such as, "objective laws of history", "objective factors" and "objective interests" of the working class, strongly insinuate rather than openly announce — how these activists see their commitment to political action as based on *more than just moral decisions*. These phrases insinuate that an inspiring, "life on the line" mission of these parties includes, but also transcends morality, simultaneously asserting the transcendence of mortality.

As used in the quotes above, one of the strongest meanings of the word objective is — *the way the world*, or a given part of it, *really is regardless of what humans think it is* (and secondarily, regardless of what people desire it to be).

A central facet and meaning of the word objective, as just described, can be gleaned by considering it not as a statement that human thought and emotion/morals do not matter when it comes to experience and action in

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[11] D'Amato, Paul. 2009. How do anarchists see change happening? SocialistWorker.org. March 26, 2009/693. http://socialistworker.org/2009/03/26/anarchists-and-change. (accessed on August 01, 2009). Italics added.

the world, including action to change the world. Or, to put this another way, my definition of objective (above) appears to exclude the role of all human thought and emotions in understanding the world vis-à-vis the meaning of objective (because the world is the way it really is regardless of what people think of it or feel about it). To follow that implication only, would however unnecessarily limit ones' understanding of the ironic revolutionary use of objectivity implicated in these quotes.

This is to say that the term should also be thought of in regard to its epistemological, and secondly, ontological dimensions. It is crucial to see the meaning of objective (and what it refers to) as if the *meaning* of the object of knowledge it captures (the way the world really is), and hence the *meanings* that the word *refers* to stand alone outside of the thinkers, that is the persons who think it (this is not a proposition to the effect that people do not think or understand the meaning of objective, nor that the linguistic assertion that people do not stand apart from each other, or that conditions in nature do not stand apart from human beings; rather what is critically evoked here is a process wherein these terms as they are used by these writers, polarize the knower from what they know, or learn to know, such that in understanding any phenomenon objectively, they can actually know exactly what the object of knowledge outside of them really is).

Following this proposition as to what is implicit in a word that people rarely step back to analyze, comes another proposition. One should see the use of these terms by these writers and the meaning they ascribe to it, as posing an *implicit*, and as I will explain, absolutist assertion — of *who* has the right and correct (ontological) view of the world/reality/*what really is*.

The reason to have the correct view is not just for one's edification, rather it is about having the *right standpoint* needed to transform the world (when moreover, asserting transformative politics may ostensibly mean, standing up to violence from the ruling class; one would not, for example want to enter into preparation for such violence in error, hence precision, correctness and the like become a moral imperative). Objectivism helps these writers understand with certitude that they have the true rather than false knowledge about working class interests for example, or the right rather than wrong knowledge about which party is dying a pre-mature death, i.e., not theirs.

In relationship to other standpoint epistemologies objectivism cuts its comparisons and exclusions on the basis of its multi-faceted, ironically alienating claim to a superior worldview.

TOTALITY AS A MUTUALLY EXCLUDING SINGULARITY

Implied in the meaning and use of the word objective above, is that these writers are able to tender an understanding of reality that can be called, pure and exclusive, i.e., in the sense of understanding the one way the world really is, without any bias for example, indeed without any human foibles stepping in to the epistemological and ontological frame.

Importantly, if these writers have identified the way the world, or a given part really is, regardless of what people desire or think it to be, these sentences imply an accompanying proposition. That proposition is that reality — or a given part of it — is *singular*.

From this apparently self-evident objectivist standpoint, the existence of only one reality guarantees that there can be a lock between reality and understanding it correctly. By implication therefore if there were multiple realities (as per a more relativist view that understanding reality as a meaning cannot supersede what each and all people think reality is) and hence, if there were many realities — which cannot be shorn of word/mind based meanings — to understand correctly, as many as there are people to think reality, how would one know which is the right reality to understand correctly (should they all be understood as such)?

Given such relativist-inflected epistemological and ontological objectivist-angst builders, the search for a lock between the oneness of correct (infallible) knowledge and the oneness of reality would seem to be impossible. On the other hand, with only one reality existent, revolutionary organizers or party members who use the objectivist standpoint have the possibility before them rather than the impossibility, of being infallible or pure, i.e., not making a mistake in understanding reality; this is rather important as these would be mistakes, in a psycho-social-natural arena where mistakes could mean life or death (the mistakes of which even if they were a distant set of undesired possibilities, could also beckon deflation of inspiration, more summarily). As I will show, there are hints in the less apparent dimensions of their own linguistic practices that they could be mistaken about this lock; following these hints bring us to a core of what is unintentionally alienating if not self-defeating for these party builders in regard to realizing their transformative vision. Such an analysis will also will yield left formation building possibilities.

A DENIAL OF MORTALITY THAT BINDS AND UNDERMINES REVOLUTIONARY ORGANIZING

A next step in the move to understand my contention that the revolutionary use of the term objective, can be alienating (while also inspiring), is that to define objective as "the way the world really is", should not be taken to imply that morality is absent from the world of these writers and the parties for whom they write. Instead, I would suggest that what one can call their objectivist perspective is a categorical part of their revolutionary standpoints. As such it does two related things:

One, it ironically *polarizes* (or one might say in a Weberian sense, rationalizes) morality contra knowledge (of reality). And two, as I will first discuss, it also ironically asserts a type of human knowledge that is ironically transcendent of humanity.

A key step in polarizing knowledge from *mortality* involves posing reality as singular, in the way it can be thought of (and not openly considering that it is their understanding of reality, not other's conceptualized reality that appears singular — e.g., in a lock of oneness between knower and what they know).

On the one hand and as indicated in the above quotes, these writers articulate the meaning of the term objective in a way that appears to need no more substantiating a description, than the use of the word "objective" itself. On the other hand, these writers can only know — or more likely, sense — what objective means and how to use it in any sentence if they have a sense of those propositions about knowing reality, that are not only false (in these writers minds), but propositions whose falseness renders their proposition true.

This is to say that just like there could be no concept of global warming if those who asserted its existence did not know what constituted "no global warming", objectivists need at least a strong subconscious sense of their negative conditions of existence (e.g., relativism) to know what not to write when it comes to articulating what objectivism means, and even to know where to put it in a given sentence. Reality moreover is a pretty big place to understand the truth or the way it really is; what about other people who dispute just this; how can they also have a lock on knowing factors of reality, or do they have false consciousness; yet how could this be since all factors would be objectively knowable by everyone if the contradicting conditions of existence of this term (e.g., relativism) were not part of the very meaning and ability to understand it's meaning.

A relativist stance then — which as we shall see in part three — also relates to a horizontal/democratic-pluralist stance — by contrast is one that asserts there are as many perceived realities as there are people, or as there are people thinking about reality. It asserts right off the importance of including the thinking, feeling human being (the subject) in all propositions about knowledge (the object).

As per relativism, none of the proponents of these perceived realities can claim the exclusive truth vis-à-vis their version of reality. They cannot persuasively claim this that is, because contrary to the objectivist position that reality is singular and exists outside of knowing it, human beings cannot know that any reality exists outside of them, without *knowing it* (feeling the knowledge/knowing it, etc.). They cannot know this *without* asserting the distinctly human, human being for example, because (as per relativism) there is no judge/source outside of human beings and their *contending* knowledge claims that could prove once and for all which version of reality is right (they cannot guarantee it will ever be objectively true in the realm of human relationships, in other words). To become that judge so to speak would be, to become omnipotent, something beyond *and* more than human, something all-knowing.

Another analytical-linguistic read that disputes this same objectivist claim, is that words can never actually capture (and hence embody in order to know) the phenomena — the "object of knowledge" — they refer too. Objectivism contradicts this proposition. As per this more relativist read, there is always *play* (if not absence, contradicted by objectivist assumptions that try mightily to fill the void) between the object of desire, i.e., to know the knowledge object, that is, what knowledge refers to in-itself (the phenomenon that words refer to) and the knowledge of the object desiring subject.

In light of these critical views objectivists can be seen not only as desiring omnipotence (and asserting a lack of any absence or void between the human being and the understanding the object of knowledge). They can be seen per this linguistic analysis, as attempting to step into a contradictory *void* — where implicitly they could know what they needed to know about reality — without it being known in the way reality is generally known", i.e., tentatively, contingently, *mortally*. This lunge towards an immortal subject position — is contradictory and potentially embarrassing as such — for one thing, in that revolutionary objectivists would never claim they were immortal.

Moreover, objectivists attempt to insinuate a lock on being in this omnipotent like state — *in a group form* (as implicated in the first quote above, the group/

party is framed by these writers as it, and not so much the individual, asserts the lock on transcendent knowledge).

INTENSIFICATION AND DEGRADATION OF THE REVOLUTIONARY DENIAL OF MORTALITY

To put this in a relativist-oriented way that strikes up more of the polarization of mortality/humanness from knowledge, these writers imply the polarization of subject from object. They implicitly marginalize the knowledge-making role of the mortal human being or subject by the use of the word objective, and they do this time after time. By doing this they disciplinarily convey the standard meaning of objective, and that very meaning (that the world is the way it is regardless of what people think it is) polarizes the subject, the person, from the object, i.e., understanding reality. The subject in effect wants to become the object (they want to alienate themselves from the subject).

Helping to establish the role of this implicit polarized (pure) subject in each of the above quoted paragraphs, is the situation in which the word objective functions as an adjective and qualifier of the word following it. As such, it serves to pull the human elements further away from the human conditions it modifies — thus rendering the polarizing impact of objective more subtle, canny, and comprehensive.

Take for example the second of four quotes above: "The multinational working class has an *objective* interest in ending capitalism in this country." Here the notion of the *objective interest* of the working class polarizes the human subject away from "class interests" — which are implicitly very human, psychological processes and references vis-à-vis the sentence in which it is used and vis-à-vis the general meaning of the word "interests" (these are things people feel in their bodies, and/or want, for example). As such these interests of humans, i.e., in their active minds and bodies are no longer are just particular people's interests. They now are also *objective* class interests, i.e., they are now ostensibly just the way they are in reality (thus alienating a whole bunch of people as objects from their bodies/subject positions, i.e., everyone in working classes is now a subject by their own fault, but an object alienated from their subject/ bodies by the revolutionary objectivist's ostensibly more infallible assertions); these interests are moreover, just the — one and only one — way they are in reality (again this provides an indication of how polarized/polarizing, and alienating, the revolutionary objectivist's sense is regarding the implied lack of understanding of many working class people of their class interests).

Leaving aside how problematically over-generalized the last objectivist proposition is when used this way (and leaving aside how potentially condescending it is to the supposed real people, i.e., wage workers, who it categorizes, and, for example, intimates a basis for knowing their real consciousness), this is to also say that these practitioners of objectivism implicitly suppress the knower. (It's not that they might deny individual agency to them, that is individual feelings, uniqueness, etc; rather this person or subject is cast as being the object, not of subjective qualities in any way near as much as being an object of objective — the way it really is — ascribed conditions; they are cast as being the object moreover of all knowing subjects — the revolutionary writers and adherents, who portray these subjects instead as being the object of objective conditions they do control, mainly because they do not know how to think about them in a way that they would putatively control them, i.e., objectively).

These practitioners cast their revolutionary subjects as such, however without apparent concern that their rather canny attempt and framing of "objective" — by removing the subject — *leaves an implicit subject — their selves — with the power to impart knowledge about something that implicitly does not need a human subject.*

One ironic result is that these writers pose themselves as something like an immortal knower. They pose themselves as an immortal knower — that ironically requires all other mortal knowers to know this (e.g., because that rarified knowledge space that objective knowledge implicitly occupies, cannot be constituted as such if there is not a *non-rarified knowledge*, which it knows it cannot be).

CANNY REVOLUTIONARY OBJECTIVISM AND ITS ALIENATING ORGANIZATIONAL CONSEQUENCES

As such, the passages above might feel unsettling, to some readers. This is not the least bit because in contrast to these writers implied move to marginalize the subject, one of the more obvious contexts of the paragraphs above is the following. Someone has written these passages and that subject, while implied — if not impressionistically perceived as dabbling in omnipotence — cannot be fully marginalized from the mortal (potentially humiliating) construction of those meanings.

However, in taking an implicit or one might say hidden, immortal like subject position, they cannily, yet also ironically — give themselves a logical grammatically honed omni-power position. This is a (subject) position that by multiple forms of semantic insinuation does not seem to need to be defended. It does not seem to need to be defended for one thing, because apparently, it is not about people in all their diversity and fallibility knowing what reality really is — so (mortal) knowledge as such does not matter.

Secondly, it does not appear to need defending because there appears to be no subjective knower of this objective knowledge.

Thirdly, and in mutually reinforcing ways, it is a rhetorical assertion that in its implied meaning seeks to exclude the possibility of anyone challenging its veracity (of anyone, for example, bringing out its close knit negative conditions of meaning/doubt, and hence, bringing out the contradictions of its putatively infallible meaning, e.g., via relativism). It seems to exclude this possibility in its disciplinary organizational psycho-social dimensions moreover, because it is an *absolutist* statement, i.e., that reality really is this singular way regardless of what people think.

This does not mean that objectivism is immune to challenges, or that any challenges are unknown or not sensed vis-à-vis the way the positive conditions or intended meanings of objectivism are expressed. One reason why this appears to be such an alienating practice is that the practitioners of objectivism can be (and are) widely sensed as to how they express some of their own undermining conditions of existence, e.g., vis-à-vis revolution and party building.

In order to pose reality as just one way, i.e., vis-à-vis the term objective, one must also have a sense of what reality is not. For example, it is not relative *only* to what all people say it is. Objectivism as I have argued above, needs its negative meaning constituting propositions (even if only sensed, e.g., as to relativism and post-structuralism). It needs these negatives to empower writers to know what to write that is and is not objectivist and hence to empower their sense of the rightness of objectivist propositions. This is connected as I have indicated, to very emotionally sacrosanct feelings of (e.g., the potential and preparations for) putting one's comrades and their own life on the line.

In part because objectivism cannot include its negative conditions of existence in its asserted positive conditions (its inner sanctum of rightness),

these negative internal propositions (and their logics and functions) generally become less consciously understood. They are nonetheless indispensable as internal social relational and disciplinary constituents of these writer's bodies, and their organizational-political life.

To say objectivism cannot do without its negative conditions of existence is to suggest that advocates of objectivism and in this case, these writers and their revolutionary organizations set up implicit moral defenses (ironically, by insinuating an infallible, immortal subject position for themselves and their comrades, for example). They set up a moral fortress more to the point. It is a moral fortress however, that does not appear to be such, but that can be analyzed as indicating they are (pre-figuratively) aware and on guard against the enemy they well know (from within, and by extensions, from without).

To defend objectivism in this respect is to bring out what is already latent for example in the moral and reductionist posing of "objective factors" (as in the third quote above). Hence tacitly (as to how the negatives constitute objectivist concepts and these writer's latent resistance to these negatives) and secondly, explicitly (if any challenges are raised against it and they decide to defend it) they assert their objectivist propositions are right, correct, and good *in the very meaning and production of term itself.*

This is to say that it is not adequate to say they implicitly, and if openly defending objectivism, explicitly have to assert these propositions are *just* right and correct. They also must be good. If they were not also good (meaning morally good), then right and correct would not be felt as good, and there would be no felt reason to defend them.

Hence, their use of a term — and the assertion of it as an absolutist statement — expresses the implicit absolute mortal human *desire* to be right — with no possibility of being wrong.

This indicates that the negative, the detested, the marginalized — e.g., relativism or just the challenge to "prove it", even if repressed and emotionally sensed, are *intrinsic* factors in the production of their objectivism. As such, these writers can be said to animate (and sublimate) these repressed "objective-negating elements" in ways that make them seem external, hence quite polarized and non-existent. Yet they are also antagonistic, mutually excluded conditions of existence of their objectivism. (These negative conditions of existence do indeed surface, albeit in the above quotes by implication, where for example, they are demonized/exorcized in the way

they are posed as external, e.g., these negatives are portrayed as emanating from the German Left Party — which is *dying* in part because it is not aware of "objective factors" in its own political emergence.)

This is also to say that I have suggested the possibility of sustained repression and sublimation processes manifest in less conscious and textually implicative oppositions posed by these writers. Additionally, I have suggested part of what is being repressed and sublimated, i.e., some of the internal conditions of the potential destruction of their objectivism. And I have indicated what is at stake here broaches/includes their sense of absolute certainty, absolute morality, and a immortalizing subjective notion of putting their own lives on the line, with their sense of a knowledge that feels tinged with transcendence/immortality.

These conditions of the context of objectivism — imply the production and reproduction of relatively consistent types — or disciplinary regimes — of social relations as I will discuss below. These are social relations that generate life experiences of an organizational, intellectual and embodied solidarity, possible feelings of heroic and transcendent knowledge, and often a strong sense of the community of the "us" versus many left wing groups and peoples constituted as "them" (often framed in incessant attack rhetoric, e.g., against "reformists" or misleaders of the working class). Given this, their responses to, or even their anticipation of serious relativist or anti-essentialist challenges would likely be fierce (indeed they already are implicitly fierce, e.g., in their absolutism, *as they impose it on themselves* and in the way they frame others outside the party, others like post-modern influenced scholars or anti-authoritarian activists and large left parties, who could be allies, more like enemies).

Their response might well be fierce that is, as they would tap into repressed and sublimated senses of what they have to lose, vis-à-vis what they have long internalized as their revolutionary organization's own destructive conditions of existence. It is towards examining the sense of what could be lost, and its ironic implications for party building that I know turn. This in turn will help to develop avenues of conciliation vis-à-vis party building and the standpoint conundrums.

TOTALITARIAN INTIMATIONS OF REVOLUTIONARY DESIRES

Ironically then, challenges that might reveal the mortal if not humble human qualities supporting these writer's objectivist statements are complexly opposed. The passion, morality, and sense of imperfections they

provoke and embody as muted negative conditions of existence for example remain opposed yet engaged as such (vis-à-vis objectivism's implied creed that morality, passion, sensed imperfection, etc. are antithetical possibly dangerous to knowing the way reality really is). If they were brought into the meaning of objective — for example, via any type of challenge, or change of mind, say by party members — they would undermine its meaning, i.e., as the unbiased, rational, non-moral, logical (implicitly superior/heroic) truth about a singular reality and their understanding of it.

This is also to suggest that they are complexly opposed, and alienating via a hardened and potentially, totalitarian orientation towards their own and others humanity.

Why would I suggest the humanity of these writers — and the parties that support their writing — is complexly alienating, e.g., expressed, stressed, detested, strangely known and desired ironically?

Because yet another dimension of these standpoint positions is that they are about the organizational member's mission of preparing themselves for the best of all possible human worlds (e.g., socialism on a world scale, and following that communism). They are about things quite moral, deeply desired, and human and as such, they generate solidarity and powerful in-group dynamics for example.

To put the irony of this situation evocatively in terms of its alienating dimensions, one might consider how a sort of insulated world of the emotionally hardened observations of objectivism — function as something like an encased weapon of a felt non-moral, rational, dispassionate, and perfected group think (used in the more open service of the passion and emotion to create socialism). It becomes an object weapon in itself, so to speak, used in the pursuit of everyday party aims, life and the ultimate good (socialism). It beckons a situation where passion, morality etc. can take up that weapon (e.g., in wanting a better world) in the form of using the internal steely resolve of "knowing the singular objective truth". And in this sense, the non-moral (or transcendent of morality) truth of their knowledge of objective conditions serves as a partly inhuman means to a purportedly humanly wonderful end (a socialist society).

If one adds to this the intimations of a subject position that is transcendent, e.g., immortal like and hence implicitly superior — in relation to all others who do not know the way the world really is, what it seems to reveal is some

of the complexities of their leanings towards totalitarianism (as much as their leanings towards some sort of transcendent all-knowing humanitarianism). Importantly, to the purposes of this article, it also indicates stark difficulties of engaging such activists in dialogue and intellectually challenging processes on these issues and in the name of building left unity.

HUMANISM FOR AND AGAINST HUMANS: CHALLENGES TO UNITY BUILDING DIALOGUES

This is also to suggest that these groups integrate other facets of their political experience, standpoints and revolutionary commitment into an ironic polarization of (their own) humanity from humanity. As per this view and this is a key point I have been working towards, to *be willing to react to capitalist violence or to be willing to raise arms and fight (potentially at this point) to the death to realize socialism, or to kill others in revolutionary processes* (or even to feel some heroic affinity with others viewed as doing that in the past), *is to know and feel at some level that one might have to shut off some of their humanity/humanism.*[12]

The implication of the meaning of objective moreover, in the context of the quotes above is that party activists know at some level (and it comes out briefly if not impressionistically in rhetoric about what a revolutionary commitment means) that they might have to make such hardened rationalizations and choices. Statements about the one and only way the world really is — help them to do that moreover (e.g., subconsciously, via an alienating-inspiring sublimation processes). Knowing this helps to harden and inspire them, prepare them for the emotional state necessary to justify these momentous potential kill or be killed decisions (this is the stuff of cult making, but more so, since it is only one piece — and often a more impressionistic piece — of many dimensions of revolutionary party building, it is more often the impressionistic stuff of sectarianism).

I would thus suggest that this encased weapon of — the objective — sets up destabilizing hard to see tendencies towards sectarianism. To raise, in pervasive social, emotional and group solidarity making relationships

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[12] I take as a conceptual entry point the following sense of alienation: it can be said to connote an analytical play of desires, repression, stress making [which can be a fruitful dynamic], and estrangement [wherein on renders, e.g., an object of desire, both strange and strangely familiar]. As I will expand upon below, this social and psychological play of desires is constituted moreover, by an ironic polarization of what one desires — from the object of desire.

moreover, the preparatory revolutionary stance of being able to fight if not kill (e.g., in defensive actions) others in the name of a standpoint that pits their humanity against their own humanity, to do this, is also to render one's self vulnerable to failure before they start (i.e., the revolution). Intimations of this failure are already present, but would require such groups to thoroughly, e.g., psychoanalytically interrogate why, for example, so few people have joined their particular fight to transform the entire world.

This sense of failure I would note as evidence not explored in detail here how the large intentional non-violent communities of left activists, pacifists, religious and global justice workers, social movement organizers, anarchists, left liberal, and many others would sense — and indeed have long traditions of suspicion and organizational politics that have built on their sense of such intimations towards totalitarianism. Nor am I exploring other than just suggesting here how it is that the very resistance forces that these revolutionary political organizations might want to recruit from who would sense those types of stresses and impositions (e.g. of a hardened humanitarian stance) that would repulse all but a relative handful of people.

This is to say however, that a sublimated hardening of one dimension of their humanity in relation not just to their own humanity but also in relation to others (other people on the outside, especially left leaning) also renders these writers/groups vulnerable to the ironies of being exposed, possibly humiliated.

They could be humiliated by being perceived as expressing the opposite of logical, rational, capable, persuasive, calm, revolutionary commitments (that which they believe they are doing, with a passion, as encased in their understanding of objective, and as part of the consequent revolutionary commitment). This is to say that this hardening process renders them vulnerable to a depth of critique and opposition of others — not just via the quip of anyone challenging them to — "prove it". This would be critiques to the effect that they *are self-destructive of their own deepest desires*, e.g., by pitting humanity against humanity, and expressing humanity through inhumanity, *with a proposition — that is suspect in its absolutist transcendental logic*, moreover.

Additionally, this analysis suggests ironic limitations of spreading movement building or party building to others on the outside so to speak, others that is who sense an implied inhumanity against humanity in the humanity for humanity stance in their revolutionary rhetoric. It suggests the fortifying of sectarian qualities manifest for example in ongoing situations that this party

ultimately embraces only those people who take inspiration from a refusal to dig into the self-destructive/alienating dimensions of their revolutionary standpoints. (This is not however, to suggest that to be ready to fight militarily, if ever it appeared needed, would generate the same ironically self-destructive stance if objectivism, were not part of this regimen; but that is not the case here.)

I would suggest moreover that the character of their alienation is such that the long-standing, barely addressed qualities of these groups as being small, fragmented, sect-like, stands in contrast to what they might feel about such characteristics.

Rather than identifying their long standing fragmented character as also embodying Left alienation, one stance that would (eventually) seem more obvious to these activists, as correct (and as justifying their own revolutionarily inspiring objectivist qualities), is that they are not a mass party (or they would become more fool-hearty if they believed they could be). This in turn speaks of and gives greater practical-emotional latitude, not only to sectarian dynamics, but also to the rising power for example, of those in the party that would argue the salience of the vanguard as opposed to the mass position.

But what this also means in the context of building a broad based Left party is that if they remain vanguardist (in inspiring and alienating forms), they do not have to subject to debate their life on the line stance and its polarizing and ironically undermining consequences. And there they can keep this potentially self-undermining humiliating dialogue, i.e., off the table, in effect saying either you agree with this to join in our (vanguard) organization/party or you are qualitatively different than and hence, alienated from us.

RECONCILING ALIENATION AND OBJECTIVISM IN PARTY BUILDING STANDPOINTS

This is to circle back to the purpose of this article and ask: What does this have to do with Aronowitz's hegemony seeking stance on "the totality" (covered in Part One) and his hope for a new Left party? For one thing an objectivist revolutionary framework analyzed above indicates how difficult it would be to open up dialogues on the utopian and totality standpoint issues. And this in turn indicates the depth of the ideological, intellectual, and individual-group psychological barriers to building a new broad based party, that took the approach of debating if not working out standpoints.

And yet as with the constructive critique of Aronowitz's proposal *it also indicates something of the content and direction such party-building dialogues could take*. That issue will be continued in the next part of this essay, on the World Social Forum's pluralist-heavy totality,

Suffice it for now to say that for one thing, if one poses greater left unity as a goal, I do not think these issues of difference and alienation among leftists can remain unaddressed. Among various reasons why this is so I would ask, *how can leftists who want to build this party — or just build greater unity — know*, e.g., how can Aronowitz and supporters of his proposal *know what in the world to agree on* when *too little in their party building theory and analytics indicates they know the extent and character of what they disagree on*? (How can leftists who want to build this party know, moreover, how complex forms of disunity/unity-excluding processes are "working inside of them"?)

The exposition of differences and their political, organizational, psychological and unity building consequences at the very least would mark an advance of what it is that could be merged or integrated, and what could be dispensed with (so far in this article that would have to do with that which is identified in Aronowitz's proposal plus the above analysis of the objectivism of some revolutionary parties).

The absolutist-leaning, inspiring, emotional and psychological group constituting character of an objectivist revolutionary standpoint (of revolutionary groups) and the inspirational yet self-undermining party building comprehensiveness of the hegemony seeking totality standpoint for Left party building (of Aronowitz's proposal), are of course not exclusively what it is that turns left inclined people away from party building. But they do significantly add to the ironically polarizing conditions as to why new generations of activists for example, such as those forming affinity groups, engaging in consensus based decision making, and insisting on decentralized organizational forms in social movements, radical community organizing, religious and global justice, and anarchist circles, *suspect* and show opposition to, vis-à-vis certain types of "intellectualism" among Left identified folk. And it indicates why they often develop and fortify such opposition in sometimes exaggerated ways, i.e., this is very emotional stuff and if they have not worked it through, say dialogically, more inflamed oppositions often result (it also suggests something of the reasons why they understandably, and one could add, ironically vis-à-vis unity potentials, *sense* these Left unity theories and practices, as implicating oppressive, if not bullying, centralized forms of command control).

It also might explain something of how these generations would sometimes over-generalize from these unaddressed alienating differences — to a more blanket dismissal of forms of Left political organization and dialogues and anything that to them smacks of old new-old left forms of intellectual engagement (e.g., "theory" making). These unfortunately could be vital formation building dialogues (dialogues lost, dialogues eschewed) about building power, community, and cooperation.

Why else is it then, that conciliatory and deconstructionist standpoint debates and dialogues should be prioritized rather than avoided?

One additional reason is to reverse the tide of the movement in the other direction, i.e., towards political atomization, something which takes place ironically while many leftists sense ever more compelling concerns of the decline of humanity's chances of thriving if not surviving. In this context one reason to move towards dialogue, debate, and reconciliation, concerns the dynamic development of ever new generations of small "unified" groups of revolutionary, and often objectivist (or essentialist) standpoint-holding activists. As nurtured and recruited by the many revolutionary Marxists, communists, e.g., Trotsky, Maoist, and Leninist influenced and socialist organizations/parties today (there are about 100 or so in the U.S.), these new generations are continuously developing and being developed and are likely growing at present (given current global distresses).[13] Related to this an equally important point emphasized throughout the first part, and that is the importance to Leftists of totality and utopian thinking.

Given the extent moreover, that many revolutionary activists involve themselves to a degree approaching a 24/7 commitment, it is not likely — nor is it a bad thing — that the involvement of new generations of revolutionary activists in will let up. If the route of working through totality and utopian standpoints is central to building the broad based Left formation that Aronowitz and no too few revolutionary leftists desire, then the hope for any success in such processes, rests in part on addressing objectivism in revolutionary utopian and totality party building politics among these new revolutionary constituencies.

Another reason why the standpoint debate necessitates a priority position is that what revolutionary leftists often do vis-à-vis seeking hegemony of one

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[13] Biver, Nico. 2006. Leftist Parties of the World: United States of America. http://www.broadleft.org/us.htm. (accessed on June 20, 2007).

utopian inflected totality standpoint is, as indicated in the previous section, done by non-revolutionary activists, along a wide range of more to less mutually exclusive forms (e.g., as when a standpoint of activists or scholars articulates even the most apparently open totality, such as a racial formation, as something open yet also relatively exclusive and privileged the way it receives the author's inordinate focus, vis-à-vis other totalities).[14]

The stakes are too high in other words vis-à-vis building greater left wing power — to continue to marginalize what cannot be expunged anyway (e.g., the across the board negative and unconscious dimensions of utopia, totality, and exhaustiveness). This is also to indicate why the standpoint dialogues and issues should not be marginalized in favor of the implied hegemony of one standpoint vis a vis Aronowitz.

THE POLITICS OF ORGANIZATION IN THE ORGANIZING OF LEFT POLITICS: THE VICARIOUS GAZE

What else is directly related to this standpoint politics and is of consequence vis-à-vis the possibility of developing dialogues on party building standpoints? One of the more overriding messages of the preceding analysis concerns the enduring multi-faceted, conscious and subconscious marginalization by leftists of finding ways to discuss, let alone work on differences (commonalities, problems, etc.). In this case I am talking about differences, regarding totalizing utopian standpoints. For one thing and as a result of refraining from opening this "mine field" (rife with potentials for dressing down if not humiliating Left wing hubris, certainty and proof making, i.e., that one knows the objective truth), activists seem to put greater unity building hopes — upon rather thin political unity building processes (such as united front formations today). These are processes that in some relation to avoiding such mine fields disproportionately embody what I would call a problematic external looking — vicarious gaze.

A vicarious political gaze speaks of the felt psychological and emotional dynamics in any given organizational circumstance — where activists, interested people, public intellectuals and so on gather at large Left inflected organizing meetings for example, and other various and sundry large political events. These are events where almost all the attention and sense

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[14] See, e.g., Omi, Howard, and Winant, Michael, 1994. *Racial Formation in the United States: from the 1960's to the 1990's.* New York: Routledge

of what is meaningful or of greatest political value is based on perceptually pointing all involved towards an assumed world of conditions and politics "out there" (e.g., and by extension, anywhere but "in here", amongst us); it is the attitudinal group and individual gaze (so to speak) *out there*, that is assumedly in the world outside "this room" where the proverbial we of a given meeting or members of an event reside. This is a "we" moreover that frames themselves as the "we" that must go to confront the real problems of society, "out there" (e.g., of global warming, austerity, financial bailouts to capitalist corporations and banks). Hence, people engaged in such gazes, in some respects, vicariously experience together, with emotion, anger, laughter and all — the object of their activist knowledge making "out there", i.e., their hopes for unity and victories in struggle (with what is "bad" out there).

It is in such ways that individuals and the groups can constitute and subconsciously habituate themselves to a gestalt like gaze towards that which is assumed to be of the greatest — left politics and unity making — value in their dialogues; this means they vicariously experience ills and problems in need of solutions, and concrete pre-figurative visions of a better future — almost everywhere but in the room or place they are in vis-à-vis the object of their politics.

Among other things they refrain from considering how the outward gaze is also actually inward and productive of intimate group social-psychological relationships.

The fortification of such practices, are consistent with objectivist languages — and group stances — in revolutionary discourse, for example. These are languages that similarly are mainly focused on analyzing other people and conditions outside of the group itself. As such they disproportionately imply and situate the inner grouping more subtly as those with the valued knowledge of what is objectively true; they are those who know for example how it really is out there, e.g., with the German Left party.

As such this standpoint orientation insinuates a vicarious gaze through an immortality edged totalitarian projection — of a truth-seeing inner core of party members. Such a psychological-political group orientation helps to in effect (conceptually) freeze the knowledge of that apparent outside in forms of ironic certitude that are, as the previous analysis indicated fortified with emotions and meanings of a potential life on the line group commitment and consequences. This renders the gestalt of their gaze out upon all that is outside of them not just as more impervious to changing towards looking

at how that affects all (e.g., in the broader coalition) on the inside. It also can render the reversal of such externalizing practices — all the more subconsciously and potentially embarrassing and vulnerable to examination (to ever addressing it; e.g., to proving it).

This also indicates that more broad based party building meeting experiences can be all the more uncomfortable and alienating not just for the many outside of the objectivist oriented revolutionaries, but also to these revolutionaries themselves. Alienation is phrased here as characterizing overdetermined or multiple currents of estrangement (of the objects of desire, for example to build a broad based party that would, in Aronowitz's terms save the planet) from the object desiring subject.

What about the vicarious gaze implied in Aronowitz's totality and utopian standpoints? These as I indicated in part one, are not just about an attempted hegemony of "the totality". They are also about a comprehensive critique of leftists and conditions on a sweeping world scope, and they are therefore about abidingly comprehensive conditions "out there". This is to say that the conditions of the interpersonal, and political-psychological, organizational processes implicated in these future meetings full of left formation building folks, would be weighed down by the ponderous gaze to intensive conditions that are bad out there that are, in Aronowitz's writing, in need of radical change. Add to this Aronowitz's ironic evocation of pre-figuring the transformative conditions — within the formation, of the society the formation building folks want to see, in the larger society that is, along with the minimization if not absence of any analysis addressing the internal political psychology and organizational dimensions of what this pre-figuration means, and one will find the vicarious dimensions of political party organizing experience suffusing the project and pages of Aronowitz's party building proposal.

Certain U.S. radical political traditions have addressed this gaze and tried to transform the more alienating if not disempowering elements of it in their organizational public politics (where the organizational is political and the political, i.e., problems out there, are examined also for how they are organizational). Such groupings in the U.S. include anti-racist/civil rights, anti-sexist/feminist and GLBT, and other anti-oppression oriented organizations or groups that take up dimensions of such consciousness raising pre-figurative political identity strategies within their everyday meeting processes (wherein their more sectoral unity focused milieus and activists do not generally engage a pluralistic horizontalist infinitely equal respect for all egalitarian-libertarian respecting struggles against oppression

and de-privileging, including struggles for example of white males). Similarly to the more political identity oriented pre-figurative organizational politics and currents, are the more pluralistic-horizontalist and anti-authoritarian traditions. These currents also include long lived religious justice traditions (e.g., Quakers/American Friends Service Committee), relatively newer and sometimes anarchist inflected global justice, intersectionalist academic, worker centers and new community labor formations groups, GLBT economic justice milieus, and some social movement traditions (and, as of late this includes the Occupy movements; wherein many people in these activist milieus generally engage a horizontalist pluralist respect for all equal-liberty oriented struggles against oppression). And situated somewhat lateral to these same organizational politics focused traditions are some radical/revolutionary community organizers, and some anti-authoritarian and internationalist anarchist traditions, a few political parties (such as the U.S. Socialist Party) anti-nuclear, anti-war, some new age, direct action and intentional communities, and anti-authoritarian study or dialogue engaging organizations (such as Organization for a Free Society).[15] The more pluralistic groups skew young.

Such practices of trying to reconcile this gaze through horizontal-democratic practices such as consensus decision-making have not yet made much of a dent in the revolutionary and independent left constituencies discussed herein.

This is to also observe that a vicarious gaze orientation, sets a strong emotional framework — in the room so to speak — for not looking as much to the power-cooperation relations (and unequal power relations as much as cooperative ones) inside/amongst us (as it does for examining the apparent power-cooperation relations and imbalances outside, i.e., in the capitalist system and enterprise). And hence it sets up and is conducive to the preeminence of a social-organizational framework that finds group participants engaging in ample ways to develop less noticed power plays, e.g., behind closed doors so to speak (it can also render majority rule, e.g., 51% winner take all politics, as alienating and disempowering in the name of group empowerment).[16]

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[15] A recent study assessed similar developments in the German anti-authoritarian movements. See, Leach, Darcy K. 2013. "Culture and the Structure of Tyrannessranny". *The Sociological Quarterly*. Vol 54, 2013, 159-228.

[16] Op cit. Leach, 2013; 181-191.

THE VICARIOUS GAZE IMPLICATES LEFT UNITY CONCILIATION POINTS

These observations hint at why collectively working through the organizational processes and politics described above would be rather trying. And yet the previous analysis also shows potentials for further left unity building, potentials that may be a bit more robust in contemporary non-party building left milieus. This is also to say that avenues towards party building would be rather trying, if not exhausting in relation to working through totality and utopian standpoint differences of the revolutionary groups, especially as to their emotional "in here/out there" political-psychological dynamics (add to this a fairly widespread propensity ((antipathy)) of people in the more identity oriented and anti-authoritarian pre-figurative traditions to preponderantly pigeon hole strategy and theory of practice and politics as the vehicle for white male Marxists and leftists to assert oppressive privilege and the means to engaging in conciliatory or unity exploring dialogues inclusive of the revolutionary identified and radical party building Left seems all the more challenging). However, *the same areas of opposition indicate problems to address and paths towards addressing them* (e.g., through discussions on these in here/out there dynamics, on the alienating/inspiring role of exclusive totality standpoints and likewise on the impacts for group cohesion and isolation vis-à-vis objectivist ideologies). And they implicate the consequences of not addressing them if leftists involved look towards conciliations in too few places or the proverbial "out there"

The signs of such vicarious forms of alienation are not just manifest in what left identifying activists often know too well, namely the interminable, tense, and often burn out inducing character of coalition or large political organizational meetings (and how they are often managed/facilitated in "in here" alienating ways, in the meetings of the whole, whether through the use of formal 51% majority-rule democratic decision making procedures; in the numerous organizational meetings where the group in the meeting routinely defers to the agenda setting and meeting conducting power of just a relative handful of people; or whether it is through the more totalizing uses of pluralist meeting frames, e.g., consensus forms, that empower infinite respect for never ending inputs and outpourings of struggles to focus on: or its the totalizing use of anti-leadership/vertical-democracy demonizing ideologies or heavy handed applications of consensus at every form of small organizational meetings).

I would also contend that something of the dimensions of this vicarious organizational gaze can help to explain why the experience that many left identified people have in no too few protest and resistance actions, such as marches and demonstrations (e.g., pre-Occupy) can feel both vital in importance and focused on ostensibly non-vicarious forms of immediate change on the one hand (e.g., ending stop and frisk, stopping the Keystone Pipeline). On the other hand these same actions can establish or contribute to overarching vicarious elements themselves.

These can be manifest for example, in relation to what it is, and where it is that the acceptable change that given protest and resistance actions call for would enduringly manifest; and by enduringly manifest I mean how they would develop if the goals of the protests/demands were to be *fully* realized in the world today (movements can stop hydro-fracking for example, only to find the world moving further towards global warming; this could be said to manifest as such because the direct action movements were not only unable to, but were not formed to adequately "pre-figure" or end the structures of economy, politics, consumer culture, etc. that underpin the ecological warming of the planet; this is also to observe that such changes are often related to what large institutional forces are called on to do by protestors, whether it is the state or corporation, wherein the corporate — and complying state elite power, control and cooperation forms — extend systematically way beyond the reformers site lines, so to speak). The changes called for in other words are not just conceptually, but also physically very much out of the protestors wheel house, that is "out there" more than they are "in here" vis-à-vis the protesting group(s) and the reach of their pre-figurative actions.

One point is that for all the felt potential of the outward gazing (e.g., "programmatic") unity positions, i.e., to be inspiring and the way to go, to build left unity, much of it will remain vicarious and ring hollow. Much of this will remain hollow and ultimately unfulfilling to the activists, resistance forces and leftists that are called on by the formation building leftists — as a basis to build a given mass based party. This analysis suggests that if one wants to see and be part of building something broad based, the fragile vicarious politics of avoidance can no longer remain implicitly hegemonic (leftists have not really avoided fragility and fragments anyway).

CONCLUSION: ORGANIZATIONAL PROCESSES IN THE POLITICAL PROGRAM IN A NEW LEFT FORMATION

As to what might need to be transformed, vis-à-vis the type of inspiring yet also self-undermining — exhausting and standpoint exclusivist — organizational forms and standpoints that Aronowitz and revolutionary organizations pose, this analysis raises the question of organization in respect to all other points. It raises this question in regard to questions that are not unlike the ones that Aronowitz raises in his formation building proposal. These are questions about the need for coherent Left organization, to which this essay adds the need for more coherent applied organizational politics and group political-psychological processes and awareness — in strategic thinking, in programmatic thinking, in organizing on the streets, in study, in discussion groups, and so on.

In this respect what seems called for are relatively simple questions, which in turn implicate fairly extensive changes in organizational processes and politics. And they implicate fairly extensive changes in regard to most Left party building organizations and their — too often inadequately examined — totality and utopian standpoints especially as to their group political psychological dimensions (awareness, etc.). These are questions like what is this or that particular programmatic demand, or what is this or that particular style of meeting doing to me, and doing to the "us", here in the room. What does it imply it will do (or call for) regarding people in general, and people who are likely allies outside of the group — when seen or understood from "our" internal forms of agreed upon provisional[17] values or standpoints (such as equality and liberty). These would be questions or frameworks raised to a point of awareness of organizational politics that have not been raised much in most left party building milieus.

Aronowitz hints at such an organizational politics in the politics of Left organizing and calls it pre-figurative (realizing the world we want to see in the here and now of our organizing processes, for example). However he does not develop it more in the direction described here, which also has some affinities for the more anti-authoritarian political milieus, including Occupy, and religious justice (such as the American Friends Service committee) traditions. And as it has some affinity for consciousness raising traditions — associated with the new social movements (in race, gender, class, and so on,

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[17] Here the notion of provisional means, always examined, subject to debate, transparent, and considered by all involved so the values they support do not become heavy handed.

which could benefit from more pluralist/anti-exclusivist mutual equal-liberty respect for difference, which is something one might say that the World Social Forum and after it, Occupy brought forward), along with anarchist collectives, global justice milieus, the indignado and indigenous organizing styles and movements arising in Latin America, Europe and the Middle East, and now known worldwide.

Aronowitz also offers a more sobering, if not comprehensive focused critique of leftward politics than most accounts today. And included in his account are important challenges about the generally too limited ways resistance movement and left organizers focus on the organizational questions. These are questions for example, of what — organizationally/political-psychologically/programmatically, might be needed to win enduring transformative conditions. Such organizations would need to be large enough and/or strategically think of the need to become large enough, and they would need to be present moreover as such, within the institutions of everyday life, to find resistance movements organizing themselves to the point of continuously being able to manifest the size and scope of what might be needed — organizationally-psychologically-programmatically — to realize the full demands of such movements.

In this respect questions loom large of overcoming (or better contextualizing) movement-fragmenting reductionistic reform movement practices, ideologies, and the like. These are ideologies and projects wherein such movements place too much time in struggling to win a given reform, or to understandably, take a this or that winnable — e.g., selective state electoral strategy to push the Left of the Democratic party further to the Left. And they place well too little (if any) time in conceiving of, debating, and working on the organizational-programmatic-psychological means to more so, build the unity formation and formations (independent of the major parties) that could substantially build up, or build upon the society-wide transformative (and emerging pre-figurative) social conditions of the alternatives they want to see. These are ideologies and projects moreover that also place too little strategic attention on the scope of what they feel would be needed to transform the *conditions of the reproduction* (e.g., institutional, ecological, national/international) of the social ills that the reform seeks to remedy.

Such a move to shift the focus to the organizational-programmatic-psychological mass formation building context would mean that even the most apparently non-controversial reform (reversing the melting of the polar ice cap) could become effectively radical and enduring, i.e., when understood

as part of a powerful left formation (if not Left party) and social movement "in motion" (which Occupy provided leftists a brief glimpse of). This is yet another sense (in addition to the dialogic mediation of the vicarious gaze) in which the organization is also "the program" so to speak, than just any one specific or set of programmatic demands would ever indicate (and the organizational actions to "carve those out"). Occupy in this respect embodied something of this sense that the organization is (also) the program.

Even though the character of the differences and oppositions in standpoints and utopian politics discussed above indicate formidable hurdles to focusing on unified formation building, the point here is that in order to attend to the issue of alienation in unity building whether due to revolutionary objectivism or the hegemony of asserting only one totality, such challenges and questions would need to be asked. These would be questions that engaged and went beyond examining the vicarious gaze described above.

Such questions would include: what are the qualities of the organizational power/cooperative and political trust-building/trust-depleting relationships — which any vicariously gazing Left group relational processes embody today? How can left leaning individuals and groups muster the organizational wherewithal to engage them (in political-psychological-programmatic terms)?

How is it that the politics of an organization (e.g., external looking, program or platform building) is intimately, and this also means subconsciously, manifest in its internal organizing of each particular group or milieu's organizational politics and program?

Are there forms of Left formation organizing that can have membership qualities, or more of a sense of belonging and accountability, in ways that also embrace horizontal decision making, i.e., that questions any strong sense of membership (e.g., with a strong us and a strong them)? Are there ways to develop such (plural and membership) forms while also confronting, engaging and transforming state power, commercial and media capitalist cultural influence and capitalist economic exploitation? What do reconciling the alienating and constructive elements of utopian and totality standpoints have to do with this question of organization belonging?

For movement building folks today to rigorously address these and many other Left alienation confronting questions could also mean that the more frequently addressed Left challenges/questions could be addressed (such as what should the programmatic focus be). But in this respect, they could be

addressed within an expanded critical context. In such contexts, the dialogic confrontation of the relation of inner/organizational and outer politics could strengthen dialogues and debates such as on the following debate: can social movements, resistance movements and left constituencies *come to common agreement* and understanding about the — general — scope of societal political change that the same worldwide resistance and left forces believe is needed to realize their transformative visions (can they come to agreements for example, regarding the power/cooperation dimensions therein)? This beckons the question of not so much a program as a common development — a huge list even — of what needs to be changed — and importantly, *how much* it needs to be changed. Totality and utopian thinking are vital in just such projects.

As to one start on the more strategic side of the issues broached in this essay, I would ask, given the critique and suggestions just addressed, what might such an organization look like? To offer a very tentative answer and I would return to an earlier references and short explanation of the phrase "left formation". In the beginning of this essay I gave a simple definition that Aronowitz considers it to be a pre-party organization.

To expand on this definition, I would offer an overdetermined, and non- or minimally — mutually exclusive notion of such an organization: it includes elements of Aronowitz's sense of it (as fleshed out in his book, especially, for example, regarding his critiques of left organizations). But it would also include the organizing politics and forms of formations such as the World Social Forum and Occupy which comparatively speaking are suffused with pluralistic dimensions (including centripetal or polycentric tendencies in which the term left for example, would not necessarily be dominant, let alone accepted by some of the involved communities). Such formations nevertheless have strong left hierarchy-leveling and unity building dimensions (e.g., anti-capitalist and anti-authoritarian or horizontalist critiques of the state). And such formations could also be said to exhibit some imprints of what a more horizontal pre-party formation form might be like, e.g., as with the building of People's Movements Assemblies in the U.S. Social Forum, or the use of the General Assembly (e.g., consensus-democratic) form in the Occupy encampments and the spread of these assemblies out into communities and institutions of everyday life (wherein one could imagine that the dynamic working group form, one of the most organizationally expansion oriented dimensions of Occupy, could include party building working groups throughout the country/encampments that would both be subsumed to the General Assembly and one among many other working groups).

This is to also say that in my experience of organizing with and for Social Forums, such Left formations as the United States Social Forum and participating in Occupy finds many of their core national/international organizers wary of and opposed to creating a party or pre-party formation, most particularly in the sense that they associate with a Marxist and/or electoral and state-centric Left bent (the World Social Forum Charter of Principles for example, bans the formal participation of party representatives).

This is also to extrapolate from these and other related examples the point that an overdetermined sense of a left formation would do well to include a multiplicity of concurrent organizational parallel forms, e.g., affiliated or federated — and more loosely conceived (some of which would take the notion of syndicalism and affiliation loosely, while others would more tightly identify with each other as one); in this sense if one could imagine Occupy actions and groups as part of such a formation, the name Occupy as it is currently felt to constitute group cohesion in an organizational formation — falls on the looser, highly pre-figurative utopian/community side and as well it falls on the vertical-representative/majority-rule election averse — side of a left formation "spectrum". This also speaks to something of the standpoints vis-à-vis being part of a left formation, that a spectrum of single issues, or single sector — ideological or organizational identities might gravitate towards (e.g., anti-fracking groups or abolitionist/anti-prison industrial complex groups).

Thus, while embodying much of what more party oriented leftists might consider to be radically left wing, such a formation would not likely have the name left in their pre-dominant languages and name identifications. This is also to observe an interesting political insight, vis-à-vis anti-capitalist formation building in particular: the widespread application of horizontal-participatory democracy, as seen in the General Assembly and other aspects of Occupy, would if engaged fully in the local bases of public-private, corporate and state institutional life/forms, the horizontal forms — could in effect, if fully implemented , transform capitalist and complicit state elite institutional hierarchical conditions towards abiding non, and anti-capitalist forms mass equality/democracy based forms. They could in other words realize just such formative transformative outcomes at the base of every one of these institutions. Such outcomes could develop, in other words, without necessarily using predominant Left identified terminologies. Such terminologies also include socialism, communism, anarchism, and capitalist state, and anti-imperialism. This does not mean such radical languages would be missing; it is more likely they would be less prevalent in relation to other languages, compared to those associated with the horizontalism and participatory democratic organizational processes and discourses.

Hence such a organizing and organizational form, while identified in the singular of the word *formation*, and while constituted in overlapping pluralities in multiple intersecting ways, connotes a more loose organizational formation compared to Aronowitz's proposal, and compared to the revolutionary left organizations organizational visions reviewed here (this would also likely mean that multiple forms of democracy and decision making, leadership and non-leadership forms, would be developed simultaneously and diffusely, i.e., horizontal, directly democratic, spokes council direct representation, consensus, majoritarian, and delegative democratic/liquid democratic).[18] Nevertheless, the sense of a formation described and supported here — engages the major challenge that Aronowitz puts forward, vis-à-vis the need for more coherent, interconnected, large, state engaging, power building, pre-party Left organization/formation.

While there seems to be little in the way of political spaces and contexts at this time for the development of such formation building potentials to really manifest, this essay attempts to indicate some of the hard work that might need to be done to broach the space, place, and trust making issues. While Aronowitz does not focus on the alienation of the political-organizational focus this internal-external dimension of left experience and its relation to totality and utopian politics, his call to focus more on talk, study, and theory making implicates a move in this direction. It does this for example, because his call to attend to internal study, dialogues, etc., as no less, if not more important than just focusing on getting "out there" into action, carries the spirit of this attempt to address Left alienation, further than many leftists (who desire greater unity) have yet done.

In part three, I will bring the critique of and insights gleaned in parts one and two of this essay into a concluding section that considers left formation building more comprehensively. I will develop that critique through an appraisal and critique of left pluralist, that is, horizontalist totality standpoints. I will also examine Aronowitz's Left formation building organizational challenge in relation to how pre-figurative politics can embrace communities and democracies that work through not only lateral/rhizomic-democratic forms but also diagonally, vertically in multi-faceted layers of decision making and organization.

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[18] See for example, Bliefuss, Joel, "Occupy's Meme Warrior: Adbusters' Kalle Lasn on Occupy and a resurgent Left". *In These Times*. May 12, 2002. http://inthesetimes.com/article/13093/occupys_meme_warrior/ downloaded: 7/5/12. See also, notions of proxy or liquid democracy, e.g., http://liquidfeedback.org/, downloaded: 7/5/12.[16] Op cit. Leach, 2013; 181-191.