

# THEORETICAL PRACTICE

"Without revolutionary theory there can be no revolutionary practice. This idea cannot be insisted upon too strongly at a time when the fashionable preaching of opportunism goes hand in hand with an infatuation for the narrowest forms of practical activity."

Lenin

# THEORETICAL PRACTICE editorial

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For many readers, the title of this new journal may seem paradoxical or even a contradiction in terms. We have chosen it because it marks a break with the ideologies which dominate contemporary Marxism. It re-establishes one of the crucial elements of Marxism-Leninism by emphasizing the irreducibility of theoretical work to political or economic struggle. And by stressing the specificity of theoretical work as a practice, it excludes contemplative academicism. But as well as fulfilling these rhetorical functions, it is a scientific concept.

To treat a human product as a simple 'given' is always an error, since the end-result is hypostasized, abstracted from the determination of the production process itself. No product could have the form of a simple presence. This would be to separate one aspect of a production process and to debase it, to make it appear as if it dropped from the sky. Marxist theory is the result of a specific form of practice, Marxist theoretical practice, which is specific in as much as it works in the realm of ideas to produce knowledge. In this respect it is different from political and economic practice through the distinctiveness of its raw material. Marxist theory is also distinguished from ideological practice by its epistemological formation: Marxist theory is counter-posed to all forms of utopianism and empiricism, and ideology in general. But all particular ideas are produced, even ideologies; that this is so is a fundamental, if elementary, law of Marxism.

Unfortunately, many classic texts of Marxism are susceptible to another interpretation. This interpretation makes the simple distinction between two elements of social life:

theory and practice, where theory is abstract and practice is purely concrete action, or activity. Theory here assumes the role of a 'given', produced by no determinate means at its own level. It is an abstract reflection of the material basis. Action ('practice') is predominant because it is materialist, as opposed to the idealism of ideas. Another interpretation abolishes the distinction between theory and practice in favour of a unilinear 'praxis', or fusion of both moments in the simultaneous changing of self and the world.

The recent work of Louis Althusser undercuts these interpretations by demonstrating that the recognition of theory as a distinctive practice can be located at decisive stages of the argument in Marxist texts. For this reason, the editors of Theoretical Practice believe that no development of scientific Marxism is possible which does not start from what Althusser has achieved. Althusser distinguishes four levels of practice: economic, political, ideological and theoretical, each with specific forms of combination of productive means, labour and material. The complex totality of these comprises 'social practice'. We are concerned here with theory and politics.

## Theoretical and Political Practices

Theoretical practice itself is not a conjuring trick, but a process which works by determinate means (an apparatus of theoretical concepts) on selected raw materials (pre-existing products of ideological and theoretical practice, not the real-concrete) to produce theoretical knowledge (the concrete in thought). This theoretical work is not identical with ideological practice. The formulation that in a revolutionary situation there is a necessary and spontaneous

escalation of an 'alienated' or 'revolutionary' culture towards Marxist theory is a false conception of the relation between ideology and theoretical practice. The relation between theory and ideology is external, there can be no fusion of one with the other. Marxist political practice is guided by, not 'led' by or 'fused' with theory. This complex unity is the unique nature of Marxism-Leninism. It is this necessary complex unity of theoretical and political practice which governs the proletarian revolution in the era of the transition from capitalism to socialism.

Marxist-Leninist parties are the organizational forms appropriate to political practice organized on the basis of Marxist theory. The complexity of the structure of the social formation engenders uneven development within all classes, in particular in the proletariat, the only truly revolutionary class in a capitalist society. Hence the party must be a membership of vanguard proletarian revolutionaries organized by full-time revolutionary workers, based and articulated upon the vanguard class. The party, organized on the basis of Marxist theory, is and must be adapted to the externally determined form of the class struggle in historically given conjunctures: the modality of struggle will be legal and illegal, peaceful and violent at different phases - this can never be fixed in advance by the party, for Marxism recognizes 'that new forms of struggle, unknown to the participants of the given period, inevitably arise as the given situation changes' (Lenin: Marx, Engels, Marxism).

Marxist theory has been the basis which has enabled the political practice of the proletarian movement to identify the particular relation of forces within the concrete conjuncture, to define the conjuncture. At one conjuncture the dominant form of the unity will be the struggle for a Marxist politics (eg, Lenin's struggle against the Economists); at another, it will take the form of the struggle against opportunism within the proletarian movement (eg, Lenin's

stand against social-chauvinism and pacifism in 1914, Mao's struggle against militarist adventurism). The most crucial conjuncture at which this unity must occur is that at which the seizure of state power, the smashing of the bourgeois state apparatus and the installation of the democratic dictatorship of the proletariat, are on the order of the day.

### Theory and Politics in Britain

In this country, by contrast, this complex unity has been replaced in the practice of Marxist groups by an opposition expressed either in the terms theory/ practice or theory/ action. In this formulation theory becomes abstract and action or practice concrete. It follows that theory becomes politically suspect, hypostasized as separate from 'concrete' struggles and thus in essence of no political relevance. This position is obscured by the formal commitment of Marxist groups to Marxist theory, but it leads to two practical results which are necessarily linked.

Firstly, theory ceases to be a developing and determinate scientific guide to political practice. Instead, it is transformed into an ideological tool, in order to distinguish one Marxist group from another. Theory, which is conceived as being purely abstract by these groups, produces in practice a theoretical position which is almost totally divorced from political practice in this country. The correlate of this dogmatist conception of theory is an opportunist-pragmatist use of theory, ie, revisionism. Scientific theory does not inform the political practice of these groups. Political practice therefore falls into a combination of organizational fetishism and moralism. In this situation, that aspect of theory not set aside for 'ritual' purposes becomes merely a pragmatic reflection of the immediate interests of the group. In their relations to the student movement this has led the groups to a variety of opportunist responses, from 'proletarianization' on the one hand to an uncritical embrace on the other. In theory,

this has been reflected in the gamut of revisionism, from ouvrieristic economism to 'critical' sociology.

Those engaged in the student movement and other new arenas of struggle have not been fooled by this practice. Rather, the combination of sectarianism and opportunism has tended to discredit scientific Marxism in their eyes, leading to a fetishization of action or to unprincipled 'syntheses' of bourgeois ideology and pseudo-Marxism. These movements have thus been unable to make the contribution to the revolution that they seemed to promise, and the work of the development of Marxist politics and theory in these areas has become more, not less difficult.

#### The Journal

This situation is aggravated by the proliferation of translations of continental Marxist theory from a whole range of schools originating in wholly different periods. It is therefore imperative for revolutionaries to work to establish correct dividing-lines in theory. As we have said, Theoretical Practice believes this must start from the philosophical intervention of Althusser and his co-workers. Theoretical Practice will therefore publish texts from all Marxist schools, insofar as they show the virtues and weaknesses of their positions and are rigorous enough to demand serious critical attention. The Révai review of History and Class-consciousness that we publish in this issue is an example of this. On the other hand, we intend to situate such texts as interventions in definite conjunctures, and to expose and challenge their ideological presuppositions. We also intend to publish translations of scientific articles significant for theoretical development in this country, and the beginnings of original work in a Marxist-Leninist problematic.

'Without revolutionary theory there can be no revolutionary movement. This idea cannot be insisted upon too strongly

at a time when the fashionable preaching of opportunism goes hand in hand with an infatuation for the narrowest forms of practical activity' (Lenin: What is to be done?). Our position does not imply theoreticism, ie, the development and practice of theory apart from politics and the class struggle. Science always serves the people, their enemies always try to obscure it. Scientificity in theory demands a correct and militant political position. This journal is politically situated within the anti-revisionist movement, i. e., it is Marxist-Leninist (against distortions of Marxism-Leninism by Trotskyist, neo-Stalinist and humanist ideology). It is part of this movement and hopes to be the nucleus of a group within it. The precondition for the formation of a Marxist-Leninist Party in Britain is unity through criticism and self-criticism, ie, at this stage, non-antagonistic relations between Marxist-Leninist groups. Without this it will be impossible to forge the instrument which can lead the class struggle to its end in the disappearance of all classes.

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We are interested in hearing from groups with similar aims or individuals wishing to form such groups. Letters, contributions and criticisms should be addressed to: Theoretical Practice, 13 Grosvenor Avenue, London N5.

# Althusser in English\*

by MICHAEL GANE

'All mysteries which lead theory to mysticism find their rational solution in human practice and in the comprehension of this practice' - MARX

## 1: Philosophy: practice of intervention

Althusser's driving impetus is a militant insistence on the importance of Marxist theory for a revolutionary Communist movement. His own self-situation is to mark out the present ideological and theoretical conjuncture in Marxism and the Communist movement: de-alienation (the critique of Stalin based on the concept of the cult); and the widespread development of Marxist humanism (based on the concepts found in Marx's early work.) The global context of these mainly western developments is the split in the world Communist movement between USSR and China. Althusser sees his task as facing up to the political and theoretical demands made by this conjuncture. His response has been to engage in a critique of humanism and a demonstration of the difference between humanism and Marxist theory, a task which has demanded a new elaboration of the distinction between ideological formations and science. The brilliance of Althusser's demonstration that Marxism-Leninism has established scientific, philosophical and political practices distinct from all humanism and historicism, makes his work the most important Marxist intervention in philosophy in the West since Lenin, and makes study of his work urgent and necessary.

Two current interpretations of Marxism, humanist and

historicist, are criticised by Althusser. In their Marxist form these interpretations date from the period of the October Revolution (Gramsci, Lukács) and have been strengthened by the publication of Marx's early works. However much these interpretations have the appearance of progressiveness in the period following Stalin's death, they remain on the ground of a problematic abandoned by Marx. That problematic, humanism, is governed by the epistemological structure of all ideology: empiricism and idealism. The human being, as a concrete subject, is the empirical given, embodying, in principle, the universal attributes of man. Or, in reverse, the essential attributes may be empiricised and the subject essentialised. 1 Historicism, which can exist outside the humanist couple, sees the unity and the temporality of a social formation as the product of the consciousness of the subject which may be the proletariat, the hegemonic ruling class, or human praxis, ie, Lukács, Gramsci, and Sartre respectively. I shall return to these points after examining the main elements of Althusser's work now available in English.

Althusser's works are 'investigations'. Their demand to the reader is clear, they are not to be regarded as elements of a completed system, but as systematic interventions into specific conjunctures of theory and ideology. (NB They do not relate to the political elements of these

\*For Marx (Essays of 1960-5; trans Allen Lane, 1969)  
Freud and Lacan (1964; trans New Left Review 55, May/June 1969)

Reading Capital (1965; parts trans New Left Books, 1970) (Part 3, by Balibar, is not reviewed here.)

Interview (1968; trans New Left Review 64, Nov/Dec 1970)

How to Read Marx's Capital (1969; trans Marxism Today, Oct 1969)

conjunctures. 2) Moreover it is because they are systematic that they are open to criticism and the possibility of correction. 3 His essays in For Marx and Reading Capital are an explicit double intervention: the first between Marx and Hegel, the second between Marx's early works and Capital. 4 'Freud and Lacan' is an intervention written to rescue the scientificity of Freud's work, and to argue the great significance of Lacan's interpretation of that work. 5 The Interview, which first appeared in the paper of the PCI, contains replies to seven questions on politics and philosophy. 'How to Read Marx's Capital' was written as an attempt to provide a guide to the reading of Capital for the readers of l'Humanité, the paper of the PCF.

During the period of these essays, 1960-9, Althusser has made a number of criticisms of his own work, the most important of which involved the conception of philosophy itself. Up to October 1967 Marxist philosophy was conceived as the theory of the different scientific practices and of scientific, ie theoretical knowledges. In 'To My English Readers' (For Marx<sup>6</sup>) certain positivist and theoreticist interpretations of his work were criticised as resulting from his own 'half silence' on a number of points. But from this half silence Althusser moved to an outright rejection of the conception of philosophy as the Theory of theoretical practice, which he criticised as one sided. The correction of the concept of philosophy was to register that Marxist philosophy is a quite different practice of philosophy from all previous philosophy, not itself the theoretical practice but a simultaneous double intervention in politics and theory, as a new and distinct theoretico-political instance. Althusser's philosophical practice is thus conceived by two key terms, intervention and conjuncture. They are to be regarded as the expression of two fundamental theses.

- 1) Philosophy represents the class struggle in theory.
- 2) History is governed by the primitive law of uneven development.

But the problems raised by the new definition lie beyond the scope of this review<sup>7</sup>, I mention it at this point only to note the limits which this change of definition has for Althusser: it does not affect the definitions of the other practices, nor the analysis of Capital. In other respects the error 'can be recognised and delimited at a few particular points...'<sup>8</sup> A correction of this type does not effect a total chain-reaction, although it has considerable importance in the region of the change itself. I will begin here with the main object of Althusser's essays, the materialist dialectic.

## II Dialectical Materialism

The materialist dialectic is specific only to scientific theoretical knowledge itself. Marxist philosophy is a philosophy 'of' knowledge in a quite limited sense.<sup>9</sup> The dialectic exists, Althusser argues, following Lenin, within Capital, in a form which has not been reflected, except in a partial manner, by Marxist philosophy. The dialectic, insofar as it is unreflected, remains in a purely 'practical state', the internal practico-constructive theoretical system of the knowledge produced by Marxist theoretical practice.<sup>10</sup>

Four distinct levels of practice are specified: economic, political, ideological, and theoretical, each being a process of transformation, through labour, of a raw material into a product; this transformative process being the 'general essence of practice'.<sup>11</sup> 'By practice in general I shall mean any process of transformation of a determinate given raw material into a determinate product, a transformation effected by a determinate

human labour, using determinate means (of 'production'). In any practice thus conceived, the determinate moment (or element) is neither the raw material nor the product, but the practice in the narrow sense: the moment of the labour of transformation itself, which sets to work, in a specific structure, men means and a technical method of utilizing the means. <sup>12</sup>

In the case of theoretical practice the product is theoretical knowledge. Its raw material is never simply the pure reality of the object, however. Althusser does not propose a dichotomy where the materialist dialectic is the property of thought as opposed to the 'real'. Rather, concrete-in-thought is produced through work on abstractions-in-thought, both of which are appropriations, but in different forms, of the real-concrete, which lies outside thought. Theoretical practice is an extractive-transformation process involving three elements: a Generality I, the presentation of the object as presented by various forms of ideology, practico-social or theoretical (ie pre-scientific), as a raw material, itself a product; a Generality II, the means, the corpus of concepts, and, in the experimental sciences, the whole field of technique 'in which the theoretical concepts are in large part invested' <sup>13</sup>; and a Generality III, the theoretical knowledge produced by the transformative work of Generality II on a Generality I. These distinctions enable Althusser to read Mao's essay On Contradiction as a 'description of the structures of the Marxist dialectic reflected in political practice'. <sup>14</sup> when Mao argues that the universality of contradiction exists only in the particular, and specificity universally appertains to the essence of contradiction, he refers, says Althusser, only to the 'condition of a scientifically specified universality'. <sup>15</sup> This specificity is Generality III <sup>16</sup>, that is, the specific totality produced by a theoretical practice; theoretical knowledge.

Having established the locale of this universality Althusser introduces the concept of structural complexity for the structures of the Marxist dialectic itself. Again, Mao's essay On Contradiction is central for the exposition. Althusser notes three concepts:

- The distinction between principal contradiction and secondary contradictions;
- the distinction between principal aspect and secondary aspects of each contradiction;
- the uneven development of contradiction.

'A simple process contains only a single pair of opposites, while a complex process contains more' (Mao). The simple process, however, is only conceivable in this scheme on one condition: if the secondary contradictions are 'complications' of a single simple principal contradiction. For Mao this is never the case. Indeed, the simple process is the case of the Hegelian dialectic, where the simple, basic contradiction is the origin of all other phenomena. In Mao, Althusser argues, the 'complex processes are never anything but given complexities, their reduction to simple origins is never envisaged, in fact or in principle'. <sup>17</sup>

At this point Althusser cites Marx: 'The simplest economic category... can only ever exist as the unilateral and abstract relation of a pre-given, living, concrete whole'. <sup>18</sup> In this instance simplicity is the product of an already constituted complexity, and here Althusser stresses that this is not a simple inversion of Hegel, rather it is the 'total elimination' of the Hegelian dialectic: 'Instead of the ideological myth of a philosophy of origins and its organic concepts, Marxism establishes in principle the recognition of the givenness of the complex structure of any concrete 'object', a structure which governs both the development of the object and the development of the theoretical practice which produces the knowledge of it'. <sup>19</sup>

The relation between complexity and the structure of contradictions lies in the very unevenness of contradiction, in their dominance/subordination, primary/secondary relations, as in their development: 'complexity implies domination. . . it is inscribed in its structure'.<sup>20</sup> ie, as a structure which is articulated in this dominance.

This means that the social formation as a structure in dominance is the complex dominance-structure of contradictions, and each contradiction is articulated only within this complex whole. The complex process is a self-governing mechanism of contradictions whose combinations condition the form of existence of the complex whole itself. There existed no concept in Marxism which enabled Althusser to name this mutual conditioning of contradictions. His solution has been to borrow one from Freud, and to fashion it to a new function. The 'reflection of the structure articulated in dominance that constitutes the unity of the complex whole within each contradiction' is termed overdetermination. But Althusser disqualifies two renderings: contradictions are neither 'univocal' nor 'equivocal'; ie. are neither determined eternally in one role in the complex whole, nor the simple reflection of pure contingency. The relation of the given aspect of the pre-given complex whole to the principle of a determinate instance (the economy), the relation of the situation in fact to the situation in principle, is a "'variation' of the - 'invariant' - structure, in dominance, of the totality".<sup>21</sup>

Overdetermination, itself a new term in this context, raises another question in relation to complex process: once the simple unitary origin is banished, what does it mean to speak of determination by the structure?

Althusser argues that the installation of structural causality into the theoretical practice itself, as its

practical explanatory principle, is the dominant aspect of Marx's immense theoretical revolution which introduces 'an absolutely new theoretical domain'.<sup>22</sup> The philosophical 'reprise', the production by philosophy of a new reflection on the practically realised revolution, must be the elaboration of this specific epistemological difference. The general epistemological problem is fundamental, and in Marx's specific case dramatic: 'I call it dramatic. . . because although Marx "produced" this problem he did not pose it as a problem".

- In its general form the problem concerns what Althusser calls the existence in the structure of its effects, or the effectivity of a structure on its elements.

- In a specific form the problem is, e. g. , the explication of the determination-structure of Marxist knowledge: 'the economic phenomena as determined by a (regional) structure of the mode of production, itself determined by the (global) structure of the mode of production'.<sup>23</sup> The 'matrix' role of the mode of production: the determination of the articulation of the structure by the historically specific mode of production.<sup>24</sup>

The break with the concept of the simple process as origin, is therefore the simultaneous break with the concept of an external and essential determination of economic phenomena by a non-economic structure. This form of causality - absent essential cause/present phenomena - is that of Leibnizian and Hegelian expressive causality.<sup>25</sup>

The structural causality of the complex process is an internal absence-presence, the structure, or cause, being immanent in its effects. Marx abandoned the two-level reality, inside/outside: the inside is the concept and the outside can only be the specification of the concept, exactly as the effects of the structure of the whole can



only be the existence of the structure itself'.<sup>26</sup> Badiou has drawn an analogy with linguistics in order to clarify a similar point: the paradigm is the internal absence of the syntagm;<sup>27</sup> or, more generally, the internal relation of the two axes of linguistics - speech (horizontal-presence) and syntax (absent vertical, present 'in' the horizontal ie speech.)

The Althusserian reading of Capital is founded on the concept of this difference: in this case the system of (vertical) concepts which develops in the discourse, and the forms of (horizontal) order of the discourse. The difference, of the system and the discourse, is a unity of dislocation, noting here that the discourse, as an ordered discourse of proof, is one of the system, i. e. , of the object grasped in the structure of its complex constitution'.<sup>28</sup> It is the action of the difference - forms of order/system of the existing object of knowledge - which produces the knowledge effect, the specific effectivity of a Generality III.<sup>29</sup> Badiou: '... all the difficulties relate to the fact that the second order (the order of presentation) is not in any way the route to the first nor its repetition, but its existence, existence determined by the same absence of the system, and by the immanence of this system: its non-presence at the interior of its very existence'.<sup>30</sup>

### III The Epistemological Break

Althusser claims that Marx himself inaugurates a new practice of reading. Just as there is a myth of the simple unitary origin, there is a myth of the essential simple unity of Logos and Being - that truth inhabits the word. Marx practices two forms of reading: a first reading which specifies the transparent oversights, omissions, the merits of a particular discourse; ie, it is precisely the 'circular myth of reading'<sup>31</sup> where Marx

possesses merely a greater vision enabling him to locate the myopia.

The new practice of reading is the reading of a second, unconscious discourse. It is therefore above all a theoretical reading which Althusser, following Lacan, calls 'symptomatic', insofar as it divulges the undivulged event in the text it reads, and in the same movement relates to a different text, present as a necessary absence in the first'.<sup>32</sup> It is a reading of the combination of absences, not merely the enumeration of a myopia.

Althusser's own reading of Marx focuses on absences governed not by mystification inherent in the questions posed, but by the presence of answers corresponding to no question posed. The absence in this case is the concept of something which is solved in practice: the specific effectivity of the structure on its elements. The absence of this concept is reflected by Marx only in metaphoric and Hegelian terms - a presence of imagery and 'flirtation' (with rejected methodology) which produce the presences of an absence only in their failure, in the 'dislocation between the characters and their roles'.<sup>33</sup> The unconscious discourse is produced only within the discourse of the system itself as part of the essential unity of dislocation. The philosophical 'reprise' in this case dialectical materialism, can only follow upon the internal development of the practice of historical materialism itself, as the elaboration of the knowledge of a 'new form of rationality'.<sup>34</sup>

Again, no term exists within Marxism to name the mutation in the theoretical practice which establishes this new form, science. Althusser here applies a concept of Bachelard, epistemological break. An epistemological break is not an 'inversion' of an ideology, but a rupture with ideology. It is the necessary theoretical

abandonment of the ideological problematic (and along with it 'the organic presupposition of its basic concepts, and with this system, the majority of these concepts, themselves'),<sup>35</sup> through the mutation of the mode of practice. The determinant moment of a practice is the moment of the labour of transformation, and it is this moment which is decisively altered in the break; and alteration, that is, of the extractive-constructive epistemological structure of a Generality II. This is not to be interpreted in an historicist sense, for example as a process proceeding chronologically from a Generality I through to Generality III, with each Generality having its own period in Marx's life. The break takes place within a theoretical practice which is always the combination of the three generalities. The break is an epistemological break at Generality II which produces the simultaneous reorganisation of the object. The new knowledge in the case of a science is the work of real discovery, not an empiricist-idealist appropriation of the real through hypotheses and testing, even in the form of a negative pragmatism (i. e. prescriptive-atomistic-nominalist-falsificationalism.)<sup>36</sup>

The fundamental distinction made between the types of abstraction within the theoretical practice itself (Generalities I and II) is the site, within Marx, of a symptomatic silence. (The differential nature of abstractions within a Generality I are a comparable site: Marx refers to 'good' and 'bad' abstractions without elaborating the distinction)<sup>37</sup>. In Reading Capital, Althusser refers back to the silence in respect to the abstractions within the theoretical practice: 'I heard this silence as the possible weakness of a discourse under the pressure and repressive action of another discourse, which takes the place of the first discourse in favour of this repression, and speaks in its silence: the empiricist discourse. All I did was to make

the first discourse speak, dissipating the second'.<sup>38</sup>

The points of symptomatic silence have great strategic importance therefore, for the science. These points are the weaknesses which are seized by external ideology, and closed by the internal structure of that ideology. (Ideology is also governed by an epistemological structure, the structure of the 'dual mirror relation' (Lacan)<sup>39</sup>: the closure is a necessary effect of the mirror recognition-misrecognition relation. The centre of the ideology forms the basis of an empiricism-speculation couple. The basic structure of ideology is the invariant: 'an empiricism of the subject always corresponds to an idealism of the essence (or an empiricism of the essence to an idealism of the subject)'<sup>40</sup> In other words, this centred structure guarantees the misrecognition relation. It is this structure which 'lies in wait for science at each point where its rigour slackens (and) also at the furthest point where an investigation currently reaches its limits'.<sup>41</sup> The structure of all scientific knowledge on the contrary is de-centred; man, as subject, is not the centre of history.) Thus, in naming the Generalities, the scientific discourse is maintained. This instance illustrates the fundamental function of the practice of Marxist philosophy: the struggle for the science against the closure of ideology.

#### IV Notes on the English Reception

Althusser should revolutionize the conditions and the mode of serious readings not only of Marx and Engels, but also of Lenin and Mao. Althusser's reception in Britain to date suggests that this will not be the case, even in the instances where there has been an informed reading of Althusser's work rather than vulgar distortion. A critique of the work has not yet been produced,

references in essays devoted to quite other purposes are all the indications there of the response of Marxists. Drawing out the importance of Althusser's effort I will comment briefly on the form of references to it in English.

The most basic point made by Althusser lies in his criticism of empiricism; Marxist theoretical practice is both a new form of critique (the new practice of reading) and a new epistemological architecture, beyond the ideological closure. The attempt to counterpose the Hegelian elements in Capital against Althusser is to fall precisely into an empiricism of the kind devastated by this criticism. To couple this empiricism with the facile charge that symptomatic reading is a veil for 'the sterile dogmatism of bureaucratic-conservative wishful thinking,' (I. Mészáros)<sup>42</sup> is the reduction of Althusserian theory to political reflex, a collapse into the most banal ideology.

A critique structure that remains on the ground of its ideological object is imprisoned in the empiricist reading, even when that reading may possess a greater 'vision'. Where the critique is a political-ideological radicalism, either a 'radical sociology' or a radical Marxism depending on the object, the structure must necessarily be a simple comparison of results on the basis of a criterion of progressiveness, scope, or scale, etc. There are many variations but the project sets up the temptation for eclecticism (theoretical opportunism) and/or pragmatism.

In the essay 'Origins of the Present Crisis'<sup>43</sup> Perry Anderson introduced a new range into the debate in Britain in an attempt to formulate a number of key problems with respect to the present conjuncture in Britain. The two most significant introductions were Gramsci

(hegemony) and Sartre (totalisation). His essays are brilliant attempts to apply these positions to English history. The work has been heavily criticised, especially by Poulantzas<sup>44</sup> as historicist. In a subsequent essay, 'Components of the National Culture'<sup>45</sup>, Anderson has attempted to move by incorporating a number of structuralist elements into his approach. In this essay he espouses the concepts of complex totality, (citing Althusser), absent centre, and pseudo-centre. Coupled with these concepts are totalising and counter-totalising thought, ie Marxism and sociology respectively. The work is thus influenced both by Althusser and Sartre and must be seen as an attempt to reach a synthesis between them.

The results of this attempt are on the one hand to remain within the historicist problematic, and thus to produce a very sophisticated, but empiricist, 'radical sociology' (the 'sociology of no sociology'). On the other, an apparent conflation of the concept of de-centred structural complexity (an epistemological proposition) with that of the absent discourse revealed by a symptomatic reading (in Althusser's case both a theory of the knowledge effect, ie the unity of dislocation between the order of the discourse of proof and the conceptual system, and a theory of the difference between the theoretical knowledge and the philosophical 'reprise' in the epistemological break.) To quote Anderson: 'Britain, then, may be defined as the European country which - uniquely - never produced either a classical sociology or a national Marxism. British culture was consequently characterised by an absent centre. Both classical sociology and Marxism were global theories of society, articulated in a totalising conceptual system. They subsumed traditional disciplines within a synthesis designed to capture the 'structure of structures' - the social totality as such.<sup>46</sup> Britain has

for more than fifty years lacked any form whatever of such thought. The whole configuration of its culture has been determined - and dislocated - by this void at its centre.' And later in the essay: 'The void at the centre of this culture generated a pseudo-centre - the timeless ego... the prevalence of psychologism... the nuclear psyche... (an) invariant substitute... It has a logical consequence. Time exists only as intermittence (Keynes), decline (Leavis), or oblivion (Wittgenstein)... (and) ultimately... the era of revolutions is, necessarily, unthinkable.'

I cannot proceed any further here with a detailed examination, but three points are already clear: 1) For Anderson British culture does have a centred (called a void) and a pseudo-centre, but should have another kind of centre (a centre of totalizing and counter-totalizing thought). The absent centre is a literal, empirical void, or vacuum, the existence of which can be found through the configuration it 'determines'. The void is not only the determinant of the configuration, it also 'dislocates' the system (presumably a system with a totalising centre is not dislocated), it 'generates' a substitute totalising centre (the pseudo-centre), which determines the experience of temporality and the limits to the range of objects for the system, as a 'logical consequence'. 2) The empiricist reading, on the principle that the description of the 'general layout of the system' is the route to the inner determination, produces continually the progressive-reactionary comparative sociology which is the structure of the critique. 3) The conflation of the de-centred 'complex totality' (structural complexity) with the absent 'totalising thought' (absent discourse) is ultimately a reduction of philosophy into history, a reduction similar to that made by Gramsci in whose work dialectical materialism disappears into historical

materialism.<sup>47</sup>

A second temptation open to the empiricist critique is the teleological-functionalist reduction: ideology is explained simply by its (reactionary) purpose. In the case of a critique of bourgeois ideology the function is a supposed apologia for the status-quo: 'Bourgeois sociology only begins to understand modern revolutions in so far as they fail - and this is undoubtedly because they want them to fail.' (Robin Blackburn<sup>48</sup>) This form of critique reflects the eclecticism of its object: it is in part the 'wanting' of revolution which brings understanding, so all revolutionaries are equivalent critics, - the fire of revolution produces flame of science: 'Marxism as a science was born in the heat of the 1848 revolutions.' (Blackburn) It is not as if this leads to the edge of idealism, (the whole tenor of this critique is that the function of bourgeois social theory 'is to induce a morbid paralysis of social will', whereas Marxist theory reinforces the practice - a revolutionary student movements in this case - of 'direct confrontation with authority') it is an idealism bordering on mysticism.

Another instance of Althusser's adoption in Britain, however, reproduces a critical sociology as a critical Marxism: counterposing one product against another, and drawing conclusions often on the basis of straightforward pragmatism: scientific Marxism is a 'trustworthy weapon' as opposed to the 'useless toy' of neo-Hegelian Marxism which was 'rejected by Marx soon after he adopted Communism' (David Fernbach<sup>49</sup>) In another case (Miriam Glucksmann) the opposition is between 'structuralism' and humanism (neo-Hegelianism), reproducing here the eclecticism of the humanist object, through a bricolage of Lévi-Strauss, Althusser etc, whereas Althusser is certainly not a 'structuralist'<sup>51</sup>. And, as with Fernbach, the conclusions are based on a dogmatic pragmatism:

'In the absence of an account of the determinate and structured character, that is, the social rather than individual nature of man's 'alienation' under capitalism, and of the recognition of the need for a strategy to overthrow it, which is effective at the collective and political level, such theories (neo-Hegelian Marxist) are doomed to remain passive. It is no wonder that bourgeois academics and commentators have espoused this version of Marxism. To emphasize idealism and humanism is an effective way of defusing the revolutionary potential of Marxism.' (Glucksmann)<sup>52</sup>

The simple inversion of Blackburn's position is striking: here concepts such as alienation, etc, instead of being the active, live, human fire of revolution, are 'doomed to remain passive'.

Althusser's reading of Marx, Lenin and Mao shows clearly that his work has important implications for all Marxism-Leninism, specially against the danger of positivist, and/or pragmatic 'orthodoxies'.

A final example of Althusser's reception, by a much less well-informed writer, is an illustration of a sociological reading of Althusser. The translation of Althusser into factoralism is a fearful mutilation: the 'dominant concern' of Althusser is read as: 'What elements of the superstructure must be taken into account and in what way? Thus, on what basis can it be argued that... a particular combination of factors is more relevant than another combination?' (Harold Wolpe)<sup>52</sup>

The whole of Wolpe's essay ('Some Problems Concerning Revolutionary Consciousness') is an attempt to translate a Marxist problematic into a sociological one, or to attempt to insert into Marxism a sociological, hyper-factorial empiricist-idealism.

Empiricism is defined, by Althusser, to include some forms of theory itself: theoretical empiricism has the epistemological structure of all ideology, it is produced in the 'simple' (it may be 'complicated' but not 'complex') constitution of the mirror relation. The exposure of this form of empiricism provides the theoretical basis of making a firm distinction between a Marxist critique and all other forms of critiques. This distinction also provides the theoretical beginnings of an understanding of ideology, a beginning which marks an abandonment of the concept of consciousness in favour of the distinction between ideological and theoretical practices. The power of ideology must not be allowed to prevent the opening of this door, which is one of the many Althusser has begun to prise open.

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#### NOTES

1. For Marx p 225
2. FM p 10
3. E. g. FM p 157 fn; FM p 256; F&L p 48
4. FM pp 12-14
5. F&L p 48
6. FM pp 14-15
7. RC p 7-8; FM p 256
8. RC p 8
9. FM pp 164-173. Lenin: 'If Marx did not leave behind him a Logic (with a capital letter), he did leave the logic of Capital'.
10. 'Internal' is important here: 'The external application of a concept is never equivalent to a theoretical practice... The application of the 'laws' of the dialectic to such and such result of physics for example, makes not one iota of difference to the structure or development of the theoretical practice of physics; worse, it may turn into an

ideological fetter'. FM p 170; cf FM p 171 fn.

11. FM p 188 fn
12. FM p 166-7
13. FM p 184 fn
14. RC p 32
15. FM p 183
16. FM p 193
17. FM p 195
18. FM pp 195-6; NB a change of translation in RC of 'ever pre-given' to 'ever already' complex, RC p 43
19. FM p 198
20. FM p 201
21. FM p 209
22. RC pp 184-193
23. RC p p 185
24. Balibar in RC p 220
25. RC pp 186-7
26. RC p 191
27. A Badiou, 'Le (Re) Commencement du Matérialisme Dialectique' in Critique, Tome XXIII no 240, Mai 1967, pp 438-467. For a brief explanation of these terms see Roland Barthes, Elements of Semiology, Cape, 1967, pp 58-88. The syntagm is the linear, irreversible discursive chain. The paradigmatic plane is that of associations in absentia, Barthes calls it 'the system'.
28. RC p 68
29. RC p 189; cf RC p 65 where Althusser discusses the 'society effect': 'what Marx studies in Capital is the mechanism which makes the result of a history's production exist as a society; it is therefore the mechanism which gives this product of history, that is the society-product he is studying, the property of producing the "society-effect" which makes this result exist as a society...'
30. A Badiou, op cit, p 453
31. RC pp 17-19

32. RC p 28
33. RC p 29
34. RC p 185
35. FM pp 192-3
36. I refer to the Popper-Lakatos school, whether in the 'naive' or 'sophisticated' mode. (Lakatos' dichotomy rational/irrational is a grid by which serious misreadings are produced: Kuhn's concept of scientific revolution, of crisis situations, is read as a psychology of discovery, 'a matter of mob psychology', Criticism and the Growth of Knowledge C. U. P. , 1970 (ed Lakatos & Musgrave) p 178. Bachelard's break will undoubtedly be read as criminal irrationality; in Althusser as political irrationality.)
37. RC pp 88-90
38. RC p 90
39. RC pp 52-3; F&L p 65
40. F M p 228
41. RC p 90 fn
42. I Mészáros, Marx's Theory of Alienation, Merlin, 1970 p 96
43. P Anderson, Origins of the Present Crisis, New Left Review, 23, January Feb 1964
44. N Poulantzas, Marxism in Great Britain, New Left Review, 43, May/June 1967
45. P Anderson, Components of the National Culture, in New Left Review, 50, July/August, 1968, pp 3-58
46. A remarkable set of relations are revealed through a close reading of this passage and a comparison with the whole paragraph on the pseudo-centre (Components, op. cit. pp 3-21, and p 56). The totalizing conceptual schemes of Sociology and Marxism 'capture' the 'structure of structures', the social totality as such. They reveal the principle governing all the discrete structures. When these disciplines are absent, the 'space' they fill is taken up by a 'pseudo-centre'. This 'pseudo-centre' has two dominant characteristics, it

'falls back on the nuclear psyche, as First Cause of society and history' (Anderson), it denies the social (through reduction) and in so doing denies the historical. This criticism simply attempts to replace one First Cause by another: it tries to fill the absent centre.

This argument is not surprising, for the concept of 'structure of structures' retains the marks of its genealogy, its origin in Levi-Strauss. 'At the limit, the reduction is achieved if one can construct a model of the activity of the model constructor. It illuminates the... texts where Levi-Strauss confers on cerebral complexity the dignity of the structure of structures, of ultimate support of 'structurality' itself. Faced with this latter object, one will undertake the construction of a model of cerebral functioning, an 'artificial brain', like the ideology of the cyberneticians, whose ideology has always been spontaneous philosophy'. (A Badiou 'Le concept de Modele', 1969) Anderson's 'structure of structures' remains thus one of many possible 'subjects' of expressive totalities whether they be, nuclear psyches, artificial brains or proletariats, ie 'subjects' not merely of humanism but also of anti-humanist ideology.

47. L. Althusser, RC p 137

48. R Blackburn, A Brief Guide to Bourgeois Ideology, in Student Power, Penguin, 1969, p 187

49. D Fernbach, Avineri's View of Marx, in New Left Review, 56, July/August, 1969, p 68

50. M Glucksmann, Lucien Goldmann: Humanist or Marxist?, in New Left Review, 56, July/August, 1969

51. RC p 7 & p 108

52. Glucksmann, op. cit. pp 61-2

53. H Wolpe, Some Problems Concerning Revolutionary Consciousness, in The Socialist Register, Merlin, 1970, p 273 (see fn 94).

# Révai and Lukács

by BEN BREWSTER

1. Early this year, Gyorgy Lukács's famous book History and Class-consciousness will at last be published in this country,<sup>1</sup> almost fifty years after its first publication in Vienna and Berlin, in 1923. Moreover, it is translated after many of the books which have encouraged or fought 'its influence, after Lefebvre, Kolakowski, Marcuse and Sartre, on the one hand, and Althusser on the other. When Lawrence and Wishart have brought out their forthcoming thorough selection of Gramsci's prison writings, all the classics of 'Western Marxism' will be available in English and most of the moderns (with the exception of the writings of Della Volpe and Colletti). The English reader can no longer plead ignorance of the Marxist tradition in Western Europe. The problem we face today is no longer ignorance, but eclecticism. Dividing-lines must be drawn if the flood of Marxist tendencies is to be fruitfully absorbed. For this we need clear outlines of the different theoretical configurations, knowledge of the politico-ideological conjunctures in which they emerged, and the principles of Marxism-Leninism with which to assess them.

2. The article by József Révai below<sup>2</sup> fulfills the first of these conditions for Lukács. Originally published as a review of History and Class-consciousness in the Grunberg Archiv in 1925<sup>3</sup>, this is its first English translation. Révai provides a succinct account of the young Lukács's main theses, and situates the book in relation to the project of a restoration to Marxism of the revolutionary character it has lost in the revisionism, and, to a lesser extent, in the 'orthodox' Marxism of the Second International. The

form that this restoration took was a re-emphasis on the Hegelian origins of Marxism, in particular, on the dialectical relationship between Subject and Object. This emphasis had been obscured in the Second International because of the influence, first of mechanistic materialism, and later of Neo-Kantianism.

However, a few things which would have been well-known to Révai's audience need to be added to this today. Several of the essays in History and Class-consciousness first appeared in the magazine Kommunismus, the Comintern organ for SE Europe, which Lukács co-edited in Vienna in 1920. Kommunismus supported the Left Wing of the Comintern (Roland-Holst, Bordiga, Pannekoek) criticized in Lenin's 'Left-Wing Communism' (June 1920). Despite his attempts to respond to Lenin's criticism in the later essays in History and Class-consciousness (particularly 'Legality and Illegality'), Lukács's leftism extended to support for the disastrous March Action in Germany in 1921. Nevertheless, within the Hungarian Communist Party he belonged to the 'right-wing' Landler faction as opposed to the 'left-wing' Kun faction, and in 1928, his draft theses for the 2nd Congress of the HCP, the 'Blum Theses', presaged the Popular Front Line of the Comintern six years later. Since that time Lukács has been a consistently 'right-wing' Communist. But in the period when History and Class-consciousness was written, his theoretical and political positions were consistently 'left-wing' ones.<sup>4</sup>

3. But Lukács's work cannot be explained solely by the internal developments of the working-class movement and its theory. Before 1918, his only real contact with socialism was his friendship with Erwin Szabó, the Hungarian anarcho-syndicalist, a friendship based on their common antipathy to the First World War. By that time, Lukács was already formed intellectually, and in one of the most rigorous intellectual systems of the time: Heidelberg Neo-Kantianism.<sup>5</sup>

Neo-Kantianism is usually dated from the publication of Liebmann's Kant und die Epigonen in 1865: it developed rapidly in the last decade of the nineteenth century and the first decades of the twentieth, organizing itself into several different local schools (Marburg, Heidelberg, etc.) which vied with one another intellectually and academically. Neo-Kantianism's interpretations of Kant varied from Cohen's pan-logism to Mach's empirio-criticism, but the Heidelberg Neo-Kantians, above all Windelband, Rickert and Lask, were distinguished by their insistence that there were two distinct realms of objects to be judged, a realm of objects of scientific knowledge, nature, and a realm of objects of interpretative understanding (Verstehen), culture. Following Kant, the Heidelbergians argued that knowledge of each of these realms required a transcendent, non-objectifiable Subject-correlate in what they called the 'pro-physical world. A second transcendent area was also distinguished, the area of 'faith' or Weltanschauung (world-outlook). A number of these features are significant, not only for Lukács, but for Révai's review as well, which is also written from a Heidelberg viewpoint. Firstly, whereas the early Neo-Kantians were deeply hostile to post-Kantian German idealism, to Fichte and Hegel, the Heidelberg school was more open, indeed, its realm of culture is Hegel's objective spirit. Hence the move from Kant to Hegel was easy for a Heidelberg-trained philosopher. Secondly, classical German sociology, particularly Weber, was very close to the Heidelberg school (Weber, of course, lived and taught in Heidelberg) in distinguishing an area of culture susceptible to knowledge of a special type (Verstehen). Hence a Heidelberg-trained philosopher would quickly and easily absorb features of the sociology of Weber and Simmel (particularly the concepts of socialization and reification).<sup>6</sup> Thirdly, the question of the existence of a transcendent Subject-correlate of knowledge occupies a crucial place, as do Fichte's and Hegel's re-



sponses to it (the transcendental Ego and the World Spirit, respectively). It is on this point that there is a difference between Lukács and Révai. Lukács attempts to argue against the tradition that for Marx, the class-consciousness of the proletariat is capable of being an immanent Subject of historical knowledge, uniting Subject and Object in its revolutionary praxis or action; or at any rate, that this is possible for the consciousness brought to the proletariat 'from without' by the revolutionary party, the zugerechnet or 'assigned' class-consciousness. But Révai shows that this does not solve the problem of knowledge of the past, when the revolutionary proletariat was absent, and without knowledge of the past, how can the proletariat know its present? The zugerechnet class-consciousness is thus the Hegelian World Spirit in Marx, too, and still depends on a more or less transcendental Subject-correlate. So we can see that Lukács himself (and Révai) are not immune to the disease of Marxism that they condemn, the influence of Neo-Kantianism. But this Neo-Kantianism is not the compound of scientific formalism and ethical absolutism which characterized Austro-Marxism; rather it fuses the problems of epistemology and ethics in the revolutionary action or praxis of the proletariat. Hence its effect in Marxism was to encourage action at any cost, even that of the 1921 March Action in Germany. <sup>7</sup>

4. Lukács is not unaware of the difficulties in his position which Révai pointed out. His reactions to the review are not recorded. When he did respond to these problems, he did not, like Révai, do so by explicitly adopting the Hegelianism implicit in History and Class-consciousness. Instead, he redefined the relationship between Marx and Hegel.

'The ultimate philosophical basis (for the solution of the problem of the relationship between Marx and Hegel in History and Class-consciousness) consisted of the

identical Subject-Object realising itself in the historical process. In Hegel, of course, this is achieved in a logico-philosophical way, in which the attainment of the highest stage of the Absolute Spirit in philosophy realises the identical Subject-Object, the cancellation of externalization (Entäußerung), and the return of self-consciousness to itself. In History and Class-consciousness, on the other hand, this process is supposed to be a socio-historical one which culminates in the fact that the proletariat realises this stage in its class-consciousness - becoming the identical Subject-Object of history. Thus Hegel does seem to have been 'put back onto his feet' in fact; it appears as if the logico-metaphysical construction of the Phenomenology of Mind has found an adequate (seinsmässig) and authentic realisation in the being and consciousness of the proletariat, which seems to give a philosophical foundation to the proletariat's historical mission to establish the classless society and to close the "pre-history" of humanity with its revolution. But is the identical Subject-Object really more than a purely metaphysical construction? Could an identical Subject-Object really be achieved by however adequate a self-knowledge, even if this is based on an adequate knowledge of the social world, i. e. by however complete a self-consciousness? It is only necessary to pose this question precisely to answer it negatively. For the content of knowledge can be returned to the knowing Subject without the act of knowledge thereby losing its externalized character. Precisely in the Phenomenology of Mind, Hegel correctly rejected a mystical and irrationalistic realisation of the identical Subject-Object, Schelling's "intellectual intuition", and proposed a philosophically rational solution to the problem. Because of his sound sense of reality, this proposal remained a proposal; his most general construction of the world did culminate in the prospect of its realisation, but he never concretely

suggested in his system how this proposal would be fulfilled. Hence the proletariat as an identical Subject-Object of the real history of humanity is not a materialist realisation which overcomes the mental construction of idealism, but far rather an out-Hegeling of Hegel, a construction which objectively attempts to go beyond the Master himself in its audacious mental elevation over all reality.

'This foresight of Hegel's was intellectually based on the extravagance of his basic conception. For with Hegel, the problem of alienation (Entfremdung) is the fundamental question for man's attitude in and to the world. But for him, alienation, which he called externalization (Entäußerung), is the positing (Setzen) of all objectivity. Carried to its logical conclusion, alienation is identical with the positing of objectivity. Insofar as it is the supersession of alienation, the identical Subject-Object must therefore simultaneously supersede objectivity too. For as the object, the thing, only exists for Hegel as the externalization of self-consciousness, its restoration to the Subject would be the end of objective reality, ie, of reality in general. History and Class-consciousness follows Hegel only insofar as in it, too, alienation is equated with objectification (Vergegenständlichung). . . In fact, objectification is an unsurpassable mode of expression in the social life of men. Since every objectification (Objektivierung) in praxis, and above all labour itself, is an objectification (Vergegenständlichung), as is every human mode of expression, including language, which objectifies human thoughts and feelings, etc., it is obvious that we are dealing here with a general human form of intercourse between man and man. As such, objectification is, of course, value-free: the true is as much an objectification as the false, liberation is as much an objectification as enslavement. The objective social relation of alienation, and, as a necessary consequence, all

the subjective characteristics of internal alienation, only arise when the objectified forms have functions in society such as to bring the essence of man into contradiction with its existence (Sein), and to subjugate, distort, deform, etc., the human essence through its social existence (Sein). This duality was not recognised in History and Class-consciousness. Hence the falsity and perversity of its fundamental historic-philosophical conception'. (Werke, Bd. 2, op cit, pp 24-27).

This quotation is from the Vorwort to the Second Volume of his Collected Works (which contains History and Class-consciousness), dated March 1967. But this new position on the relation between Marx and Hegel dates from much earlier. The opposition of the terms alienation (Entfremdung-Entäußerung) and objectification (Vergegenständlichung) derives from the last section of the Third of Marx's 1844 Manuscripts ('Critique of the Hegelian Dialectic and of Philosophy in General'). In his Vorwort, Lukács states that, despite his political conversion in 1928, he did not change his theoretical position until 1930, when, while working at the Marx-Engels Institutes in Moscow and Berlin, he was able to read the edition of the Manuscripts which was being prepared for publication in the MEGA. And the first theoretical elaboration of his new position can be found in his book Der junge Hegel (The Young Hegel), completed in Moscow in 1937.<sup>8</sup>

It is sometimes suggested that Lukács's retractions of History and Class-consciousness were purely tactical, but it is clear from the above quotation that he shifted his theoretical ground considerably in the 1930's, going even further than Révai in his review. For whereas Révai argued that it is the problem of knowledge of the past that makes it impossible to overcome the duality of Subject and Object, Lukács argues the same thing by a general reductio ad absurdum: the duality of Subject and

Object in externalization could not be overcome without all objectivity, ie, every thing, vanishing. A number of consequences follow. Firstly, the focus of the theory's attention in capitalism shifts from the market, the archetype of reification and alienation, to labour, the archetype of objectification: 'In my analysis of economic phenomena in History and Class-consciousness, I did not look for their starting-point in labour, but only in the complex structures of the developed commodity economy' (Vorwort, op cit p 22). 'Praxis' is no longer conceived on the model of 'revolutionary praxis', but rather on that of labour: 'I did not realise that without a basis in real praxis, in labour as its archetype (Urform) and model, overstraining the concept of praxis was bound to turn it into the concept of an idealistic contemplation' (p 20). This in turn leads to a new respect for the objectivity of nature: 'The fundamental category (of the economy) for Marxism (is) labour as the mediator of the metabolism between society and nature' (p 19); 'the ontological objectivity of nature... constitutes the adequate (seinsmässig) basis for this metabolism' (p 19). And this to a rehabilitation of the 'reflection theory of consciousness': 'The most primitive kinds of labour, even the stone-chipping of primitive man, presuppose a correct reflection (Wiederspiegelung) of the reality which thus comes immediately into question' (p 27). Hence Lukács has shifted his ground on many points since 1923. 9

But in shifting his ground, has Lukács changed problematic? Has he escaped the kind of problems raised by Révai's review? In a review of The Young Hegel in his book Studies on Marx and Hegel (a discussion which can serve the same function with respect to the later Lukács as Révai's review does for the Lukács of History and Class-consciousness), Jean Hyppolite argues that he does not. Lukács position requires that there can be a society of objectification alone,

a communist society, that alienation is only a feature of certain social systems, in particular of the capitalist system. Hyppolite comments, 'It is undeniable that the capitalist system represents a form of human alienation, but it can hardly be the only one... It is surely an oversimplification to imagine that this tension can be reduced to a super-structure of the economic world' (Studies on Marx and Hegel, London 1969, p 87). Does the distinction between alienation and objectification enable us to tell when objectification is alienation and vice versa? If the abolition of all alienation is assured by the expropriation of private ownership, then the link between revolutionary praxis and the abolition of alienation becomes a completely accidental one; evolutionary socialism is once again a possibility, and the concept of alienation cannot be applied to a socialist society. If, on the other hand, alienation is derived from an external limit to the universalization of revolutionary praxis, eg, 'scarcity', then the question arises, is not death an external limit for the members of every society? 'By objectifying himself in culture, the State, and human labour in general, man at the same time alienates himself, becomes other than himself, and discovers in this objectification an insurmountable degeneration which he must nevertheless try to overcome. This is a tension inseparable from existence, and it is Hegel's merit to have drawn attention to it and to have preserved it in the very centre of human self-consciousness... Between nature and human self-consciousness there is a basic tension observed by Rousseau. Man is no longer a living creature like others; in reflecting upon his life he immediately finds himself on the margin of this life, he grasps it as a risk, as the necessity of death. He confounds himself with nature from which he emerged and yet from which he is separate; the life instinct and the death instinct are, as it were, the poles of an irresolvable dualism. This is the source of alienation and the origin of the problem of human destiny'

(ibid. , pp 87-88). In New Left Review 35 (Jan-Feb 1966), when I attempted to defend a Sartrean scarcity theory of alienation against the sociologist Peter Berger, he replied in the same terms: 'the fundamental terrors of human existence are given in the fact that man is a conscious animal fated to die' (p 76); 'socialism may be desirable or undesirable for any number of reasons, but its chances of producing reifications of the human world are roughly equal to those of capitalism' (p 77). Berger, moreover, defends the distinction between objectification and alienation. Of course, I have no intention of supporting the positions of Hyppolite and Berger. Like Révai's review of History and Class-consciousness, their articles demonstrate where the logic of this pre-Marxist problematic leads. Marxists cannot adopt one or other position inside this problematic; their task is to expound and develop the new problematic inaugurated by Marx in Capital. The distinction between alienation and objectification cannot rescue Lukács's conception of Marxism from the same charge of secret Hegelianism as that made by Révai in 1925; rather, it reproduces the possibility of such a charge on another level.

5. Lukács's work, early or late, consists of variants within the same problematic. I need not analyse or criticize this problematic here, as Althusser has already done so thoroughly, particularly in Reading Capital, Part II, Ch. 5. It is the problematic of historicism. But it is worth spending a little time investigating how Lukács reads this problematic into Marx, and not into the Marx of the Early Works, but into Capital itself.

In the central essay of History and Class-consciousness, 'Reification and the Consciousness of the Proletariat', Lukács remarks: 'It has often been emphasized that the famous chapter of Hegel's Logic on Being, Non-being and Becoming contains the whole of Hegel's philosophy. It

could equally be said that what Capital has to say about the fetishistic character of commodities conceals within it the whole of historical materialism, the whole self-knowledge of the proletariat as the knowledge of capitalist society (and of earlier societies as stages leading up to it)' (Werke 2, p 354; Geschichte und Klassenbewusstsein, Berlin 1923, p 186). In Chapter I of Capital Volume One, Marx argues (and Lukács quotes him): 'The mystery of the commodity form thus consists simply of the fact that it reflects back to men the social character of their own labour as an objective character of the product of labour itself, as a social natural property of this thing, and thereby also reflects back the social relation of the producers to the total labour as a social relation of objects existing outside them. By this quidproquo, the products of labour become commodities, sensible supersensible or social things... It is only the determinate social relations between men themselves which have taken on for them the fantasmagoric form of a relation between things' (Capital, Moscow 1961, Vol I p 72, retranslated from the German). This is the phenomenon Marx calls the 'fetishism of commodities'. Even in a restricted form the scientific status of this concept is by no means certain.<sup>10</sup> But Lukács gives it the place in the Marxist system that the categories of Being, Non-being have in Hegel. How does he do this?

First he notes that commodity exchange has existed for centuries, 'but here we are interested in how far commodity exchange and its structural consequences have been capable of influencing the whole outer and inner life of society' (Werke 2, p 258; G&K, p95). 'This development of the commodity form to the real form of domination over the whole society first took place in modern capitalism' (259; 96). Lukács takes one aspect of this phenomenon, a symptomatic one, the process of rationalization: 'If one

follows the development of the labour process from manual work via co-operation and manufacture to modern industry, one sees a constantly increasing rationalization, and a more and more thorough eradication of the qualitative, human or individual properties of the labourer' (262; 99). This rationalization takes two forms: the division of labour, rationalizing the technical labour process, and the reduction of economic activity to calculation: 'With the modern 'psychological' decomposition of the labour process (Taylorism), this rational mechanization penetrates even to the worker's 'soul': even his psychological properties are separated from his total personality and objectified over against him, so that they can be incorporated into a rational specialised system and reduced to the calculative concept. What is most important for us here is the principle that is thus imposed: the principle of rationalization based on calculation, on calculability' (262; 99). This reduction of the worker to calculability is then extended to the whole of society (at the economic level initially) as a social norm: 'The fate of the worker becomes the general fate of the whole society: indeed the generality of this fate is the precondition for the labour process in the factory modelling itself according to this norm' (265; 102). This feature of the labour process in general is then extended to credit, finance capital, money, etc., and then finally to the super-structures: rational law: 'It is of the essence of the legal system that it can be linked in formal generality to every possible life occurrence, and that in this extension it is predictable and calculable' (272; 108); bureaucracy characterized by 'the ever increasing tendency to the formally rational handling of all questions from an objective view-point, an ever growing distance from the qualitative and material essence of the things involved in the bureaucracy's activities' (274; 110); and finally a uniformly rationalised ideology: 'So long as the fate of

the worker still appeared as an individualized fate (eg the slave of antiquity), the life of the ruling classes could proceed in quite different forms. For the first time, capitalism introduces a - formally - unified structure of consciousness for itself as a whole, along with its unification of the economic structure of the whole society' (275; 111).

Thus, what was a property of commodities, their fetishistic character, in Marx, becomes, in Lukács, a general principle realized everywhere in capitalist society, reification. Anyone familiar with classical German sociology will recognise the form of the argument, and most of its content. A feature of the initial system (commodity exchange), in this case the principle of 'rational calculation', is abstracted as a general subjective form; its different realisations in all possible areas are then listed. At the same time, behind the apparent neutrality of the procedure is a constant tendency to see the subjective form spreading remorselessly through the system, swallowing up area after area. This is Weber's method of 'ideal types', and Lukács's 'reification' is a variant of one of Weber's most important ideal types, 'rationalization'. Lukács explicitly admits this: he quotes Weber several times and at length in the passage I have analysed here, and he says: 'The labourer's fate is typical for the whole society in that this self-objectification and this development of a human function into a commodity, reveal the dehumanized and dehumanizing character of the commodity relation in its most striking form' (267; 103-4).

But this method of 'ideal types' is one example of a much more generalized notion, characterized by Althusser as the 'expressive totality', and typical of all forms of historicism. All the parts of the whole, in this case, the capitalist social formation, are seen as embodying a single principle, which can then be read throughout the

system by a process of simple abstraction. Despite Weber's explicit refusal of the category of the totality, and Lukács's explicit espousal of it, both are working within the historicist problematic. Just as Hegel is more like the Marx of History and Class-consciousness than Lukács realised, there was less difference than Lukács thought between his Heidelberg Neo-Kantian and socio-logical forebears and his own 'Marxism' of the 1920's. And although he has since got rid of the Heidelbergisms in his theoretical system,<sup>11</sup> he has not left the ground of the historicist problematic to this day.

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#### NOTES

1 Translated by Rodney Livingstone; to be published by Merlin Press, February 1971.

2 At the time Révai was a younger colleague and pupil of Lukács's, and collaborated with him in the magazine Kommunismus. Later he became Minister of Culture in the Hungarian People's Democratic Republic and led a campaign against Lukács's aesthetic positions in the late 1940's (see his Lukács and Socialist Realism, London 1950). Typical of the period, this attack is of little theoretical interest.

3 Archiv für die Geschichte des Sozialismus und der Arbeiterbewegung, Vol XI, 1925, pp 227-236.

4 See his own account in the Vorwort to Georg Lukács: Gesammelte Werke, Bd. 2, Neuwied and Berlin 1968. This Vorwort is to be translated as a Preface for the English edition of History and Class-consciousness.

5 Also called Freiburg, Baden or South-West German Neo-Kantianism, because its members held posts in all three universities, situated within one hundred miles of each other in the old Grand Duchy of Baden. Their journal was Logos, to which Lukács and Weber contributed,

as well as the pure philosophers of the School. For Neo-Kantianism in general, see Lenin's Materialism and Empirio-criticism, Collected Works Vol. 14, p 365, n. 18 (but note that while it is true that the Heidelberg Neo-Kantians tried 'to prove that historical phenomena are strictly individual and not subject to the operation of any laws', they did not think that this deprived them of any possibility of knowledge of historical phenomena - see below).

6 See particularly Max Weber: Basic sociological Concepts Section 9; Georg Simmel: Philosophie des Geldes.

7 The post-War revival of 'Lukácsism', in the form of 'Marxist humanism', has, however, been far from 'leftist' in its orientation. For a resolution of this apparent paradox, see Jean-Paul Dollé: 'Du gauchisme à l'humanisme socialiste', Les Temps Modernes, April 1966.

8 Or 1938. Lukács's own accounts differ (Werke, op. cit., Bd. 2, p 38; Bd. 8, p 9).

9 His forthcoming Zur Ontologie des gesellschaftlichen Seins will give a full version of this new outlook.

10 Althusser has recently called the theory of fetishism 'a flagrant, and highly damaging trace of Hegelian influence' ('Avertissement aux lecteurs' in Karl Marx: Le Capital (Livre 1), Garnier-Flammarion, Paris 1969, p 22). However, it would seem to have an application in the analysis of bourgeois law (see Reading Capital, pp 226-233), and hence could be used in the critique of those categories of ideology which derive, as many do, from law and jurisprudence.

11 Lukács has criticized his Neo-Kantian mentors in Die Zerstörung der Vernunft, Werke Bd. 9, 1962.

# A Review of Georg Lukács' 'History and Class Consciousness'

by JOZSEF REVAI

To ask what is the role of the dialectic in the Marxist system is the same as asking what is the relationship between Marx and Hegel. This question has not been answered unanimously in the Marxist camp. Strongly influenced by the Neo-Kantian tendency in philosophy, Neo-Marxist discussions of Marx have seen Marxism as an individual science (Einzelwissenschaft)<sup>1</sup> which explains the development of processes in society and history according to causal laws. It was therefore absolutely impossible for it to have any internal and objective connexion with questions of 'world outlook' (Weltanschauung). This interpretation of Marxism as a 'positive science' was facilitated by the fact that Neo-Kantianism itself had abolished all questions of 'world outlook' from philosophy and even from the Kantian system, making philosophy into an individual science, too. Kant was transformed into a positivist, Marx interpreted as a Kantian, and their relation to one another became that of any natural science to its positivist epistemology. The task of philosophy was merely the investigation of the transcendental presuppositions of all knowledge. Given such a conception, it is obvious that the interpreter of Marx is forced to see Marxist 'materialism' as a private whim of Marx himself, explicable historically by the role of eighteenth-century materialism in the social struggle, but not in general anchored objectively in the system itself. Conceptions of the relation between Marx and Hegel differ,

but their common presupposition is the claim that Marxism is an individual science much like any other. It is from this point of view that the question of the dialectic has been discussed and answered. It was from this point of view that Eduard Bernstein saw the dialectic, the Hegelian heritage in Marxism, as a 'snare', an aprioristic conceptual construction which falsifies empirical facts and destroys the value-freedom of scientific judgement.<sup>2</sup> This standpoint led Max Adler to claim that the destruction of the 'mystical shell' of the Hegelian dialectic is no more no less than the discrimination and distinction between the dialectic as a method of scientific work and the 'real antagonisms' of history.<sup>3</sup> And from the same position, Heinrich Cunow could say, inversely, that the Marxist dialectic merely 'reflects' the dialectic of the process of social development.<sup>4</sup>

In this context it is completely impossible even to perceive the essence of the Hegelian dialectic. For the presupposition of that dialectic is the theory of a determinate relationship between being and thought. But if this problem is rejected a priori as 'metaphysical' or answered as if it was a superficial problem, a 'misunderstanding of Kant' (here Max Adler is following Schopenhauer), the dialectic must remain either a fantastic construction or an enigma. For once the relationship between being and thought is conceived as a relationship between what is to be known and the knower,

the dialectic cannot even emerge in this form. And if the problem is dealt with nevertheless, certain of the central problems of the dialectic have to be eliminated straight-away and their fragmented individual elements handled out of context as purely external determinations of thought or of a real process. And in fact, when the philosophical literature of socialism does discuss the dialectic, its central question - the specific, dialectical relationship between being and thought - is not made the central issue, and correspondingly, the distinction between the Hegelian and the Marxist dialectics is not developed uniformly from this point.

For even the older Marxists, particularly Plekhanov and Engels himself, did not treat the question of the relationship between being and thought dialectically, but rather in the sense of a naturalistic metaphysics. This does of course lead to a rejection of the duality of being and thought maintained by Critical Philosophy (Kritizismus),<sup>5</sup> but the unity it proclaims is only verbally related to the Hegelian unity. Treating the Hegelian or Marxist dialectic from the point of view of a naturalistic metaphysics leads on the one hand to a purely external judgement of the Hegelian dialectic as an 'idealistic' dialectic and imputes to the Hegelian concept of the 'Spirit' (Geist) the meaning that that word has in the system of dogmatic metaphysics, while on the other, a truly horrific example of its results is found in Plekhanov, who lumps together as materialisms the 'monism' of a philosophical dilettante like Haeckel and Marxism,<sup>6</sup> and bases the Marxist form of the identity of Subject and Object on a statement of Huxley's 'the principles of psychology are to be found in the physiology of the nervous system.'

In Engels, Plekhanov and their followers, this Hegelian inclusion of nature in the dialectic goes hand in hand with a complete rejection of Hegel's concept of nature and a

glorification and absolutization of natural-scientific knowledge which is completely incomprehensible in dialecticians and historians. But the conception of dialectical materialism as closely related to or even identical with naturalistic materialism may not close every way towards an understanding of the Hegelian dialectic and Marx's criticism of it; on the contrary, the defenders of the Hegelian tradition of Marxism were most often those 'orthodox' Marxists who connected Marxism philosophically with naturalistic materialism: but the attempt to make nature dialectical while relying on the natural sciences inevitably led to the opposite result. The dialectic was naturalized. Of course, the initial consequences of this interpretation were purely philosophical and less dangerous in relation to the distortion of the essence of Marxism than attempts at interpretation of the opposite kind. For the attempt to make nature historical, ie, dialectical, leaves the historical dialectic itself more or less undisturbed, while the attempt to include history in the realm of nature must distort the dialectical structure of history itself and transform the theoretical and practical attitude of men to it. It is therefore no accident that the politico-revolutionary orthodoxy of Marxism could maintain a naive and careless attitude to dogmatic 'bourgeois' materialism while it scented an immediate political danger in Kantianism, Machism, etc. It is no accident that the dialectic was handled as a theoretical weapon by those Marxists in whose philosophical interpretation it was only distorted, consciousness of it having become external, while those who imagined they had raised themselves critically above primitive materialism had to throw out the dialectic not only in philosophy, but also in political theory. Plekhanov, for instance, stressed two determinations of the dialectic as its most characteristic features: 1) development in contradictions; 2) the dialectic



relationship between quantity and quality. His understanding of these individual moments of the dialectic was excellent, but he believed he could ignore Hegel's theory of self-consciousness, which is what binds the individual moments of the dialectic into an organic whole, and conceive the whole distinction between Marx and Hegel in the fact that Marx put the concept of the 'relations of production' in place of the Hegelian 'World Spirit'. He recognised the importance of Hegel's conception of mutual interaction, according to which 'two sides of a single thing' cannot be conceived 'as an immediate given, but as moments of a third, higher unity'. But he understood this 'higher' unity as a new ongoing link in the causal chain, and as a result of this attitude he had to substitute a causal relationship for the Hegelian relation between World Spirit and History. The consequence of this misunderstanding, this lack of judgement where Hegel was concerned, was that as a philosophy Marxism became an internally incoherent juxtaposition of the most diverse elements.

Lukács's History and Class-consciousness is the first systematic attempt to make Marxism philosophically conscious of the Hegelian in it, of the dialectic. But that is not the only reason why it is so important. There is also the original turn that Lukács has been intelligent enough to give the philosophical interpretation of Marxism the interpretation of Marx's critique of Hegel. Lukács's book far surpasses in depth, wealth of content and ability in testing general and apparently 'pure' philosophical statements in concrete individual problems, all those works which have hitherto dealt with the philosophical principles of Marxism as a special problem. But as well as this, it is the first attempt at a historical-materialist treatment of the history of philosophy (particularly in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries), and even in a purely

philosophical perspective, the first significant break with the petrification of philosophy as nothing-but-epistemology. I must straightaway renounce an exhaustive discussion of all the questions it treats or raises. Lukács himself, in his introduction, formulates his aim as that of bringing the question of the dialectic back into discussion. I shall therefore restrict myself to a reproduction of his general line of thought, with the aim of linking to it a few equally general critical comments.

Lukács's central question is, can the dialectic be anything but revolutionary? That is, must not the unity of theory and practice be treated as its innermost essence, and is it not a contradiction to its real presuppositions if this unity is not installed in it? Lukács finds the Hegelian dialectic wanting by this standard and points out its peculiar internal contradictions. He thus treats Marx's Thesis on Feuerbach, that 'the philosophers have only interpreted the world in various ways, the point is, to change it', as the essence and starting-point of Marxism. And this point is the point for 'philosophy'. The task of changing the world is not to be understood in the way that eg, the application of the natural sciences, technology, means a 'change' of nature, a 'mastery' of it, but rather the practical moments must be given in theory itself, in its relation to its object. For technology, the 'praxis' of the natural sciences, presupposes precisely unchangeably valid natural laws, while in Marx's view, the 'changing of the world' means the supersession (Aufhebung) of 'natural laws of society' which depend on 'the participants' lack of consciousness'. Consciousness of the law, knowledge of the object, must therefore mean the same thing as transformation of the object. However, this kind of knowledge is only possible if there is no rigid, un-supersedable foreignness of the Subject and the Object of knowledge, if the object (Gegen-

stand) is conceived not only as an Object (Objekt) but also as a Subject (Subjekt), if the knowledge of the object means a corresponding self-knowledge of the Subject, the self-consciousness of the object.<sup>7</sup> All the determinations of the dialectic, the supersession of the rigidity of the concepts, thesis-anti thesis-synthesis, etc, are only meaningful if they are understood as determinations of the process of the self-knowledge of the object. But the latter can only be transformed as a totality. For its liability and openness to change means the supersession of the autonomy and isolation of its individual moments. The dialectic consists precisely of the fact that the autonomy of the individual moments is exposed as an appearance. The true reality is not the isolated facts but the totality. The individual 'facts' can only be understood if they are dissolved and inserted into the totality. But in what area can an identical Subject-Object be found? Hegel hardly raised the question. From the start, he dealt with the whole world from the point of view of emergent self-consciousness. In Lukács's interpretation of Marx, nature is excluded straightaway as the object knowledge of which might mean its own self-knowledge, and the validity of the dialectic is restricted to history, meaning the history of men. (Precisely because of this methodological separation of history and nature, Lukács has been able to avoid the completely anti-historical Enlightenment conception of the natural sciences which still prevails everywhere among Marxists, and to see that conception itself as a historical product.) Marx's advance over Hegel lies in the fact that he discovered the identical Subject-Object of history concretely in the proletariat. He did not treat history post festum in a completely contemplative way, as a process in principle completed, as Hegel did, but found the point from which history until now can be conceived as history, as meaningful, necessary events in general, in the struggle of

the proletariat for a socialist society, in the dialectical conception of the present. For 'historical development so-called depends in general on the fact that the latest form treats the past ones as stages on the way to itself' (Marx).<sup>8</sup> The process of history can only be conceived as a totality if the present is in a position to grasp past history as its own past. Past epochs can be grasped as history only from the standpoint of the Subject which transforms the present as an object. Only by rejecting the Hegelian aphorism that Minerva's Owl takes wing as dusk falls and that philosophy only begins when a form of life has grown old, could Marx finally realise the dialectic, the unity of Subject and Object, the rule of the Spirit, as a unity of consciousness with its object. Lukács conceives Marx's 'putting Hegel's dialectic onto its feet' as its realisation, and he glimpses the essence of Marx's critique of Hegel when he says that 'the Absolute Spirit, which makes history,' only reaches 'consciousness subsequently, when movement has ceased. Philosophy thus arrives post festum. . . The Absolute Spirit, as an Absolute Spirit, only makes history in appearance'. The Spirit is only a spectator, not the creator of the process. Insofar as Hegel only treats history after the event, as a finished process, he is unable to reach a real unity of Subject and Object, or thought and being, he is forced to contradict himself, not seeking 'the Idea in reality' but outside reality. The structure of the relation between the World Spirit and real history as a Ruse of Reason has to appear to him as a supra-historical, atemporal 'law', whereas for Marx it expresses only the structure of the past. Hegel's conceptual mythology is an expression of the fact that he was also only capable of treating the object, history, contemplatively, ie, externally. From this basic conception Lukács derives not only the perspective on the Marxist dialectic in which he explains the problems posed by classical German philosophy and its connexion with

Marxism, but also the whole construction of the content of the Marxist system. Marxism appears as the solution of questions and contradictions with which classical German philosophy struggled in vain. Kant's problem: that conceiving the knowledge of the object as the 'creation' of the object inevitably clashed with the contemplative structure of knowledge for which the world to be known had to remain insurpassably a 'given', ie, in principle 'uncreatable' by the Subject. The Kantian thing-in-itself, inevitably barring the road for any epistemology in which the only natural knowledge of the world is contemplative, set a limit to the rationalizability, the 'creatability' of the world of mere facticity. Lukács shows how Critical Philosophy's questions are bound up with the commodity fetishism of capitalist society, how the rule of men by economic laws in capitalism makes it impossible for philosophy to answer the question of the genesis and 'creation' of the object. Commodity-producing society itself creates facts in isolation from the whole whose coherent reflection and rationality presupposes precisely the irrationality of the whole. Hence questions as to the genesis and totality of the world were given from the beginning as insoluble tasks for classical philosophy. Marx was able to answer these questions because 'the dialectical method as a method of history was reserved for that class which was capable of finding the identical Subject-Object in itself from its own life basis: the proletariat' (Werke 2, p 331; G&K, p 164). And Marxism cannot be separated from the 'practico-critical activity' of the proletariat. It is the reified social being of the bourgeoisie that determines its reified consciousness and imposes on it a purely contemplative attitude to its own reality (in its social sciences as well as its natural sciences and philosophy). In the same way, it is the social being of the proletariat which enables Marxism to go beyond the mere facticity of society, the

mere immediacy of capitalism leaving the ground of individual-scientific research into the laws governing isolated component regions, in order to grasp society in its historicity, ie, in its totality. Marxism, as the class-consciousness of the proletariat, as the unity of theory and practice, is the self-knowledge of capitalist society and as such the first knowledge in history which is no 'false consciousness', no mere ideology, which is in a position to 'transform' and 'create' the object. That is why Lukács so sharply criticizes the attempt to reduce Marxism to an individual science or a sociology, and ascribes such importance to the Marxist investigation of primitive society. For only in the spirit of Engel's efforts to show that there was once a state of society in which 'natural laws of society' did not hold, is it possible to trace the historical process by which these laws have gradually asserted themselves, acquiring absolute validity in capitalism, or to grasp the 'realm of freedom' as a supersession of the validity of these laws. Historical materialism therefore follows from the practical character of the Marxist dialectic, attuned to the transformation of the object: it is not a heuristic principle with whose help the facts of history can the better be elaborated and rationalized; it is the knowledge of the Archimedean point, the 'anatomy' of civil society, from which it is possible on the one hand to conceive and revolutionize its totality, and on the other to grasp the historicity of the past, the step-like character of past epochs leading to the present, ie, the totality of the process of history. The economic point of view of historical materialism is not the point of view of an individual science, but follows necessarily from Marx's revolutionary, dialectical philosophy of history, it is a point of view which mediates between the natural (naturwüchsig) immediacy of past epochs and their totality and historicity.

But Lukács's conception of Marxism, its first concrete elaboration, in which Marx'd dialectic means the reality and truth of the Hegelian dialectic, reproduces the antinomies of the Hegelian dialectic anew on a higher level. According to Lukács, the 'Copernican Revolution' that Marx made in the dialectic lies in the fact that he does not interpret the dialectic into history post festum, from outside its process, but recognizes it precisely in the midst of history, in the revolutionary interaction (Wechselwirkung) of Subject and Object. He includes the future in the realm of the revolutionary dialectic, not as a teleological positing of objectives or a natural-law 'ought', but as an active reality which inhabits and determines the present. This supersedes the mere contemplation of history and gives rise to the objective possibility of a transformation of the object through the emergence of the class-consciousness of the proletariat as the self-knowledge of capitalist society.

However, on the other hand, the concrete identification of the proletariat as the identical Subject-Object of history, the establishment of the fact that its class-consciousness represents the first real self-knowledge of the Object, means that history up till now had had no identical Subject-Object. The structure which was expressed by the 'Ruse of Reason' and signified the transcendence of the meaning of the process with respect to the purposes and consciousness of men, implied precisely this fact. But this is to pronounce the structural transformation of the dialectic when it is applied to the past. If the dialectic were exhaustively identical with the revolutionary dialectic, Marx's characterization of the bourgeois conception of history - 'there has been history, but there is no longer any'<sup>9</sup> - would be turned upside down: there is a history, but there has not been any before. The proletariat's knowledge of history, which is made possible

by and follows from its revolutionary dialectic in the present, depends on the knowledge of the past which led necessarily to the present. The meaning of that past is only revealed on the basis of the self-criticism of this present. But for the past itself, this means an unsurpassable transcendence of its historicity with respect to its being-for-itself. This transcendence is not a Kantian transcendence, for if it were it would presuppose an infinite progress; it is, so to speak, a transcendence inhabiting the process itself. But what else is this but the Hegelian World Spirit? - the Subject-correlate of what can be called a merely 'objective' dialectic in which the identical Subject-Object of history is not yet present, in which the duality of thought and being still survives. To posit the Ruse of Reason necessarily implies positing a Subject which is not identical with the empirical Subject of history, whereby the structure of its relation to real history is essentially the same as the structure of the Hegelian relation between World Spirit and History. And this alters the problem of subsequentness, of the post festum consciousness. Marx, and following him Lukács, criticize Hegel because for him thought only arrives subsequently, is only a spectator of the process and only relates to it in a purely contemplative way, from outside history. It seems to me that this criticism of Hegel is only partly justified, for a Kantian definition of contemplation underlies it. Contemplation in Kant's sense means a prior contemplation inside the process, with the result that contemplation - in Lukács's sense - can only mean the 'natural regularity' of the process, the unknowability of its totality, direction and necessity. With Hegel, however, it is not a matter of contemplation within an inconceivable and unconceived process, but of contemplation of a completed process whose meaning has already become visible. Marxism, too, must retain the point of view of subsequentness thus conceived, indeed it is a

presupposition of its philosophy of history. The essence of the latter is the knowledge of the 'realm of necessity' as opposed to the 'realm of freedom'. The knowledge of the dialectical transition from the realm of necessity to the realm of freedom is only made possible on the basis of its 'endedness', its conclusion in the proletariat, in communism. Marxism is the subsequent consciousness of a world period which is already methodologically complete in thought.

This specific problem of the past which can only be grasped contemplatively (meaning, of course, in the contemplation of the proletariat, the identical Subject-Object of the present), thus firmly resisting any eventual removal of the problematic of the thing-in-itself, is sensed by Lukács himself. This problem is at the root of the essay on 'The Change in the Function of Historical Materialism'. The 'change in function' which takes place on the victory of the proletariat means the supersession of the struggle character of Marxism and the emergence of its purely scientific elements, its orientation towards the past. And here the question of the applicability of historical materialism is a crying one. For as the self-knowledge of capitalist society, it must be much more 'cautiously' applied to societies in which commodity fetishism is still only a superficial phenomenon, societies which are not yet or not purely governed by 'natural laws of society'. For 'economic life's autonomy, its positing of itself as its own goal, its enclosure into itself and self-mastery, its immanence, have not yet arisen in pre-capitalist societies as they are found in capitalist society' (414; 244). Hence it is a matter of the application of the categories of the self-knowledge of capitalism, of the categories of complete socialization, to 'societies' which have not yet been completely socialized, in which a 'natural relation' still predominates. What does this natural relation mean?

It means that the autonomy of the individual component parts of the society is not an apparent autonomy but a 'real' one, grounded in itself, as opposed to the fetishistic appearance of this autonomy in capitalism. And that therefore, once again in opposition to capitalism, the category of the totality is a category external to the 'natural relation'; to dissolve this non-fetishistic material relation into the process of history would not give a real knowledge of its character as a moment, but merely misrepresent it. Here becoming is not the truth of being. Or rather, the truth of being as becoming, as history, is a moment external to being, the category of reality (of the totality, of history) is not the mediation between it and existence, it does not lead to existence but away from it. This does not mean the self-supersession of history, but merely the re-emergence of the problem of the thing-in-itself in history itself. It appears in the image of the antagonisms between the 'true', original nature of past epochs and their 'phenomenal' nature for the subject of historical contemplation. It is not a matter of the 'same' thing-in-itself structure as is found in Critical Philosophy, but of the necessary emergence of a contemplative dialectic, which therefore means that Hegel did not 'relapse' into Kantianism, either. Dialectical contemplation can only formally be compared with the contemplation of rationalism.

Lukács was unable to see this problematic clearly. He thought he was forced to make the different categories of the totality equal because he did not distinguish clearly enough between the identical Subject-Object of history as a whole and the identical Subject-Object of capitalist society alone. The object can only be grasped and revolutionized as a totality by a Subject which is also a totality; and in capitalist society that is the proletariat constituting itself as a class. However, the proletariat

is only the bearer of the unified (einheitlich) Subject of history as a whole, not in its immediacy this Subject itself. The identical Subject-Object of capitalist society is not equivalent to the unified Subject of history as a whole, which is posed 'merely' as a correlate and cannot be located concretely. The modern proletariat struggling for communism is not the Subject of ancient and feudal society. It grasps these epochs as its own past, as steps leading up to it, but it is not their Subject. The proletariat as the identical Subject-Object of a determinate historical epoch in which such a thing is possible for the first time, must project into the past a unified Subject of history as a whole which will ultimately be identical with its Object, in order to be able to conceive itself. Lukács himself concedes this when he counterposes a dialectical materialism to Feuerbach's mechanistic materialism: for the former it is 'non-existent man' who is located at the centre of history. For 'existing man' as the centre of history would mean simply the reproduction 'of the inhumanity of class society on the metaphysico-religious plane, in the Beyond, in Eternity' (378; 209) If man is not dialectically conceived, then 'absolutized man simply steps into the place of those transcendent powers which he was called on to explain, dissolve and replace methodologically' (373; 204). But if two people say the same thing, that does not make their positions the same. The proletariat, which has conceived the non-existence of the man of all class societies through its own inhumanity, still presupposes some 'existent' man, ie, some merely negatively determined man for whom being governed by natural laws of society is not a part of his 'nature', whose realization by the proletariat is the aim of the historical process and who must therefore be assigned to the historical process as a mere Subject-correlate inhabiting it transcendently. 'Man', not Feuerbach's man, but the man to be realized by the proletariat, is a

conceptual mythology, too. But an inevitable conceptual mythology. This mythology proves necessary for the proletarian standpoint, because the latter is at the turning-point of two world epochs and can therefore see the future as well as the past. But the future is still necessarily empty and the past carries with it, precisely as a totality, an indelible trace of irrationality. Both create the conceptual mythology, an expression of 'the inability to penetrate the object itself'. But this conceptual mythology is already something different in principle from that of bourgeois rationalism. For the latter it is a matter of a mental expression of the inconceivability of its own historical reality, while for the former it arises only on the basis of knowledge and revolution themselves. The reproduction of the Hegelian antinomies of the dialectic points forwards, not backwards. The relationship between Hegel and Marx is even closer than in Lukács conception.

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#### TRANSLATOR'S NOTES

- 1 Einzelwissenschaft: the science of a specific area, as opposed to the universal science of the totality. The term is not Lukács's, nor standard Heidelberg terminology (Rickert uses Spezialwissenschaft).
- 2 Eduard Bernstein: Evolutionary Socialism, trans. E C Harvey, New York 1961, p 223.
- 3 Max Adler (1873-1937), Austrian Social-Democrat, one of the principal theorists of Austro-Marxism. Révai is probably referring to his Marxistische Problems. Cf. Lukács: Werke Bd. 2, p 183; G&K, p 24.
- 4 Heinrich Cünow (1862-1936), German Social-Democrat, regarded as a 'radical' before 1914, moved rapidly to the

right during the War, collaborated with Parvus in the ultra-social-chauvinist journal Die Glocke, 1919-24 editor of Neue Zeit, the SPD's theoretical journal. Cf. Lukács's criticism of him in 'Technology and Social Relations', New Left Review 39, Sept-Oct 1966, pp 29-30. 5 Critical Philosophy: Kant's own name for his system, often used of themselves by Neo-Kantians.

6 G Plekhanov: The Development of the Monist View of History, London 1956.

7 Gegenstand/Objekt: Classical German philosophy dis-

tinguishes between objects in general confronting the subject of cognition (Gegenstand) and the Object or the philosophically elaborated conditions of objectivity (Objekt). This translation follows the normal practice in rendering Gegenstand as 'object', and Objekt as 'Object' (with a capital O).

8 1859 Introduction, in Grundrisse der Kritik der politischen Ökonomie, Berlin 1953, p 26.

9 The Poverty of Philosophy, New York 1963, p 121.

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# The young Marx and Rancière<sup>1</sup>

by ANTONY CUTLER

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'The critic... can start with any form of theoretical and practical consciousness and develop the true actuality out of the form inherent in existing actuality as its ought to be and goal.'

Marx, 'Letter to Ruge' September 1843<sup>2</sup>

'Idealism is rooted in the immediate. The spirit is in some way always immediate to itself.'

Bachelard, 'Le Matérialisme Rationnel'<sup>3</sup>

The 'Early Works' of Marx<sup>4</sup> have been read from two different points of view, which, in respect of the content of their conclusions, are fundamentally opposed. The humanist reader will seek to read the 1844 Manuscripts in 'Capital',<sup>5</sup> the anti-humanist reader will seek to invert this reading.

<sup>6</sup> This inversion obscures the fact that both readings have an unconscious unity. Althusser has shown that this unity is the unity of a method. Both discourses share the method of writing the history of philosophy 'in the future anterior'.<sup>7</sup>

This method has three theoretical pre-requisites. Firstly, the text read must be broken down into a set of elements. This is essential for the method because it allows a comparison of elements of diverse problematics. However, in itself, it is insufficient for it contains no principle of what elements shall be selected and compared. This function is fulfilled by the second pre-requisite, that the method should be teleological. The humanist will thus seek idealist and ethical themes in 'Capital' because, for him, the inherent tendency of Marx's work is humanist; conversely, the anti-humanist will seek materialist themes in the 'Early Works'. The substance of the method is defined by these two pre-requisites but they in turn depend on a third, that the history of philosophy will be explained purely as a history of ideas.<sup>8</sup>

Jacques Rancière starts from a rejection of this ideological method. He sets out to comprehend the historically deter-

minate problematic of the 1844 Manuscripts, a problematic which has not fundamentally rejected the problematic of Hegel or of Feuerbach. His project is a condition of the understanding of the distinction between the ideological discourse of the 'Early Works' and the scientific discourse of the 'Mature Works' of Marx.

For Marx, in 1843, the 'existing actuality' contains simultaneously its own inherent principle of truth and the absence of that principle. It is this contradiction which forms the basis of the method of the 1844 Manuscripts. The inherence of this truth means that its coming to consciousness will be expressed in the process of erklären: simultaneously declaration and explanation. The erklären, itself the principle of inherent truth, is at the same time the principle of its absence. The declaration and explanation does not start from the expression of the particular contradictions which constitute what Marx, at this stage, calls the 'struggles of our age'. The Truth inherent in these particular contradictions is not intrinsic to their particularity but stems from their nature as expressions of the essential and universal contradiction. In themselves, they remain 'sins of humanity', sins of blindness of consciousness, unilateral because partial. In this schema the knowledge of particular contradictions (eg, those of the economy or of the political level) are situated within the reflexive, pre-critical discourse. This discourse can only grasp the phenomena of the fundamental and essential contradiction.

This fundamental contradiction of which all the particular contradictions are phenomena is expressed in the concept of alienation. This is the scission between man's essence and his estranged or alien being. The erklären is itself based on a prior concept, Vermenschlichung, the concept of giving a general form to the contradiction and, simultaneously, humanizing it. To declare and explain is to reveal the nature of the essential contradiction behind the

phenomena. which is also to humanize and raise to a general form those phenomena, and in so doing move from the phenomena to the essence.

However, if the nature of the critique in the discourse of the 'young' Marx were only to be a statement of the nature of the essential contradiction it would remain abstract. For the movement from the phenomena to the essence, if it is to be a 'true' critique, must move 'back', to expose concretely those very sins of consciousness which it revealed abstractedly in completing its first movement. These two essential movements are inscribed within the theoretical structure of the Manuscripts: the 'concrete critique' is not merely the practical side or application of the abstract critique.

The Inherence-Absence of the 'true' actuality reveals a principle of humanist anthropology of which Althusser writes, 'If the essence of man is to be a universal attribute it is essential that concrete subjects exist as absolute givens: this implies an empiricism of the subject. If these empirical individuals are to be men, it is essential that each carries in himself the whole human essence, if not in fact, at least in principle: this implies an idealism of the essence.'<sup>9</sup> The critique which declares the nature of the essence of the phenomena to be the contradiction within the subject (scission) must, if this contradiction is to be universal, find this contradiction in every actual subject. What separates the discourse of the 'young' Marx from previous theories of human nature is that the essence is not a complex of attributes but a scission between those attributes and 'real' being. It is thus revealed in the 'struggles of our age', the plurality of spheres in which the scission manifests itself (religion, the state etc). What is the principle from which this critique starts?

If the point of departure of the critique in terms of the



particular contradictions is arbitrary, because the phenomena are equivalent in principle, there are 'special places where the contradictions come to be reflected: these are the state and religion.' <sup>10</sup> This point of departure in fact remains arbitrary; yet it is an arbitrariness itself inscribed within the structure of the discourse of the 'young' Marx. To express what governs this point of departure I shall introduce two related concepts, the principle of immediate reality and the principle of the critique of abstraction.

The principle of immediate reality is the principle determining which particular phenomena the fundamental and essential contradiction takes up as its dominant form of appearance at any particular moment in time. Marx expresses the principle thus, 'Two facts cannot be denied; religion and politics are matters now forming focal points of Germany's interest. No matter how these may be we must begin with them, not oppose them with any one fixed system...' <sup>11</sup> This principle reveals the workings of the empiricism/idealism couple. The fundamental contradiction within the human essence finds its dominant form of appearance in those areas where the scission is most clearly experienced. The contradictions within these phenomena are thus more real. This theoretical structure implies the equivalence of immediacy and reality, that is the principle of empiricism. In this principle, therefore, we have a case of a confusion of the real-concrete and the concrete-in-thought, and a principle of the entrance of the latter into the former.

Rancière identifies three modes of discourse which are opposed to one another in the Manuscripts, the one-sided-pre-critical, the abstract-speculative, the critical. Does the opposition between the critical (what Marx calls his own discourse) and the abstract-speculative then represent a totally different principle, a theoretical principle, one

which signals a break? This point is crucial for if this principle is the principle of a radically new discourse, the discourse of a science, the break then becomes that break with 'hyposatization' identified by the Della Volpe school. <sup>12</sup>

The critique of the abstract-speculative discourse takes as its point of departure the same phenomena as those taken by the principle of immediate reality, namely, religion and the state. This does not exhaust their similarity, for the critical discourse discovers in the abstract-speculative discourse the same essence-phenomena model which it operates itself. The latter discourse is thus distinguished by this principle from the pre-critical discourse. What distinguishes the abstract-speculative discourse from that 'true' discourse which is critical? The answer is that the essence of the abstract-speculative discourse is an objective de-humanized essence while the 'true' essence, the human essence, is its phenomena. The scission within the human essence is 'hypostatized' as a scission within the abstract-speculative essence, which, because it is an 'abstract' movement, is no longer a scission but a completed process of overcoming that 'abstract' alienation.

<sup>13</sup> The two discourses are distinguished by the inversion of terms. The human essence, which in the abstract-speculative discourse is the phenomena of the state and religion, is, in the critical discourse, the essence of religion and the state. The conception governing this inversion is again an appeal to the 'real'. The abstract-speculative discourse reflects the 'real' 'struggles of our age', in a mystified form, whereas what is required is to grasp them in their true 'human form'. The critique of the abstract-speculative discourse is governed by the principle of immediate reality, the principle of the entrance of the real concrete into the discourse, the principle of empiricism we have already encountered.

This discussion of the point of departure seems to present an anomaly, for is there not another point of departure, one which truly governs the discourse of the Manuscripts, ie the critique of political economy? The appearance of this anomaly is deceptive. A point of departure is defined by its quality of determinacy, yet does the 'economy' in the Manuscripts have this character?

The structure of the discourse of the Manuscripts does not allow the possibility of taking a phenomena as a point of departure except when it is a privileged area of reflection of a fundamental or essential contradiction. However, the abolition of economic alienation is posed by Marx as the condition of the abolition of all other alienations. It is not a privileged area of reflection of the fundamental or essential contradiction but that very contradiction itself. The economy can only fulfill this role on one condition, that it ceases to be an economic level in a social formation, that is, a phenomenon in the discourse of the discourse of the Manuscripts, and becomes that real essence above and beyond any determinate level, the essence in scission. In the discourse therefore, the concepts of political economy must be translated into those of anthropology, a process which Rancière calls amphibology. Thus, the economic is characterized by a concept signalled by Rancière, its absence and excessive presence: absent in that it has no location, and by the same principle, is excessively present.

In the system of concepts of this discourse, that system which 'hierarchizes them vertically' <sup>14</sup>, the concept governing the absence and excessive presence is the 'uncriticized' Hegelian concept of experience. This concept is expressed by Hegel thus, '... it must be said that nothing is known which does not fall within experience, or (as it is also expressed) which is not felt to be true... For experience just consists in this, that the content - and the content is spirit - in its inherent nature is substance and

so object of consciousness. But this substance, which is spirit, is the development of itself explicitly to what it is inherently and implicitly;... It is inherently the movement which is the process of knowledge - the transforming of that inherent nature into explicitness, of Substance into Subject, of the object of consciousness into the object of self-consciousness...' <sup>15</sup> The absence and excessive presence of the economy partakes of that universality of the movement of the scission and its supersession which cannot be localized because it is the principle of a general movement. The discourse of the Manuscripts thus simultaneously partakes of the model of the Hegelian discourse as the phenomena are partial expressions of the essence, and the phenomena are equivalent in their ultimate reduction to the essence once it has completed its movement of supersession.

This character of the economy in the discourse of the Manuscripts reveals the relation of the critique to the theory of classical political economy. The latter is for this discourse a mirror for the 'facts', the critical discourse opposes itself to the discourse of classical political economy in the opposition expression/understanding. The critical discourse 'understands' by placing itself 'above' the discourse of classical political economy, by operating the process of Vermenschlichung. The critical discourse recognizes itself in the mirror of political economy, recognizing its own anthropological concepts in those same uncriticized anthropological concepts of the discourse of political economy. This implies what is explicitly stated by Marx, that the process of understanding is only that process of theoretical empiricism, to formulate a concept for the 'fact'.

To conclude, it may be said that the lessons of the 1844 Manuscripts derive from its uniqueness as the only truly systematic expression of the thought of the 'young' Marx.

Althusser has situated this unique text in the following terms: - 'It would be difficult not to speculate that Marx's sudden and total last return to Hegel in that genial synthesis of Feuerbach and Hegel, the 1844 Manuscripts, might not have been an explosive experiment uniting substances of the two extremes of the theoretical field which he had until then frequented, that this extraordinary rigorous and conscientious experiment, the most extreme test of the 'inversion' of Hegel ever attempted might not have been the way Marx lived practically and achieved his own transformation, in a text which he never published. Some idea of the logic of this prodigious mutation is given by the extraordinary theoretical tension of the 1844 Manuscripts, for we know in advance the paradox that the text of the last hours of the night is, theoretically speaking, the text the furthest removed from the day that is about to dawn.' <sup>17</sup>

#### NOTES

(1) The extract published here constitutes pages 95-122 of Jacques Rancière's study 'The Concept of a Critique and the Critique of Political Economy; From the 1844 Manuscripts to Capital'. The complete essay is published as pages 93-210 of Lire Le Capital Vol I (François Maspéro 1965). It remains untranslated in full, the only translation of the collective work which made up Lire Le Capital, originally published in two volumes by Maspéro is L. Althusser and E. Balibar Reading Capital (New Left Books 1970); this is a translation of the new edition of Lire Le Capital brought out by Maspéro in their 'Petite Collection' series in 1968. This edition contains substantial additions and corrections to the essays of Althusser and Balibar, but it omits the contributions of Rancière and Macherey originally included in Vol I of the first edition and of Estabiet originally included in Vol

2 of the first edition. Jacques Rancière's present position on Althusser can be found in Saul Karzs et al Lectura de Althusser, (Buenos Aires 1970).

(2) In Writings of the Young Marx on Philosophy and Society trans. and Eds, by L. D. Easton and K. H. Guddat (Anchor Books 1967) p 213.

(3) (Presse Universitaires de France 1953) p 76.

(4) See Glossary definition by Ben Brewster in L. Althusser For Marx (Allen Lane 1969) pp 256-257.

(5) It would be a mistake to think that the humanist reading of Capital from the standpoint of the Manuscripts is a recent phenomenon. In fact it is coterminous with the publication of the manuscripts themselves. For example see S. Landshut and J. P. Mayer Importance pour une intelligence nouvelle de Marx de ses œuvres de jeunesse in Karl Marx Oeuvres Philosophiques Vol 4 (Alfred Costes 1948) pp XIII-LI See also For Marx pp 51 and 52 (particularly footnote 3 p 52).

(6) A reading which is anti-humanist is essentially ideological, Marxism is not an anti-humanism but rather an a-humanism. For a perceptive discussion of readings of the early works and particularly the forerunners of the early works see J Hoepfner 'A Propos de Quelques Conceptions Erronees du Passage de Hegel a Marx' Recherches Internationales a la Lumiere du Marxisme No 19, 1960 (pp 175-191). See also Althusser's discussion of this paper in his essay 'On the Young Marx' For Marx pp 49-87.

(7) See For Marx p 54. See also eg Landshut and Mayer, op. cit. pp XIII-XIV.

(8) See For Marx pp 56-57

(9) See For Marx p 228

(10) Rancière (translation p. 41)

(11) Marx Letter to Ruge Sept 1843 Easton and Guddat op. cit. p 213.

(12) For a brief account of the position of the Della Volpe School see 'Introduction to Della Volpe' 'New Left Review' 59 Jan/Feb 1970 pp 97-101. Althusser's criticism of Della Volpe and Colletti can be found in Reading Capital pp 115-6 and 135-6. See also Rancière 'Le Concept de Critique...' particularly pp 170-176.

(13) Because the scission within the abstract-speculative discourse is 'hypothesized' the form of resolution of that scission is never specified. The determination of the resolution of this contradiction thus always comes from outside the discourse. For example, the role of the state in Hegel. The relation of the critical discourse to this 'hypostatization' is to confront its ideological character not from the point of view of the entrance of ideological factors into the discourse but rather on an empiricist basis, that the form of resolution of the scission is inadequate because it ignores the 'real' source of alienation.

(14) On the concepts of exposition and order of discourse see, L. Althusser, Reading Capital, p 68 and Alain Badiou 'Le (Re) Commencement Du Materialisme Dialectique' Critique, Tome XXIII, No 240 May 1967.

(15) G. W. F. Hegel 'The Phenomenology of Mind' (Harper Torchbooks 1967) pp 800-801 (emphasis in original)

(16) For example Michel Foucault comments that for Smith '... all labour could represent a certain quantity of merchandise. Men's activity and the value of things were seen as communicating in the transparent element of representation'. The Order of Things (Tavistock Press 1970) p 253 (My emphasis)

(17) For Marx p 36 (emphasis in original).

# The Concept of 'Critique' and the 'Critique of Political Economy'

(From the Manuscripts of 1844 to Capital)

by JACQUES RANCIERE

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The sub-title of Capital: 'A critique of Political Economy', provides a justification for this exposition. The sub-title requires the consideration of two matters:

1. The concept of a critique is a concept we find throughout Marx's work. He made use of it to refer to his specific activity at all stages in the evolution of his thinking.

However, although this concept was always present in Marx's mind, we know that it was worked out by him explicitly at a precise stage in his development, ie during the years 1842 to 1845. During this whole period it was the central concept in his thinking. Hence the question arises: what is the connection between the sub-title and the working out of the concept of a critique which we find in the works of Marx's youth?

2. Let us specify the problem. The plan for a critique of political economy was formulated for the first time by Marx in 1844. This plan dominated his work from then until the end of his life. It gave rise successively:  
- to the Manuscripts of 1844 which proclaim explicitly

they are a critique of political economy

- to the Contribution to the Critique of Political Economy of 1859

- and to Capital.

Hence the problem: what is the connection between Capital and the plan which was Marx's in 1844?

Naturally I shall not relate the whole history of the development of this plan, the successive elaborations to which it gave rise. I shall restrict myself to bringing together two texts: Capital on the one hand, and the 1844 Manuscripts on the other, which contain the first critique of political economy which was dependent strictly on the young Marx's critical theory.

In the first part I shall try to define the characteristic features as a whole of this critical theory of which he made use in the Manuscripts. And having done so, I shall establish a certain number of reference points (eg the problem of the economic subject).

In the second part,<sup>1</sup> where there can be no question of giving such an overall picture, I shall take two or three problems in Capital and attempt to link them up with the same reference points established in the first part, and to show the movement of the concepts and of their relationships which constitutes the transition to Marxist scientificity, the transition from the ideological discourse of the young Marx, to the scientific discourse of Capital.

In this study I shall rely on already established theoretical knowledge constituted by the work of Althusser, (cf. For Marx, Allen Lane, London, 1969) and the concepts established and worked out by J. A. Miller, on the occasion of unpublished papers read during the year 1964, and devoted to the theory of J. Lacan and to the critique of G. Politzer's psychology. J. A. Miller showed the decisive

character of these concepts for the reading of Capital in his article: 'The Function of Theoretical Training' (Cahiers Marxistés-Leninistes No 1).

### 1. The Critique of Political Economy in the Manuscripts of 1844.

#### Preliminary:

The critique which is carried out in the Manuscripts represents the most systematic form of the anthropological critique carried out by Marx, in the texts of the period, 1843-44, on the basis of Feuerbachian anthropology. (It is self evident that since our aim is simply to sketch the outline of this critique which he carried out, the problem of the relationship between Marx and Feuerbach lies outside the scope of our study.)

Let us try to define this critique by replying to three questions:

1. What is the object of this critique?
2. What is the subject of the critique, ie who carries out the critique?
3. What is the method of the critique?

The reply to these questions is provided by the last paragraph of the letter to Ruge of September 1843:

'We can express the aim of our periodical<sup>2</sup> in one phrase: A self-understanding (critical philosophy) of the age concerning its struggles and wishes. This is a task for the world and for us. It must be the work of united forces. It is a confession nothing else. To have its sins forgiven, mankind has only to declare them for what they are.'<sup>3</sup> ('Um sich ihre Sunden vergeben zu lassen, braucht die Menschheit sie nur fur das zu erklaren, was sie sind.')

The whole critique hangs on the way in which the three terms which I have indicated - the subject, the object and the method - are linked together.

Let us take the object first: what is involved? It is a question of an experience whose subject is humanity. For a very long time humanity has been going through this experience, but blindly; now however, we have reached the point where it is possible for humanity to understand itself.

The 'we' represents the critical consciousness. It is this which first becomes conscious that the time has come when this experience comes to its termination, which is knowledge of itself. It is the privileged consciousness in which this experience first becomes clear to itself, or more precisely it is the words in which the language of this human experience expresses itself and at last knows its own truth.

The whole method is contained in this erklären. It means both to declare and to explain. This means that the statement of the facts for what they are (fur das was sie sind), that the statement of the human experience just as it presents itself, is already their explanation. It is enough for the words to be spoken which give expression to these facts (which Marx calls the sins of humanity). The statement of these facts is already knowledge of them, and their knowledge abolishes them as sins, since what made them sins was precisely not being known, being blind experience.

The most important part of what is said in this erklären is that, fundamentally, the explanation belongs to the same order as the statement, the announcement.

We can express this by means of another metaphor: we may say that the critique is a reading. The text in question is that experience the subject of which is humanity. What is it that constitutes that text, that statement? That text is woven of contradictions. The form in which the human experience makes its development known is in the form

of the contradiction. Every sphere of human experience (political, religious, ethical, economic, etc.) presents a certain number of contradictions. These contradictions are felt by individuals in what Marx calls: 'the struggles and aspirations of our age.'

The role of the Critique is to say or to read - whatever the chosen metaphor - the contradiction, to declare it for what it is. What is it that establishes the difference between this and the ordinary statement, and which enables it to be a critique?

It is because it perceives behind those contradictions, a more fundamental contradiction, that which is expressed by the concept of alienation.

The banal description of the concept of alienation is very familiar: the subject, man, expresses the predicates which constitute his essence in an external object. At the stage of alienation this object becomes alien to him. The essence of man has passed into an alien being. In its turn this alien being - which is made up only of man's alienated essence - presents itself as the real subject and posits man as its object.

In alienation, man's own being exists in the form of his alien being, the human exists in a non-human form - reason in the form of non-reason.

It is this identification of man's essence with his alien being which defines the position of the contradiction. That is to say that the contradiction is based on the separation of a subject from itself. The contradiction is separation, this is the important point to bear in mind in order to follow the whole logic of the critical discourse.

In experience, however, the structure of the contradiction is not given as such. It is expressed in a particular form. In fact the separation of a man from his essence, results

in a division. Each of the separate spheres of the manifestation of the human experience - spheres which correspond to the different predicates of the human essence - take on an autonomous reality. From this it follows that the contradiction always presents itself as the contradiction within a particular sphere. Any statement of the contradiction which restricts itself to that particular form is a unilateral and partial statement. The task of the critique is to raise the particular contradiction to its general form.

Different concepts express this change of level. Marx speaks of the general form, the level of abstraction, true meaning. These terms are summed up in the general concept which describes the operation: that of Vermenschlichung (literally 'humanisation'). To give to a contradiction its general form is to give to it its human meaning; that is, the separation of man from his essence. This human meaning, of which the particular contradiction is the manifestation, is discovered by the critique by releasing the general form of the contradiction: the relation between the two terms whose separation is posed in the contradiction.

Let us take an example. In the Jewish Question Marx criticises the way in which Bauer posed the problem of Jewish emancipation. For Bauer the problem is reduced to the relationship between the Jewish religion and the Christian state. Thus he does not consider the state in its general form but takes a particular type of state. Moreover, he considers Judaism in its religious aspect only instead of giving to it its general human meaning.

Marx, on the other hand, carries out this transition to the general form: from the particular State/religion contradiction, he goes on to consider the contradiction: the State/assumptions about the State, which leads to the

contradiction: the State/private property.

At this level the fundamental contradiction appears: the fact that the essence of man exists outside of man in the State.

From this example we see that the critical discourse is:

- the explanation of the fundamental meaning of the contradiction.
- the rediscovery of the original unity.

This original unity, is the unity of a subject and its essence. It is this unity of the subject man and his essence which defines the concept of truth in Feuerbach's critique.

This concept of truth enables us to locate the problem of the discourse which is opposed to the critical discourse: the speculative discourse. The latter may be characterised as an abstract discourse. This concept of abstraction in the anthropological critique is the basis of a fundamental misunderstanding: it refers both to a process which takes place in reality, and at the same time to the logical steps which belong to a certain type of discourse.

Abstract is in fact taken here in the sense of separated. The abstraction (separation) takes place when the human essence is separated from man, and his predicates are fixed in an alien being. The speculation starts off from this abstraction, from this separation from the original unity. In that state the predicate exists separated from the subject. But this separation from the original unity is at the same time the setting up of a new unity - to the advantage of the estranged being in which the essence of the subject is alienated. That is what enables the predicate to pose as the true subject. That is how theologians, who start off from the division between man and his essence alienated in God, make God the real

subject. In the same way speculative philosophy - i. e. Hegelian philosophy - starts off from thought separated from its subject, man, in order to make the abstract ideas the real subject of the experience.

Thus we read in Feuerbach's Philosophy of the Future No 23:

'The essence of God is none other in Hegel than the essence of thought, or thought separated by abstraction from the thinking ego. The philosophy of Hegel, has made from thought, from the subjective being, but which is thought without the subject, and thus represented as a being distinct from himself, the being divine and absolute.'

What is important here is that abstraction as an instrument of thought is disqualified. All thinking which seeks to proceed by scientific abstraction (in the sense explained by Marx in the general Introduction of 1857) is accused of maintaining the separation of the abstract moments from the human experience.

Thus in the Provisional Theses for the Reform of Philosophy Feuerbach characterises abstraction as alienation:

'To abstract is to pose the essence of nature outside of nature, the essence of thought outside the act of thinking. By founding his whole system on these acts of abstraction, Hegel's philosophy alienated man from himself. It identifies clearly what it separates, but in a way which itself involves in its turn, separation and mediation.' Thesis No 20.

To anticipate we may say that what is confused here in this theory of abstraction are the two processes which Marx distinguishes as the process of thought and the real process in the general Introduction of 1857.

To sum up these preliminary considerations, on the concept of the critique, we distinguish between the three possible types of discourse from the viewpoint of the critique:

a discourse which takes place at the level of the phenomena, a one-sided discourse, which grasps a particular aspect of the contradiction only;  
two discourses which take place at the level of the essence: the critical discourse or the development of the true essence,  
and the speculative discussion or the development of the false essence.

\* We can now tackle the study of the critique in the Manuscripts.

### 1. The Level of Political Economy

We shall not deal with the whole theoretical structure of the Manuscripts. We prefer to approach the text indirectly by asking ourselves the question: what is the place of Political Economy in the Manuscripts? Marx's Preface does not define the concept of Political Economy. Political Economy appears as one item in the index of subjects. Marx states that he will present the critique of the different kinds of subject-matter (law, ethics, politics, etc.), that he will show their connection later, and that, finally, he will show how speculative philosophy has made use of these materials in order to carry out its own constructions. There is no placing of Political Economy. In fact two things would have had to be placed: the economic reality and the economic discourse.

#### (a) No placing of the economic reality

Here the economy does not appear as a basis or as a last resort. There is here no setting up of an economic



structure in the sense in which Marx understands it from the German Ideology onwards.

Neither does it appear as the fundamental alienation produced by the reduction of other alienations (here I refer to Calvez' outline).<sup>4</sup> The alienations are presented right from the beginning as being all on the same level.

As a first placing we may define political economy, law, ethics, politics as different spheres of human experience. (Let us emphasise here, the importance of this concept of experience which comes really from Hegel. It is this concept which is not worked out theoretically by Marx which makes his theorising possible. In his critical examination of Hegel in the 3rd Manuscript this is what is not criticised. It is the implicit presence of this unrecognised and uncriticised concept which constitutes the conditions which make the young Marx's critical discourse possible, and which makes a scientific discourse impossible.) For economic reality appears only as one of the spheres, which express each in its own way, the development and alienation of the human essence.

Nevertheless, this first placing is contradicted by a second placing. In the Third Manuscript Marx states that economic alienation is the alienation of real life (in contrast with religious alienation which takes place only in consciousness). Therefore, the abolition of economic alienation involves the abolition of all other alienations.

How is this transition possible? What we have is an expansion of the concept of the economy, in such a way that it comes to include all the relations of man with nature (in the concepts of production and consumption) and all the relations of men between themselves (in the concept of exchange). Hence the economy covers the whole field of human experience, it is merely the form taken by the

very concept of experience.

Thus the localisation of economic reality offends in one case by its absence and the other by its excessive presence. But in both the result is the same: Marx did not set up a separate field of political economy.

#### (b) No placing of the economic discourse

There is one remarkable fact in the Manuscripts: the problem of the political economy as a discourse with claims to be scientific is not really posed. It is true that in the 2nd Manuscript Marx talks of the progress of political economy but this is only a progress in cynicism: economists admit more and more frankly the inhumanity of political economy.

In fact for Marx the category of the discourse does not become a preferential category until it concerns the essence (either as a speculative discourse concerning a false essence, or a critical discourse concerning the true essence). At the level at which we are the discourse of the economists is taken only as a reflection of the facts. There is no disjunction between economic facts and economic science. This absence of disjunction is expressed by Marx when he talks of the level of political economy. The expression level of political economy defines on the one hand a certain stage of development of humanity, a stage of development which manifests itself by phenomena such as competition, pauperisation, etc. But it also refers to the conceptual level at which the economist's discussion takes place. A considered consciousness proper to it corresponds to that order of the phenomena. In other words that considered perception of phenomena which in Capital Marx characterises as the 'simple conscious expression of the apparent movement' is validated here, and the concepts of classical economy seem only to express this per-

ception.

Note for example in the 1st Manuscript what Marx calls the laws of the economy. These are the expression of a state of things which correspond to the stage of political economy, i. e. to a certain stage of development of humanity.

In his essay Umriss zu einer Kritik der Nationalökonomie, written several months before, Engels went about things differently: he attempted a critique of the concepts of political economy (for example of the concepts of value). He made the contradiction internal to these concepts the sign of a more fundamental contradiction linked to private property. In the Manuscripts, on the contrary, no economic concept as such is criticised. All the concepts are validated at the level of political economy. They express the facts adequately. Simply they do not comprehend them.

Thus political economy appears as the mirror in which the economic facts are reflected. This mirror concept is explicitly developed in the Critique of Hegel's Philosophy of Law: the State is the mirror in which the contradictions of civil society are reflected in their true significance. This theme is latent also in the letter to Ruge. Marx explains there that although it does not matter from where the critique begins, there are special places where the contradictions come to be reflected: these are the State and religion. Here it is Political Economy which plays the role of mirror.

We can now understand that phrase from the Preface to the Manuscripts: 'My results have been won by means of a wholly empirical analysis, based on a conscientious critical study of political economy.'<sup>5</sup>

It is because the discourse of Political Economy is a mirror that the reading of the economists can pass for an empirical analysis, and that it can be a critique of the contradictions in economic reality.

## 2. The Critical Elaboration

The critique is not located at the level of the terms of Political Economy. And in fact it uses uncritically all of its concepts, particularly those of Adam Smith, in order to refer to economic phenomena.

In fact the critique is more fundamentally a critique of the text as a whole. Once the statement of economic discourse has been worked out, the critique intervenes. We will raise ourselves above the level of political economy to give in its general form the contradiction set out in the economist's discourse.

This change of level is made clear by Marx at the beginning of the essay on Alienated Labour. It is emphasised by the opposition between the two verbs: fassen (express) and begreifen (to understand).

'Political economy starts from the fact of private property, but it does not explain it to us. It expresses (fassen) in general and abstract formulae the material process through which private property actually passes, and these formulae it then takes for laws. It does not comprehend (begreifen) these laws, ie it does not demonstrate how they arise from the very nature of private property.'<sup>6</sup>

Political economy grasps the laws which show the movement of private property. It does not comprehend these laws in their internal connections, it does not comprehend them as expressions of the movement of the essence of private property.

It is this comprehension which is the proper task of the critique. How will it operate? Here the problem of the starting point is posed. The starting point can not be an abstraction. It must belong to the category of the phenomena. On the other hand in principle this phenomenon is unimportant. The starting point should be what Marx calls 'an actual economic fact'. Marx first sets out this fact and then formulates its concept:

'We proceed from an actual economic fact. The worker becomes all the poorer the more wealth he produces, the more his production increases in power and range. The worker becomes an ever cheaper commodity, the more commodities he produces. With the increasing value (Verwertung) of the world of things proceeds in direct proportion the devaluation (Entwertung) of the world of men. Labour produces not only commodities: it produces both itself and also the worker as a commodity and does so in the proportion in which it produces commodities generally. This fact expresses merely that the object which labour produces - labour's product - confronts it as something alien, as a power independent of the producer. The product of labour is labour which has been congealed in an object, which has become material: it is the objectification of labour. Labour's realisation is its objectification. In the conditions dealt with by political economy this realisation (Verwirklichung) of labour, appears as loss of reality (Entwirklichung) for the workers; objectification as loss of the object and its object-bondage; appropriation as alienation (Entfremdung) estrangement (Entäusserung).'<sup>7</sup>

Impoverishment is the economic fact from which Marx begins. The more wealth he produces the poorer the labourer becomes. From this fact Marx proceeds to an analysis of the essence. This fact expresses something, this phenomenon expresses an essence. Impoverishment

manifests the process the general and human form of which is alienation.

Thus the economic fact undergoes an elaboration which enables him to reveal its meaning. Between these two paragraphs we have the transposition of one structure into another. Beneath the statement of the economic facts, a reference text has been slipped, the text of the anthropological critique which states the process of alienation. Impoverishment - economic - has become alienation - anthropological.

It all takes place on the level of two statements - which I give in simplified form.

- Man produces God
- the worker produces an object.

Man produces God, i. e. he objectifies in God the predicates which make up his essence. So now when we say that the worker produces an object, we start from the prosaic concept of production, but the slide takes place thanks to this concept which enables us to think of the relationship between the worker and his product, on the model of the relationship between God and man in religion. So the productive activity is identified with the generic activity (the activity of man in so far as he affirms his own essence) and the object produced is identified with the objectification of the generic being of man. The fact that this product should go to increase the power of Capital then appears as the final stage of alienation, that in which man becomes the object of his object.

So the scheme of religious alienation has been projected onto the worker-product relationship. In religious alienation there is in actual fact equivalence between man and his product. God is made up only of man's predicates. He is thus a completely transparent object in which man can recognise himself and the end of alienation appears logi-

cally as man taking back what he objectified in God. So the transparent nature of the subject/object relationship, given as a basis for the critique of religion and justified by the very nature of the object, is here introduced by Marx into the relationship of the worker to his product. The worker's product is supposed to be something in which the worker should recognise himself.

This transposition has been made possible because there has been a play of words on the concept of production; also on the concept of object. To say that the worker produces an object appears quite innocent, but into this vague concept of object, the Feuerbachian concept of object is introduced. The latter is expressed as follows by Feuerbach in the Essence of Christianity:

'The object of man is nothing other than his essence, itself, taken as an object.'

'The object to which a subject relates by its essence and of necessity is none other than the subject's own essence, but which has been objectified.'

Thus the object produced by the worker, appears as a Feuerbachian object, as the objectification of man's own essence.

What makes the operation of the critique possible is a play on the terms production and object. By moving from their vague (undetermined) economic meaning to their anthropological meaning, these two concepts overturn the discussion given in the discourse referred to.

This process which enables an economic law to become an anthropological law (the general form of the contradiction) we will call amphibology.

#### Amphibology and its Basis.

Take on the one hand the structure of alienation to which we referred to above.

The following inversion is produced in alienation: the generic life of man becomes the means of his individual life, his essence becomes the means of his existence. Thus in the Jewish Question Marx shows how the Declaration of the Rights of Man makes political life, which represents the generic life of man, simply a means of preserving the selfish interests of the members of the bourgeois society.

Take on the other hand an economic concept: the concept of means of subsistence. We know that according to classical economics the value of labour is equal to the value of the means of subsistence necessary for the worker. We know also, that in Capital Marx brings the critique to bear on the concept of the value of labour itself, and shows that it is no more than an irrational expression of the value of labour power. At our present level such a critique is not involved; nevertheless it is possible to set out the following equation:

The labour of the worker = the activity providing the worker with his means of subsistence.

However, in the anthropology of the young Marx, labour is the manifestation of the generic life of man. We have, therefore,

Labour of the worker = manifestation of the generic activity of the worker

Therefore: the manifestation of the generic activity of the worker = the activity providing for the worker his means of subsistence

or: the manifestation of generic life = the means of maintaining individual existence.

Here we find the means/end reversal, characteristic of alienation. The concept of means of subsistence has facilitated the overlapping of the economic law by the anthropological structure.

We have given here an example of an operation which is not stated by Marx explicitly, but on which the possibility of his discourse is based. A similar demonstration could be carried out with a certain number of the other concepts in the Manuscripts. We can now set out a table of the amphibologies in which we shall see how the terms and the connections between the terms (laws) of classical economy are immediately transposable into the critical discourse (anthropological).

TABLE OF THE AMPHIBOLOGIES

Economy	Critique
worker	man
labour	generic activity
product	object
capital	estranged being (fremdes Wesen)
means of subsistence	means of life (Lebensmittel)
value	value (wert) = dignity (Weirdre)
exchange	community
trade	intercourse (verkehr)
wealth	wealth (feuerbachian sinnlichkeit)

TABLE OF THE RELEVANT OPPOSITIONS

Man	thing
means	end

Remarks

(a) The first amphibology is the worker/man amphibology.

The subject of the process at the beginning is the worker. So we might think we are starting here from a point of view which is that of class struggle. In fact this is not so. In the second paragraph of our text that worker becomes a producer. Later that producer becomes simply a man.

Let us re-read the beginning of our text (p 42) 'The worker becomes all the poorer the more wealth he produces, as his production grows in power and range.'<sup>8</sup>

Let us compare now the text of the Third Manuscript with this phrase.

'Man becomes ever poorer as man; his need for money becomes ever greater if he wants to overpower hostile being; and the power of his money declines, exactly in inverse proportion to the increase in the volume of production, that is, his neediness grows as the power of money increases.'<sup>9</sup>

The alienation has become alienation of man in general.

(b) The amphibology of value is tangible in the pair Verwertung/Entwertung to which we referred above.

Into the classic economic concept of value, there has crept an ethical concept of value, in which we can recognise the Kantian concept of dignity.

(c) The amphibology of exchange is set out principally in Marx's note books in which he commented on the economists he had read before writing the Manuscripts. Exchange is understood anthropologically as intersubjectivity. At the stage of political economy, exchange appears as the alienated form of the human community (Gemeinwesen). The concept of commerce (Verkehr) is also used with the same intersubjective resonance (even

in the German Ideology) the concept of Verkehrsform posed as the equivalent of the concept of productive relations retains an anthropological content).

(d) The other amphibologies have already been explained with the exception of the amphibology of wealth, to which we must return.

We can now define what the begreifen (understanding) which characterises the critique is. It consists of a solution by substitution of the terms of the equations in which the contradiction is posed.

These equations are, for example:  
 appreciation of the world of things = depreciation of the world of men.

or value of labour = value of the means of subsistence.

The solution is found when we state the fundamental equation of identity:  
 human essence = alien being

This equation indicates to us in fact the principle of the contradiction, the separation of the human essence from the human subject. In the Manuscripts this separation is expressed by the concept of alienated labour. Also alienated labour is the concept (Begriff) which is propounded as the solution for all the equations.

How is it possible, starting from this definition of the concept, to set up the critical discourse of political economy? Marx indicates this to us:

'Just as we have found the concept of private property from the concept of estranged, alienated labour by analysis, in the same way every category of political economy can be evolved with the assistance of these two factors; and we shall find in each category, eg trade, competition, capital, money, only a definite and developed expression of the first foundations.'<sup>10</sup>

This means that we shall discover the same structure to which we have referred in all the categories of political economy. This should not surprise us: the study of the process of amphibology has shown us that by starting from each category, we may discover an expression of the fundamental contradiction: the separation of the essence from the subject.

We can express what this begreifen is in another way by returning to our first metaphor of language: the begreifen consists in revealing the more fundamental language which is contained within the economic statement. The movement of the begreifen which includes the connections of the facts, is the elaboration of the language in which human experience expresses itself.

Or, if you like, the critique is the translation and our table of amphibologies is a dictionary. But it is a very remarkable dictionary. In it we find a term by term equivalence, and not just the terms, but the statements themselves correspond to them are equivalent.

This is only possible through a special kind of encounter: the encounter of an explicit anthropological discourse and the anthropological discourse which is implicit in classical economics. In fact the political economy with which we are concerned here is the 'pre-critical' economy which has not yet been subjected to the decisive critique which Marx makes of it in Capital. It is a political economy which speaks of production in general, without being able to formulate the concept of the specificity of a mode of production, which conceives of economic development by starting from the activity of economic subjects.

Let us take one of the definitions of classical economics, that which defines capital as accumulated labour. We see clearly the anthropological schema which can insinuate

itself here, the amphibology which will not be removed until, Marx, in Capital, defines capital as a relationship of production so carrying out the radical change which brought the economic discourse over from the field of anthropology into that of science. In the same way, texts such as the celebrated passage in Boisguillebert about money, which should be the servant of man, and which has become his master, present themselves for the examination of the anthropological critique. The political economy with which Marx is concerned is thus saddled with a whole implicit anthropology. It usually presents itself in a more or less explicit fashion, varying in particular cases, within the framework of a theory of society. This theory of society refers back to a theory of human subjectivity (which may be presented as a theory of needs, a theory of interests, a theory of passions, etc) to a theory of intersubjectivity, of relationships between human subjects, and to a theory of the relationships of man to nature. The very concepts which make up its field, those of exchange, industry, etc, are far from being untainted by psychological or anthropological implications. So the anthropological theory of the young Marx presents itself precisely as a general theory of the relationships of man with nature and with man. In the same way there is in classical economics, a more or less implicit theory of the natural order and of its perversion (we have an example of this in the text of Boisguillebert mentioned already). So the theory of alienation is the systematisation of this theory of the perversion. In this way the anthropological critique may be presented as the clarification and systematisation of the anthropological discussion implicit in classical economics.

(I only raise this problem in a very general way. Naturally it ought to be studied much more deeply. Perhaps also, it could be approached differently by posing the question

of a double relationship: the relationship of the concepts of labour, alienation, etc, in the Manuscripts with the theoretical working out of these concepts in Hegel, and the relationship of Hegel to political economy.)

Let us try now to work out more precisely what it is that makes possible the overlapping of the two discourses. Let us refer to the table of the amphibologies. What makes the translation possible, the transition from one column to the next, is the existence of a common support.

"The support for the amphibology is a subject: the subject man.

In order to see how this support operates let us study the following sentence:

'We took our departure from a fact of political economy - the estrangement of the worker and his production. We have formulated the concept of this fact: estranged, alienated labour.'<sup>11</sup>

The necessary condition of the critical transposition is that the Subject-Predicate-Object structure should function. This is made possible thanks to the introduction of the possessive: his production. However little thought we may give to it, we know that this relationship of possession is one merely of appearance, and in relation to the worker in large industry, it has very little meaning. But by introducing it the field of economic phenomena is able to centre around a subject. This subject is not given in the worker. It is in his production. In other words it is the release of the predicate which determines the subject.

How can this his, this relationship of possession, subject/predicate be introduced? It is the concept of production itself from which it is inferred. Because it is not defined scientifically, as it will be in Capital, i. e. situated within a process, this concept has only to indicate an act

taking place in the sphere of activity of a subject, in a subject/object relationship. More generally, the concepts of classical economics (society, product, wealth, revenue, etc), because they have not been subjected to a critique, determine the place of a subject.

If we anticipate and confront the concept of production which is involved here, with the concept of process of production in Capital we see that it is the concept of relationship of production, which makes it possible to cancel the amphibologies, by carrying out the desubjectification of the economic categories. Here it is its absence which determines the subject/man as the necessary support of these categories.

We see now why the non-critique of the terms of political economy is the condition of the critique of political economy, how the non-determination of a domain of political economy is the condition of the determination of economic phenomena as expressions of an anthropological process.

In this connection it is not unimportant to ask who are the representatives of political economy in the Manuscripts are. If we refer to the texts quoted in the first Manuscript we find that they belong to two categories - some, the majority, are taken from Adam Smith, others are taken from Baret and Sismondi (representing the humanist critique of Ricardo's cynicism). It is from these texts that Marx derives the laws of political economy, which he transposes in the anthropological theory. On the other hand, we may note in this same collection of First Manuscript texts an almost complete absence that of Ricardo. No doubt Ricardo is mentioned several times, mainly in the Second Manuscript. It is he who expresses cynically all the inhuman consequences of political economy. But Marx does not reflect here what it is that provides

Ricardo's originality in the heart of classical economics. It is Ricardo who expresses from within political economy the difference between the essence and the phenomenon. For the young Marx, however, this difference falls outside of the economic discourse. It is this precisely which defines the difference between the economic discourse and the critical discourse which is its meaning.

In Capital Marx grasps Ricardo's originality and locates at this level his own differences with the conceptions of Ricardo, insofar as they represent what is most fundamental in classical economics. At the level of the Manuscripts Ricardo appears as the man of abstraction, he who, having defined competition as something accidental, denies the apparent economic phenomena in order to impose his own abstractions. (This is what Marx reproaches him with in his Notebooks.)

In the same way it is Ricardo who reduces the importance of subjective factors in the economics. The young Marx thinks of this reduction only as an expression of the inhumanity of the laws of political economy.

And if Marx does not grasp the importance of Ricardo at his true level, it is because we are involved in the Manuscripts less with a critique of the principles of political economy, than with a real theory of wealth. (We shall see later what we must understand by this.)

#### Remarks

Below the table of the amphibologies I have written what I call the table of relevant oppositions: person/thing and means/end. It is these oppositions which give the anthropological discourse its meaning. At the same time we are directed by them to the field in which the relevance of these oppositions is located, that of Kantian ethics.

Here I want only to draw attention to a problem; although



there has been abundant theorising about the problem of the relationship between Marx and Hegel, no one has thought about the relationship which is, perhaps, decisive, in order to be able to understand the break between the critique of the young Marx and that of the mature Marx, the Kant/Marx relationship.

We may wonder whether the territory in which the young Marx stands is not that outlined by the Kantian oppositions (heteronomy/autonomy, person/thing, means/end). It would then be necessary to study the displacement of these oppositions in Capital: for example, the displacement of the opposition person/thing in the concepts support and personification. Likewise we would have to ask to what extent the concepts of means and ends of the mode of capitalist production bring about this desubjectification of the means/end contradiction.

These few remarks may help to explain why the supersession of the problematic of the 1st Manuscript carried out in the 3rd Manuscript is a Hegelian supersession.

#### 4. Development of the Contradiction HISTORY AND SUBJECTIVITY OF MOTORS AND MOTIVES

This critical discussion has enabled us to define the fundamental contradiction: the loss of man in his object, his separation from himself, the alienation of the human essence in the movement of private property.

We know how the theoretical method of the problematic of the Manuscripts develops: alienated labour appears first as a consequence of private property, but the analysis reveals that private property is itself a consequence of alienated labour. The problem of the origin of alienated labour is then posed: either alienated labour is an accident, and we are then driven back to a problematic of

the origin of bad history, similar to that of the philosophy of the Enlightenment; or alternatively alienation is a necessary process, which is inherent in the development of humanity. It is this second solution which is chosen by Marx in the Third Manuscript, in which the alienation of the human essence appears as the condition of the realisation of a human world.

Here again we are not going to take up a position at the centre of Marx's explicit problematic. Our purpose is to reply to the following question: What is there in the relationship between the activity of economic subjects and the historical development of private property which makes possible the setting up of the field of political economy?

We will pose this problem by following the misfortunes of a particular character, and about whom we shall have to speak again with regard to Capital: the capitalist.

We will begin with a phrase from Adam Smith which Marx quotes:

'The most important operations of labour are regulated and directed in accordance with the plans and speculations of those who make use of capital.'<sup>12</sup>

We see that Marx returns in several places to settle accounts with this determination of the subjectivity of the capitalist as the motor for the development of the economy, declaring that the working of the economy is regulated by the decisions of the capitalist. Two concepts express this function of the capitalist's subjectivity: the concepts of mood (Laune) and calculation (Berechnung). This theory of subjectivity and calculation is particularly clear in the text of the Third Manuscript entitled 'The meaning of human needs under the regime of private property and under Socialism'.<sup>13</sup> It involves a new definition of political economy: it now appears as the

science of calculation. For example the law of the value of labour shows the fact that political economy calculates for the worker the most restricted life possible. Political economy is thought of here - which was already the case in Engel's text - as the direct expression of capitalist subjectivity. The laws of political economy then appear to be orders expressing the will of the capitalist. These laws express economic phenomena to the extent that they are those which determine the development of private property.

This is where in the text such expressions as 'to obey the laws of the economy' come from, also 'to conform to the lessons of the economy'. Thus the worker obeys the laws of the economy in obeying the orders of capitalist calculation, of which the economist is the spokesman.

But should this capitalist subjectivity - the role of which we have just examined - be itself lost in the movement of private property, in the development at the stage of political economy? It is not without interest to see how this loss takes place.

A first model which presents itself to Marx to think about: the Adam Smith model of competition bringing about the balancing of the subjective attitudes and so establishing the harmony of society as the result of egoistical interests. This model is recalled by Marx (on p 131).<sup>14</sup> We may make a remark on this subject: the importance accorded to competition in the Manuscripts - and even more in Engel's text - marks the still ideological nature of their critique of political economy, the confusion between what Marx in Capital distinguishes as the real movement and apparent movement. However, in this Manuscript Adam Smith's model is not retained by Marx. He criticises Adam Smith's thesis of the fall in profit due to competition.

Also Marx makes use of a second model which we can see at work in the text The Meaning of Human Requirements.<sup>15</sup> Here Marx develops the idea of the transition from squandered wealth to industrial wealth. The first stage of this dialectic is that of squandered wealth, the capitalist who enjoys himself. This first stage is called on to disappear into the second stage, that of calculation. The calculating capitalist is the industrial capitalist. He carries out the subordination of enjoyment to calculation to wealth. The stage of the calculating capitalist is the last stage in the development of private property. 'Pleasure is therefore subsumed under capital, and the pleasure-taking individual under the capital-taking individual, whilst formerly the contrary was the case. The decrease in the interest-rate is therefore a symptom of the annulment of capital inasmuch as it is a symptom of the rule of capital in the process of perfecting itself - of the estrangement in the process of becoming fully-developed and therefore of hastening to its annulment.'<sup>16</sup>

Why is this stage of capitalist calculation, that which precedes the suppression of the capitalist? It is because capitalist subjectivity (calculation) has created the objectivity in which it will disappear, which will make possible the end of alienation, ie wealth.

Let us make clear the amphibology which is posed above. The wealth which is the result of calculation is the deployed wealth of human powers. It represents the humanisation of the perceptible world which alienation has made possible, the end of the movement by which the natural objects of the world have become natural human objects, constituting a world in which man can discover and recognise his own essence, that alienated essence which, in the form of alienated labour, constituted wealth.

The amphibology consists in this: that which is included

in the (economic) concept of essence is the concept of Sinnlichkeit. The Sinnlichkeit is for Feuerbach, the perceptible externalness in which man recognises himself. For Marx, this recognition, this identity of the Sinnlichkeit (perceptible reality) and the human can be only a result. It is the result of alienated labour the creator of wealth.

'It is due only to the objectively deployed wealth of the human essence that the wealth of man's subjective faculty of feeling is first of all either developed or produced, for an ear to become musical, for an eye to perceive the beauty of form, in short for the senses to become capable of human enjoyment, to become senses which are affirmed as the essential powers of man.'

We see here what this loss of the economic subject in the development of private property means. In its disappearance the real subject of the movement, humanity appears. Through the motives of capitalism, it is the development of the human essence which has made a path for itself, which has played the part of motor.

What we find here is the Hegelian model of the Preface to the Lectures on the Philosophy of History. The real subject of history makes use of illusory subjective states in order to impose its laws. The real motor of history is human essence. And the stage of wealth is that in which humanity can recapture it, by recognising itself in the perceptible world.

So, now we can state precisely what the level of the political economy is. The stage of political economy is that in which the subjective essence of wealth appears, i. e. labour. The discourse of political economy recognises the essence of man as the essence of wealth, but it does not know the alienation of that essence. It does not recognise that labour, the source of wealth, is alienated

labour. What the economy knows as the essence of man is his alienated essence.

At the same time we understand the basis of the difficulty which we emphasised in the first part - the absence of a dislocation between the economic reality and the economic discourse, which is expressed in the concept: level of the political economy: that concept expresses a certain stage in the development of that human experience, of which we spoke at the beginning. It expresses a certain consciousness of itself of humanity. But this self-awareness of humanity is an indirect consciousness of itself. Humanity only knows its essence in the form of alienation, or, what expresses the same situation, it knows it only as one of its determinations (political economy, says Marx, knows man only as a capitalist or as a worker, it knows labour only as activity directed towards profit, etc). By making of the economy an anthropological history of the relationships of man with nature and with man, so by knowing economic objectivity only in the form of intersubjectivity and feeling (Sinnlichkeit), Marx made the approach possible which caused this objectivity to disappear into a dialectic of human experience, which, finally, is no more than a dialectic of consciousness of self.

##### 5. Critical Discourse and Scientific Theory

If we collect together all the elements of the critical discourse we see that they assume a certain shape, which is the shape of the conditions of the impossibility of the scientific discourse.

The starting point of the critical discourse is the rejection of abstraction. What is involved is in effect the history of a subject. The abstraction of thought being identified with the separation from the elements of reality, the abstraction can only consider a separate stage of

the history of the subject. It does not allow the attainment of an understanding of that history.

But because of its theory of the concrete, the critique condemns its discourse to be only reduplication. It is a reduplication of its own starting point, i. e. what is provided for it by ordinary experience and the already established discourses.

To try to show this, we refer to the scheme provided by Althusser to think out the concept of theoretical practice ('On the Materialist Dialectic', For Marx, op. cit, pp 163-218)

We know that theoretical practice is a process of transformation which produces a specific object: knowledge. By means of the concepts of a 'theory' a Generality II, it transforms the given, ie the generalities already worked out by previous theoretical practice, (Generality I), thus producing new concepts, some new knowledge (Generality III).

Here the Generality I is represented by the economic concepts of classical political economy (production, labour, capital, revenue, wealth. . .). Generality II is the anthropological theory whose labour, referred to by such terms as Erklärung, Vermenschlichung, begreifen, produces the anthropological concepts of production, concepts of production, labour, wealth, strange being, etc. We can characterise this transformation in two ways.

- from the viewpoint of the relationship between Generality I and Generality III the anthropological concepts are, as we have seen, the translation of economic concepts. The whole transformation is reduced to this translation. No new economic concept is produced.

- from the viewpoint of the relationship between Generality II and Generality III. The concepts of the 'theory' (Gen-

erality II) the concepts of essence, alienation, generic activity, etc, are only reproduced, reduplicated in the anthropological concepts of Generality III.

Thus the process of transformation carried out by the Critique is only the caricature, the begrifflose Form of theoretical practice. It is in this very special structure of the process of transformation which transforms nothing that the young Marx's ideological theory is presented.

We see everything that is implied in the young Marx's theory of abstraction. It is not by chance that, in the general Introduction to the Critique of Political Economy, the touchstone which distinguishes science from ideology is the theory of abstraction. Neither is it by chance that most of the distortions of Marxist theory have in common that they are based on a certain ideology of the concrete.

In the same way we can see how the pair: theory of the abstraction/theory of the subject, prevent the problem being posed of the setting up of the field of political economy, as a field of objectivity.

So we see:

1. The setting up of objectivity is in fact reduced to the development of the history of a subject. The latent concept of experience removes the possibility of setting up a field of science.
2. On the other hand if we are never concerned with anything other than a history of the human essence, it is not possible to set up specific objectivities which would give rise to specific scientific discourses. In effect we are discovering the same history everywhere. Everywhere it is the human essence which is being expressed.

This is what Feuerbach expresses in the Provisional Theses No 62

In the usage of language, the name 'man' is clearly a particular name, but according to the truth, it is the name of all names. Man has the right to a multiplicity of predicates. Whatever he names or expresses, he never expresses anything else than his own essence.'

In the same way as it is the name of man which we should discover in each object, so, also, it is a theory of man which we re-discover in each of the theses in which the young Marx's critical theory is expressed.

We can now set them out in a sort of table.

Theory of Critique	- thesis of the irrelevance of the starting point, thesis of the mirror, thesis of the non-abstraction.
Theory of Contradiction	- concept of the contradiction as the separation of subject from its essence, and the inversion of the act and the subject.
Theory of objectivity	- Objectivity is made up by the development of the history of a subject. There are no specific fields of objectivity.

All of these theses which sketch out the form of the critical theory reflect one another, and all express the same theory of man.

This theory reaches its ultimate point in the Manuscripts. It finds its complete form in the text of the Third Manuscript on Communism.

In this essay in which Marx develops a strictly Hegelian dialectic, in which Communism is defined in the same term used by Hegel to define absolute knowledge, we are involved in a discussion which is both perfect in its

logical rigour, and also untenable (i. e. untenable within the framework of a theory which has in view effective revolutionary activity).

In addition this discussion has no sequel. The new object discovered by the Critique, political economy, appears to have been absorbed entirely by the Critique. In reality it is this object which imposes the shattering of the critical model and the re-organisation of the whole of Marx's problematic.

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#### NOTES

1. To be published in a later issue of Theoretical Practice.
2. The reference is to the Deutsch-Französische Jahrbucher (1843-44).
3. Lloyd D Easton and Kurt H Guddart: Writings of the Young Marx on Philosophy and Society, Anchor Books New York 1967, p 215.
4. Jean-Yves Calvez: La pensée de Karl Marx, Editions du Seuil, Paris 1956.
5. Easton and Guddart, op. cit. p 284. Martin Milligan, trans., Karl Marx: Economic and Philosophical Manuscripts of 1844, Foreign Languages.
6. Easton and Guddart, p 287; Milligan, p 67.
7. Easton and Guddart, p 289; Milligan, p 69.
8. Easton and Guddart, p 289; Milligan, p 69.
9. Omitted in Easton and Guddart; Milligan p 115.
10. Easton and Guddart, p 299; Milligan p 82.
11. Easton and Guddart, p 296; Milligan p 78.
12. Not included in Easton and Guddart; Milligan p 131.
13. Frederick Engels: Outline of a Critique of Political Economy.
14. Not included in Easton and Guddart; Milligan, p 128.
15. Milligan, pp 115-134.
16. Not included in Easton and Guddart; Milligan, p 128.