THE TROUBLE WITH INDIVIDUALISM: SOCIAL BEING IN LE GUIN AND DELANY

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CHAPTER 1
INTRODUCTION

Oscar Wilde, in his *The Soul of Man Under Socialism*, writes: "With the abolition of private property [...] we shall have true, beautiful, healthy individualism. Nobody will waste his life in accumulating things and the symbols for things. One will live. To live is the rarest thing in the world. Most people exist, that is all" (1046). As he expounds, private property has impeded the development of the "great actual individualism latent and potential in mankind" by presenting a false individualism contingent on property ownership that asserts itself by "confusing a man with what he possesses" (1045). Thus, Wilde, looking optimistically forward to a future where socialism eclipses capitalism, sees this shift in economic systems as a means to radically restructure the life of the individual in a way that allows unfettered personal development. The abolition of private property, he assumes, would lead to this freedom because it would eliminate poverty, thus freeing the poor from their slavery to subsistence, and wealth, thus freeing the wealthy from the all-consuming obligations of accruing and maintaining it. The production of everything "useful" would be done by the "state," which would carry out all "unintellectual [...] monotonous, dull labour" through the utilization of technology (1050-1). The removal of private property, coupled with the usage of machines to perform *all*
undesirable manual labor, would provide for every individual a life of "making beautiful things, or reading beautiful things, or simply contemplating the world with admiration and delight," a life that allows humanity to fulfill its true purpose (1051). For Wilde, "art is individualism," and every man would be free to become an artist, producing "solely for his own pleasure" (1051-2). The development, then, of Wilde's latent "great actual individualism" is contingent upon the individual's ability to produce without any obligations to his society whatsoever. He asserts, "An individual who has to make things for the use of others, and with reference to their wants and wishes, does not work with interest, and consequently cannot put into his work what is best in him" (1052). Thus, the socialization of the production of necessity created by the abolition of private property allows for the complete privatization of creative production. Freed from commercial obligations, the individual's production is severed from the realm of the social entirely.

Wilde admits that his socialist vision is ultimately "Utopian," but, as he rightly assesses: "Progress is the realisation of Utopias" (1051). Utopian visions provide a necessary function in the process of development; humanity cannot move beyond what it is without first recognizing the presence of an alternative. As Fredric Jameson notes, the hope of any radical social change is reliant upon "the conception of systemic otherness, of an alternative society, which only the idea of utopia seems to keep alive" (36). Socialism, as it is presented here by Wilde, is such an attempt at the creation of such a "systemic otherness." Wilde begins with what Jameson refers to as a "root of all evil" diagnosis (36); he identifies private property as this root and then discusses the ways in which its elimination will cure social pathologies. This is an approach that is seemingly
true to the vision of Karl Marx himself, who was dedicated to the belief that material conditions determine all other aspects of human life. As he states in *The German Ideology*: "As individuals express their life, so they are. What they are, therefore, coincides with their production, both with what they produce and with how they produce. The nature of individuals thus depends on the material conditions determining their production" (150). Thus, Wilde's utopian project is, in this sense, true to Marxian analysis; it begins with the assumption that the individual is a product of his material environment and that a change in material conditions is the only means by which the fundamental existence of the individual may be altered.

Wilde's primary goal of self-guided production for the individual also finds parallels at the heart of Marxian philosophy. As Terry Eagleton claims, Marx's hope for socialism was the creation of a society in which "men and women would be allowed to flourish as radical ends in themselves," a society in which individual production need not have "utilitarian justification" but could be "an exercise of self-fulfilling energy for the mere sake of it" (20-1). Thus, Marx claims that forced labor alienates man from himself because it is not "his own spontaneous activity" and is therefore not part of his "essential being" (326-7). Marx, too, like Wilde, looked to the future of automation to relieve the human race of the burden of performing undesirable labor (Eagleton 21). For Marx, the less time spent providing for the realm of necessity meant more time for the true development of humanity: "[T]he realm of freedom actually begins only where labour which is determined by necessity and mundane consideration ceases" (441). Socialized control of technology, for both Marx and Wilde, would allow for the employment of
these means of production to serve the necessity of the whole, allowing a broader "realm of freedom" for all individuals in which they could fully develop as human beings.

Wilde then, in many ways, puts forth a socialist vision that incorporates much of Marx's own thought. However, there is one important aspect of the creation of a socialist "systemic otherness" that Wilde fails to consider, an aspect that is arguably one of the most crucial dimensions of Marxist philosophy. While the ultimate end for both Marx and Wilde is a social order that eliminates forced labor and allows the individual complete control of his own production, Wilde assumes the presence of a space of individualism that is wholly separate from the social realm, while Marx identifies such a space as a fallacious construction that leads to the alienation of man from his nature as a social being. As he maintains in the *Economic and Philosophical Manuscripts*, "It is above all necessary to avoid once more establishing 'society' as an abstraction over against the individual. The individual is the social being" (350). As Marx's usage of the words "once more" suggests, this notion of division between the individual and social being is an essential element of the current economic system. As Eagleton notes, "The history of capitalism is the history of possessive individualism, in which each self-owning human being is locked off from others in his solipsistic space" (45).

It is this history that Marx seeks to move beyond but in which Wilde remains mired. In discussing the socialization of production, Wilde presents the relationship between the individual and society as a dichotomy: "The state is to make what is useful. The individual is to make what is beautiful" (1050). Instead of addressing the state as a composition of individuals, Wilde presents it as an abstract entity that functions
separately from the lives of its individual members. While this monolithic entity works silently in the background to provide for the realm of necessity, the individual will be unfettered from all concern for the material well-being of himself and others. This representation of the state echoes Marx's interpretation of its role in a capitalist society, wherein the "contradiction between the interest of the individual and that of the community the latter takes an independent form as the State, divorced from the real interests of individual and community, and at the same time as an illusory communal life." The state, as an entity, is representative of the false separation between the individual and her society, obscuring the real "mutual interdependence of the individuals among whom the labour is divided" (160). For, despite Wilde's utopian longing for complete automation, the realm of necessity cannot be entirely abandoned. Even if machines were capable of performing every arduous task, which they likely never will be, the very assembly and maintenance of those machines would not fit with Wilde's notion of every individual as pure artist. Labor will still exist; necessities will still have to be met, and in his desire to ignore the realm of necessity entirely, Wilde continues the capitalist project of obscuring the real material interdependence that exists between interconnected members of a community.

Furthermore, Wilde's assumption that free individual production must include a solipsistic retreat is in stark contrast to Marx's own philosophy. Wilde's assertion that production, in order to be representative of the individual, must not be for "the use of others" or dependent upon "the wants and wishes" of others reinforces the dichotomy between the individual and the social. Just as he assumes that the individual must be
divorced from the realm of necessity, he assumes that the social must be divorced from
the realm of artistic production. In contrast, Marx argues that all production, even that
which does not bring one into direct connection with one's society, is of a social nature.
As he notes, even when performing seemingly autonomous acts of production, "I am still
socially active because I am active as a man [...] My own existence is social activity.
Therefore what I create from myself I create for society, conscious of myself as a social
being" (350). For Marx, while every individual is unique, he is just as much a social
being, defined by an intrinsic connection to the rest of his species. Thus, his production
expresses not only his own unique qualities but acts also as a representation of the
"totality of vital human expression" (351). Wilde's conception of individual production is
seemingly an extension of the notion of private property; it reinforces the notion of
"possessive individualism" that is the bulwark of capitalist ideology. Wilde's artist works
by himself and for himself, with no realization of himself as a social being.

Wilde, then, identifies private property as the "root of all evil" and works from
its elimination to establish the "systemic otherness" of a socialist utopia. However, even
with his elimination of private property, he fails to address the reconstruction of social
relations that is at the heart of Marxist theory. Thus, his solutions are hollow. While the
release of the individual from the burden of arduous physical labor is an important part of
the socialist project, his reliance on the abstract entity of the state and technical
advancements to wholly assume the responsibility of the provision of necessities ignores
the reality of interdependence and the importance of the cooperation of individuals.
While eliminating forced labor and allowing for the free creative production of the
individual is of great importance, without an understanding of the individual as a social being, this production is still a means of alienation. It still serves to alienate the individual from his connection to humanity, encouraging him to view his intellectual property as private and himself as an autonomous being. This is ultimately detrimental to any rethinking of social construction. While a change in material conditions may be necessary, without the requisite move to an understanding of ourselves as interconnected beings with a common identity, there will never be a motivation for such change. Private property as material expression and the ideology of competitive individual autonomy are mutually constitutive, and without first challenging the latter, the elimination of the former can have no depth.

The following chapters will examine four works of speculative fiction that each create a more complete "systemic otherness," one that presents not only an alternative vision of the role of the individual in society but one that challenges the very definition of the "individual" as an entity. As Bertell Ollman notes in his study of the Marxian dialectical method, "[I]t is a matter of where and how one draws boundaries and establishes units [...] in which to think about the world. The assumption is that while the qualities we perceive with our five senses actually exist as parts of nature, the conceptual distinctions that tell us where one thing ends and the next one begins [...] are social and mental constructs" (11-2). The works studied here discuss the concept of the individual not as an assumed natural unit but as one that is socially and mentally constructed; they challenge the assumptions concerning where the individual ends and the social begins, exploring Marx's conception of the "social being" using this dialectical method. In The
*Dispossessed*, Ursula K. Le Guin examines production and labor as essential bonds between the individual and her society, presenting a way in which a society might move beyond alienated labor not by eliminating labor but by embracing it as an essential part of one's social being. Working from the Marxist notion that all production is social, Le Guin also suggests that there is no true separation between production that is traditionally viewed as "individual" and that which is overtly social, presenting a dialectical understanding that views them not as a dichotomy but as two overlapping, interconnected parts of the whole of labor relationships. In her *The Left Hand of Darkness*, Le Guin approaches the dialectical relationship of the individual/social being in the context of political and cultural systems, presenting a society that focuses on the supremacy of the individual as better able to represent human solidarity than one which undermines the individual in the service of an imagined common good. Difference, in this text, is presented as a bond rather than a means of division, suggesting that the essence of the individual is simultaneously unique and communal. Samuel R. Delany, in *Stars in My Pocket Like Grains of Sand*, challenges the supremacy of the traditional family unit as a means to organize social life, suggesting that the presence of the institution of the family serves as a means to isolate the individual from her society and undermines the importance of communal identity. He presents an alternative vision of a domestic unit that does not include this separation but serves as a further means to connect the individual to her society. In discussing these units of "private" life, the text utilizes them as representations of broader systems of thought, addressing them as microcosms of the dialectical relationship of the individual/social being. In the final chapter, Delany's
Trouble on Triton will be discussed, a novel that utilizes its protagonist to represent the reader's disorientation when faced with "systemic otherness." Delany further develops Le Guin's concept of unity through difference, presenting a society that has taken an appreciation of difference as its cultural foundation. His protagonist, an alien from a world more like the reader's own, is incapable of abandoning the individual/social dichotomy and thus struggles to establish an individual identity in a society in which there is no barrier between self-fulfillment and communal acceptance, where the individual and the social being are not autonomous units in conflict but are viewed as interconnected parts of a decentered totality. All these works present a view of the individual and the social as dialectically related, applying the Marxian understanding of the social being to economics, politics, religion, and psychology. Thus, these works more effectively represent the core of Marxian philosophy than does Wilde's self-described socialist utopia.

In his eleventh theses on Feuerbach, Marx states: "The philosophers have only interpreted the world, in various ways; the point, however, is to change it" (145). As Drew Milne rather wryly notes, "In a cruel turn on Marx's thesis of Feuerbach, it would seem that Marxists have thus far failed to change the world; the point now is to interpret this failure" (18). To hazard one interpretation, it may be that the focus on Marx's materialism often overshadows the importance of his philosophy of human relations. This creates shallow utopian visions which fail to realize that the essential connection between the individual and her social being must be established in conjunction with a shift in material conditions. While the visions of the future that will be presented here are not all
predicated upon the elimination of private property or the automation of manual labor, they represent an understanding of dialectical relationships and the social being lost to many modern interpretations of Marxism.
Ursula K. Le Guin, in her work of speculative fiction *The Dispossessed*, presents the reader with the moon world Anarres which is home to a society built on the principles of decentralized control and the absence of private property. Work assignments are therefore voluntary; the societal workload is accomplished by a combination of people seeking job postings that suit their particular interests and the assignment, at random, of other labor projects. There are no financial gains to be had; all production, from writing symphonies to mining, is driven by two primary motivations: the individual joy derived from working and a sense of social responsibility. As explained by Le Guin's protagonist, Shevek, the two motivations are ultimately inseparable because the individual has an integral connection to his society. As he explains to a friend: "We don't leave Anarres because we are Anarres [...] You might like to try being somebody else to see what it's like, but you can't" (45). However, despite his strong commitment to the moral foundations of his society, Shevek struggles throughout the novel to reconcile these two components of himself; he finds it hard to be both Shevek and Anarres. While he ascribes to the fundamental belief that work is "the lasting pleasure of life" (150), Shevek struggles to find joy and fulfillment in work he considers menial. He also confronts conflict in the definition of what is "socially useful" work and struggles within a society that he feels has become too pragmatic and utilitarian. In examining Shevek's attempt to integrate his two seemingly inimical selves, we will discuss the distinction between
alienated and non-alienated labor and the role of intellectual production in society, arguing throughout that as Shevek's relationship to labor and production becomes clear, it leads him back to an understanding of himself as a social being, a recognition that he is both Shevek and Anarres.

On the world of Anarres, Le Guin creates a society in which work is considered to be not a burden but a fundamental and pleasurable part of life. In Pravic, the language of the Anarresti, the same word is used for work and play (92). This linguistic anomaly is based on the teachings of Odo, the founder and philosophical architect of Anarresti society, whose writing Shevek quotes: "A child free from the guilt of ownership and the burden of economic competition will grow up with the will to do what needs doing and the capacity for joy in doing it" (247). Thus, the beliefs that shape Anarresti society are antithetical to those of capitalist societies. Instead of assuming economic competition and the acquisition of private property to be requisite motivating factors in the accomplishment of necessary societal functions, the philosophy embraced by the Anarresti assumes instead that these factors stifle the natural development of an innate will to work in the individual. In explaining to a family on the capitalist world of Urras why the people of Anarres volunteer to do difficult manual labor, Shevek elucidates the role of this individual will in society: "[W]ork is done for work's sake. It is the lasting pleasure of life. The private conscience knows that. And also the social conscience, the opinion of one's neighbors. There is no other reward [...] One's own pleasure, and the respect of one's fellows" (150). Thus, the individual will to work is bolstered by a sense of social responsibility. However, Shevek discovers as a young man that the work
prescribed by one's individual will and that prescribed by the societal will may not be congruous.

Just as Shevek is beginning his individual studies in physics, he is called to work on a large-scale labor project, tasked, with thousands of others, with the replanting of a forest destroyed by draught in an area known as "the Dust." He immediately regrets his decision to accept the assignment. He spends his days shoveling in the heat and the dust in "silent resentment and exhaustion," plagued by the sense that his intellectual talent is being uselessly squandered, arguing to himself that people who have an aptitude in "centrally functional fields such as physics" should not be asked to do such physically demanding and mentally impoverished work (48). In a society based on the philosophical understanding that work is meant to bring joy, Shevek questions the morality of taking an assignment that one finds detestable; certainly his misery is not harmonious with the Pravic linguistic conception of work/play. Thus, Shevek concludes of himself: "He was not working. He was being worked" (48-9).

This distinction, so succinctly made by Shevek, is one that parallels that of Marx's notion of alienated labor. Marx begins with a belief that is very similar to that espoused by Le Guin's Odo, assuming that the desire to "do what needs doing," or, in Marx's terms, the "practical creation of an objective world, the fashioning of inorganic nature" (Manuscripts 328-9), is an innate human characteristic. Expanding from this belief, Marx defines alienated labor as that which does not belong to his [the worker's] essential being; that he therefore does not confirm himself in his work, but denies himself, feels miserable and
not happy [...] His labour is therefore not voluntary but forced, it is *forced labour*. It is therefore not the satisfaction of a need but a mere *means* to satisfy needs outside itself. (326)

Both in the Odonian conception of work/play and in the Marxist notion of work as the "vital activity" of human beings (328), there is an assumption that work should be done of one's own volition, for one's own satisfaction and fulfillment. As Shevek was denying himself the pursuit of his true passion (physics) and derived no fulfillment from the tree-planting project, it was alienated labor. In the capitalist system, the motivation to perform alienated labor is clear. One must work to provide oneself with both necessities and the things one desires, and this, for most, requires the selling of one's labor. However, the philosophical foundations of Anarres were established to remove the factors that force one to labor against one's will. It leads the reader to question the way in which Anarresti society in praxis failed the young Shevek in this respect, why one of its citizens would feel as though he were "being worked."

The answer lies in what Shevek referred to as the "social conscience," what his friend Bedap cynically labels "the unadmitted, inadmissible government that rules the Odonian society" (165). As Shevek further explains later, in a society without structural law, a law of public opinion emerges, creating a set of norms that have dire consequences if disobeyed. That the consequences are not physical, i.e. starvation or corporeal harm, but psychological does not lessen their impact. Shevek makes explicit how this structure of public opinion leads to alienated labor: "[W]e're ashamed to say we've refused a posting [...] the social conscience completely dominates the individual conscience [...]"
We fear being outcast, being called lazy, dysfunctional, egoizing. We fear our neighbor's opinion more than we respect our own freedom of choice" (330). Thus, in a society meant to prize both the individual and social will, the two can become antagonistic. It is from this antagonism that alienated labor emerges in Anarresti society; Shevek was working not for himself but for an "other," the specter of the social will. As Marx explains, if a worker is not master of his own labor, then "another man—alien, hostile, powerful, and independent of him—is its master. If he relates his to own activity as unfree activity, then he relates to it as activity in the service, under the rule, coercion and yoke of another man" (Manuscripts 331). Marx here was referring to the appropriation of the worker's labor by the owners of the means of production, but in a society without ownership, Shevek is alienated not from a certain class of Anarresti but from his society as whole. As a young man, he is most pleased when he is left alone to do physics in solitude, when he can make his "inward isolation" a tangible reality (106). He thinks of himself: "He was born to be alone, a damn cold intellectual, an egoist" (158). It is this estrangement, that of Shevek from his society, that leads to a break down in the Odonian philosophy of the oneness of the individual and social being. Shevek's alienation from his society, the fracture of his individual and social selves, leads to alienated labor; labor for his society confronts him as labor in the service of an alien being, something outside of himself.

It is only when Shevek comes to an understanding of himself as a social being that he ceases to be alienated from his labor. As Shevek matures as an individual, his relationship to his society matures as well. He has begun his career as a physics professor and a relationship with his partner Takver, with whom he had a child, when a devastating
draught seizes Anarres. His partner, a biologist, is sent to a remote area for a posting in her field. Shevek contemplates either going with Takver, where he would have no work to do, but would be with her and the baby, or staying at the university to continue to do physics. In the end, Shevek does not choose either. He instead volunteers for a "famine-prevention posting" in the desert-like area of Anarres that he despised so much as a young man. This time, he does not feel coerced but feels as though he is making the decision freely. The night before he leaves for the distant posting, his hope for his child is "that as long as she lives, Sadik will love her sisters and brothers as well, as joyfully, as I do now tonight" (250-1). He says of Takver and himself: "Society was not against them. It was for them; with them; it was them" (258). This change in Shevek points to his acceptance of the Odonian notion of the "social being," he understands the dualistic nature of his being as he had not as a young man. He realizes that any personal fulfillment that he would achieve through either his intellectual studies or his family would be meaningless in the context of a suffering society. Looking around at the response to the draught by his fellow Anarresti, Shevek sees Odonian philosophy in action: "There was an undercurrent of joy [...] There was a lightheartedness at work however hard the work [...] The old tag of 'solidarity' had come alive again. There is an exhilaration in finding that the bond is stronger, after all, than all that tries the bond" (247). This work, essential for the survival of the whole, is the embodiment of the work/play signifier. The joy, the self-fulfillment, that Shevek could not find previously in work he found beneath his intellect, he found in embracing "solidarity." He discovers that the bond that ties him to his fellow Anarresti proves to be stronger than the antagonism
that had alienated him; no longer alienated from his social being, he is no longer alienated from labor that benefits society.

The large-scale labor projects in which Shevek participates consist of socially necessary work, work that must be done to allow for the survival of his world. However, this work could be easily classified as undesirable; it is difficult, monotonous manual labor. Herbert Marcuse, in his *Eros and Civilization*, points out that this kind of labor has always been necessary to allow for the material development of civilization. He acknowledges, like Marx, that the bulk of the work that has built modern society "was chiefly labor, alienated labor, painful and miserable—and still is. The performance of such work hardly gratifies *individual* needs and inclinations" (85). While Marcuse allows that much of this pain and misery has been a product of the repressive "hierarchical system of labor" under capitalism (90), he also assumes an ahistorical relationship of man to labor, a biological aversion of the former to the latter. He asserts: "The realm of necessity, of labor, is one of unfreedom because the human existence in this realm is determined by objectives and functions that are not its own and that do not allow for the free play of human faculties and desires" (195). Marcuse finds hope for society not in the reorganization of labor but in its elimination; the ultimate goal being "total automation" that would release human beings from the burden of labor (156), allowing for "the development of individuality *outside* the inevitably repressive work-world" (195).

In contrast, Shevek, recognizing himself as a social being, does not view socially necessary labor as "unfreedom" but as part of a greater sense of freedom. As he explains to Tirin: "[It is] our common nature to be Odonians, responsible to one another. And that
responsibility is our freedom. To avoid it, would be to lose our freedom" (45). Labor for the betterment of the society is just one way in which this responsibility is carried out, thus it is an avenue for greater freedom and, therefore, a means of individual fulfillment. Marcuse calls for the elimination of undesirable work; Le Guin suggests a way in which this same work may be viewed as desirable. By linking personal freedom with social responsibility, the Anarresti overcome what Marcuse assumes to be a biological aversion to manual labor; they are able to find joy in it because it is for the betterment of the community, and, therefore, for themselves as social beings. This understanding involves a shift in what Marcuse labels the performance principle. He defines performance principle as "the prevailing historical form of the reality principle" (35), the latter being the necessary restraint on the pleasure principle that allows man to function in society by teaching him to delay gratification and sublimate his more destructive or disruptive desires (13). While Marcuse views the reality principle as necessary repression, he views the performance principle as surplus-repression, "the additional controls arising from specific institutions of domination" (37). As Marcuse rightly assesses, under the performance principle of the capitalist system, "society is stratified according to the competitive economic performances of its members," and every human being must then conform his desires to "an acquisitive and antagonistic society" (44-5). Thus, the performance principle in a capitalist society employs surplus-repression that is based on economic competition which binds the individual to alienated labor. Marcuse does not consider the possible presence of a constructive performance principle, an historical representation of the reality principle that actually ameliorates the relationship of man to
labor. However, what Marcuse deems as surplus-repression may, in the right conditions, be viewed as the responsibility of which Shevek spoke, a responsibility that breeds greater personal freedom.

In the absence of capitalist greed and conflict, the individual is faced with a new "reality," one in which she is not alienated from her labor, and work may cease to be repressive. As was earlier stated, the Anarresti society is built on the assumption of an innate human will to work; however, as we saw of Shevek, that will to work alone may narrow the definition of what type of production is self-fulfilling, limiting it to only those labors that allow the "free play of human faculties and desires." Shevek, at first, driven by his individual conscience alone, wanted only to do physics. In a utopia designed by Marcuse, he would be free to do just that; the young Shevek who found the labor projects detestable would be representative of the natural state of man. However, Shevek's limited view of labor does not remain so because his personal desires conform to the performance principle of Anarresti society, and this conformity allows him a greater means of self-fulfillment. Instead of further separating him from his individuality, as Marcuse assumes is the necessary result of any performance principle, the Anarresti performance principle allows Shevek instead to realize new facets of his own being. As Shevek's friend Bedap exclaims, "Nobody's born an Odonian any more than he's born civilized!" (168). This becoming of an Odonian, a being appreciative of the social totality, is not innate but is taught; it involves the shaping of a performance principle radically different from that in a capitalist society.
As John Dewey once eloquently remarked, "We are born organic beings associated with others, but we are not born members of a community" (1040). We must consciously shape our society, and thus, a performance principle will always exist. The reality principle makes us civilized; the performance principle shapes the nature of that civilization. The reality principle, of its essence, involves the repression of certain individual desires, but as Marcuse notes, these restrictions "have become the privilege and distinction of man which enabled him to transform the blind necessity of the fulfillment of want into desired gratification" (38). Thus, the reality principle functions to humanize the individual. In a like manner, the performance principle of Anarresti society seeks to further humanize by reinforcing the bond between the individual and, in Marxian terms, his "species-being" (Manuscripts 329). Marcuse does not see that the act of the fulfillment of want, the "realm of necessity," can provide any gratification of its own. However, as Shevek's transformation shows, this may not be the case. The performance principle on Anarres does consist of "additional controls;" it shapes the individual will to include a sense of social responsibility. This excess repression, however, works for the betterment of the individual by strengthening the bond with her species-being, allowing her a fuller understanding of her own humanity. In doing so, it works to eliminate the presence of alienated labor, not by eliminating labor, but by eliminating the "estrangement of man from man" that results from the capitalist performance principle [emphasis removed] (330). The focus of the Anarresti society to break down the false dichotomy of the individual/social being runs parallel to the Anarresti work/play
signifier. Just as there is no innate separation between the individual and the social being, there is no such division between individual desire and the realm of social necessity.

We have focused thus far on the ways in which Shevek modified his individual conscience to fit that of the social will. However, as was earlier referenced, there is a danger in a society that prizes social responsibility of the social conscience coming to completely dominate the individual conscience, a result counterintuitive to the ideological foundations of Anarres. As Bedap notes, the Odonian philosophy, while it does prize the social totality, has at its core "the freedom of invention and initiative" (176). Shevek says that in the Odonian philosophy, the individual has "the power of moral choice—the power of change, the essential function of life" (333). However, both Shevek and Bedap realize that this ideal has been compromised by the reality of their society, that creative production and new ideas have been stifled by a rigid structure of public opinion. While Shevek comes to understand himself as a social being, he does not cease to be critical of his beloved world. He recognizes the failure of his society to uphold its commitments to individual initiative, thus creating another conflict between Shevek's individual and social selves.

As Bedap notes, education on Anarresti has become "rigid, moralistic, authoritarian" (168). Shevek encounters the limits of the Anarresti educational system at an early age. During an educational session called "Speaking-and-Listening," Shevek as a young child is already thinking as a physicist. In attempting to share his intellectual musings with the group, he is reprimanded by the instructor, who tells him: "Speech is sharing—a cooperative art. You're not sharing, merely egoizing." Because the other
students were not able to understand him, Shevek's presence was labeled "disruptive" and was assumed to serve no societal function (28-9). This tension between Shevek and his society, established early, serves as the foundation for his later feelings of alienation. The idea that his intellectual pursuits are "egoizing," merely selfish and without social value, is reinforced throughout Shevek's life. As Bedap notes, this feeling is a product of an essential failure in Anarresti society: "We've gone right back to barbarism. If it's new, run away from it; if you can't eat it, throw it away!" (176). The definition of what is socially useful has become so narrowed in Anarresti society that new thought and creative production are classified as selfish pursuits. While the aforementioned draught functioned to increase the sense of solidarity that Shevek was missing in his life, it also functioned to reinforce this rigid utilitarian view that maintained the separation between Shevek and his society. Shevek is told by Sabul, the man who runs the physics department at his university, that he needs to abandon his studies in the face of the natural disaster, claiming in the most patronizing of fashions that: "What a boy thinks he likes to do isn't always what society needs from him." In attempting to defend his work as a "centrally functional activity," Shevek is told that it "doesn't get bread into people's mouths [...] We've got to gear toward practicality" (265). Upon recognizing himself as a social being, Shevek is able to close the gap between his individual and social selves. However, while this helps Shevek to understand his role in society while he is performing work of obvious social utility, like the labor projects, he continues to question the place of the work that gives him intellectual fulfillment in a society that seems to misunderstand and resent it. He understands his role as a social being, as well as his unique individuality, but
the structure of his society makes it difficult for him to understand how the two function as one.

Shevek does set aside his physics during the draught, taking the assignment in "the Dust" to help ensure his world's survival. However, he does not abandon his intellectual pursuits, does not embrace the close-minded practicality that is increasingly shaping his society. Despite Shevek's partial reconciliation between his individual and social selves, he becomes increasingly convinced that his individual pursuits are incompatible with his social surroundings on Anarres. Recognizing the importance of his work, Shevek leaves Anarres for the capitalist world of Urras, where correspondence has already assured him a place for his ideas. As Shevek explains to a woman on Urras, he came there "for the sake of the idea. To learn, to teach, to share in the idea. On Anarres [...] I could not finish my work [...] And even if I had been able to finish it, they did not want, they saw no use in it" (345). Shevek initially finds the intellectual atmosphere that he so desires in the highly developed world of Urras. He is greeted as a colleague by other respected scientists, encouraged to work, and given classes to teach. However, Shevek soon finds that the profit motive has tainted everything on Urras and that he has only been received by the government because it wishes to acquire ownership of Shevek's primary theory in order to obtain a monopoly on an advanced form of space travel that Urras could then use for its own military and economic aggrandizement (333-4). While he seeks out Urras as a place to share his ideas, he finds the world bereft of any such concept. He says of Urras, "There is nothing you can do that profit does not enter into, and fear of loss, and the wish for power [...] You cannot act like a brother to other people,
you must manipulate them, or command them, or obey them, or trick them" (346).

Shevek realizes that the work he finds personally fulfilling on Anarres is meaningless when carried on in such an environment. By fleeing to the privatized world of Urras, Shevek attempts to take possession of his idea, and this possession leads to corruption. As he explains before returning to Anarres:

[T]he ideas in my head aren't the only ones important to me. My society is also an idea. I was made by it. An idea of freedom, of change, of human solidarity, an important idea. And though I was very stupid I saw at last that by pursuing the one, the physics, I am betraying the other. I am letting the propertarians [capitalists] buy the truth from me. (345)

In leaving Anarres with his scientific discovery, Shevek is assuming an ownership that runs counter to his belief in "human solidarity." While Shevek never cares for the money he is given on Urras, he realizes that his very presence there makes him complicit in the workings of the capitalist society that he so despises.

It is only after experiencing life on a world not guided by the Odonian principles of social responsibility and solidarity that he recognizes the true meaning of such principles. He realizes that his decision to leave Anarres is based on a false premise. He assumes prior to leaving Anarres that his society's unwillingness to accept his intellectual pursuits means that those pursuits are somehow severed from his social being; however, he comes to realize that "his radical and unqualified will to create was, in Odonian terms, its own justification. His sense of primary responsibility towards his work did not cut him off from his fellows, from his society, as he had thought. It engaged him with them
absolutely" (334). Shevek comes to understand that his individual drive to work, to pursue his "vital activity," is part of himself as a social being. His understanding echoes the words of Marx:

"[E]ven if I am active in the field of science [...] an activity that I am seldom able to perform in direct association with other men—I am still socially active because I am active as a man [...] My own existence is social activity. Therefore what I create from myself I create for society, conscious of myself as a social being." (Manuscripts 350)

Shevek now understands the root of his society's failure: the assumption that there is such a thing as a truly individual pursuit. In its very conception of "egoizing," Anarres is betraying Odonian principles. Shevek realizes that intellectual production, though it may not have an apparent societal connection, is just as essential to an understanding of the social being as work that is clearly of a social nature. Shevek's work in physics is just as much a social activity as his work in the group labor projects because it is part of himself as a social being and is therefore part of his society. Therefore, in removing his intellectual production to a world of privatization, Shevek robs it of an essential element of its character, and it becomes meaningless. In attempting to remove his production from the social realm, he comes to understand that he is just as much Anarres as he is Shevek; his attempt to abandon his society is ultimately an attempt to separate two inextricable elements. It is with this understanding that Shevek returns to Anarres in a state of "clear, unmixed happiness" (386), ready to embrace his essential connection with and commitment to the shaping of his society.
The Dispossessed presents a protagonist that undergoes a meaningful evolution in his relationship to labor and production; this evolution leads him to an understanding of himself as a social being, a being that is representative of "the ideal totality, the subjective existence of thought and experienced society itself" (Manuscripts 351). The social obligations that he at first finds demeaning become a source of joy for him when he truly feels solidarity with his society, and the intellectual production that he initially felt alienated him from his society he comes to view as just one more facet of social production. Shevek comes to understand that there is no innate separation between the individual joy derived from working and one's sense of social responsibility; it is through this understanding of the Odonian linguistic conception of work/play that Shevek comes to represent the Marxian philosophical conception of the individual/social. Thus, it is through his shifting and conflictual relationship with labor and production that Shevek recognizes himself as part of a greater humanity. This movement towards a totality that we view throughout The Dispossessed is important not only for its result but for the process; the change that Shevek undergoes is essential to highlight the necessity of viewing the individual not as a discrete unit but as defined by her role in complex and fluctuating relations. As Bertell Ollman notes in his study of Marxian dialectics: "Since change in anything only takes place in and through a complex interaction between closely related elements, treating change as intrinsic to what anything is requires that we treat the interaction through which it occurs in the same way" (31). Shevek's transformation presents a microcosmic view of the importance of dialectical thinking in understanding the individual as intrinsically linked to the productive forces of her society. Because his
realization of himself as a social being is only possible through his interaction with the structure of labor and production in his society, he is presented not as a static, independent element but as one interconnected element in a complex system of relations, an understanding that may function as an important alternative to the capitalist assumptions concerning the role of the individual in her society.
CHAPTER 3
UNITY THROUGH DIFFERENCE IN *THE LEFT HAND OF DARKNESS*

Ursula K. Le Guin, in her *The Left Hand of Darkness*, presents the reader with a world that is comprised of two very different societies. These societies are viewed through the eyes of the outsider Genly Ai, the representative of a federation of worlds known as the Ekumen. The Ekumen, comprised of eighty-three planets and about three thousand nations, is a system that does not rule but coordinates. As Genly asserts, "Its power is precisely the power of its member states and worlds" (17). It functions to facilitate trade, communication of ideas, and peace. Genly states as its purpose "[t]he augmentation of the complexity and intensity of the field of intelligent life" (34). The Ekumenical project is one that moves to break down the barriers between worlds by creating a shared identity among a vast array of disparate peoples; it is built on the assumption that unity is the only path to peace and development. Genly Ai, as a representative of the Ekumen, is tasked with increasing the scope of this unity; he is sent to encourage the world of Gethen to join the federation. He approaches first the nation of Karhide, a largely decentralized and underdeveloped society comprised of "a sprawl and splatter of vigorous, competent, quarrelsome individualities over which a grid of authority was insecurely and lightly laid" (99). Genly finds the lack of order on Karhide frustrating; he believes that its entrance into the Ekumen may be complicated by the Karhidish inability to mobilize as a nation, the inability of the people to view themselves as a stable entity. Furthermore, life on Karhide is guided by a complex system of honor,
known as shifgrethor, which makes conversations "a perpetual conversational duel" that Genly finds impedes communication and, therefore, cooperation (33). Genly is relieved when he leaves Karhide for Orgoreyn, a nation "simple, grandly constructed, and orderly" in which a highly centralized bureaucracy runs an efficient and technologically advanced society (114). Orgoreyn achieves this impressive level of order and development through a reliance on communal identity; as Genly notes, the Orgota are "trained from birth in a discipline of cooperation, obedience, and submission to a group purpose" (173); they are all employees of the state and function as part of a highly structured whole. Genly finds comfort in the "steady, subdued" Orgota (113), and the absence of shifgrethor allows for more direct, and therefore seemingly more productive, communication (134). For Genly, Orgoreyn appears as "a country ready to enter the Ekumenical age" (114).

In considering the Ekumenical project as one that relies on a shared identity and cooperation, it seems clear why Genly initially assumes Orgoreyn to be the more promising prospect. Genly finds Karhidish society a loose conglomeration of disparate entities; it appears to lack a collective identity. Karhide is composed of small, independent clans called "Hearths;" Genly Ai refers to them as "quarrelsome individualities," and Estraven, a man of social prominence in Karhide, refers to his country as "not a nation but a family quarrel" (6). This conflictual nature exists not just between Hearths but among individuals as well. Shifgrethor, which Genly describes as the "pride-relationship" (13), dominates all aspects of life, complicating communication with the use of "evasions, challenges, and rhetorical subtleties" (33). As Genly notes in his attempt to communicate with Argaven, the Karhidish king: "That I was not dueling
with Argaven, but trying to communicate with him, was itself an incommunicable fact" (33). The conversation Genly Ai wishes to have is one of cooperation, but Argaven is programmed for competition. The people of Karhide, through shifgrethor, maintain walls between one another that make understanding and cooperation difficult. Thus, life on Karhide seems incongruous with the Ekumenical model, which seeks "the enrichment of harmony" (34).

Orgoreyn, on the other hand, seems primed for the Ekumen. The Orgota have a system that is based on the principle of unity. As Genly Ai explains, the Orgota employ various forms of the term "commensal" to define many parts of their society, from the state-owned mines, farms, and factories to governing institutions at every level; children are raised in the "Commensal Hearth," a communal childcare facility. The government officials themselves are termed "the Commensals," and the citizens as a whole are defined as "the Commensality." Thus, the term is used to describe both institutions and individuals; Genly visits the office of the "Local Commensal Farm Centrality," and goes to dinner at the home of "Commensal Slose" (108-18). Genly finds the vague usage of the term to be telling: "In this curious lack of distinction between the general and the specific applications of the word, in the use of it for both the whole and the part, the state and the individual, in this imprecision is its precisest meaning" (108). The usage of the same term to define all facets of Orgota society implies an adherence to a collectivist mentality; there is nothing in Orgota society that does not have a pre-ordained place in the well-structured whole. The "precisest meaning" of Orgota society is its lack of distinction between the totality and its disparate parts; Orgota society, by definition, is a collective.
As Estraven asserts, this social structure has prepared them to enter a federation like the Ekumen because they "have experience in subordinating local interests to a general interest, while Karhide has almost none" (19). The Ekumen attempts to create a universal community and therefore promotes peace and intellectual development as the "general interest" and works to convince worlds to contribute to this purpose. Karhide has little conception of a general entity, and therefore little thought for a group purpose; Orgoreyn, on the other hand, with its focus on collectivity, is familiar with such a promotion. Thus, for Genly, it is Ogoreyn that seems most prepared to join the Ekumen and to adopt the understanding of a shared humanity that is intrinsic to the Ekumenical model. The Ekumen, as Genly explains, is "an attempt to reunify the mystical with the political" (135). While it functions practically to facilitate trade and mediate conflicts, at the root of its being is the realization that all sentient beings are part of one all-encompassing whole.

While it works to form political connections, it is also promoting the "mystical" belief in this larger connection.

While Genly Ai initially assumes that Karhide is unprepared to embrace such a connection and that Orgota society contains the foundations for such an understanding, he finds upon further exposure to these societies that the opposite is true. This realization stems from an understanding that Genly Ai develops concerning the true nature of unity. He comes to understand that the focus on the personal interaction of individuals and the embracing of difference practiced in Karhidish society are essential to fulfill the Ekumenical purpose, while the adherence to an abstract collective identity in Orogoreyn undermines any real connections between the members of its society. Through his
interaction with these two societies, Genly comes to recognize the intrinsic connection between individual identity and collective identity; he discovers that an appreciation of the former is the only basis for the establishment of the latter. In this realization is the foundation of the Marxian notion of the social being which identifies the individual both as a unique entity and as part of the total human existence. An examination of these two societies and the evolution of Genly Ai's understanding will be an examination of the importance of this intrinsic connection as identified by Marx.

Soon after arriving in Orgoreyn, Genly identifies the superficial nature of the communal identity that binds Orgota society. He finds that while the language of Orgoreyn speaks to unity, its citizens do not recognize themselves as part of a greater whole but are rather confined to an existence of life as an autonomous "unit" within a whole that they cannot comprehend (149). As Estraven finds when he is exiled from Karhide and flees to Orgoreyn, the nation is run on alienated labor. He works in one of the massive factories, making "little transparent boxes," noting: "I do not know what the boxes are for" (149). The Orgota citizen, while functioning to fulfill the economic needs of her society, has no conception of how her production contributes to the society of which she is ostensibly such an integral part. Also, as Estraven notes, social cohesion is maintained through a strict control of knowledge and information by a ruthless secret police; he asserts that in Orgoreyn, "the government can check not only act but thought" (151-2). Thus, not just the material but also the intellectual production of the Orgota are controlled. Furthermore, any independent action that manages to emerge in this highly controlled environment is swiftly punished. Genly discovers this first hand when, after
examination by the Commensals, his mission is deemed dangerous, and he is carried away in the middle of the night to an Orgota prison. Genly's appraisal of this building is telling: "It is what it looks like and is called. It is a jail. It is not a front for something else, not a façade, not a pseudonym. It is real, the real thing, the thing behind the words" (166). Here, Genly makes explicit the superficiality of the communal language of Orgoreyn; while it speaks of harmony and interconnectedness, it achieves its "grandly-constructed and orderly" appearance not through cooperation but through separation and fear.

This way of life has a profound effect on the very nature of the Orgota citizen. Being structurally deprived of individual freedom creates a zombie-like quality in the Orgota; they simply perform their given function without question or creative thought. As Genly observes, they are wholly "incurious" and largely lack "the qualities of independence and decision" (113, 173). While it is difficult for him to articulate, Genly senses that "each of them lacked some quality, some dimension of being; and they failed to convince. They were not quite solid" (146). This ties in with his earlier assertion of the semantic importance of the universality of the term commensal; Orgota society requires a "lack of distinction between [...] the state and the individual." The Orgota individual is not a "solid" entity because her individuality, instead of being incorporated into her society, is absorbed by it. She lacks definition; she cannot define herself as an individual outside of her role in the function of the state. Reduced to the life of a "unit," she has been separated from her humanity.
In being separated from her humanity, the Orgota citizen cannot recognize humanity in others; the unitization of the individual cuts her off from the whole, rendering humanity unrecognizable. As Genly notes, the Orgota cannot even band together in the face of terror and persecution; they lack any "fellowfeeling of being prisoners together" (110). Even after being huddled together for days in the back of a prison van with several Orgota after his arrest, Genly cannot feel a sense of connection with the Orgota people: "Jammed together in the sour darkness of our shared mortality, we [...] breathed our breaths mingling, laid the heat of our bodies together as a fire is laid—but remained strangers" (170). The Orgota can work together to fulfill a necessary group purpose, like producing warmth, but have no "fellowfeeling" other than the shared physical one of being cold. They can recognize each other as part of a whole, but that totality has no meaning for them. Having been dehumanized by the constant dismissal of their individual qualities, the Orgota cannot see the humanity in others, even in those who share their suffering. As Estraven understands, it is this inability to recognize an individual as more than simply one part of the established whole that makes Genly Ai's mission impossible for the Orgota government to comprehend. As he explains, "These Orgota have not the wits nor size of spirit to fear what is truly and immensely strange. They cannot even see it. They look at a man from another world and see [...] a sorry little political Unit like themselves" (159). The Orgota cannot understand Genly's purpose because they cannot think of him as anything but a fellow cog in the machine; they have no means to define an individual without placing her within their firmly established
structure. Themselves reduced to the status of "units," the Orgota can only view others as such.

Essential to Marx's conception of the social being is the understanding of the effects of the loss of individuality on the ability to recognize one's connection with others. It is one of his primary critiques of the capitalist system. Terry Eagleton, in his *Marx*, addresses this association: "It is just because he values the individual so deeply that Marx rejects a social order which, while trumpeting the value of individualism in theory, in practice reduces men and women to anonymously interchangeable units" (20).

While Orgoreyn has socialized the means of production, it still utilizes the alienated labor of capitalism that Marx sees as counterintuitive to the development of individuality. The citizens of Orgoreyn are separated from their own production; it has no meaning for them and thus becomes alien to them. As Marx argues, the separation of the individual from her "vital activity," separates her from her humanity: "The whole character of a species [...] resides in the nature of its life activity, and free conscious activity constitutes the species-character of man" (*Manuscripts* 328). It is just this "free conscious activity" that is suppressed in Orgoreyn; the individual is separated from her humanity, or "species-character," through the structuring of a society that controls and dictates her means of both material and intellectual production. As Marx goes on to explain, the alienation of the individual from her own "vital activity" ultimately leads to "the estrangement of man from man" because: "What is true of man's relationship to his labor, to the product of his labor and to himself, is also true of his relationship to other men" (330). The alienation of the individual from her own humanity through the appropriation of her productive forces
leads to an inability to recognize relationships between herself and another that do not speak the language of alienation. Thus, it is impossible for the Orgota to recognize their fellows as anything other than indistinguishable "units."

It is in this way that the communal identity of Orgoreyn is superficial and detrimental to the establishment of any real shared identity. This understanding of Orgota society runs parallel to the Marxian critique of "crude communism," which cannot move beyond the alienation associated with private property because it merely creates a state in which private property appears as "universal." This communism, for Marx, presents a false sense of communal identity in which "the community is simply a community of labour and equality of wages, which are paid out by the communal capital, the community as universal capitalist" (346-7). The communism found in Orgoreyn is of this crude type; it does nothing to restore the relationship of the individual to her own production, and without establishing a means to achieve individual identity, a true communal identity cannot be formed. As Marx explains, fully-developed communism involves the complete abolition of alienation; it is "the true appropriation of the human essence through and for man; it is the complete restoration of man to himself as social, i.e. human, being" (348). Thus, in reuniting man with his own "essence," free conscious production, true communism also restores the relationship between the individual and his society. The restoration of man to himself is simultaneously a restoration of man to his species. Without the former, the latter is impossible. It is perhaps easy to forget when one is reading of class struggle and political revolution in Marx's writing that the ultimate end of the progression is the betterment of the life of every individual, to establish a
society in which "men and women would be allowed to flourish as radical ends in
themselves" (Eagleton 20). This achievement of true individuality, for Marx, is also the
key to a meaningful communal identity.

In the spirit of Marx, Emma Goldman argues that there is no inherent antagonism
between the individual and social instincts but that a false dichotomy has been
historically constructed. She notes: "The individual and society have waged a relentless
and bloody battle for ages, each striving for supremacy, because each was blind to the
value and importance of the other." This blindness is particularly foolish, she notes,
because the individual and society are two parts of the same being: "There is no conflict
between the individual and the social instincts, any more than there is between the heart
and the lungs: the one is the receptacle of precious life essence, the other the repository of
the element that keeps the essence pure and strong" (820). Individualism and collectivism
are two organs of the same body; the failure of one leads to the death of both. It is this
understanding of the inextricable nature of individualism and collectivism that shapes life
on Karhide. As opposed to Orgoreyn, which attempts to reduce individuality in an
attempt to achieve unity, the Karhidish people embrace individuality through the
recognition of their personal differences. As Genly Ai discovers, this understanding of
difference provides Karhide with the necessary foundation to join with the Ekumen in its
project to promote harmony and cooperation.

In Karhide, the concept of humanity is not abstract; it finds its definition in
practice. Every personal interaction carries the weight of importance. When an agitated
Genly Ai asserts to one of his acquaintances on Karhide that his mission "overrides all
personal debts and loyalties," his acquaintance, without hesitation, identifies the mission as immoral (104). Genly quickly agrees, citing his own impatience as the source of moral failure, not the mission itself. As Genly's mission has far-reaching positive impacts, the joining of worlds to ensure peace and the transference of knowledge, his initial assertion that the importance of this goal overrides personal connections seems entirely reasonable. However, as Genly later makes clear, it is only through the recognition of the importance of individual relationships that the greater goal of uniting humanity can be reached. He explains why it is a necessity for the Ekumen to send only one envoy at a time to the world being considered for entrance into the galactic society: "Alone, the relationship I finally make, if I make one, is not impersonal and not only political: it is individual, it is personal [...] Not We and They; not I and It; but I and Thou" (259). While the Ekumen's goal is ultimately collective, involving the well-being of over eighty worlds, it seeks to achieve this goal through the establishment of personal relationships. This is built on an understanding of humanity that the Karhidish people already possess, the understanding of humanity as real relationships between one individual and another, that can be seen in their interactions with others. Running alongside the competitive code of shifgrethor in Karhide is the informal code of hospitality. As Genly Ai explains, "villagers, farmers, or lord of any Domain will give a traveler food and lodging, for three days by the code, and in practice for much longer than that; and what's best is that you are always received without a fuss, welcomed, as if they had been expecting you" (106). Genly is continually surprised by the general kindness and generosity of the Karhidish people that prevails despite their personally combative natures. As Genly Ai says, in Karhide: "The stranger
who comes unknown is a guest" (97). Difference, in Karhidish society, does not create barriers to interaction; a person who is unknown is not feared but welcomed.

While Genly initially finds the code of shifgrethor to be an impediment to cooperation and therefore indicative of the Karhidish inability to form a cohesive whole, he comes to understand that the complexities of shifgrethor can also be viewed as a path to a greater understanding of human relationships. There can be discovered in the practice an appreciation of difference that is essential for unity. Genly Ai initially finds it difficult to trust Estraven, his Karhidish companion, finding him "dark, obstructive, and enigmatic" (19). This obstruction sensed by Genly was one similar to that which he found in the king, a product of the practice of shifgrethor that made conversations a "duel" in which information was not freely given. However, after Estraven rescues Genly from an Orgota prison camp and they spend weeks travelling through frozen wastelands together as they flee back to Karhide, a bond of great strength grows between the two. As Genly explains, this bond was built not of a discovery of likeness but of an acceptance of difference: "[I]t was from the difference between us [...] that love came: and it was itself a bridge, the only bridge, across what divided us" (249). He later further explains that the "intimacy of mind established between us was a bond, indeed, but an obscure and austere one, not so much admitting further light [...] as showing the extent of the darkness" (255).

It is this notion, that of "showing the extent of the darkness," which is the key to the understanding of shifgrethor; it is about an appreciation of difference. It presents a "negative" view of human nature only in the sense that it highlights what one cannot know about another; it does not assume antagonism, it acknowledges uncertainty. It is
only when Genly Ai embraces this uncertainty that he begins to trust Estraven. Difference does not mean that cooperation is impossible, but it is impossible to have true cooperation if difference is not regarded. If one assumes that another is just like oneself, then disagreements will seem incomprehensible. However, the more difference is recognized, the more one can begin to understand oneself as part of a complex system of widely varied components. Problems arise in Karhide only when differences become arbitrary distinctions, when the Other ceases to be general and becomes defined by a category. It is thus the growing sense of nationalism that Estraven fears will lead to war on Karhide. The prime minister of Karhide, Tibe, in an attempt to further centralize power, looks to war as "the sure, quick, and lasting way to make people into a nation." His rhetoric therefore avoids any mention of shifgrethor and instead speaks only to national identity, ignoring personal relationships and focusing on creating fear and anger of the neighboring nation of Orgoreyn" (101-2). In order to drive the Karhidish people to support violence, Tibe strives to undermine their sense of humanity by attenuating their focus on individual interactions and encouraging them to view both themselves and the Orgota, not as individuals, but as dehumanized mass entities. Thus, the Otherness that is assumed to exist as a natural part of human interaction on Karhide becomes a tool for violence only when it is used to create divisions among humanity and identities that can be pitted against one another.

The Marxian conception of the social being is based on the coexistence of shared identity and difference. Marx argues that what is generally assumed to be "common sense" overlooks the possibility of this coexistence: "[I]n seeing a distinction, it fails to
see a unity, and where it sees a unity it fails to see a distinction” (qtd. in Ollman 42). As Bertell Ollman notes, Marx moves beyond this false assumption of exclusivity with his dialectical model through a focus on the mutual dependence of interacting parts. This interconnectedness makes possible the simultaneity of shared and disparate identities:

> In adhering to a philosophy of internal relations, the commitment to view parts as identical exists even before they have been abstracted from the whole, so that one can say that [...] identity proceeds difference, which only appears with the abstraction of parts based on some appreciation of their distinctiveness. Such differences, when found, do nothing to contradict the initial assumption of identity, that each part through internal relations can express the same whole (43).

In dialectical terms, then, the individual is identical to other individuals in the sense that they are mutually dependent parts of the same humanity while simultaneously different from other individuals in ways that may constantly be redefined. As Ollman explains, the identities formed within dialectics, because they are defined by interaction, are necessarily protean. The "abstraction of parts" is a continually shifting process; thus, Marx refers to an abstraction as a "moment," reinforcing its character as "a temporarily stable part of a larger and ongoing process" (31).

> It is through a realization of such dialectical concepts that Genly Ai comes to understand his mission for the Ekumen. In viewing the Ekumen as a bringer of unity and creator of shared identity, Genly initially views the communal nature of Orgoreyn as compatible with the Ekumenical project. However, he comes to realize that the harmony
on Orgoreyn is superficial; while it focuses on the whole, Orgota society fails to embrace
the dynamic nature of individual interaction that is essential to a true understanding of the
nature of humanity. Conversely, Karhide, while appearing to lack unity, comes to
represent for Genly the heart of the Ekumenical project; in presenting individuality and
collectivism not as mutually exclusive but as contingent upon one another, Karhide
represents for Genly true potential for "[t]he augmentation of the complexity and
intensity of the field of intelligent life."
In *The German Ideology*, Karl Marx discusses the relationship of the family unit to the division of labor within the capitalist system. As he explains, the existence of labor division is predicated upon a social system that fragments communal identity through "the separation of society into individual families opposed to one another." He notes that "the division of labour implies the contradiction between the interest of the separate individual or the individual family and the communal interest of all individuals who have intercourse with one another [...] this communal interest does not exist merely in the imagination, as the 'general interest,' but first of all in reality, as the mutual interdependence of the individuals among whom the labor is divided" [emphasis added](159-60). As was discussed in a previous chapter, Marx sees as essential the recognition of individual production as a communal activity and the viewing of one's own production as the connection to one's social being (*Manuscripts* 249-50). Here he suggests that the family unit, as an extension of the autonomous individual, serves to further obfuscate this essential relation by reinforcing the false sense of division created by alienated labor. Thus, the family unit is an agent of alienation, lending itself to the further "estrangement of man from man."

Samuel R. Delany's *Stars in My Pocket Like Grains of Sand* seems to support this Marxist notion of the family unit as a divisive force. The novel takes place at a time in which there are several worlds inhabited by sentient beings, travel among these worlds...
has been accomplished, and the flow of information among them is fairly fluid.

Throughout the entirety of this known universe, a struggle for power is ensuing between two systems of thought, the Family and the Sygn, and their adherents. These two holistic systems reach to the very root of existence. As one of the characters notes: "The Family/Sygn conflict is in the process of creating a schism throughout the entire galaxy, concerning just what exactly a woman is" (184). (Here it should be explained that, in Delany's future, woman, as opposed to man, is the default noun used to denote humanity; furthermore, she is the default pronoun.) As the text expounds upon the ways in which these two systems of thought reach such ontological depths, it continues to place them in the context of "private" life, linking the larger abstract systems to the literal presence of the family unit and its possible social alternatives. The two systems of thought that battle throughout Delany's universe and the units of domestic life that function within them are mutually constitutive, and it is in this that one finds the connection to Marx's assertion of the importance of the family unit in the shaping and functioning of the capitalist system.

Marq Dyeth, Delany's protagonist, lives on Velm, a world in which the Sygn system dominates, and he is a member of a unit of domestic life that resembles, yet differs fundamentally, from the autonomous family unit. The term used to describe this unit is "stream," a term borrowed from the original inhabitants of Marq's world, the evelm. As Marq explains, the evelm did not have a term for units defined by reproductive lines, but "stream" was a term used to describe their vast educational system which carried out "the propagation of nurture." After humans had come to Velm, the two cultures blended to form the notion of the stream as something akin to a family unit.
However, the stream differs significantly from the notions of the traditional family unit. While Marq has mothers and sisters with whom he lives, they are not connected by "egg-and-sperm relations" but by a series of adoptions, and his stream consists of both human and evelm (118-9). Also, the stream as "private" unit has not lost touch with its etymological root as a widely dispersed system of education. The stream is not viewed as a means of division but as a way in which one becomes further connected to one's society. As Marq explains, "[I]n the Family structure, the parents are seen to contain and enclose the children, to protect them from society. In the stream structure, the children are the connection between the parents and the society [...] Because most children don't generate from within streams, the stream structure conceives of all children as gifts from society, as gifts to society" (120). The stream structure, at its ontological root, is not a system of enclosure; it does not consider as relevant that private/public binary upon which the traditional family unit is predicated. In this way, it focuses foremost on the individuals within the stream as members of their society, with the stream structure acting as just another facet of identity that works within, not in opposition to, the society as a whole.

While the stream structure organizes life in the areas where the Sygn system is dominant, those living under the influence of the Family, not surprisingly, structure themselves according to the notion of family that is most familiar to the modern Western reader. As was just noted, Marq makes the distinction as one of connection versus enclosure, with the family representing the latter. He also notes that while the stream structure is fluid in its definition of itself as a unit, incorporating a variety of
nontraditional kinships, the family unit is rigidly structured and narrowly defined. As Marq explains, "That father-mother-son that make up the basic family unit, at least as the Family has described it for centuries now, represents a power structure [...] as well as paths for power developments and power restrictions" (119). Therefore, the family unit, unlike the stream, is predicated upon the placement of barriers, both within itself and between itself and others. These barriers are not only used to create internal power structures but also as a means to distribute power in society. The Thants, a "reproductive commune" from another world with whom the Dyeth stream has close ties, are chosen by the Family to represent them as a Focus Family. The Thants, both before and after their actual absorption into the Family, work as a representation of the family unit, and stand in sharp contrast to the Dyeth stream. Even before they are officially approached by the Family, the Thants have a sense of separation from society that the Dyeths do not. Being one of the oldest streams on Velm, the Dyeths' home is located on the outer rim of the urban center where they live, and as Marq explains, this distinction marks for them "a hurt, a failure, a deprivation" because it acts as a means of "isolation" from their society. Marq explains that it is just this distinction that makes the Dyeth stream interesting to the Thants, who view it as "a mark of privilege" (106). Because the stream structure is built on ideas of interconnectedness, the Dyeths have no sense of being privileged above other streams; the Thants, however, thinking in terms of the family as competitive units, view the Dyeths as a privileged unit. The Thants think in terms of power relationships, and, for them, "a stream so old and august" as the Dyeths symbolizes great power (107).
Once the Thants become a Focus Family, a unit designated by the Family to act as a ruling body, their emphasis on separation becomes solidified. They use their rigid definition of the family unit to distinguish themselves from the Dyeths and to place themselves in a privileged position over them. The stream that they once respected (although for all the wrong reasons) becomes a target for scorn and prejudice. The Thants attend a party held by the Dyeths shortly after their absorption into the Family solely for the purpose of making their separation clear. Speaking among themselves (but loudly enough for everyone to hear), they assert that the human Dyeths have been "reduced to beasts" by their sexual relationships with the evelm, who they refer to as animals. They also assert that sexual relationships between those of the same sex, which occur freely within streams, are barbaric and that the presence of these "unnatural" sexual relationships shows that the Dyeths have "not even reached the elementary stage of culture [...] where a family takes its appropriate course." They claim that their definition of a domestic unit, in opposition to the stream structure, is "older, purer, human," and therefore superior (301-3). The Thants, as a "reproductive commune," had passed judgment based on what they perceived as the merit of individual units; upon becoming a "family," however, they adopt a rubric of systemic bias that creates separation based on a strict set of cultural norms. Anyone who does not adhere to their definition of the family unit becomes uncivilized and their behaviors are classified as pathological. Thus, the practice of enclosure is seen on two levels, creating barriers not just between individual families and their society but also between those who exist within the ideological realm of the family and those who do not.
As was earlier noted, Marx discusses the institution of the family as lending itself to the continuation of the competitive individualism necessary for the capitalist system to function, and similar arguments have been made by more contemporary scholars. As John D'Emilio maintains, the "privatized" family fits well within the capitalist system because it ensures that "the products of socialized labor belong to the owners of private property" (473). There is likely no motivation more often stated by those aspiring to be wealthy than a desire to provide for one's family. As an extension of the autonomous individual, the family structure functions to reinforce an adherence to economic competition, thus further solidifying the private/public dichotomy. As Janet R. Jakobsen notes: "[T]he Protestant ideal of marriage makes the individual the basic unit of social relations, rather than [...] the community, the society, or any other possible configuration" (27). In relying on the family unit as the primary means of identity formation, societies ensure that they will never move beyond the notion of "the autonomous individual who stands before God and acts on individual interests in the marketplace" (Jakobsen 25). Thus, the family unit is tied to the continuation of the capitalist system; the latter needs the former to mask other possible relationships that may foster a cooperation that would be ultimately damaging to a system predicated on competition. As Marq Dyeth asserts, the family unit functions to "contain and enclose," and this includes its relationship to capital; it is a repository for the spoils of the individual acting autonomously in the marketplace.

Aside from its function in the separation of the individual from her social being in general, the family unit also serves to create ideological boundaries that enclose and
privilege certain individuals, further fracturing society and breaking down a sense of interconnectedness. As is shown in the behavior of the Thant "family" toward the Dyeth "stream" upon the former's adoption of that highly specified identity, a hierarchy is created in which the family unit is privileged over other means of identity. The public disapproval of the Thants toward the sexual behaviors acceptable in the stream system is one that finds a parallel in current considerations of marriage as a heteronormative institution. While one cannot wholly conflate marriage and family as institutions, the former serves as a foundation for the latter and will thus find its relevancy to the discussion as such. Michael Warner, in his *The Trouble with Normal: Sex, Politics, and the Ethics of Queer Life*, discusses the institution of marriage as a means of producing privileged (and therefore underprivileged) identities. As he notes, while marriage acts to give those within it "validation, legitimacy, and recognition," it is simultaneously "invalidating, delegitimating, or stigmatizing other relations, needs, and desires" (99).

The Thants derive power from their status as a Focus Family, but that power is relative. In order to solidify their position, they have to assert dominance over another group that represents a different set of cultural norms. Marriage and the family, therefore, while they are generally considered to be "private" institutions defined by "personal" internal relations, are actually defined externally and through negative means. Here, the family unit functions to "contain and enclose" sexual norms to the exclusion of those who do not adhere to these norms. Therefore, the family unit acts as an agent of alienation both by reinforcing the capitalist ideology of the autonomous individual and by creating spaces of ideological privilege that serve to increase "the estrangement of man from man."
Warner says of marriage that its status as "a public institution, not a private relation" means that "[t]he ethical meaning of marrying cannot be simplified to a question of pure motives, conscious choice, or transcendent love" (107). Both marriage and the family unit rely on a certain sacrosanct status that distinguishes them from more secular (and therefore less privileged) social relationships. However, as D'Emilio, Jakobsen, and Warner suggest, in order to understand the true nature of these institutions, one must recognize them as part of a greater system of thought that shapes the way in which individuals view themselves, one another, and their relationship to their society as a whole. It is in this context that we will return to the Family/Sygn conflict on a broader level. As has been discussed, the distinction between the family structure as defined by the Family and the stream system advocated by the Sygn is one of enclosure versus interconnectedness. This distinction extends throughout the competing philosophies, encompassing all aspects of life.

Marq says of the basic family unit, as it is proposed by the Family, that it acts not just as a unit of "private" life but as "a conceptual structure as well, a model through which to see many different situations" (119). As he further notes, the desire to spread this "conceptual structure" has been built around the Family's quest to "establish the dream of a classic past as pictured on a world that may never have existed in order to achieve cultural stability" (80). The Family as a system of thought represents a view that is so conservative as to have become regressive. Its desire for stability has driven it into the recreation of an idealized past that suits its conception of power hierarchy. In the adoption of the idealized "father-mother-son" family unit as a conceptual model, the
Family is attempting to create an entire system based on an unequal distribution of power divided among autonomous units and the exclusion of alternative modes of interrelationship. Thus, the Family sets up a system of concentrated leadership based on the "Focus Family," whose members both hold practical political power and function ideologically as "a model unit for the women of an entire world" (180-5). Furthermore, the Family seeks to legitimize its chosen conceptual model by granting it moral superiority. It asks that its adherents "[c]oncentrate on what is truly eternal [...] and ignore all the illusory trivialities presented by the accident of the senses" (128-9). The family unit is presented as an eternal structure; its legitimacy lies in an imagined past that its adherents must take on faith.

The Sygn, instead of attempting to mold societies into a preset vision, is "committed to the living interaction and difference between each woman and each world from which the right stability and play may flower" (80). They achieve this relativism through a focus on conserving local history and the sustainment of diversity. As Marq relates, human adherents of the Family came to his world, Velm, before the Sygn structure came to dominate and set up a shrine to "the original Old Eyrth" where an ancient evelmi temple had once stood. While the Family adherents were removed from the area, the new retreat established by the Sygn there still includes some relics of the Family. As Marq explains: "Since the Sygn is concerned with preserving the local history of local spaces, the Family occupation of the retreat was now part of that history" (96). Unlike the Family, they do not seek to recreate the idealized vision of one past but to represent the truth of as many past experiences as possible. This makes the Sygn a very
fluid structure. Marq discovers his first time "offworld" that the way in which the Sygn is manifested on Velm is representative of only one facet of its protean meaning. Marq says that he discovers on other worlds "rituals, cynks [symbols], and services so vastly different from the ones here at home as to be unrecognizable." He comes to understand that the Sygn itself is "only a name, pronounced a thousand different ways, spelled differently in a hundred different languages" (97). Unlike the Family, whose definition is the same regardless of the world on which it is present, the Sygn system varies depending upon the unique qualities of the place in which it is practiced. It does not propose uniformity but rather celebrates difference. This focus on the unique nature of all of its adherents leads the Sygn system away from religious dogma; it eschews the eternal in favor of a humanistic approach. Its adherents are asked only to "[l]ive life moment by moment as intensely as possible" (129). Within the Sygn system, there is no ideal towards which one strives; there is only the process by which one interacts with and is shaped by one's world.

Some of the ways in which the family unit functions in current Western society as a larger ideological entity have already been discussed. Delany's vision of a political/religious/economic/ideological system that is structured directly around the supremacy of the family unit echoes many of the concerns voiced by Marx and others of the role that the family unit plays in perpetuating alienation. Delany's vision of the Sygn as an alternative holistic system also finds connections with those who are attempting to voice challenges to the supremacy of the competitive autonomy and ideological closure of the family unit. D'Emilio, for instance, presents an alternative vision of the space in which
individual identity is formed that is significantly similar to the stream structure created by Delany. D'Emilio suggests that instead of "trying to turn back the clock to some mythic age of the happy family," we should create "structures and programs that will help to dissolve the boundaries that isolate the family, particularly those that privatize childrearing [...] As we create structures beyond the nuclear family that provide a sense of belonging, the family will wane in significance" (475). Here D'Emilio proposes an emphasis on interconnectedness that would move beyond the limitations of the private/public barrier, allowing for a broader space in which to form identity. This is what the stream structure is predicated upon: the view of children as "a gift from society and for society" and a movement away from the role of the family as a barrier between the individual and her society. D'Emilio's vision does what Jakobsen rightly assesses is essential to a movement away from the supremacy of the autonomous individual: "to make relations that resist the logic of capital and in doing so open the door to alternative possibilities" (32). What is important to note here is the realization that these relations must be formed. In the current configuration of social life, there may not yet be enough "alternative possibilities" to support a restructuring of interrelationships, but what both Delany in his speculative fiction and D'Emilio and Jakobsen in their essays suggest is that a critical approach to the supremacy of the family unit is an essential beginning to forming these new relations and subsequently attaining a broader understanding of the individual as social being.

The Sygn brilliantly represents the possibility of radically restructured relations. Through its focus on "living interaction and difference," it functions without relying on
set patterns of behavior and enclosed spaces of identity. In this way, the Sygn represents the possibility of a "queer" reimagining of the individual's relationship to society. As Jakobsen suggests, "sexual perversity can help create alternative economic units to that of the autonomous individual and the household" through its ability to exist outside of and therefore challenge these conceptual models. As she goes on to explain, queer life proposes that one look not to established units but to the "interstices between individual, family, [and] community" (32-4); queer life asks one to think about new relations, ones that refuse to be enclosed. In doing so, it presents a picture of interconnection that ignores traditional barriers. Warner seconds this notion, arguing that those who embrace queer life "have an astonishing range of intimacies," that are "complex and bewildering" (116). It is in this complex array of connections that one finds the means to combat the ideological enclosure of the family unit. Warner argues that it is imperative to embrace the complexity of these relations instead of attempting to fit them into the preexisting model of the marriage institution; he thus calls for a rethinking of the gay movement that does not include the pursuit of marriage rights. As was earlier noted, Warner views marriage as an institution that legitimates certain relationships and individuals at the expense of others. Therefore, for Warner, expanding marriage rights means further embracing this policy of exclusion and strengthening the ability of marriage to delegitimize other intimate relationships; gay marriage is not about diversity but normalization (109). In *Stars in My Pocket*, Marq expresses the same view. He explains that the Family will sometimes be "quite loose" in its application of the father-mother-son hierarchy, allowing for multiple people to fill each role; he notes that his own stream
structure could be reinterpreted "as a classical 'family' without an eyeblink, just by assigning one or more parts to one or more women." However, as he notes, it would be dangerous to allow such a reinterpretation: "[I]f we agreed to the model, no doubt we'd begin to stabilize the power structure it controls" (1119-20). Marq, like Warner, realizes the deleterious effects of allowing the continuation of an institution based on exclusion and inequality. The stream structure and the Sygn system that it represents are a refusal to accept this given model, and this refusal creates a space for new ways in which the individual can establish her social identity.
Utopian fiction can serve many functions: it can highlight the flaws of the society in which it is written; it can make suggestions for the amelioration of those flaws; it can remind the reader that her societal structures are historic, not eternal, and are therefore subject to change. The examination prompted by these works is not only external but internal as well; the reader is asked to put herself in a new world and therefore must examine herself as part of the utopian project. This process of embedment is not likely to be seamless. As Fredric Jameson identifies, there is a significant psychological limitation facing the reader of utopian fiction: "[W]hat we call our personality is made up of [...] the miseries and the deformations, fully as much as the pleasures and the fulfillments. I fear that we are not capable of imaging the disappearance of the former without the utter extinction of the latter as well, since the two are inextricably and causally bound together" (52). If human beings are dependent upon misery as well as pleasure to establish their identities, the reader may find herself feeling unexpectedly alienated from a world devoid of some of the most familiar sources of conflict.

It is just this psychological limitation that Samuel R. Delany addresses through the character of Bron in Trouble on Triton: An Ambiguous Heterotopia. As the title suggests, the world of Triton is not presented as an unequivocal utopia, but it is a society in which many of the problems that face our own have been eradicated. If a citizen is
unable to pay for necessities, free food, shelter, and transportation are provided through a highly efficient system; reliance on government aid is temporary and common, so there is no negative connotation surrounding its use (152). Regeneration treatments are available once one begins to age (100). On Triton, citizens live in co-ops that are organized based on sexual and social preference: there are gay, straight, non-specified, all-male, all-female, and mixed sex co-ops as well as those divided into family units; one can choose whatever type of community best fits oneself. Furthermore, no sexual desire is taboo. As Bron notes, if one wants to "manacle eighteen-year old boys to the wall and pierce their nipples with red-hot needles," one will be able to find others with the same interest and practice it without fear of judgment (99-100). He summarizes life on Triton as follows: "Somewhere [...] there it is: pleasure, community, respect—all you have to do is know the kind, and how much of it, and to what extent you want it" (104). Yet, Bron is not happy in this world of ready pleasure and social acceptance.

It may be easy to dismiss Bron's unhappiness as a personal failing; he is largely unlikeable and unpleasantly neurotic. However, Bron comes to Triton from Mars, a society more akin to that of the 21st-century United States, and is therefore, like the reader, coming into Delany's utopian vision as an outsider. Thus, his inability to acclimate to life on Triton may be viewed as an embodiment of the reader's own inability to form an identity in the absence of conflicts that have come to be an intrinsic part of the way she defines herself. Coming from a society guided by the precepts of individualism which emphasis separation between the individual and society, the reader, upon embedding herself in Delany's Triton, may find that the lack of conflict between herself
and her society feels like a loss of individuality. Coming from a society in which one is highly conscious of sexual and gender norms and shapes one's personal desires based on this awareness, the reader may find herself lacking the language to express her desires in the absence of these norms. The pressure to conform to the norms of a modern industrialized society is generally considered an impediment to self-fulfillment and happiness, but if this pressure is removed, one may find oneself, like Bron, struggling to hold onto the "miseries" and "deformations" that are such an integral part of one's consciousness, constructing internal barriers in the absence of external ones. An examination of the character of Bron will be an examination of these internal barriers and the ways in which these barriers serve to define the individual.

Bron states early on in Triton that he hates being defined as "a type" (5). He longs for an individuality that lacks social definition and is continually frustrated by his inability to place himself in opposition to social expectations. For years Bron, "in silent protest," refused to enter any of the government-run "ego-booster booths," structures scattered about his home city of Tethys that show one randomly selected snippets of footage of oneself collected by the government. Bron claims to find these booths, designed as an attempt to present government surveillance as anodyne, inherently distasteful. However, he admits that he ceased his personal protest upon realizing that most people he knew were engaged in the same boycott because it "made it depressingly easy to define the people who did not use them, if only by their prejudices, as a type" (5). Thus, what Bron hoped would place him in opposition to societal norms actually served to identify him with a large portion of his society. His protest, initially defined by himself
as a personal moral stance, lost legitimacy as such when he found it to be a shared action, showing that his commitment was not to the substance of the moral stance but rather to the idea of taking one.

Bron continues this attachment to arbitrary acts of protest throughout the novel. In relating the events of a party he had attended at the family commune of his boss, Phillip, Bron explains his desire to rebel against an atmosphere that he found nauseatingly "healthy and accepting and wholesome and elegant." In an attempt to "do something really outrageous," he speaks of his former life as a prostitute (an occupation that does not exist on Triton), and begins to loudly proposition the room at large. Far from having the effect of social alienation that he sought, however, he was both taken up on his offer to provide sexual favors for five franqs and was informed that Phillip and another member of the commune had also formerly been prostitutes on other worlds. This inability to create a conflict between himself and his social surroundings infuriates Bron. He declares, with disgust, that "[i]t was all perfect, beautiful, without a crack or a seam. Any blow you struck was absorbed and became one with the structure" (102-3). Bron's protest is not against any injustice but is rather against the lack of injustice; he is fighting acceptance itself. He chooses to bring up prostitution at Phillip's party for the same reason he chooses to end his boycott of the ego-booster booths: he can only define his individual self in oppositional terms. Just as the booth boycott had meaning for him only when it was an individual protest, Bron's history as a prostitute is meaningful for him only as a means to set himself apart from others. He detests being a type because, for him, being a type is the opposite of being an individual. He longs to be "the only one—
some way, some form, some how" because it is the sole way in which he can define himself as a unique human being (102).

Bron's inability to define himself in the heterogeneous society of Triton stems from a distinction between individualism and individuality that is lost to Bron himself; he believes that he is striving for the latter, but it is the former that he actually pursues. This distinction is one that is crucial to an understanding of Marxian philosophy; as Peter Critchley argues, "Marx's entire project can be interpreted as an attempt to assert individuality against individualism" (sec. 4). As has been discussed in a previous chapter, the ultimate goal for Marx is a society in which "men and women would be allowed to flourish as radical ends in themselves," and the achievement of this true individuality requires the supersession of the historically constructed concept of individualism. Critchley addresses this historical context: "The existence of individualism as an oppositional ideology under the feudal society shows the emergence of bourgeois market society and capitalist social relations" (sec. 4). The ideology of individualism lays the foundation for "the dominant conception of rationally-choosing, self-centered, self-contained individuals prevalent in contemporary politics, society and social science" (sec. 2). Individualism is defined, not by the unique properties of the individual, but by an abstract conceptual space of self-containment. It is this abstract concept of the individual which allows capitalism to function: "Under market conditions, individuals confront each other as abstract, interchangeable entities; working people become commodities, selling their labour power to the highest bidder; and the capitalist does not care what he produces as long as he makes a profit" (Eagleton 22). Far from defining the individual as a unique
entity, individualism renders the individual "interchangeable," and therefore makes possible the dehumanization that accompanies alienated labor. Individualism is, therefore, counterintuitive to the Marxian notion of true individuality, which is achieved only through the concrete interaction of the individual with her society. For Marx, the "essence of all individuals" is their ability to engage in free conscious production, and, as has been discussed in a previous chapter, Marx views all production as being of a social nature. Therefore, the recognition of one's individuality is ultimately a social project. As Eagleton notes, "In developing my own personality [...] I am also realizing what I have most deeply in common with others" (27). As was discussed in the previous paragraphs, Bron feels that he can only develop his personality against what he has in common with others; he is thus embracing the abstract notion of individualism.

Bron's inability to view himself outside of the ideological realm of individualism is placed in sharp contrast to the ideas proposed by his own chosen field of study, "metalogics." As Bron explains, the theoretical basis of metalogics is to challenge the validity of establishing logical boundaries. He defines two primary complications identified with "bounding." Firstly, a boundary can never truly separate two things because "there has to be something underneath it [...] that is neither on one side nor the other." In thinking of a brick wall, for instance, it is not floating in a void but is setting on a foundation shared by the two halves that it attempts to distinguish. Secondly, a boundary is difficult to define because there is no definite way to determine "where to set the boundary, how to set it, or if, once set, it will turn out in the least useful" (50-1). In short, boundaries are ultimately arbitrary constructions. Metalogics, then, moves beyond
this limited process of definition by viewing the nature of things as "[a]reas of significance space [that] intermesh and fade into one another like color-clouds in a three-dimensional spectrum" instead of stacking together like "hard-edged bricks in a box" (50-1). Thus, concepts derive meaning not from their ability to be definitively distinguished from another concept but from the interpenetration of multiple elements. Bron's analogy serves to further clarify: If one is touching the grotte between the tiles of the Taj Mahal, one can say that one is touching the Taj Mahal. However, it also puts one in contact with the Vriamin Claypit from which the grotte was mined, connecting one with the "surface of India" and with every building that uses that same clay (50). Therefore, the Taj Mahal is not defined as one area of solid space in contrast to other spaces but as an "area of significance space" that is composed of identities from multiple sources.

Metalogics applies beautifully to the understanding of individual identity. Like the Taj Mahal, human beings are a complex composition of mutually constituted elements that produce layers of meaning. While Bron is capable of intellectually processing this complex system of ontological understanding, he ironically cannot view himself as part of a larger system of meaning. He can only think in terms of logical boundaries when considering his relationship to his society; he is attempting, despite his theoretical understanding of its impossibility, to place a brick wall between himself and others. Bron's discontent with life on Triton is a product of this attempt to establish a rigid boundary between self and society that does not exist in Delany's heterotopia. In a society that focuses on the acceptance of individual desires, the self is easily "absorbed [...] into the structure." This is, as metalogics suggests, a natural state. The individual, as
a composition of societal elements, is not an autonomous entity. The non-hegemonic social structure on Triton makes Bron's unwillingness to integrate seem pathological; he cannot even define what he is attempting to separate himself from. However, as a doctor on Triton later notes, Bron's desire to re-establish boundaries that have been effectively removed on Triton stems from "those nameless social attitudes that one internalized during a less enlightened youth on a world with a different culture" (225). Bron, the product of a "less enlightened" society, carries with him the remnants of his culture, as does the reader of utopian projects. Bron's limitations concerning the understanding of his own ontology may have well been designed by Delany to echo those of his readership.

As Bertell Ollman notes in his *Dialectical Investigations*, "conceptual distinctions that tell us where one thing ends and the next one begins [...] are social and mental constructs [...] people coming from different cultures and from different philosophical traditions can and do draw them differently" (11-2). Ollman here makes explicit what Delany's metalogics implies; if boundaries are arbitrary, their significance must be socially constructed. Bron's need to draw a boundary between himself and his society is therefore not an idiosyncratic shortcoming but rather a product of a specific epistemological construct. His understanding of his own ontology can be understood as part of what Ollman defines as "non-dialectical" thinking. This epistemological approach is flawed in that "it privileges whatever makes things appear static and independent of one another" (10), and therefore, in the words of Karl Marx, "in seeing a distinction, it fails to see a unity" (qtd. in Ollman 42). As Ollman extrapolates, this mode of thinking has a direct effect on the definition of the individual as an autonomous unit apart from
society: "The isolated individual, man separated from both natural and social conditions is [...] its preferred vantage point for studying society [...] In this perspective, the individual is chiefly what he believes himself to be, and society itself what many individuals operating one at a time [...] have made it" (71). Bron's desire to "be the only one" is a product of this non-dialectical approach. In attempting to define himself as a distinct human being, he cannot comprehend himself as part of an interrelated whole.

As non-dialectical thinking structures Bron's understanding of himself, his understanding of metalogics runs parallel to the fundamental nature of Marxian dialectical thought. Dialectical thought, as opposed to defining elements as independent entities, constructs meaning through a system of relations. These relations "that come together to make up the whole get expressed in what are taken to be its parts. Each part is viewed as incorporating in what it is all its relations with other parts up to and including everything that comes into the whole" (35). This statement nicely parallels the metalogical analogy of the Taj Mahal; the grotto that holds the building together brings to the whole its relationships to the surrounding geography and structures. The part brings with it "its relations with other parts." Just as non-dialectical thought carries implications for an understanding of the ontology of the individual, dialectics suggests an approach that views the individual not as a static entity but as a complex system of relations. Thus, Marx's assertion that the individual cannot be separated from her species-being is a product of dialectical thought. As Marx notes, "Man, however much he may [...] be a particular individual [...] is just as much the totality, the ideal totality, the subjective existence of thought and experienced society for itself" (Manuscripts 351). Coming
together in each individual is the entire system of relations of which she is a part; the individual is a microcosm of social forces. This is important in both an understanding of Bron as well as one's understanding of oneself as reader. Bron is limited by a concept of individualism that he does not recognize as an historical construction but misidentifies as his essential being. This same limitation is faced by the reader of utopian fiction who is the product of an epistemological system that is primarily non-dialectical and is dominated by the ideology of individualism. As Ollman notes, the purpose of Marxian dialectics is not to uncover how a relationship is established but why "aspects of an already existing relation may appear to be independent" (12). Dialectical thought begins with an understanding of mutual interdependence; therefore, what it seeks to discover is what obscures the relationships that it already knows to exist. Individualism, in presenting the individual as a "self-contained" unit, obfuscates the real connection between the individual and her species that Marx identifies as the core of her being.

Bron's inability to embed himself fully in life on Triton is a product of both his limited definition of the individual as well as his inability to articulate his own desire. As was earlier noted, Bron says of Triton that one can have whatever one wants, as long as one knows what that is. However, this utopian ideal is lost on those who lack the internal structures to function within it. Bron asks, "But what happens to those of us who don't know [...] What happens to the ones of us in whom even the part that wants has lost, through atrophy, all connection with articulate reason?" (104). On Triton, there is a community for every personality type and an outlet for every sexual desire. One need only know oneself to find happiness. However, this may be a much more complicated
concept for someone, like Bron, who has not been shaped by the ideas of a society in which there is no "majority configuration" and the effort is made to "make the subjective reality of each of its citizens as politically inviolable as possible" (225-8). As an alien coming to Triton from the "less enlightened" world of Mars, Bron is used to having his desires shaped by the presence of established norms and hierarchical relationships. Bron's history on Mars is greatly illuminated by his visit to Earth, in which he attempts to reenact the social roles that he internalized on Mars when going out to dinner with his romantic interest, the Spike. The restaurant that Bron and the Spike attend is an anachronism, a vestige of "Capitalist China," where they still accept actual paper money (which is illegal in the Outer Satellites). Bron immediately associates this experience with his life as a prostitute on Mars fifteen years earlier, and he can only view the social venture in these terms. As he has experience with "the etiquette of money," Bron decides that he must be in the power position. He therefore assigns himself the role of "client," and the Spike the role of "prostitute" and constructs his behavior around his understanding of this hierarchical relationship. He is "reduced to the sweat of mortification" for the most minor of perceived social infractions, like his inability to remember the name of the most expensive liquor. That fact that he enjoys the less expensive liquor that he does order simply "wasn't the point." The night is not about his enjoyment; it is about rather the opposite. As Bron notes, "The client's job was to impress, not be impressed" (163-74). The client/prostitute relationship is one of an active/passive construction, and Bron can only think of his relation to the Spike in these terms. Thus, the role that he assigns for himself completely eclipses any pleasure he may
have been able to receive from the evening and any real connection that he may have had with the Spike. Bron's inability to think beyond social norms here is significant in considering his inability to articulate his desire. Because his past is constructed of adherence to arbitrary social structures and binary relationships, Bron does not form the ability to freely seek pleasure. Therefore, with the removal of arbitrary social constraints on Triton, Bron constructs his own internal barriers to self-fulfillment.

This construction of internal restraints becomes most apparent when Bron recreates himself as a woman. On Triton, there are "forty or fifty basic sexes" (99), but Bron cannot disengage himself from thinking in terms of a strict male/female gender binary. Furthermore, Bron views this binary relationship as a hierarchical one, with the former being the privileged term. Bron states unequivocally that "what gives the species the only value it has are men" because of the "ingenuity" that is born of "a particular male aloneness" that women simply do not possess (231-2). Bron decides that the best way to apply his understanding of the male/female relationship is to boldly abandon his privileged position and become a woman. As Bron explains, she chose to undergo the sex change because, having been a man, she can understand how to protect the all-important "male aloneness": "I'll know how to leave it alone enough not to destroy it, and at the same time to know what I can do" (231).

However, fulfilling the role that she constructs for herself proves to be difficult for Bron. While Bron does undergo a complex physical and genetic procedure to make himself a woman, it is ultimately the male Bron that creates the woman that he becomes. As her post-op counselor explains to her: "In one sense, you are as real a woman as
possible, in another sense you are a woman created by a man—specifically by the man you were" (251). And the man that Bron was had a very strict understanding of the role of the "real" woman. Thus, Bron as a woman is structured around self-imposed behavioral restraints. One of the first things she notes after her transformation is that "a real woman had to relinquish certain rights" (233), and this idea dominates her behavior. When Bron finally decides to fulfill her self-defined purpose as a woman and connect herself to "real" man, she finds herself in a conundrum. She goes to a bar in an attempt to meet someone but cannot figure out how to behave because, as she notes: "I am in the position where I am here to be approached and cannot acknowledge an approach of any sort: Otherwise, I will turn off the person that I am here to be approached by" (258). The female Bron cannot function within the boundaries set by the male Bron; she is paralyzed by them. She realizes that, for herself as a "real" woman attempting to find a "real" man, "the doing [...] was preeminently a matter of being; and being had turned out to be, more and more, specifically a matter of not doing" (263). Following the guidelines established by the male Bron, she discovers that the construction of her personality is based on restrictions; she can only realize herself negatively, through the things that she will not allow herself to do. Bron approaches the construction of herself as a woman just as he approaches his role as the "client" when out with the Spike, as a series of barriers between her/himself and the expression of her/his desires. While Triton celebrates the "subjective realities" of its citizens, Bron's inability to define herself without the imposition of outside social constraints leads her to impose order on her own reality.
When Bron goes to get his sex change, the doctor informs him that most of the clinic's clients are from Mars or Earth, which the doctor terms the "less-enlightened" societies. As he explains, sex changes are not common among natives on Triton because "our system doesn't produce that many serious sexually dissatisfied types" (220). In allowing an outlet for every social and sexual desire that the individual can imagine, the need to adhere to the conceptual structure of a gender binary is effectively removed on Triton, and what Bron undergoes, while a physical change, is based on a socially, not biologically, constructed binary. As was earlier noted, there are dozens of sexes with which one can identify on Triton, so Bron's desire to become a "woman" is based on "those nameless social attitudes" that Bron internalized "on a world with a different culture." Thus, when Bron complains to her post-op counselor that she has become more inefficient and emotional since her sex change, the counselor bluntly informs her that these changes are imagined and "all so desperately Martian" (251). Having internalized such notions of the female character on Mars, Bron attempts to view herself along those guidelines. She wants the biological change to have been a real transformation of her being and to fit with her preconceived notions of the gender binary, but on a world like Triton where such notions have been superseded, the very foundation on which Bron bases her own identity is proven untenable.

As was earlier noted, Jameson maintains that our ability to embrace a utopian vision is complicated by the removal of the "miseries and deformations" that make up our personalities as much as do the "pleasures and fulfillments." Because of their intrinsic connection, we may have significant difficulty imaging the removal of the former without
the disappearance of the latter. Bron's inability to achieve happiness on Triton, a world which has reached so many utopian goals, is a product of certain internalized "deformations." He can only identify with his society through the lens of individualism, resulting in a self-imposed alienation. This desire to be an autonomous unit functioning independently alienates him not only from others but from his own being as well. Instead of focusing on interaction ("doing"), he can only define himself through pre-established identities ("being"). Because Bron cannot view himself as a social being, he is committed to constructing barriers that block the active development of his personality. Bron, however, does not recognize his own "deformities;" his inability to function on Triton appears to him as a conflict between his essential being and a society that does not understand him. This is perhaps the true difficulty the reader faces in approaching visions of the future; in order to even attempt to imagine a world without misery, the reader must first identify externally imposed social deformations as something that can be separated from herself as an individual. This difficulty is particularly significant when attempting to move beyond the limitations of individualism; the trouble with individualism is that it masquerades as individuality.
WORKS CITED


---. "Theses on Feuerbach." Tucker 143-5.


