SOME INTRODUCTORY REMARKS are warranted. First, a rather uneasy integration in the paper of two critiques can be discerned: (1) the critique of the position of woman in modern societies: it is quite clear that her role as defined by the expectations of the marriage-family institution at present is a severely delimiting and, for the most part, oppressive one; and of (2) the critique of the marriage-family institution, both in terms of the functions it performs for a capitalist society and in terms of the proposition that institutionalisation of an intimate relationship between individuals is destructive to more or less degree. Secondly, then, it must be understood that the family is treated not as a universal idea but as an institution, a micro-system, that performs vital functions for the wider society or macro-system. It follows that if some kind of total questioning is being directed to the

1 The reason for this is that I regard the first critique as being relevant, for the most part, to short-term considerations; the second critique involves a much longer term perspective and, obviously, a more total analysis.

2 Under this generic term I include the Soviet Union and all societies that may be termed 'state-capitalist', and indeed, ultimately, any industrialized society, the power structure of which is centralized and in which individuals are denied participation in the decisions controlling their lives.

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macro-system, it must be extended to this micro-system, particu-
larly since the latter is usually the area of the most intensely-felt
experience for the individual and the area in which the individual's
‘being-in-the-world’ is first constituted. Thirdly, this paper can
only lay pretension to being provocative hypothesis. What little
empirical work has been done on the family has occurred almost
entirely within a behaviouralist framework. That is, much
empirical work has to be done in respect of these critical questions
before they can be formulated with some certainty. Fourthly, in
this paper, an ideal-type will be employed: that of the conjugal,
middle-class, urban family in an industrialised society — the type
that is being rapidly universalised in these societies.

It is because the marriage-family institution is so taken-for-
granted, agrees so natural, that it is first necessary to establish
just how important it is and point to the impact it has on all of
our lives.

It has been sociologists, concerned to refute the contentions,
of other sociologists and social moralists, that the family, regret-
tably, has been stripped of its functions and is doomed to eclipse
by other social institutions in modern industrial societies, who
have recognised the importance of the family institution to the
wider society and have isolated its functions for that society.
The arguments as to the decline of the family have taken two
forms. First, sociological: e.g. MacIver has argued that: (i) agen-
cies of the State have increasingly taken over the governmental
functions of the family; (ii) the formal system of public education
has relieved the family of its educative functions; (iii) the family
has ceased to be an economic unit, as the modern factory system
removed work from the domestic sphere; (iv) pointing to, e.g., the
phenomenon of adolescent youth culture, recreation is no longer
provided for completely within the family but increasingly provided
for outside it. Second, moralistic: the Pope, clerics in general,
members, etc., see societal ‘ills’ such as crime, delin-
quency, sexual permissiveness, anomic youth (i.e. student rebels)
as the result of the “growing instability of marriage”, the “contin-
ual increase of divorce”, of, generally, the “decline” of the family.
Against this, Fletcher, among others, shows that the above lament
is misplaced: what these people are talking about is not the

6 Ibid., ch.3.
eclipse of the family, but of one particular form of this institution. Indeed the moralists are regretting the demise of the Victorian patriarchal, middle-class family, the propagator of a morality, the Puritan Ethic, that underpinned the scarcity conditions of the accumulation of capital. Against the sociologists, Fletcher argues that the governmental and aducative functions,7 in particular, are not merely still extant but vital to the workings of the wider society. Indeed, he argues:

\[\ldots\] the family is now responsible for the fulfilment of more functions than hitherto, and \[\ldots\] it is more tightly and more responsibly woven into the wider structure of society than was the case before the full onset of industrialization. (Emphasis in original).

So the family has become more functional not less and the caution here is not to confuse changes within that institution with the demise of the institution itself. This caution should operate when we observe or project changes in the family stimulated by the transition from a mechanised to a ‘technological’ economy. It should also operate in circumstances in which the role of women is clearly going to be considerably modified; that is, I agree with Berger and Kellner’s argument8 that “sexual emancipation” and “equalitarian values” will serve to increase the viability of the marriage-family institution so far as it will become humanised and more adaptive to individual need.

We need only adduce the following points and evidence to see the importance of the marriage-family institution. First, in all western countries more people are marrying and are marrying at an earlier age. Thus, in Britain, according to prevailing trends, it was projected that, within this decade, 1 of all women under 25 years would be married and that, by 1972, only 5% of women will regain single9. And, to cite Elizabeth Still, in a New Society report:

The average age at marriage is now well under 23 in Britain as against between 19 and 20 in America for women.10

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7 The recreative function is also still extant and important: the institutionalization of the weekend and the advent of television are important factors here.
10 “The Fashion for Families”, New Society, 8 June 1967, p.837. The same tendencies can be seen in figures for Australia:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Average age of marriage</th>
<th>1920's</th>
<th>1961</th>
<th>1966</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Women</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>24.7</td>
<td>22.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Men</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>25.2</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

In Australia in 1966, 59.6% of all females in the 20-24 age group were married; in the 30-34 age group, the proportion was 93.15%. As elsewhere, marriage among minors has also increased. Data provided in second edition of A. F. Davies and S. Encel Australian Society: a sociological introduction (Cheshire 1970), p.275.
The general reason for these trends is agreed on: "with better economic conditions, people find marriage easier, and the desire to marry seems to have become more widespread throughout the population."11 Secondly, while the rate of births conceived outside marriage has been increasing,12 most of the couples concerned marry. Greater sexual "permissiveness", symptom of what we may call the new Hedonist Ethic, is no challenge to the family institution—a point I shall develop later. Thirdly, it may be argued that relatively easier access to divorce may endanger the family institution, but, apart from pointing out that there is substantial degree of remarriage or that the rate of divorce remains fairly constant—12% in Australia—or that 1/3 of the total number of divorces over the past few decades in Britain have been childless, divorce is still, clearly, contained within the institutional structure. Divorce is one more mechanism increasing the adaptiveness of the marriage-family institution: as Berger and Kellner argue:

Typically, individuals in our society do not divorce because marriage has become unimportant to them, but because it has become so important that they have no tolerance for the less than completely successful marital arrangement they have contracted with the particular individual in question. (My emphasis).13

They continue and speak of "the crucial need for the sort of world that only marriage can produce in our society". This need arises because, simply, all people require a very small14 community of intimates with whom to express themselves and to whom they can refer for support; and the only socially sanctioned expression of such a community is the marriage-family. Consider here the very intense cultural pressures that urge people to marry and have children. Consider, also, that, with probably only the exception of the orphan or displaced individuals, all individuals live out their lives in some familial relationship. Indeed, most individuals are directly involved in this institution for all of their lives with the exception of the transitional or abnormal conditions of: (i) the independent young worker or student, (even here, probably the majority in these two categories live at home until married); (ii) the married couple childless, or as yet without children, and the widowed old. The family then is the key inter-

12 70% of all first births in Australia, a figure cited by Professor Lloyd Cox, professor of Gynaecology, University of Adelaide, at a meeting to plan a Family Planning Association in S.A., (2/12/1969).
14 That such a community within a capitalist society tends to be very small may be more a function of the nature of human relations within that society rather than of a universal need.
personal unit in modern society: it is the only alternative for "an emotionally fulfilling life."  

To conclude this introductory section, the following statement by Fletcher may be cited:

... the family is demonstrably so important a social group, so powerful a nucleus of interests and loyalties, and so fruitful a source of individual variety that it is always very conspicuously and strictly supervised and regulated by the central Agencies of authority and control in society — the state, the law, the religion. (My emphasis). (33).

Society, then, requires that interpersonal relations be institutionalised: while Fletcher does not ask why, the proposition, implicit in his statement, may be suggested: that it is because the marriage-family is a, if not, the, primary instrument of effective social control. At the descriptive level, this proposition is elaborated by C. L. R. James: the family is —

... the whole civilisation in embryo. There the social practices, aims and ideals of the whole civilisation are not merely taught but practiced under those conditions and between individuals where human (and in all probability biological affections) are inseparably intertwined with the social disciplines of the society.

It is this need to institutionalise interpersonal relations that will be investigated in this paper. At this stage it is possible to propose that institutionalisation of a personal relationship spells reification to greater or lesser degree. As a working definition of 'reification' that provided by Berger and Pullberg will be used: "By reification we mean the moment in the process of alienation in which the characteristic of thinghood becomes the standard of objective reality." Reification, that is, is the situation in which man's actions and creations are not understood as the expression of human vital activity but are objectified and set over and above men who become merely reactive creatures.

II

What is the nature of the social system that requires this alienated behaviour? At this stage, only a schematic answer, to which further content shall be given in the rest of the paper, can
be offered. The nature of this system can be suggested in one word, as provided by Marcuse: “Domination” —

Domination is in effect whenever the individual’s goals and purposes and the means of striving for and attaining them are prescribed to him and performed by him as something prescribed. Domination can be exercised by men, by nature, by things — it can also be internal, exercised by the individual on himself, and appear in the form of autonomy.19

Also schematically, two historical stages may be distinguished here and Marcuse further used: (1) domination by nature; (2) domination by men, and, in particular, the stage at which social domination has been “introjected” — i.e., the process by which it becomes a psychic, an internal control — by the individual. Using Marcuse directly, this historical distinction becomes that between “surplus-repression”, which is “the restrictions necessitated by social domination”, and “(basic) repression [which is] the ‘modifications’ of the instincts necessary for the perpetuation of the human race in civilisation.”20

Basic repression is more operative than surplus-repression in this case cited by Juliet Mitchell:

In the Soviet Union in the 1920’s, advanced social legislation aimed at liberating women above all in the field of sexuality: divorce was made free and automatic for either partner, thus effectively liquidating marriage; illegitimacy was abolished, abortion was free etc . . . The social and demographic effects of these laws in a backward, semi-literate society bent on rapid industrialization (needing, therefore, a high birth-rate) was — predictably — catastrophic. Stalinism soon produced a restoration of iron traditional norms. Inheritance was reinstated, divorce inaccessible, abortion illegal, etc . . . The State cannot exist without the family.21

The centralisation of power required for rapid industrialisation in an ‘undeveloped’ country, and the process — in which time will be the most scarce resource — itself demand the regulation, the institutionalisation, of sexuality and reproduction. Individual gratification and individual expression must be attuned to, i.e. modified to suit, overall social needs, in this case, the struggle against basic material scarcity.22 This kind of analysis involves the historicising of Freud’s ‘Reality Principle’, a conceptual tool that can afford great historical insight.

20 Herbert Marcuse Eros and Civilisation (Sphere Books, Gr. Britain. 1969) p.44. When material scarcity, as an all-embracing imperative, no longer obtains, basic — and surplus — repression coexist to constitute a complex of domination, with the latter, historically in the West, having predominated as primary scarcity was increasingly combatted.
22 It is thus that I would explain the puritanism we find in Mao’s China.
In the modern capitalist, 'developed' society the imperatives of basic scarcity are not dominant. There is, rather, a situation that can be described as one of relative scarcity: as control over nature has proceeded and new needs have developed, the meaning of gratification, in contrast to the former situation, has changed. Scarcity now refers to surplus consumption and it is this on which gratification in our societies centres. It is the perpetuation of this relative scarcity that is irrational for it spells a situation, in which life has become a means to consumption, to be set against the real potential of these societies for life to be seen as an end in itself, for the human, creative capacities of each individual to be expressed freely and explored. This irrational situation is perpetuated because it services the interests of the minority(ies) in whose hands power is concentrated. In a top-down, centralised structure of power the 'masses' are organised, they are adapted to the social roles entailed by this structure. In terms of an ideal-type dichotomy of behaviour and action, they behave far more than they act, and, if they act, it is principally within the framework of behaviour required. Spontaneity, or free, unpatterned, autonomous action, is therefore outlawed. So sexuality, potentially the primal urge of spontaneity must be institutionalised. Reproduction must also be controlled, not so much in terms of population needs, but in terms of socialising or adapting new members of society to the patterned and controlled behavior that services the social system. This socialisation process is not most effectively undertaken in impersonal or large institutions but in small, intimate ones in which biological ties justify and cushion the social control at work.

III

A note on Engels' analysis: The schematic and too-simple overview offered above may suggest Engels' explanation of the origins of the family as involving too narrow an interpretation of historical materialism, too literal use of the term 'economic'. He argued: "Monogamy [i.e. the marriage-family] arose out of the concentration of considerable wealth in the hands of one person — and that a man — and out of the desire to bequeath this wealth to the man's children and to no one else's." \(^{24}\) He

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23 Sexuality here is to be understood in a broad sense, as requiring the *aufhebung* of the mind/body, reason/passion dichotomy, and as entailing free bodily expression that subsumes under itself genital sexuality and that makes any prescription to how sexuality is to express itself arbitrary. The question then becomes not what is sexuality — that we can only discover in freedom — but whether it is expressed humanly.

did wisely leave as a query: “Since monogamy arose from economic causes, will it disappear when these [particular] causes disappear?”

Once again, the need is obvious: for a historiography that analyses the origins of the sexual division of labour, of the family. Until that analysis begins, the critical analysis offered here is without depth.

### IV

Before critical description of the specific functions of the marriage-family institution in modern, capitalist societies proceeds, a note should be made on the changing role of women within this institution. Fletcher, Hannah Gavron and Klein and Myrdal have all suggested ‘progressive’ social reforms that would humanise somewhat women’s lot. These reforms centre principally round the right of wives-mothers to work. This demand has become socially legitimate, though not actualised, and it is a demand very difficult to resist not only in the face of the educated housewife’s ennui that is, ultimately, socially destabilising but also in the face of condensation in time of child-bearing years and increased longevity of life. That is, the demands of Betty Friedan’s NOW can be actualised within the existing framework, and their actualisation is likely to sustain rather than imperil the marriage-family institution.

### V

The following functions that the family institution performs have not been adequately conceptually integrated. At the outset, it is enough to say that they are to be subsumed under the general societal imperative of institutionalisation of human action, its conversion into behaviour. They are listed in order of increasing importance: the last three — privatisation, sexuality and socialisation — are clearly central to maintenance of this institutionalisation. The naming of these functions suggests only simple descriptive categories such as one may find in a behaviouralist presentation of the family: content is given to these categories beyond that, but, again, the deficiency lies in the failure to show how these functions come together to constitute a totality, a micro-system.

1. **Production.** The family clearly plays a supportive role for capitalist production, for the market economy, but this role is

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25 *Loc.Cit.*


dealt with under the functions of privatisation and socialisation. What is meant by production here is the role of the wife-mother, within the family, in providing domestic labour which, as Margaret Benston shows, “constitutes a huge amount of socially necessary production.” This function is not essential to the macro-system: it could be provided for outside the family by more collective or communal arrangements. This will occur in a capitalist society only so far as it does not diminish the consumption role of the family unit.

(2) Reproduction. As before, not so important in itself in respect to the existing structure of power, but obviously vital in the sense of species-survival. However, even this latter function may diminish with social anxiety as to population control. Quality not quantity will count, and thus this function must be seen in close relation with the socialisation function.

(3) Consumption. Briefly, two points may be made here. First, as Betty Friedan says: “the perpetuation of housewifery, the growth of the feminine mystique, makes sense (and dollars) when one realises that women are the chief customers of American business.” The motivation researchers have analysed in too competent fashion the sense of futility and social isolation of the house-bound wife-mother in suburbia and know how to evoke its sublimation as a huge commercial proposition. Secondly, it only matters that the family buys. Accordingly, the value complex of possessiveness and privateness is evoked and reinforced to produce an incredible situation of waste: e.g. washing machines and powered mowers, etc., are used only for a slight proportion of the time they could be used.

(4) Privatisation. This function may be described as cushioning, as serving as a retreat from the general dehumanisation of and lack of communality in the macro-system. The marriage-family institution becomes the “crystallisation of a so-called private sphere of existence, more and more segregated from the immediate controls of the public institutions (especially the economic and political ones), and yet defined and utilised as the main social area for...

30 It is because this labour is not recognised as productive that housewives demean themselves in their own eyes in contrast to their husband-breadwinner and suffer general lack of status.
32 This particular advertising appeal will have to change to meet any modifications in the role of women.
33 Operation of Parkinson’s Law, i.e. over-use, is synonymous with waste in this context.
the individual’s self-realisation”.

The complexity of the public sphere, the remoteness of key decision-making from the individual, the ‘technological veil’ combine to make society and its workings opaque to comprehension. Thus the individual, in having to “find a way of living in this alien world”, has to secure to himself some space, to develop “human relations” such as to “modify its anonymity” and to develop enough savoir faire to survive the rat-race, to work the form-filling requirements of large, public bureaucracies. The opaqueness of the public sphere with the consequent need for private space combine to produce a situation in which large numbers of people “are quite content” that “their public involvements have little subjective importance, regarding work as a not too bad necessity and politics as at best a spectator sport.” It is the private sphere — “the warm house, detached and insulated” — in which

... the individual will seek power, intelligibility and, quite literally, a name — the apparent power to fashion a world, however Lilliputian, that will reflect his own being: a world that, seemingly having been shaped by himself and thus unlike those other worlds that insist on shaping him, is translucently intelligible to him (or so he thinks) a world in which, consequently, he is somebody — perhaps even, within its charmed circle, a lord and master.

The wife-mother, defined in terms of her “expressive function” meets this need in, e.g., husband ego-building. Gerger and Kellner argue further that “the public institutions have no need to control the individual’s adventures in the private sphere, as long as they really stay within the latter’s circumscribed limits”. At least there is no need for direct control; the private space is illusory for even there interpersonal relations will be overlaid by role expectations and behaviour attuned to the needs of the public sphere. The question required to be asked is what kind of human creativity can develop or express itself in such a constricted and falsely private space? What is the nature of that remnant of the world left to human beings when they see their humanity mirrored in a prize rose or decorated cake? Moreover, may not the possible frustration incumbent on such a confined search for autonomy lead to, e.g., in many cases, authoritarian parent-child relationships, particularly when the male bread-winner experiences authoritarian or top/down structures, however subtly mediated, within the work-place? The need for power in the private sphere


is likely to be intensified in the 'post-industrial' society with its degree of centralisation of the productive apparatus and with what Daniel Bell calls "the loss of insulating space" and "communications overload."

Possessive individualism and exclusiveness are inherently involved in the privatisation role of the family:

Families have helped to perpetuate exploitative systems by separating people into small, isolated units, and preventing them from joining together to fight for their common interests by training them to consider that their worries are personal and private when they are in fact social. Being trained to turn all one's affection towards a spouse and children, people suppress their need for warmth from a broader community. Families promote individualism and the false linking of identity with private property, private space etc. . . .

Thus R. D. Laing calls the family a "protection-racket": on the one hand, "this mutual back-scratching, this esteem-, status-, support-, protection-, security-giving and getting"; on the other, the outside world conceived as a menacing 'them'. This is the ideal situation for suspicions, exclusivism of any kind — racial, class, etc. — to flourish; however, it may become less directly anti-social in a consumer, Hedonist Ethic society.

One important effect of the family's privatisation role at present is the social isolation of the housewife reflected in the pathetic dependence of such lonely women on, e.g., 'Talkback' programs.

(5) Sexuality. To restate an earlier proposition, inherent in institutionalisation of interpersonal relationships is sexual expression: the key nature of the family, the focus of this institutionalisation, is then readily apparent. Sexual repression is a necessity for any structure of 'domination' where the overriding priorities are not human but, e.g., 'efficient' and 'rational' production. That is, for a society where people must be organised, scheduled to undertake what has been defined as socially necessary labour on a planned basis. Sexuality becomes dominated by time, the most important scarce value in any system of domination: it is thus, as an intimate situation, relegated to the life corners of relaxation in which, because so dominated by the structure of organisation of time, it is apt to become routinised. More importantly, sex-

39 Linda Gordon "Families" — Published by Sydney WLM.
41 This is true, paradoxically, of the consumer society in which leisure, in terms of historical perspective, appears a very 'liberating' phenomenon. Yet leisure itself is defined in relation to work and is itself organized: predefined expectations, patterned behaviour characterize leisure as much they do work. An intimate situation of two people always has the tendency, fulfilled to some degree or other, to go beyond the established expectations and patterns; but the expectations of leisure appear to involve more intensive group interaction — the responsibility of sharing 'fun' with others.
uality in this situation becomes a scarce good. It is therefore easily convertible into a commodity in a society that commercialises leisure; once a commodity, sexuality as expression of human relations takes on an instrumental character — use by one (male) of the other (female) or, what will become more common, mutual use. Expression of gratuitous, spontaneous reciprocity between two autonomous individuals who see and welcome each other as such is precluded. Indeed, such reciprocity is precluded by the fact of institutionalisation of interpersonal relationships itself.

As earlier indicated, there are some — sociologists or moralists — who see 'permissiveness' as endangering the very foundations of the marriage-family institution. This perception might encourage those who reject the Puritan Ethic to see 'permissiveness' as the alternate. This is a complete fallacy since permissiveness as a conception is necessarily defined in relation to the already established family institution. If a free, non-institutionalised situation obtained, there could be no such concept as 'permissiveness'. Indeed, permissiveness in liberalising the institution, makes it a more effective and more subtle containing force. So far as any conception is necessarily defined in relation to the already established itself to express institutionalisation: it is only a variation on the constant theme of patterned behaviour. Clearly, then, the separation out of authentic expression of sexuality from repressed sexuality is a very difficult process for the individual, however conscious, to undertake. It is the psychology of repression of the Puritan Ethic epoch that breeds the hatred directed against the few who throw away their watches and attempt to live unfettered by the demands of inhuman, social organisation. Repression in the Hedonist Ethic epoch is likely to express itself in the individual's inability to distinguish between 'freedom' and 'license'. Free-spontaneous expression of sexuality is not synonymous with the dehumanised ritual of sleeping round, the morality of which is only too well suited to the exploitative, possessive-individualist morality of capitalism: as de Beauvoir says:

> Liberty ... does not mean fickleness: a tender sentiment is an involvement of feeling which goes beyond the moment; but it is for the individual alone to determine whether his will in general and his behaviour in detail are to be such as to maintain or, on the contrary, to break off this relation he has entered upon; *sentiment is free when it depends upon no constraint from outside, when it is experienced in fearless sincerity.* (Emphasis mine).

Sexual permissiveness will be encouraged in the modern, consumer society: not only used to market more goods, but one more

42 Under the Puritan Ethic this scarcity is to be conceived in absolute terms: under the Hedonist Ethic it is to be conceived in relative terms.
drug capitalism shall be pleased to administer, to stave off fright­
ening and dangerous questions about the meaning of one’s life.
To be drugged mitigates against developing a human social situa­
tion: communication and expression of self are not important. As
Jules Henry says:

In the metaphysic of fun, fun is what gives reality to the world; no matter
whom you are with, if you have fun together all will be right and the world
will hold together. (Emphasis in the original).11

That, far from being a challenge to the family, permissiveness
increases its viability is recognised by, e.g., Fletcher. For him,
experience before marriage, will increase the chance of finding
a sexually compatible partner and thus will make the marriage-
family institution more adaptable to individual need.15

(6) Socialisation. Socialisation is the process in which the indi­
vidual is adapted to the macro-system, to its mode of organisation
and ends. The marriage-family is not only the basic socialiser of
children to the dominant value-system, to the societal structure
of roles and to the ‘commonsense’ — or typified16 — conception
of human interaction: it is also the primary instrument of adult
socialisation. In discussing the socialisation function of the modern
family institution, the emphasis here is not on specific values
transmitted in the process, but on the learning of institutionalised
or reified behaviour.17

To consider adult socialisation first: here, marriage is the
“decisive phase”.18 Marriage is what Berger and Kellner describe
as a “crucial nomic instrumentality in our society”: “the essential
social functionality of this institution cannot be fully understood
if this fact is not perceived.”19 Sociologists since Durkheim have
implicitly recognised this in their realisation that marriage serves
as a protecton against ‘anomic’ for the individual. The marriage-
family as a likely vehicle of reified social behaviour is thus sug­

16 “The common-sense world, then, is the arena of social action; within it men
come into relationship with each other and try to come to terms with each
other as well as with themselves. All of this, however, is typically taken for
granted, and this means that these structures of daily life are not in themselves
recognized or appreciated formally by common-sense. Rather, common-sense
sees the world, acts in the world, and interprets the world through these implicit
typifications.” — Maurice Natanson in intro. to Alfred Schutz’s Collected Papers,
17 Of course, form (structure of organization of behaviour) and content (values)
are integral to each other.
19 Ibid. p.5.
gsted, since anomie refers to the breakdown or absence of the process by which the individual is **successfully** adapted to the nomic structure of the social system. The successfully adapted individual does not, in all self-consciousness, reflection and experience, choose his own values and mode of social interaction or, since this is impossible in such absolute terms, to restate it, there is no real dialectic between the individual and society in constituting values and modes of social interaction. The nomic structure of a social system, the defining feature of which is 'domination', precludes such a dialectic.\(^5\) Anomie is the condition of the individual who has learnt the expectations in respect of an ever already constituted nomic structure: i.e., he cannot attempt praxis\(^5\) because he wants to be directed or subsumed under some kind of organic social system. Berger and Kellner point out that marriage as a phase of socialisation, "has a rather different structure" from those of the earlier phases of childhood and adolescence:

There the individual was in the main socialized into already existing patterns. Here he actively collaborates rather than passively accommodates himself.\(^5\)

Such collaboration is expression of the socially produced need to surrender oneself to the social system.\(^5\) It is in terms of this need that we may accept as true the proposition that "married people are more stable emotionally (i.e., operating within a more controlled scope of emotional expression), more mature in their views (i.e., inhabiting a firmer and narrower world in conformity with the expectations of society), and more sure of themselves (i.e., having objectivated a more stable and fixated self-definition)."\(^5\)

The reified character of marriage is expressed in the familiar sociological fact that marriage, for the most part, tends to be **homogamous** — i.e., it involves two individuals from similar backgrounds, most obviously, in terms of region, class, ethnic and religious affiliations. Homogamy has an important stabilising function and sharing of background and of social typifications is essential to effective institutionalisation of a relationship. Thus marriage, if it is to work, is a situation in which the two individuals "have internalised the same overall world, including the general

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\(^5\) In Sartrian terms, this may be stated as praxis as having given way to the domination of the practico-inert. Cf. R. D. L tienen & David Cooper *Reason and Violence: A Decade of Sartre's Philosophy 1950-60*. (Tavistock 1964).

\(^5\) Praxis "is revealed immediately by its end", i.e. it allows ready identification o: the agent with a project; praxis is "free" because it "invents its own law" as "mediation between the objectivity already given and the objectivity that remains to be produced." (Emphasis in original). *Ibid.* p.153.


definitions and expectations of the marriage relationship itself."55 This shared world is only partially constituted at the outset: the establishment of a common definition of reality is a process in marriage which occurs principally through what Berger and Kellner call "conversation":

Each partner ongoingly contributes his conceptions of reality, which are then 'talked through', usually not once but many times, and in the process become objectivated by the conversational apparatus.56

This objectivation process is easily apt to become reified: marriage then becomes not a relationship between two individuals but a symbiotic relationship to which both surrender themselves. That is, they see their own and the other's identity as having its focus in the overlapping area constituted by shared actions, interests, perceptions, etc. The potentially destructive nature of this symbiotic relationship is exemplified in the following two situations. In the first situation, if one partner dies, the established identity of the other still alive is threatened.57 In the second, if one should individually develop beyond the already agreed-on, shared definition of him or her, the overlapping area — i.e. the relationship — and the established identity of the other are threatened. One important effect of this symbiotic relationship is the "sharing of future horizons, which leads not only to stabilisation, but inevitably to a narrowing of the future projections of each partner"58: generally, "possibilities become factualities".59

The socialisation of children in the family is their induction into a reified existence: "a child raised in the circumscribed world of the nuclear family is stamped by it in terms of his psychological needs and social expectations."60 The modern family is acclaimed as being 'democratic', both in the sense of being child-centred and in the sense of being "democratically managed in that husband, wife and children are all taken into account in arriving at family..."58 Berger & Kellner Op.Cit. p.15.

55 Ibid. p.10.
56 Ibid. p.13.
57 "An absolute union between two people that has been destroyed by death can only be reconstructed as a different morphon, another Gestalt. The one who keeps living must accept a double identity which measures new experiences on mutual agreed standards but which in turn judges the validity of these standards by the force of new experiences. I had compressed an entire life cycle from naive childhood through acquisitive adolescence toward productive maturity into the twenty years since my husband's death." — Sibyl Moholy-Nagy Moholy-Nagy. Experiment in Totality. (MIT Press, 1969).
58 Ibid. p.17.
59 Ibid. p.17.
60 Ibid. p.19.
decisions. If this is democracy, it is more in respect to behaviour than to action: it occurs within the already established framework of values and norms of interaction with each other and the world. R. D. Laing is one concerned to establish the destructive character of this induction into a reified existence: the family “is . . . the usual instrument for . . . getting each new recruit to the human race to behave and experience in substantially the same way as those who have already got there.” Socialisation, both in terms of the process itself and in terms of the inhuman nature of the world to which adaption is made, is, Laing argues, likely to destroy or preempt any development of the individual self, i.e., of the individual’s sense of his own, particular being-in-the-world:

But the result of such adjustment to our society, is that having been tricked and having tricked ourselves out of our minds, that is to say, out of our own personal world of experience, out of that unique meaning with which potentially we may endow the external world, simultaneously we have been conned into the illusion that we are separate ‘skin-encapsuled egos’.

It is Laing’s and Jules Henry’s experience of schizophrenic and psychotic children that their ‘condition’ is largely the function of a familial situation that has denied them any sense of identity, of expression of self in the real world.

To conclude, the essential argument structuring this paper is that the family institution is the primary bastion of reification in modern, capitalist societies. The argument is well summed-up in this statement by Berger and Kellner:

The narrowing and stabilization of identity is functional in a society that, in its major public institutions, must insist on rigid controls over the individual’s conduct. At the same time, the narrow enclave of the nuclear family serves as a macrosocially innocuous ‘play area,’ in which the individual can safely exercise his world-building proclivities without upsetting any of the important social, economic and political valuecarts. Barred from expanding himself into the area occupied by these major institutions, he is given plenty of leeway to ‘discover himself’ in his marriage and his family, and, in view of the difficulty of this undertaking, is provided with a number of auxiliary agencies that stand ready to assist him (such as counseling, psychotherapeutic and religious agencies.) The marital adventure can be relied upon to absorb a large amount of energy that might otherwise be expended more dangerously. The ideological themes of familism, romantic love, sexual expression, maturity and social adjustment with the pervasive psychologistic anthropology that underlines them all, function to legitimate this enterprise. Also, the narrowing and stabilization of the individual’s principal area of conversation within the nuclear family is functional in a society that requires high degrees of both geographical and social mobility. The segregated little

63 Ibid. p.61.
world of the family can be easily detached from one milieu and transported into another without appreciably interfering with the central processes going on in it. Needless to say, we are not suggesting that these functions are deliberately planned or even apprehended by some mythical ruling directorate of the society. Like most social phenomena, whether they be macro or microscopic, these functions are typically unintended and unarticulated. What is more, the functionality would be impaired if it were too widely apprehended.65

In the last sentence lies the rationale of this paper.