

WORKING-CLASS AND PROLETARIAT – On the relation of Andries Sternheim to the Frankfurt School –

Bertus Mulder and Lolle Nauta

Introduction

The so-called Frankfurt School had several minor members, scholars who did not form the hard core of the Institute and its journal, but who were nevertheless associated with it for a part of their life. Neumann and Kirchheimer, whose work has drawn some attention in the last ten years, are examples. But there are other personalities as different as Gurland, Wittfogel, Schachtel and Borkenau as well. Their work belongs largely to the tradition of critical theory, but they were not responsible for the research- and publication-policy of the institute. In this sense they were minor members, in contrast to the hard core which consisted of Horkheimer, Fromm, Pollock, Leo Löwenthal and later, Marcuse and Adorno.

Andries Sternheim, a Dutchman, belongs to this group of minor members. He wrote dozens and dozens of reviews for the *Zeitschrift für Sozialforschung* (ZfS). He organized and coordinated most of the research for *Autorität und Familie* under Horkheimer's direction, published in Paris in 1936. In addition, Sternheim was from 1933 till 1938 the second vice-president, after Horkheimer and Pollock, of SIRES, the "Société Internationale de Recherches Sociales". SIRES was the society in control of the financial affairs of the Institute.

The aim of this article is not only to introduce Sternheim to an international public and thus to do justice to a man who made a contribution to the development of critical theory in the thirties and who has been almost completely forgotten since.¹ A glance at the mainstream of critical theory through the looking-glass of the ideas of a minor member can also serve a more theoretical goal. It enables one to get a clearer idea of the theoretical assumptions which were shared by the central group and of their historical relativity. These assumptions can be criticized on a philosophical level, as has been done by Habermas for example. But they can also be criticized by comparing them with other ideas prevalent at that time. What Söllner has shown for Neumann and Kirchheimer, goes true in an earlier period for Sternheim as well. He participated wholeheartedly in the interdisciplinary research-program of Horkheimer and his colleagues. He felt attracted by the socialist or Marxist inspiration which was responsible for the subjects which became prominent in this program. But at the same time his ideas about society and politics differed in some important respects from the ideas of the central group. An inquiry into the ideas of Sternheim teaches us that apart from the assumptions of the leading group, other theoretical options were open at that very period and it may be interesting to ask what was behind them.

This article consists of three parts. First we describe some common assumptions and striking differences between Andries Sternheim and the Frankfurt circle. In the second part we intend to interpret these differences; to this end we introduce the concept of an exemplary situation. And finally, we provide some illustrations of these different exemplary situations and draw a conclusion with regard to the political role of socialist intellectuals.

Shared Interests and Striking Differences

Andries Sternheim was neither a university graduate nor an academic philosopher. In many respects he was a self-made man who studied history, social science, statistics and economy outside the university. One can say that as a critical theorist he developed more or less on his own.

This interest in critical social science however was not only a private matter. From his adolescence onwards Sternheim was involved in the Dutch labour-movement. He had been trained as a diamond-cutter in Amsterdam and he soon became a member of the "Algemene Nederlandsche Diamantbewerker Bond", a politically and socially very interesting section of the Dutch Labour Movement. Here he received part of his education on the field of political and social science, following courses and undergoing different kinds of training. Already, when he was about twenty, he became an active member of the SDAP, the Dutch Social Democratic Labour party.²

This early connection with the Labour Movement and with social democratic politics actually turned out to be decisive for his biography as a whole. Here he found his teachers and his friends. Here he took a prominent part in all kinds of organizational work, also writing many articles and reviews for several Dutch socialist periodicals.

In 1920 Sternheim became head of the library and documentation-centre of the "International Federation of Trade Unions" (IFTU) in Amsterdam. Here he was also in charge of the editorial office of the periodical "The International Trade Union Movement" and of the organization of social research.

Andries Sternheim advocated a kind of socialism, for which "cultural elements" were more important than let us say for an average marxist of the Second International. Of course, economic transformation was also crucial to him and like every socialist and communist at that time he was convinced that a just society would only be possible after the elimination of the capitalist mode of production. At the same time, however, already from about 1920 on, he stressed that psychological factors were important as well and here the cultural element came in. Fundamental changes in society, Sternheim claimed, are not possible if the individuals remain the same. Sternheim advocated what he called "cultural socialism"; and its aim was to foster "the social feelings of man".³ Also in another respect this socialism was cultural. In a socialist society the treasures of culture will be available for everyone. Mankind as a whole will share what until then was only a prerogative of the ruling groups.

It may be clear why Sternheim felt at home in the climate of Frankfurt. Like Horkheimer and his group, he identified strongly with the working class. Like them he was a Marxist who at the same time felt a strong inclination to discuss the foundations of socialism with a growing awareness after the First World War

that rather unforeseen social changes were on their way. Both Sternheim and Horkheimer deemed it necessary to put some fundamental assumptions of marxist theory under discussion. Both were, be it for different reasons, strongly inclined to underline the relevance of what may be called the cultural factor. In Frankfurt the influence of Lukács and Fromm was crucial. Sternheim was part and parcel of a tradition which found its main theoretical spokesmen in people like Van der Goes and later De Man.⁴

Identification with the working class, a common Marxist background and the discovery of culture which then, so to say, was in the air – these elements should not make us overlook an important difference which has to do with politics.

The reception of critical theory in the roaring political atmosphere of the sixties should not make us forget that spokesmen of the Institute after Grünberg did not want to deal with politics in any way. That Horkheimer became a director of the Institute and not Korsch or Lukács, was due to the fact that they were communists. A proposal to appoint one of them might have “provoked the open protest of the university as a whole”.⁵ Of course, the journal and the Institute were able to put subjects on the agenda of social scientists and philosophers which were politically highly relevant. And it cannot be denied that the Institute in Frankfurt could engage a number of scholars who were active socialists and communists.⁶ But at the same time the social pressure on the main representatives to keep hands off from politics should not be underestimated. The financially independent Institute of Social Research (IfS) could only survive in its own created “niche” by a high degree of political abstention. Before 1933 this abstention was required, because state and university in Weimar were highly suspicious about what took place behind the doors of a house which accommodated so many Marxists. Wiggershaus qualifies the Institute as exterritorial, not only in relation to the university but also as far as the socialist parties were concerned. After 1933 their immigrant role in France, Switzerland and the USA put a number of restrictions on the behaviour of Horkheimer and his friends.

Sternheim felt at home in the climate in Frankfurt and could even become a director of the Geneva-branch because of a common political interest. But at the same time he was separated from Pollock, Fromm, Horkheimer and Löwenthal by a political gulf. This was not only caused by the fact that they did not share his working-class origin. Class-differences may be crucial, but they are not decisive. It was due to the fact that he always was politically active, whereas they were not associated with any political party or trade union. Here the fate of Sternheim joins that of Franz Neumann, who was politically active as well and who also felt at home in social-democratic circles. Both were not in tune with the explicit non-political line of a school they felt congenial with for political reasons.

The Horkheimer group and Sternheim had more in common, however, than a deep concern for the fate of the working-class. The Institute of Social Research must also have been interested in Sternheim, because he was so well informed about the situation of labour in Europe. As a director of the documentation centre of the “International Federation of Trade Unions” he had already participated in different kinds of research on labour-affairs. This research at the same time backed the Labour-representatives in ILO’s yearly Labour-conferences. Here we discover a second parallel between Frankfurt and our trade unionist from Amsterdam. Both

Sternheim and Horkheimer c.s. were eager to complement and eventually correct Marxist theory with empirical research about all possible aspects of the situation of the working-class.

So, it is perfectly understandable that Sternheim was made a director of the Geneva-branch of the Institute in 1931. This branch had not only been established by Horkheimer, Pollock and Löwenthal as a possible escape-route from the Nazi's. In Geneva there was also established the International Labour Institute, whose director Thomas was already acquainted with Grünberg, the first director of the IfS. So, Sternheim was supposed to cooperate closely with him.

Generally one can say that relations between Sternheim and the Institute were close about as long as the interdisciplinary research-program lasted. Horkheimer formulated this program in 1931, when he became the director of the IfS. In 1932 Sternheim introduced himself to a wider public by an article on the problem of leisure-time in the first volume of ZfS⁷. The institutional links between Sternheim and the IfS were reduced in June 1938, when Sternheim was dismissed as director of the Geneva-branch. The argument was the Institute's bad financial situation. He was directed by Horkheimer to write a handbook on the situation of leisure time in the different countries of Europe; he had to go back to Amsterdam and so was cut off from the Institute's internal discussions⁸. Some time before, at the end of 1937, the interdisciplinary research-program had more or less come to an end with the publication of Horkheimer's article on traditional and critical theory.

Between 1931 and 1938 the name of Sternheim became well known to the readers of the ZfS, because he wrote a large number of book reviews, besides organizing and coordinating research for *Autorität und Familie*. For the third part of *Autorität und Familie* he wrote a contribution about "The role of the Economic Motive in the Contemporary Family", and together with E. Schachtel he authored for the second section a large report about family- and authority-relations. Looking back on the close cooperation between Sternheim and Horkheimer, some differences also can be discovered. Sternheim is more practically oriented than his philosophically trained German colleagues. His reviews deal with subjects like unemployment and its social and psychological consequences; rationalization in industry; the role of trade unions in the different countries; the position of women in society and the way the attainments of the labour unions are monopolized by fascist dictatorship.

This more practical attitude is not surprising; Sternheim was associated with the labour movement and Horkheimer and his friends were not. But there is another, philosophically more interesting difference here. From the beginning Sternheim is as much aware of the positive aspects of the modernization of western society as of the negative side of this process. He never tends to identify modernization and liberation and neither is he inclined to interpret modernization only in a negative way. Leisure time, for example, is on the one hand a necessary condition for the emancipation of the working class. A labourer who has to work 10 to 12 hours neither has time for reading or sports nor for participating in political activities. However on the other hand leisure can also mean manipulation instead of emancipation. Press, radio and sports can serve both human ends and oppression. Sternheim never falls prey to the unjustified optimism which in the last resort was behind the traditional marxist paradigm nor to the sweeping pessimism, which was to become a characteristic feature of critical theory in the late thirties and forties.⁹

Sternheim and the Frankfurt-group shared not only a concern for the working-class and the necessity of social research. Andries Sternheim from the Netherlands must also have been impressed by the anti-fascist stand of his friends in Frankfurt. Here, in a country where the Nazis were becoming stronger and stronger, he found a group of leftist scholars who would never be ready to make any concession to the brutality of the street.

Already since the twenties Sternheim had felt worried about fascism. As a head of the documentation centre of the IFTU, he was well informed about the situation in Italy where Mussolini came to power in 1922. And he was very much aware of the imminent dangers for Holland and other countries when Hitler started to throw aside the democratic institutions which had been built up in the Weimar Republic. Of Jewish origin himself, like Horkheimer and many of his colleagues, he had as many personal as political reasons to be worried about what the future had in store.

To be united against fascism, however, on a personal, political and even scientific level, does not imply that there is also a theoretical consensus. Exactly here, at a point where their common fate was at stake, differences manifested themselves which are relevant for our understanding of fascism today. Here again, Sternheim is much nearer to Neumann and Kirchheimer than to the mainstream of critical theory.

On a political level, Sternheim's interpretation of the situation was more contextual and less general. The way fascism was seen by the Horkheimer-group is described by Dubiel as "apocalyptic".¹⁰ In their eyes a catastrophe of enormous consequences was closing in over Europe as a whole. And, at least in the case of Horkheimer, this general apocalyptic mood in some respects went hand in hand with an underestimation of the real dangers which were imminent. The reason is that his apocalyptic mood was based on a general pessimism concerning the development of European civilisation as a whole. That is why Horkheimer and Sternheim disagree on the subject of the coming world war. While Sternheim expresses his fear that a war is coming nearer and nearer, Horkheimer neglects this.

But there is more at stake here than only an appreciation of the political situation, which naturally looked different from a New York perspective than from a window in Amsterdam. Sternheim does not agree with the idea that fascism should be interpreted *generally as the political form of capitalism*. According to Pollock's view, supported by Horkheimer, capitalism reached its highest stage with national-socialism or fascism. This view, however, had two implications which were not shared by Sternheim. The first was a negative view of liberalism. The highest stage of capitalism also reveals the true, inhuman face of liberalism. Human rights, democracy and liberty: they are the masks which hide oppression by the bourgeoisie; and these things come into the open in fascism.

Of course Sternheim does not deny the class-character of quite a number of liberal institutions, but he is not ready to equate the two. Acquainted with the international situation, he already quite early discovers important features of fascist dictatorship. Fascists and Nazis, he observes, are in fact, usurping what labour by the struggle of its unions and parties has achieved. The party, for instance, appropriates the workers' leisure time. Whereas the way they want to organize their life, should more and more become a matter of the workers themselves, under fascist dictatorship this

becomes a matter of the state and the party. Here it is decided what the working class has to think, to do and to adore and so it would be nonsensical to say that the true face of liberalism is now coming into the open. On the contrary, an important achievement of liberalism – even if it was not yet the right of *everyone* – is denied and destroyed. To formulate this in other words: under fascism man's *negative liberty*, the right to decide oneself how to live and to be active, is eliminated.

For Sternheim the manipulation of freedom is not a general effect of the modernization process. It rather has to do with the specific way in which fascist politicians appropriate "the soul" or the culture of the worker, in Italy as well as in Germany. Here again, we discover a parallel with Neumann, who analyzed in *Behemoth* the way in which legal institutions were swept away by Nazi violence.¹¹

There is a second implication of the mainstream's theory of fascism which cannot be found in the work of Sternheim. From the idea that fascism is politically the highest stage of capitalism, it follows that Italy and Germany so to say walk in front. The other capitalist nations will follow when their society is ripe for it. Sternheim cannot be supposed to agree with this. Of course, he does not want to discriminate Italians or Germans by seeing them as potentially fascist or something like that. He is inclined to inquire into the specific reasons behind the Nazification of Germany. He is not blind to the danger that Hitler and Mussolini will overtake a number of other countries, but he is not ready to put all "capitalist" nations in the same basket.

According to Pollock and Horkheimer, the German events in the thirties reveal a tendency which is inherent in all industrialized nations in the West. According to Sternheim, who here again anticipates certain views of Neumann, some capitalist societies are more allergic to the fascist virus than others. So the theoretical differences were perhaps even deeper than Sternheim was aware of. Whereas in traditional German Marxism liberalism was a forerunner of fascism, we can find in the work of Sternheim an argument to put it the other way around: the better liberal institutions are rooted in a society, the less likely it is that fascist ideologies will succeed in getting hold of its members.¹²

Different Exemplary Situations

The differences which came up in exploring the congeniality between Sternheim and the Horkheimer group can be explained by introducing the concept of an exemplary situation.¹³ We define it as a situation which embodies a kind of "surplus-value" for a social philosopher or a social scientist. In his analyses of social problems it functions as an ideal example. To put it differently, it contains for him a large amount of normative force, directing his way of thinking in a number of respects and fixing at least partly the limitations by which his way of social analysis is restricted.

Thus, the famous analysis of Hobbes by MacPherson can be summarized by saying that for our seventeenth-century philosopher the market became an exemplary situation.¹⁴ Even for the way he depicts the state of nature, the market, as it developed in early capitalism, functions as a leading model which determines the way human behaviour is described and which of its features are singled out in order to become prominent.

In our opinion, the exemplary situation which directed the thought of the Horkheimer-group, was *the political revolution in Germany*. Their belief in the revolutionary role of the proletariat and their subsequent disillusion in this respect are to be understood against this background. After the First World War many leftist intellectuals, among them Lukács and Korsch, believed time was ripe for revolutionary change. KPD and USPD expected immediately after 1918 that Germany would follow the example of Russia.

These expectations, however, did not prove true. A long life was not granted to the workers' and soldiers' councils. And apart from that, many workers were more interested in general elections than in a revolution. The SPD succeeded in oppressing a number of local insurrections, happily supported, of course, by the rightist forces.

In retrospect we know that the belief in the revolutionary possibilities of the proletariat, as philosophically interpreted by Korsch and Lukács,¹⁵ was continually shrinking in the twenties and thirties. But such phenomena are not necessarily detrimental to the weight of an exemplary situation. It is now the unsuccessful revolution in Germany which exerts a strong influence on the way of thinking in Frankfurt. A distinction must be made between *the belief in the revolutionary force of the proletariat* on the one hand and its *philosophical articulation* on the other. After the belief had been given up, the philosophy of the proletariat as a conceptual system did not disappear. The same categories which previously – and here of course *Geschichte und Klassenbewusstsein* is crucial – expressed the hope for a radical change, are now used to characterize a society without revolutionary potential. Concepts like “totality”, “alienation” etc. are still part of the theoretical vocabulary although their meaning has changed quite dramatically. Dubiel characterizes the decay of the labour-movement in Weimar as the “Urszene”, one might translate: the prototypical situation to which the Frankfurt Circle refers again and again in its political thinking.¹⁶ We consider the unsuccessful German revolution as the real “Urszene” which is at stake here.

For Sternheim, however, a proletariat which is revolutionary or which has lost its revolutionary impetus, was not prototypical. He did not believe in the revolutionary force of the proletariat and never suffered from disappointment in this respect. Although he belonged to the left wing of the Dutch Social Democratic party (SDAP), Sternheim was a reformist to the bone. His exemplary situation is a working-class which has to fight for its legitimate rights in a political democracy. His proletariat is not supposed to liberate mankind in one revolutionary sweep. His workers are to be emancipated slowly and gradually by receiving the same rights which previously have been granted to the bourgeoisie. Such an exemplary situation is as concrete as a council of workers which calls for strikes and proclaims the beginning of a new era. It is nothing else than the daily work for the party and trade-union. The more they are successful, the easier it will be for the workers to vindicate their legitimate rights in democracy.

These diverging exemplary situations are of course closely related to the specific historical situations of the Netherlands and Germany. In this context two points only can be mentioned. The first is that The Netherlands was not a hodgepodge of different states like Germany. The process of nation-building here was much more advanced and owed a great deal to the common battle against Spain in the seventeenth century. Second, since 1848 constitutional power in The Netherlands lies with

parliament, and from the end of the 19th century onwards voting rights are given to more and more groups. So, in The Netherlands socialist struggles concern the exclusion of proletarian groups from a political democracy already in existence and the extension of democracy from the sphere of politics to economics. In Germany, on the other hand, all kinds of semifeudal and authoritarian powers have to be eliminated by the workers first in order to gain democratic power. The diverging exemplary situations of Sternheim and the Horkheimer-group are firmly rooted in different societies which generate different prospects.

From the perspective of these diverging exemplary situations the differences between Sternheim and the Frankfurt Circle described in the previous paragraph, become perfectly understandable. Our first point had to do with politics. In looking at the relation between Sternheim on the one hand and people like Horkheimer and Pollock on the other, we are faced by a paradoxical situation. The group which shares a philosophy of the proletariat – being poised as they were between hope and fear – has nothing to do with politics and is not associated with any party or labour union. The man who does not foster like expectations about the proletariat, is firmly rooted in the national and international labour movement. Can it be that the alienation and possibly revolutionary role of the proletariat were only real at a sufficient distance from social and political reality?

Be this as it may, the idea that the working class was deprived of its revolutionary potential, in our eyes was never substantiated by the famous research projects of the IFS. Certainly, it was made abundantly clear by empirical research that a considerable number of the members of leftist parties exhibited rather authoritarian patterns of behaviour. And it cannot be denied that the Institute quite early discovered the susceptibility also, of working-class circles for Nazi propaganda. But this of course did not prove that the workers had lost their revolutionary instinct. One can only lose something one has owned before and evidence for such ownership was never produced by the metaphysicians of the proletariat.

The second difference between Sternheim and Horkheimer becomes understandable as well. If the working-class is to be emancipated slowly and gradually, by the efforts of labour unions and socialist parties, modernization can neither be interpreted in a fully positive nor in a fully negative way. For example, without leisure time it will not be possible to provide workers with the cultural capital they need to acquire self-respect in a society, where they are discriminated against. But on the other hand this same leisure time can be abused by Nazis and fascists for reinforcing patterns of behaviour which block the emancipation of the workers. Modernization can mean the opening up of the treasures of culture for the masses. It can also lead to new and more sophisticated forms of exploitation. From the perspective of the exemplary situation of Sternheim, who managed a part of the empirical research of the Institute, the results could never mean that the working-class had lost its revolutionary impetus. From his perspective the results show clearly that emancipation, which is not only a matter of economy but of culture as well, still has a long way to go. The authoritarian patterns of behaviour laid bare by the Institute's research, showed that feudalism and capitalism did more than rule only society's economy and politics. They also had a firm grip on society's cultural capital. Their power had been internalized by large groups of the "lower" classes which would rather listen to priests and policemen than to labour-leaders or intellectuals.

In the third place, the diverging views of the Horkheimer-group and Sternheim on liberalism and fascism can be described as a consequence of their different exemplary situations. As long as the proletariat is the unique engine of social change, liberalism and fascism are not the same, but they can be supposed to have a great deal in common. Both are political stages of the capitalist mode of production which is responsible for the alienation of the proletariat. And both have to be overcome before the proletariat can appropriate its "human essence" – to use the idealist jargon of the orthodox marxist tradition.

Starting from the opposite idea of a gradual and perhaps interrupted process of emancipation of the working-class, yields a different picture. In this view the working-class is not only opposed to liberalism because of the way labour is exploited and oppressed. It also opposes liberalism because liberal rights are the prerogative of the bourgeoisie only. Instead of appropriating its human essence in general, it wants to obtain these very rights, from the rights to vote to the right of equal treatment before the law. Civil society is not just a mask which conceals all kinds of cruel oppression. It is the name for all kinds of cultural and political capital which were exclusively owned by the bourgeoisie until socialists of different colour began to contest these prerogatives and to extend the application of civil rights to the sphere of labour relations. For this reason Sternheim never considered fascism as the revelation of the truth of capitalism only. He is fully aware of the close relationship between fascism and certain industrial elites, but sees at the same time that fascism destroys the liberal institutions of civil society which are a necessary requirement for the emancipation of labour.

Two Illustrations

At the end of 1934 Sternheim tells Horkheimer that he wants to write an article for ZfS about "Leisure in totalitarian state". Horkheimer accepts and in Spring 1935 Sternheim sends in his article. Because all the energy of the Institute is concentrated on the publishing of *Autorität und Familie*, it takes a long time before a decision is taken. In October 1936 Sternheim gets a message from Horkheimer that his article has been rejected. The author is very disappointed. In January 1938 the article is published instead by the *Sociological Review*, a journal from the Institute of Sociology in London.¹⁷

The reasons of Horkheimer's refusal are not clear. Horkheimer wrote Sternheim that the article is not actual enough because the results of a recent congress about leisure time have not been taken into account. Sternheim himself thought that the article had been sent back because of its open criticism of the totalitarian state.¹⁸ And Löwenthal told Martin Jay that the essay "simply did not live up to the *Zeitschrift* standards, although it wasn't really a poor effort"¹⁹.

Be this as it may, the article perfectly illustrates the differences found so far. Sternheim does not deal with Germany only, but also with Italy, although he is not blind to the differences between the two. He does not believe that Germany should be a kind of forerunner in the general development of capitalism. And Sternheim further assumes that in pretotalitarian Germany the labour unions were actually championing the freedom of the individual by their battle for leisure. The way, Sternheim writes, leisure is organized by the Nazi-regime, means that there

can no longer be any private life for the worker. It is clear that in Sternheim's eyes national-socialism is not a kind of consequence of liberalism, but rather its negation. What Adorno and Horkheimer will describe some years later as a 'general feature of modern society' – a thesis so-called postmodernists today flirt with again – is observed by Sternheim as a specific trait of totalitarian society: "The cleverness of the totalitarian systems is that by means of a refined mechanism, psychological and moral enslavement is perceived as freedom".²⁰ Whether the article was refused in 1936 because of its deviant opinions, we do not know. It illustrates, however, unmistakably a tradition of thought which was different from the mainstream of critical theory.

That these differences were also philosophically relevant, becomes apparent from a critical letter Sternheim wrote Horkheimer in 1937.²¹ The articles Horkheimer and Marcuse published on critical theory in the *ZfS* are at stake here, and two points deserve our attention.

Sternheim criticizes Marcuse's idea that in future society the idea of happiness finds its complete realization. According to him more happiness means a higher form of culture, and a higher culture has as a consequence that human beings become more sensitive to suffering as well. Sternheim does not wish to postulate a complete break between society now and socialist society of the future. Neither can he therefore agree with Marcuse who writes that in future society philosophy will become devoid of an object.

Sternheim's criticism of critical theory here anticipates social philosophers of today like Lukes or Rosanvallon who discover the idea of "a transparent society"²² in the heart of marxist theory. In communist society of the future there are no institutions; everyone is associated with everyone else; laws are not required and philosophy has come to an end. Such a society is indeed transparent. One can look through it. It has the same reality as the so-called naïve art of a postcard or a painting by Henri Rousseau. Everything is there. Only a context lacks. The stream of time has come to a standstill.

Sternheim's second point of criticism concerns what one may call teleological remnants in the theories of Marcuse and Horkheimer. He very much doubts the idea that a rational society can be based on human nature. He does not believe that by a kind of innate inclination every human being can be supposed to strive for a better world. And he further rejects the assumption that class contradictions are going to aggravate.

In our opinion both points can be related to a Lukács-like philosophy of the proletariat which still exerts some influence on Horkheimer and Marcuse in the thirties. The drama of alienation and appropriation does indeed lead to the idea of a transparent society. When man's alienation has been overcome, all crucial problems of society have in principle been solved. And that the philosophy of *Geschichte und Klassenbewusstsein* is a teleological system, has been made sufficiently clear by many critics of Lukács.²³ Horkheimer and Marcuse were both critical of the philosophical godfather of Frankfurt, but this does not mean that his Hegelian teleology is completely absent from their work.

Conclusion: The Role of Socialist Intellectuals

In this article a great deal of attention has been given to the differences between Sternheim and the Horkheimer-group, because this counterbalances a too monolithic

image of the critical tradition. A paradigm is not just a common set of shared assumptions. It also represents the theoretical capital of a group of scholars who have come to power and whose work consists also of the vindication of their throne. A study of Sternheim actually confirms what Söllner concludes in his analysis of Neumann and Kirchheimer. Certain options were marginalized and put aside by the mainstream of critical theory, which now, from our retrospective at the end of the eighties, have become more important. From this study it even becomes apparent that there are some parallels between Sternheim and Neumann who lived in different places and apparently never had the opportunity to meet each other.

Of course the differences between Sternheim and the hard core of the Institute have to be understood against a background of shared assumptions: they all believed that in the battle between socialism and capitalism in the end socialism would win; socialism for them also meant planned production; the emancipation of labour was not possible as long as the means of production were privately owned; and, finally, reformists and more revolutionary marxists were convinced of the necessity of class struggle; socialism would only gain the victory after a long series of conflicts.

By way of conclusion, the differences we found can almost be summarized in one point, which may have some relevance for critical theorists today. To put this briefly: in the political theory of the proletariat, the relation between "the proletariat" and the "philosophers" or "critical theorists" themselves remains unclear. The concept of the proletariat is not a sociological, but a philosophical one. It does not describe certain observable features of the working class, but is part and parcel of a philosophical speculation in which this very class is endowed with some metaphysical attributes. Why exactly these attributes are singled out by the philosophers concerned, is a question we cannot go into here.²⁴ It may suffice to observe that here a mechanism of attribution is at work which is not explicitly justified. Why the philosophers concerned endow the workers with a crucial role in the history of mankind, is not explained. The concept of the proletariat is the result of a process of construction which enables the constructors not to reflect on the way they themselves are associated with or separated from working-class reality. In their books about the proletariat one looks in vain for a chapter about intellectuals, a chapter about the role they are supposed to play in the process of emancipation.²⁵

In this way the philosophy of the proletariat functions as a kind of legitimation for the philosophers and social scientists concerned. By serving the cause of the proletariat as it has been defined by themselves, they move automatically, so to say, in the correct direction. And here again it is hardly relevant whether they still believe in it or have already become sceptical about it. In both cases the legitimation process worked. In the first case, of course, because theory and research were supposed to serve the cause of the proletariat, which had not yet become culturally respectable in academic circles. And in the second case for the same reason. Now, the growing sceptical attitude legitimated a great quantity of research which deservedly became quite famous and culminated in research about "the authoritarian personality". As far as the theory is concerned however, a switch takes place in the second case. The more it becomes evident that not much can be expected of the working class, the clearer it is that now critical intellectuals themselves are left as the bearers of the torch of social change. Their role, which was concealed

behind the mask of the proletariat, now comes into the open. These critical theorists themselves bear exactly the same responsibility towards mankind as previously ascribed to the mysterious entity called proletariat.

It is clear from the foregoing that this process cannot be described adequately by saying that now, after the proletariat had been assimilated, intellectuals, lonely as they were, had to take over. The proletariat, as it was conceived by the theorists of the mainstream, had been their own invention from the very beginning. A proletariat in the sense of Lukács never existed except in the heads of the philosophers who had spent too much time in reading Hegel and not enough in looking around.

Looking back to Sternheim, who in contrast with Horkheimer, came from the working-class itself, we discover quite another picture. Already in his book on socialism in 1922, he states that emancipatory changes are not a matter of the working-class only. They concern also the growing and expanding group of technicians and intellectuals. In Sternheim's work the role of the working-class, which is naturally crucial, is not exclusive. In the ideology of Dutch social democracy of the twenties intellectuals as well are supposed to fight for a just society. Our conclusion can be that in Sternheim's work the borderline between the working-class and these new groups is not obliterated. The relation between the two is a matter of reflection and discussion. His exemplary situation – the working-class which had to be emancipated – remained at a distance from him. As a self-made man he may have been too much aware of the differences which had grown between his previous milieu and himself to be able to forget about them. From his work we learn that the willingness of an intellectual to take political responsibility for certain issues or certain groups does not have to lead to a complete identification. Solidarity and distance are not enemies; they are brother and sister.²⁶

NOTES

1. The diamond-worker Andries Sternheim (1890–1944) was head of the documentation department of the International Federation of Trade Unions (IFTU) from 1920 till 1931 and head of the Geneva branch of the Institut für Sozialforschung from 1931 till 1938. In that year he returned to Amsterdam. Sternheim and his wife were killed in Auschwitz in April 1944.

2. Alfons Söllner, *Geschichte und Herrschaft, Studien zur materialistischen Sozialwissenschaft 1929–1942* (Frankfurt, 1979).

3. Andries Sternheim, *Het Socialisme in zijn nieuwste Schakelingen* (Amsterdam, 1922), 92.

4. Frank van der Goes (1859–1939) was one of the twelve founders of the Dutch Social Democratic Labour Party (1894) and editor of the social-democratic monthly *De Nieuwe Tijd*. In 1899 he was appointed as a lecturer in socialist economics at the University of Amsterdam.

Hendrik de Man (1885–1953) was strongly connected with the Belgian Labour Movement. He taught social psychology in Darmstadt and Frankfurt a.M. and became famous for his book *Zur Psychologie des Sozialismus* (Jena, 1927).

5. Rolf Wiggershaus, *Die Frankfurter Schule, Geschichte, Theoretische Entwicklung, Politische Bedeutung* (München, Wien, 1986), 34.

6. Wiggershaus, o.c., 47.

7. Andries Sternheim, "Zum Problem der Freizeitgestaltung", *Zeitschrift für Sozialforschung*, 1 (1932), 336–355.

8. Max Horkheimer, "Traditionelle und kritische Theorie", *Zeitschrift für Sozialforschung*, 6 (1937), 245–294.

9. See Th. Adorno and M. Horkheimer, *Dialektik der Aufklärung* (Amsterdam, 1947).

10. Helmut Dubiel, *Wissenschaftsorganisation und politische Erfahrung, Studien zur frühen kritischen Theorie* (Frankfurt a.M., 1978), 62.

11. Franz Neumann, *Behemoth, Struktur und Praxis des National-Sozialismus* (Frankfurt a.M., 1977).
12. See Andries Sternheim, *Volkerenbond en Wereldvrede* (Amsterdam, 1920), 66, where he makes a sharp distinction between the political and the economic sphere and holds the opinion that bourgeois democracy is the absolute condition for the development of a socialist society.
13. Thomas Kuhn, "Second Thoughts on Paradigms", *The Essential Tension. Selected Studies in Scientific Tradition and Change* (Chicago and London, 1977), 293–319.
14. See Lolle Nauta, "Historical Roots of the Concept of Autonomy", *Praxis International*, 4, no. 4 (1985), 363–377. Cf. C.B. Macpherson, *The Political Theory of Possessive Individualism* (Oxford, 1962).
15. Karl Korsch, *Marxismus und Philosophie* (Frankfurt a.M./Köln, 1966). G. Lukács, *Geschichte und Klassenbewusstsein* (Darmstadt, 1968).
16. Helmut Dubiel, o.c., 118.
17. Andries Sternheim, "Leisure in the Totalitarian State", *Sociological Review*, 30 (1938), 29–48.
18. Sternheim in a letter to Horkheimer of April 12, 1938. Horkheimer-archives, Stadt-Universitätsbibliothek, Frankfurt a.M. See also: Theo Beckers, "Andries Sternheim en de studie van vrije tijd in de Frankfurter Schule", *Sociologisch Tijdschrift*, 12 (1986), 680–707.
19. Personal communication of Martin Jay in a letter to one of the authors of March 26, 1984.
20. Sternheim, o.c., 48.
21. Sternheim in a letter to Horkheimer of December 14, 1937. Horkheimer-archives, id.
22. Steven Lukes, *Marxism and Morality* (Oxford, 1985). Pierre Rosanvallon, *Le Capitalisme utopique, Critique de l'idéologie économique* (Paris, 1979).
23. For instance, by Habermas at several occasions.
24. See Dick Pels, *Macht of Eigendom, Een kwestie van intellectuele rivaliteit* (Amsterdam, 1987).
25. Alvin W. Gouldner, *The Future of Intellectuals and the Rise of the New Class* (New York, 1977).
26. We want to thank Sjaak Koenis, Tsjalling Swierstra and Arjo Vanderjagt for their comments on earlier drafts.