

ALTHUSSER/BALIBAR/CUTLER/LECOURT

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THEORETICAL PRACTICE editorial

The aim of all Marxist-Leninist practice is the unity of revolutionary theory with the revolutionary movement. This unity must eventually take the form of the embodiment in the programme, practice and slogans of a communist party of a scientific analysis of the conjuncture. The tools for such an analysis are not, however, ready-made, they have to be constructed, developing the science of historical materialism founded by Marx and most decisively advanced by Lenin. The present editorial committee believes that this task is not only necessary, but also possible, and it has therefore decided to make work in historical materialism its priority, and to continue the editorial policy of numbers five and six by making it predominate in the pages of the magazine.¹

We hold that this possibility exists on the basis of the work of Louis Althusser and his collaborators. In the editorial to number one we stated: 'The editors of Theoretical Practice believe that no development of scientific Marxism is possible which does not start from what Althusser has achieved', and in subsequent issues we have attempted both to expound that achievement and to begin the development. However, Althusser's work does not consist of a summa or a series of analyses on a previously established basis. Even the essays in For Marx represent stages in work in progress,

and since Reading Capital both Althusser and his collaborators have not hesitated to criticize their earlier essays. Hence to know what Althusser has achieved and what his work has made possible, some assessment of his own development and of the significance of this self-criticism is required.

The main published record of the series of corrections since the first publication of Reading Capital (1965) is as follows: the Preface to the Italian edition of Reading Capital (1968), Lenin and Philosophy (February 1968), 'Lenin before Hegel' (April 1969), the Preface to the English edition of Lenin and Philosophy and Other Essays (June 1970) and now 'Reply to John Lewis (Self-Criticism)' (Summer 1972).² These texts have mainly concerned one point: the definition of philosophy as a theory of theoretical practice to be found in 'On the Materialist Dialectic' and the first part of Reading Capital. It has been implied (by the republication with only minor changes of Reading Capital) that the reflections on Marx's scientific problematic in For Marx and the other two parts of Reading Capital are not completely distorted by this 'theoreticist' deviation, and hence not fundamentally affected by the criticism. However, since the writing of Reading Capital, Althusser and his collaborators have turned to developments

in epistemology and the study of the ideological instance of the social formation rather than carrying on directly from the positions established in Reading Capital. It has been left to others to attempt this development: Charles Bettelheim, Pierre-Philippe Rey and, with less success, Nicos Poulantzas, among others.³ Hence the assumption that the problematic of historical materialism outlined in Reading Capital is unaffected by the revision in the definition of philosophy has remained uninvestigated. For this reason, the text by Etienne Balibar we publish in this issue is of great importance. It is the first attempt by one of the co-authors of Reading Capital to assess how far the theses it contains have stood the test of the seven years that have elapsed since they were first published.⁴

However, this raises the general question of the revision of the original definition of philosophy. It must be discussed if its effects are to be known and assessed. In this issue we therefore publish an article by Althusser himself clarifying the new definition, and a text by Dominique Lecourt on the relation between Marxist theory and Hegel which, as well as filling in the ellipses in Althusser's 'Lenin before Hegel', represents the most detailed exposition of the new definition to date, and the most thorough exposition of the modifications it produces in Althusser's earlier theses on the relations between Marx and Hegel. As to the effects on the problematic of historical materialism as outlined in For Marx and Reading Capital, a variety of positions are

conceivable. One article in this issue, by members of the editorial committee, defends the original position that in For Marx and Reading Capital, Louis Althusser and his co-workers elaborated, in however imperfect and indicative a form, a scientific theory of theoretical practice, and that therefore the clarifications of the basic concepts of historical materialism in those works stand a fortiori. The opposite extreme could be represented by an article in a recent issue of Cinéthique by Jean-Paul Fargier, Gerard Leblanc, Claude Menard and Jean-Louis Perrier;⁵ for this position the new definition is radical, and calls for a total reformulation, or even a completely new start in the elaboration of the concepts of historical materialism. The other members of the editorial committee of Theoretical Practice would not want to accept such a position. While rejecting the notion of a theory of theoretical practice and accepting the new definition of philosophy outlined by Althusser and Lecourt in this issue as a political intervention in theoretical form in political and scientific practice, they hold that For Marx and Reading Capital contain the results in the science of historical materialism of an intervention of this kind, and therefore that the problematic of historical materialism is open to scientific development.

Hence, despite this unresolved difference, we believe that our practice can remain unified precisely around the priority argued in the beginning of this editorial for work developing historical materialism. Dialectical materialism, however defined, has been and will be

necessary to this development, but at the present moment we are agreed that the terrain of historical materialism is open, and that the place to set about solving philosophical problems is as they arise on this terrain. A more advanced historical materialism can only ensure a stronger position in the future in the philosophical struggle against bourgeois ideology.

NOTES

- 1 Two members of the editorial board disagree with this assessment and have therefore resigned. It should be stressed that these resignations bear no relation to positions taken up in the dispute about the definition of philosophy discussed below.
- 2 See Reading Capital (NLB 1970), pp. 7-8; Lenin and Philosophy and Other Essays (NLB 1971), pp. 29-68, 105-20 & 7-9; Marxism Today, Vol. 16, Oct. and Nov. 1972, pp. 310-8 & 343-9. A number of other texts could be cited: 'To my English Readers', (October 1967), For Marx (Allen Lane 1969), pp. 9-15; 'Marx's Relation to Hegel' (January 1968), Politics and History (NLB 1972), pp. 163-86; also Dominique Lecourt: Pour une Critique de l'Epistémologie, esp the introduction and 'Sur l'archéologie et le savoir' (Maspero, Paris 1972, English translation to be published in 1973 by NLB; a translation of 'Sur l'archéologie et le savoir' is available as 'Archaeology and Learning' from Manchester University Socialist Society); and Etienne Balibar: 'La rectification du "Manifeste Communiste"', La Pensée no. 164, August 1972, pp. 38-64.
- 3 See Theoretical Practice Numbers Two and Six.

- 4 Jacques Rancière has written a self-criticism: 'Sobre la Teoría de la Ideología (la política de Althusser)' in Saúl Karzs et al.: Lectura de Althusser (Buenos Aires 1970), but this concerns the philosophical question of the epistemological break rather than the scientific problems raised by the essay in Reading Capital.
- 5 'Pratiques artistiques et lutte de classes,' Cinéthique nos. 13-14, 1972, pp. 40-62.

Theoretical Practice - Books

Theoretical Practice (Publications) Limited and Routledge and Kegan Paul Limited are to publish, under a joint imprint, a series of books of critical interest to Marxist readers.

Titles already in preparation include: Hilferding's 'Finance Capital', Kautsky's 'Agrarian Question', Mavrakīs on 'Trotskyism', and the previously untranslated texts from the first edition of 'Reading Capital'.

It is hoped that the first books will be available in the latter part of 1973.

The Conditions of Marx's Scientific Discovery

On the New Definition of Philosophy

LOUIS ALTHUSSER

I

If I were asked for a brief summary of the essential Thesis I have been trying to defend in my philosophical essays, I should say: Marx founded a new science: the science of History. I should add: this scientific discovery is a theoretical and political event without precedent in human history. And to be more precise: this event is irreversible.

A theoretical event. Before Marx, what can be called the 'History continent' was occupied by ideological conceptions with a religious, or moral, or juridico-political inspiration, in brief by philosophies of history. They claimed to provide a representation of what takes place in societies and in history. In fact all they did was to mask the mechanisms

governing societies and history in distorted and deceptive notions. This mystification was no accident: it was integral to their function. These conceptions were indeed no more than the theoretical detachments of practical ideologies (religion, ethics, juridical ideology, political ideology, etc.) whose essential function is to reproduce the relations of production (= of exploitation) of class societies. It was by breaking with these ideological conceptions that Marx 'opened' the 'History-continent'. Opened: with the principles of historical materialism, with Capital and his other works. Opened: for, as Lenin said, Marx only laid down the 'cornerstones' of an immense domain which his successors have continued to explore, but whose vast extent and new problems demand unceasing efforts.

A political event. For Marx's scientific discovery was the beginning, and has become more and more the object and stake of a stubborn, implacable class struggle. By demonstrating that human history is the history of class societies, and hence of class exploitation and class rule, i. e., ultimately of the class struggle, by demonstrating the mechanisms of capitalist exploitation and capitalist rule, Marx directly countered the interests of the ruling classes. Their ideologists were unleashed and are more and more unleashed against him. On the other side, the exploited, and above all the proletarians, have recognized in Marx's scientific theory 'their' truth: they have adopted it, and made it a weapon in their revolutionary class struggle. This recognition has a name in history: it is the Union (or else, as Lenin put it, the Fusion) of the Workers' Movement and Marxist Theory. This confluence, this Union, this

Fusion, have taken place neither spontaneously nor easily. For the workers' movement, which existed well before the formation and spread of Marxist theory, was under the influence of petty-bourgeois ideological conceptions such as utopian socialism, anarchism, etc. Very lengthy work and a very long ideological and political struggle were necessary for this Union to form and acquire a historical existence. The very conditions of its realisation and existence mean that this Union cannot be a result achieved once and for all. Subject to the class struggle, it must be constantly defended in a bitter class struggle against the deviations and crises that threaten it: as testimony, take yesterday's betrayal by the Second International and today's split in the International Communist Movement.

One fact is indisputable: for one hundred years, the whole history of mankind has depended on the Union of the Workers' Movement (and of the oppressed peoples) and Marxist Theory (later, Marxist-Leninist Theory). Stand back a little and you can see that, in different but convergent forms, this reality now dominates over the stage of world history: the struggle of the proletariat and of the oppressed peoples against Imperialism. This fact is irreversible.

II

I could stop at these statements. However, if (whatever the places we occupy in this struggle) we wish to advance in the exploration of the 'History-continent', or (what, in one part-

icular respect, is the same thing) to understand actively the contemporary forms of proletarian class struggle, we must go further. We have to ask ourselves the following question: on what conditions was Marx's scientific discovery possible?

To all appearance, this question is a detour. It is not a detour. To all appearances, it is a theoretical question. In fact, it has political implications clearly relevant to the current situation.

III

When, in my earlier essays, I showed that Marx's scientific discovery represented a 'break' or 'rupture' with previous ideological conceptions of history, what was I doing? What was I doing in speaking of a 'break' or 'rupture' between science and ideology? What was I doing in speaking of ideology?

I was drawing up a formal analysis, and I must now indicate its meaning and establish its limits.

Above all, I was making an observation. I took note of a fact, of a theoretical event: the arrival of a scientific theory of History in a domain hitherto occupied by conceptions I described as ideological. Let me ignore for a moment this last description: ideological.

I showed that there was an irreducible difference between Marx's

theory and these conceptions. To show this I compared their conceptual content and their modes of functioning.

Their conceptual content. I showed that Marx had replaced the old basic concepts (which I called notions) of the Philosophies of History with absolutely new, unprecedented concepts, concepts which were 'nowhere to be found' in the old conceptions. Where the Philosophies of History spoke of man, economic subject, need, system of needs, civil society, alienation, theft, injustice, mind, freedom - where they even spoke of 'society' - Marx began to speak of mode of production, productive forces, relations of production, social formation, infrastructure, superstructure, ideologies, classes, class struggle, etc. I concluded that there was not a relationship between the system of Marxist concepts and the system of pre-Marxist notions. This absence of a relationship of continuity, this theoretical difference, this dialectical 'leap', I called an 'epistemological break', a 'rupture'.

Their modes of functioning. I showed that in practice Marxist theory functioned quite differently from the old pre-Marxist conceptions. It was clear to me that the basic system of concepts of Marxist theory functioned in the mode of the 'theory' of a science: as a 'basic' conceptual apparatus opening onto the 'infinity' of its object (Lenin), i. e., destined endlessly to pose and confront problems so as to produce new knowledges. Let us say: as a (provisional) truth for the (infinite) conquest of new knowledges, themselves capable (in certain conjunctures) of renewing this first truth. By comparison, it was clear to me

that the basic theory of the old conceptions, far from functioning as a (provisional) truth for the production of new knowledges, presented itself practically, on the contrary, as the truth of History, as exhaustive, definitive and absolute knowledge of it, in short as a system closed in on itself, without any development because without any object in the scientific sense of the term, and only ever finding in the real its own mirror reflection. Here too I concluded that there was a radical difference between Marx's theory and previous conceptions, and I spoke of an 'epistemological break' and of a 'rupture'.

Finally, I described these earlier conceptions as ideological, and thought the 'epistemological break' or 'rupture' which I had observed as a theoretical discontinuity between Marxist science on the one hand and its ideological pre-history on the other. Let me specify: not between science in general and ideology in general, but between Marxist science and its own ideological pre-history.

However, what enabled me to say that the pre-Marxist conceptions were ideological? Or, what comes to the same thing, what meaning did I give to the term ideology?

An ideological conception does not have the mark of the ideological stamped on its forehead, or in its heart, whatever meaning is given to the term ideological. On the contrary, it presents itself as the Truth. It can only be described as such from without and after the event: from the standpoint of the existence of the Marxist science of History. I say: not just from the standpoint of the existence of Marxist science as a science, but from the standpoint of Marxist science as a

science of History.

Indeed, once it emerges in the history of theories and has established that it is a science, every science makes its own theoretical pre-history, from which it has broken, appear as erroneous, false, untrue. That is how it treats it practically: this treatment is a moment of its history. But there are always philosophers to draw different conclusions: to found on this recurrent (retrospective) practice an idealist theory of the opposition between Truth and Error, between Knowledge and Ignorance, and even (assuming that they take the term ideology in a non-Marxist sense) between Science and Ideology, in general.

This effect of recurrence (retrospection) also occurs in the case of the Marxist science: when this science emerged, it necessarily made its own pre-history appear as erroneous, but at the same time and in addition it made it appear as ideological in the Marxist sense of the term. Better, it made its own pre-history appear as erroneous because ideological, and treated it practically as such. Not only does it designate the error, it provides the historical, class reasons for this error. In this way it prevents the exploitation of the 'break' between science and its pre-history as the idealist opposition between Truth and Error, Knowledge and Ignorance.

On what principle does this difference and unprecedented advantage rest? On the fact that the science founded by Marx is the science of the history of social formations. As such, it gives for the first time a scientific content to the concept of

ideology. Ideologies are not illusions pure and simple (Error), but bodies of representations existing in institutions and practices: they feature in the superstructure and are based in the class struggle. If the science founded by Marx makes the theoretical conceptions inscribed in its own pre-history appear as ideological, it is therefore not just in order to denounce them as false: it is also in order to say that they present themselves as true and were and still are accepted as true - and in order to provide the reasons for this necessity. If the theoretical conceptions with which Marx broke (to simplify, let me say: the philosophies of history) deserve the description ideological, it is because they were the theoretical detachments of practical ideologies fulfilling necessary functions in the reproduction of the relations of production in a given class society.

If this is so, the 'break' between Marxist science and its ideological pre-history refers us to something quite different from a theory of the difference between science and ideology, to something quite different from an epistemology. It refers us on the one hand to a theory of the superstructure, in which feature the State and Ideologies (I have attempted to say something about this in my article on Ideological State Apparatuses).² It refers us on the other hand to a theory of the material conditions (production), the social conditions (division of labour, class struggle), ideological conditions and philosophical conditions of the processes of production of knowledges. These two theories derive in the last instance from historical materialism.

But if this is so then Marx's scientific theory itself has to be interrogated about the conditions of its own 'irruption' into the

field of the ideological conceptions with which it broke.

IV

The great Marxists (Marx above all, Engels, then Lenin) certainly felt that it was not sufficient to observe the emergence of a new science, but that it was necessary to provide an analysis, in conformity with the principles of the Marxist science, of the conditions of this emergence. The first elements of an analysis are to be found in Engels and Lenin in the form of the theory of the 'Three Sources' of Marxism: German philosophy, English Political Economy and French Socialism.

Let us not be drawn into error by the old metaphor of 'sources' and its attendant idealist notions (origin, inter-iority of the current, etc.). What is particularly noteworthy in this 'classical' theory is first that it thinks Marx's discovery not in terms of the genius of an individual or author, but in terms of a conjunction of different and independent theoretical elements (Three Sources). Only after this does it present the conjunction as having produced a fundamentally novel effect with respect to the elements that went into the conjunction: an example of a 'qualitative leap', an essential category of the materialist dialectic.

However, Engels and Lenin do not stop there. They do not defend a purely internal, purely 'epistemological' conception of the emergence of the Marxist science. They recall that these three theoretical elements refer to a practical background: to a material, social and political history,

dominated by decisive transformations in productive forces and relations of production, by centuries of class struggle between the rising bourgeoisie and the feudal aristocracy, dominated lastly by the first great actions of proletarian class struggle. In a word, they recall that it is practical (economic, political and ideological) realities that are represented theoretically, in more or less abstract forms, in German philosophy, English political economy and French socialism.

They are represented in them, but at the same time they are distorted, mystified and masked in them, since these theoretical elements are profoundly ideological in nature. This is where the decisive question arises.

It is indeed insufficient to observe that the conjunction of these three theoretical elements produced the emergence of the Marxist science. It also has to be asked how this ideological conjunction was able to produce a scientific disjunction, this confluence a 'rupture'. In other words, it has to be asked how and why, in the event of this conjunction, Marxist thought was able to leave ideology: or else, what is the displacement that produced this amazing transformation, what is the change in standpoint that brought to light what had been masked, overturned the meaning of what had been achieved, and discovered in the facts an unknown necessity.

I should like to propose the first elements of an answer to this question by putting forward the following thesis: it was by moving over (se déplaçant) on to absolutely unprece-

dent, proletarian theoretical class positions that Marx activated the effectivity of the theoretical conjunction from which emerged the science of History.

V

This can be shown by running roughly through the 'moments' of the 'development' of the thought of the Young Marx. Four years separate the liberal-radical articles of the Rheinische Zeitung from the revolutionary rupture of 1845, registered in the Theses on Feuerbach and The German Ideology by the famous formulae proclaiming the 'settling of accounts' with 'our erstwhile philosophical conscience' and the arrival of a new philosophy that would stop 'interpreting the world' in order to 'change it'. During these four years, we see a scion of the Rhenish bourgeoisie move from bourgeois-radical political and philosophical positions to petty-bourgeois-humanist positions, and then to communist-materialist positions (an unprecedented revolutionary materialism).

Let me specify the aspects of this 'development'.

We find the Young Marx conjointly changing the object of his reflection (broadly he moves from Law to the State and then to Political Economy); changing his philosophical position (he moves from Hegel to Feuerbach and then to revolutionary materialism); and changing his political position (he moves from radical bourgeois liberalism to petty-bourgeois humanism and then to communism). Even

in their dislocations, these changes are profoundly linked together. However, they must not be fused into a single structure-less unity, for they intervene at different levels and each of them has a distinct part to play in the process of the transformation of the Young Marx's thought.

It can be said that in this process, in which the object occupies the foreground, it is the political (class) position that occupies the determinant place, but the philosophical position that occupies the central place, for it is the last that ensures the theoretical relationship between the political position and the object of reflection. This can be verified empirically in the history of the Young Marx. It was indeed politics that made him move from one object to the other (schematically: from Press laws to the State and then to Political Economy), but each time this move was realised and expressed in the form of a new philosophical position. From one point of view the philosophical position seems to be the theoretical expression of the political (and ideological) class position. From another, this translation of the political position into theory (in the form of a philosophical position) seems to be the condition of the theoretical relation to the object of reflection.

If this is so, and if philosophy does indeed represent politics in theory, it can be said that the Young Marx's philosophical position represents, in its variations, the theoretical class conditions of his reflection. If this is so, it will come as no surprise that the rupture of 1845, which inaugurated the foundation of a new science, was first expressed in the form of a philosophical rupture, of a 'settling of accounts' with the

erstwhile philosophical conscience, and beneath the proclamation of a philosophical position without precedent.

This astonishing dialectic can be seen at work in the 1844 Manuscripts. A close examination of them reveals the extent of the theoretical drama Marx must have lived through in this text (he never published it or even spoke of it again). The crisis of the Manuscripts is summed up in the insupportable contradiction between the political position and philosophical position confronting one another in a reflection on the object: Political Economy. Politically, Marx wrote the Manuscripts as a communist, making the impossible theoretical gamble of using in the service of his convictions the notions, analyses and contradictions of the economists, putting in the forefront what he was unable to think as capitalist exploitation: what he calls 'alienated labour'.

Theoretically, he wrote them on petty-bourgeois philosophical positions, making the impossible gamble of introducing Hegel into Feuerbach so as to be able to speak of labour in alienation and History in Man. The Manuscripts are the moving but implacable protocols of an insupportable crisis: the crisis that confronts an object enclosed in its ideological bounds with incompatible political and theoretical class positions.

This crisis came to a head in the Theses on Feuerbach and in The German Ideology: at any rate, these works announced that it had come to a head, they contain the 'germ' of a 'new world outlook' (Engels). What changed in the sparks of the Theses was not Marx's political position, but his philosophical position. Marx abandoned Feuerbach once and for all, he

broke with the whole philosophical tradition of 'interpreting the world' and advanced into the unknown lands of a revolutionary materialism. This new position then expressed in philosophy Marx's political position. I should say: Marx had made a first step, but a decisive, irreducible step, towards proletarian class theoretical (philosophical) positions.

Here again it is politics that was the determinant element: the deeper and deeper commitment to participation in the political struggles of the proletariat. Here too, from the theoretical standpoint, it is philosophy that had the central place. For it was on the basis of this theoretical class position that Marx's reflection on his object, Political Economy, was to take a radically new direction: to break with all ideological conceptions in order to develop the principles of the science of History.

That is how I should take the liberty to interpret the theory of the 'Three Sources'. The conjunction of the three theoretical elements (German philosophy, English political economy and French socialism) could only have its effect (Marx's scientific discovery) by a displacement that led the Young Marx not only on to proletarian political class positions, but also on to proletarian theoretical class positions. Without the politics nothing would have happened: but without the philosophy, the politics would not have found its theoretical expression, indispensable to the scientific knowledge of its object.

I shall add just a few words more.

First, to point out that the new philosophical position announced in the Theses was only announced in them; that it was thus not given at one stroke or complete; that it has been ceaselessly elaborated tacitly or explicitly in the later theoretical and political works of Marx and his successors, and more generally in the history of the Union of the Workers' Movement and Marxist Theory; that this elaboration is the dual effect on it of Marxist-Leninist science and Marxist-Leninist political practice.

Second, to point out that it is not surprising that the adoption of a proletarian philosophical position (even in 'germ') is indispensable to the foundation of the science of History, i.e., to the analysis of the mechanisms of class exploitation and class rule. In every class society, these mechanisms are covered-up-masked-mystified by an enormous layer of ideological representations; the philosophies of history, etc., are their theoretical form. For these mechanisms to become visible, it is necessary to leave these ideologies, i.e., to 'settle accounts' with the philosophical conscience that is the basic theoretical expression of these ideologies. Hence it is necessary to abandon the theoretical position of the ruling classes and to take up the standpoint from which these mechanisms can become visible, i.e., the standpoint of the proletariat. It is not enough to adopt a proletarian political position. This political position must be elaborated into a theoretical (philosophical) position for what is visible from the standpoint of the proletariat to be conceived and thought in its causes and mechanisms. Without this displacement, the Science of History is unthinkable and impossible.

Lastly, to return to my starting-point, let me add that this detour via the conditions of the emergence of the science of History is not a scholarly detour. On the contrary: it recalls us to the current situation. For what was demanded of the Young Marx is still demanded of us, and more than ever. More than ever, in order to 'develop' Marxist theory, i.e., in order to analyse the new forms of capitalist-imperialist exploitation and rule, more than ever, in order to ensure a correct Union between the Workers' Movement and Marxist-Leninist Theory, we must take up proletarian theoretical (philosophical) positions: take them up, i.e., elaborate them on the basis of proletarian political positions, by a radical critique of all the ideologies of the ruling class. Without revolutionary theory, said Lenin, no revolutionary movement. I can write: without proletarian theoretical (philosophical) positions, no 'development' of Marxist theory, and no correct Union of the Workers' Movement and Marxist Theory.

July 1970

NOTES

- 1 Editorial Note: Louis Althusser has asked us to draw attention to the date of this text; to point out that it is a previously unpublished text witnessing to a stage in his reflection on the question of the 'break' in which he rectifies his earlier conceptions; and to note that it may be of assistance in clarifying a passage in his article: 'Reply to John Lewis (Self Criticism)', Marxism Today, October and November 1972.
- 2 Lenin and Philosophy and Other Essays, NLB, London 1971 pp.121 - 73.

LENIN/ HEGEL/ MARX

DOMINIQUE LECOURT

I. QUESTIONS

In What the 'Friends of the People' Are, Lenin, who had not read Hegel, wrote: 'Marx never dreamed of "proving" anything by means of Hegelian triads. '1 If all one cares to know of the Philosophical Notebooks, written twenty years later. is the famous aphorism that 'it is impossible completely to understand Marx's Capital . . . without having thoroughly studied and understood the whole of Hegel's Logic, '2 then there is no problem: this reading must have been a revelation for Lenin, in it he must have found (at last!) the living soul of Marxism.

Engels, even, had said that without Hegel 'nothing would have been possible': once he had overcome his youthful precipitation, the accumulation of years, experience and culture must have restored Lenin to the fold. . . .

I think the opposite is the case: once one takes the trouble to read the Notebooks right through, and honestly, it becomes clear that Lenin's opinion did not change and that despite the aphorism what we have in them is a repudiation of the Hegelian dialectic. It is true that this repudiation, which adds nothing to the text of 1894, is now accompanied by Lenin's recognition of Marxism's theoretical debt to Hegel. This is what makes the text so interesting, and difficult; this is what gives meaning to the aphorism and makes it possible to think in combination those two apparently contradictory propositions: 'without Hegel, nothing would have been possible' and 'Marx never dreamt of proving anything by means of Hegelian triads'.

As we know, Louis Althusser has long since demonstrated that there is a break or rupture, or else a change of terrain, between the (idealist) Hegelian dialectic and the (materialist) Marxist dialectic.

This thesis was aimed at Neo-Hegelian interpretations of Marxism which used certain of Marx's youthful texts as a justification for their misrecognition of the scientificity of the discipline inaugurated by Capital: historical materialism or the science of history. Simultaneously it woke dialectical materialism, 'Marxist philosophy', from a long sleep. To recall the tight bonds linking its categories with the concepts of the science that had produced, if not theorized them, by having made them work, was to restore them to life and to open the gate to new investigations.

These theoretical and critical effects bear witness to the validity of the thesis then advanced.

Nevertheless, precisely because of the development of knowledge that it has made possible, it seems to me that it is possible - and therefore necessary - to refine and rectify this thesis today. This is no paradox: it is the fate of all scientific theses. In a recent text,³ Althusser himself has shown that by brutally placing the 'break' in 1845, he had reduced a process to the instantaneity of an event, and thus made it impossible to think adequately the long theoretical labour by which Marx managed to free himself of all the Hegelian 'survivals' that long affected not only his style, but also his thought.

And yet it seems to me that this specification is still insufficient, for the concept of the break cannot give a precise account of the complexity of the operation in question. To be legitimate, its use in fact demands that the two terms present be: a) a science; b) the ideology of which that science is the science. In other words, there cannot strictly speaking be a 'rupture' except between a science in the specific unity (theory-object-method) that constitutes it and the network of knowledges that it enables us, by recurrence, to define as 'ideological'. Such is quite clearly Marx's position vis-à-vis the classical economists, for example: Capital invalidates their concepts as ideological ones. When it is a question of the relation between Marx and Hegel, the use of the concept of rupture runs into several difficulties: the most obvious arising from the fact that the same category cannot be used to think the relationship between the Marxist science of history and Hegelian philosophy on the one hand, and the relationship between Marxist philosophy and that same philosophy on the other. Otherwise Marx's name would become the alibi for a serious confusion which, I believe, is at the bottom of many of the misunderstandings which obscure the question. An immediate and still approximate effect of the distinction introduced: since what is at stake here is two 'philosophies'⁴ and a science, the solution belongs in the first place to a theory of philosophy in its relation to the sciences. Now

we already have this theory; or rather, we only have to take it. Lenin gave the beginnings of it in Materialism and Empirio-criticism; I shall not rehearse his analyses here, Althusser has collected them together and reflected on them in a recent lecture.⁵ I shall therefore restrict myself to a brief reminder. The Leninist theses are as follows:

a) Philosophy, which has no object of its own, only exists in its relationship with the existing sciences. Let us therefore return to my initial question: all I need say is that 'the solution belongs to a theory of philosophy' since there is no philosophy outside a certain relationship with the sciences. The history of philosophy is punctuated by the events which take place in the sciences. There is strictly speaking no history of philosophy, although philosophy does have a history: the history of its relationship with the sciences in the variations of its forms.

b) A crucial point: this relationship is in the last analysis political in nature. Philosophy makes 'interventions' in (auprès de) the sciences. It represents with (auprès de) them the class struggle. Punctuated by those revolutionary events, the breaks occurring in the sciences, it indefatigably repeats the operation of 'patching things up' to its own advantage. The site at which this operation takes place is what constitutes in all philosophy what is called the 'theory of knowledge': the site at which philosophy traces 'dividing-lines' within knowledge,

assigns the sciences their place, and thereby attributing to itself jurisdiction over them, establishes itself in power.

c) One last point which, as we shall see, is not without its importance for our purposes: just as it is making these interventions which constitute it, philosophy elaborates a discourse which denegates this its own practice. Althusser has drawn attention to this typical denegation of philosophy. I shall have occasion to return to it.

We know enough now to re-examine my question afresh. Indeed, it goes without saying that if what I have just said about philosophy is correct, then Hegelian philosophical categories could not have intervened as such in the constitution of the Marxist science of history, for to think Hegelian philosophy according to the Leninist concepts I have just outlined, is to understand it as a specific intervention - the Hegel intervention - with (auprès de) the existing sciences. Now this intervention was quite clearly made outside the field of historical materialism, for the latter did not yet exist. In consequence: Hegelian philosophy could not play any part in (auprès de) the science of history other than that of an obstacle. . . . Indeed, as we know this is in fact the part it played in Marx's thought, and has played since in that of his commentators. And yet, 'nothing would have been possible without Hegel': we also know that certain Hegelian categories participated in the formation of the concepts of historical materialism. Here I can already make two comments:

a) These categories - to this we must hold firm - cannot have operated as Hegelian philosophical categories. They must have undergone a preliminary treatment. It is this treatment that Lenin designates in our text as an extraction or unpeeling. The Notebooks, as we shall see, are merely a long elucidation of this 'unpeeling'; they allow us to reflect theoretically what the convergence of these metaphors is only an attempt to describe. A theoretical formulation: that is my modest task.

b) It is time to come to the last and most difficult point. In fact, we still do not know why it is precisely Hegelian philosophy - and not some other philosophy - which was able to function in this way. In other words: it happens that Marx began to think in the 'element' of Hegelian philosophy; but could he not have reached the same results from a starting-point in some other philosophy?⁶ Are we not in this case dealing with a double, historical and theoretical accident?

Another, more accurate way of posing the same problem: is there in Hegelian philosophy a specific disposition of categories which enabled it to function as Lenin describes it in the formation of Marx's scientific concepts, which enabled it to lend itself to extraction? Now, once again - even if the Marxist tradition leaves us slightly short of answers to this question - we know where to look for them: in the sciences and in politics. Or to think the Hegelian intervention according to Leninist concepts and to define what made possible its 'encounter' with Marx. Lenin, as we shall see, gives the elements of an answer, but at the level of effects: according to him it was the critical effects of Hegelian philosophy on Kantian

philosophy that enabled Marx to extract something valid from 'abstract and abstruse Hegelianism'. Of the reason for these effects, Lenin tells us nothing. Hence I shall have to put forward a hypothesis. As we shall see in detail, I hold that Hegelian philosophy had 'adopted' and made the main category of its system a concept that had emerged in the field of the then nascent biological sciences: the concept of a 'process without a subject'. This concept, detached from its original terrain and restructured according to the constraints of the Hegelian system, was 'translated' into dialectics, and it was this concept that Marx 'recuperated', after destructuring the dialectic, to make it into the main concept of the science of history. By the bias of a new practice of philosophy, a mutation in biology produced a theoretical revolution in history. I shall not anticipate any more: it is enough for the time being to have underlined the fact that this examination is in strict solidarity with the examination of the Notebooks; for its is ultimately a question of using the very concepts they bring to light in order to explain the prodigious historical and theoretical event which they describe: the 'encounter' of Marx and Hegel.

II. COMMENTS

These comments are formal and what they stress is obvious. The Notebooks are notebooks, i.e., a selection of notes: the first obvious fact. A methodological imperative and a critical principle follow. To read the text, step by step, relating the notes that constitute it to the text to which they refer - Hegel's Science of Logic⁷ - that is the imperative, if one wants to grasp Lenin's

thought in its labour, i.e., in its life.

As for the principle, it comes down to registering a fact: there are notes and notes. From mere transcription of the text - as a reminder - to free commentary (a freedom which is probationary!) via critical annotation. Not to make these elementary distinctions is to condemn oneself to understanding nothing. In particular, it is important not to confuse what is only stressed as a reference point so as to reconstitute the consistency of the Hegelian text for an eventual rapid re-reading, and what is stressed in order to express Lenin's opinion on some point in the Hegelian text. A simple precaution which enables one to avoid that enormous oversight: the attribution to Lenin of all the Hegelian texts he has copied out. There is no shortage of commentators who have fallen into this trap. This is not surprising once one knows what they are looking for in Lenin's text: a contribution to their theory which has it that Marxism is an 'inverted Hegelianism' and vice versa. What could be better in these circumstances than to attribute to Lenin the texts of Hegel's that he transcribes? The dishonesty is in proportion to the oversight which indicates it.

Since Louis Althusser we have known what is wrong with the thesis of the 'inversion' of the Hegelian dialectic into dialectical materialism. We know its theoretical and political effects. That is enough to make us cautious in the face of a text which in certain passages does state this 'inversion', but which, unless one allows classical and ill-disposed interpretations to pressure one into

the afore-mentioned oversight, does not in general present itself as an inversion of Hegel. This caution does at least have the advantage that it makes possible a strict delimitation of those moments designated by Lenin as 'inversions' in order to lay bare what these declarations conceal.

Second obvious fact: there is a clear disproportion in the distribution of the different forms of notes: everything concerning the 'Doctrine of Being' is a matter of simple and very sporadic transcription or brief annotation; only with the 'Theory of the Essence' do connected commentaries begin to appear, and finally it is the 'Subjective Logic' - the shortest part of Hegel's book, but the longest in the Notebooks - which presents the most annotations combined with commentary. It will surely be conceded that this disproportion cannot be accidental. What Lenin says about the last chapter, the chapter on the Absolute Idea, is enough to make us take these tiny details seriously.

Third obvious fact: Lenin reads Hegel 'through' Engels. There are many references to his Ludwig Feuerbach: their expressions are often identical (e. g., 'abstract and abstruse Hegelianisms'; also the 'inversion'). Hegel, writes Lenin - as if to reassure himself at the most idealist moment in the Logic - 'is materialism which has been stood on its head', and he adds in brackets '(according to Engels)' (PN 104). In the last few pages - as if in relief - 'Engels was right when he said that Hegel's system was materialism turned upside down' (PN 234). But it has to be noted that this opinion is

expressed vis-à-vis the chapter which, without any mention of 'inversion', he has stated to be 'the least idealist': thus it would be dishonest to take this passage as a justification for retrospectively projecting its meaning on the text as a whole. To resolve the difficulty I shall be forced to examine closely the status Lenin grants to the chapter on the Absolute Idea.

Last obvious fact: Lenin is particularly concerned with the critical effects of Hegelian philosophy on Kantian idealism. But this point has to be developed.

III. THE CRITICAL EFFECTS OF HEGEL ON KANT

Hegel: (Logic I 146): It is said that reason has its bounds. 'When this assertion is made it is not seen that by the very fact that something has been determined as a boundary, it has already been surpassed.'

Lenin's comment (PN 111): 'sehr gut!'

In reading The Science of Logic and the Philosophical Notebooks in parallel, one cannot but note that although Lenin does not hesitate to skip ten or twenty pages without comment (the chapter on the 'quantum', and in general the section on Quantity shows this), he never misses a criticism directed at Kant by Hegel. It can indeed be said that by doing so Lenin is repeating and developing - to the extent of considerably enriching it - an observation of Engels's in Ludwig Feuerbach: 'There is... a set of... philosophers - those who question the possibility of any cognition, or at least of an exhaustive cognition, of the world. To them, among the more

modern ones, belong Hume and Kant, and they have played a very important role in philosophical development. What is decisive in the refutation of this view has already been said by Hegel, in so far as this was possible from an idealist standpoint.'⁸ Lenin says 'from the standpoint of the most consistent idealism.'⁹

The question raised here is a difficult one, but it is crucial. What makes it difficult can be stated briefly as follows: 'How is it possible for a materialist (Engels or Lenin) to claim that an idealist philosophy - however consistent - can give a 'decisive refutation' of another idealist philosophy? Surely they are condemned to go round in circles in the closed space of idealism.' To answer this question is to give Engels's phrase 'in so far as... ' all its meaning. The analyses in the Notebooks, I believe, enable us to measure how far this is.

But the question has one further import, and this is the one that makes it crucial: if Hegelian philosophy truly contains a 'decisive' refutation of Kantian philosophy, this theoretical fact has to be thought, as Lenin and Engels invite us to think it, as an 'anticipation'; we therefore have to concede the existence of a radical originality in Hegelian philosophy with respect to earlier philosophy.

Allow me to leave these difficult questions for the moment and anticipate later developments. The operation we are witnessing here is a complex one. In fact, the Kant-Hegel relationship thought in Hegel - as Hegel reflects it in the Logic - is indeed of the type: more consistent, less consistent; or else: making explicit what is implicit, development of the germ, transgression of the

limit, etc.¹⁰ But that is the standpoint of Absolute Idealism.

Engels and Lenin, however, act on this relationship as materialists; from the idealist Hegelian thesis that there is an Absolute Knowledge, Lenin retains the anti-Kantian affirmation that there is no absolute limit to knowledge. We can say that the Notebooks allow us to appreciate the distance that separates these critiques in their parallelism; far from taking that parallelism uncritically for an inverted identity.

We now have to go into the details of the critical effects stressed by Lenin. I shall move from the more apparent to the less obvious; in other words, I shall in my turn restrict myself to notes before reflecting their systematic unity.

A/ In Materialism and Empirio-criticism, as in Engels's Ludwig Feuerbach, what is singled out - though for different reasons - in Kantian philosophy is the notion of the Thing-in-itself. Hence it is hardly surprising to see that Lenin retains all Hegel's attacks on the Thing-in-itself. Sometimes transcribing his text, when he finds it sufficiently aggressive and ingenious, sometimes warmly endorsing it in the margin - with a warmth bordering on lyricism. By affirming the unity of essence and appearance,¹¹ Hegelian philosophy obtains Lenin's approval for showing that the notion of the Thing-in-itself is an empty abstraction. Lenin writes: 'In Kant Ding an sich is an empty abstraction, but Hegel demands abstractions which correspond to der Sache' (PN 92), and

further on on the same page, 'What Hegel demands is a Logic the forms of which would be gehaltvolle Formen, forms of living, real content, inseparably connected with the content.'

One hundred other equally significant references could be found whose repetition is essential to the Hegelian Logic and whose adoption is - as I shall try to show - essential to Lenin's thought.¹² For the moment an approximation will suffice: if Hegel is against the Thing-in-itself it is not so much because it reserves a region beyond human knowledge: that is no more than an effect of the inconsistency of Kantian idealism; but because positing it - rather hypothesizing it - is a correlate of the principle of that inconsistency, which I might call Kantian 'anthropologism'. The Thing-in-itself, a fixed point beyond knowledge, can only be understood by reference to the finitude of a knowing subject. But for Hegel this is to fail to see that in man, by man, it is Being, as the Logos, that pronounces itself. The Absolute Idea that speaks (and causes). Take that as it is and overturn it in any direction you like, you won't find a scrap of materialism in it. All you could draw from it strictly speaking would be an absolute anthropology of the Feuerbachian type. Lenin, though, goes about it quite differently: he retains two determinations from the Hegelian critique: empty and fixed point; after which he can very well say that 'like' Hegel he is for the 'cognizability' of the Thing-in-itself. Let us look closer: I should not have said empty and fixed point, but empty therefore fixed point. What interests Lenin in the

Hegelian critique of the Thing-in-itself is the fact that it frees the movement of knowledge. Empty abstraction forms a fixed point which conceals the advance of knowledge.

He writes: 'In Kant, "the empty abstraction" of the Thing-in-itself instead of living Gang, Bewegung [progress, movement], deeper and deeper, of our knowledge about things' (PN 91).¹³ On this point, too, Lenin is 'verifying' Engels who gave Hegel credit for having set in motion the categories of thought; i.e., for having cancelled the topological distinction established by Kantian philosophy between the senses, the intellect and reason. But what principle underlies this materialist reading of Hegel? It is the recognition of the objective movement of the categories of thought in scientific activity. It is thus explicable that Lenin and Engels were able to make the following judgement - a paradoxical one for anyone who has read The Encyclopaedia of the Philosophical Sciences - that Hegel is 'for modern physics!' If you are not yet convinced that this is a matter of something other than an inversion, try to understand modern physics in Hegel inverted!

One step more: if Lenin thinks the Thing-in-itself is a pernicious Hypothesis it is because - as an empty and dead abstraction, a fixed point cancelling the movement of knowledge - it subjectivizes thought, which is from then on deprived of truth and caught in the trap of the relativism of appearances. Taking up a development of Hegel's on the Thing-in-itself, Lenin writes: 'In my opinion, the essence of the argument is... in Kant,

cognition demarcates (divides) nature and man; actually it unites them' (PN 91). And further on, giving us the last word of this critique: 'Thus... Hegel charges Kant with subjectivism. This NB. Hegel is for the "objective validity"... of Semblance, "of that which is immediately given" ' (PN 134). A confirmation of my thesis: it is precisely in this passage that Lenin returns to his attacks on the ideology of the given represented by the Machists. This is what he writes: 'The more petty philosophers dispute whether essence or that which is immediately given should be taken as basis (Kant, Hume, all the Machists). Instead of or, Hegel puts and, explaining the concrete content of this "and"' (PN 134). Lenin returns to the point again and again: 'transcendentally, that is really subjective and psychological' (PN 118) Counterpoint to the subjectivisation of thought: the place preserved for God. Lenin adopts for himself the Hegelian critique: 'Kant: to restrict reason and strengthen faith' (PN 100). And several times to this effect: 'Down with Heaven! Down with God!'

That is enough. Still provisionally, but in a more precise fashion, I can now characterize the materialist reading of Hegel as follows: the extraction of that in Hegel's critique of Kant which effects the elimination of the category of the subject; or else - more technically - that in absolute idealism's critique of subjective idealism which represents the work of the Absolute on - against - the subjective.

And yet I should add that this is only a starting-point, or, rather, a point of attack, a gateway to the basic

concepts of Hegelian idealism.

IV. READING AS A MATERIALIST: THE DIALECTIC

Everything can be summed up in a commentary on the following astonishing sentences of Lenin's: 'Nonsense about the Absolute... I am in general trying to read Hegel materialistically: Hegel is materialism which has been stood on its head (according to Engels) - that is to say, I cast aside for the most part God, the Absolute, the Pure Idea, etc.' (PN 104). I have already mentioned this text, but it deserves a long explanation. If only to note that the 'Nonsense about the Absolute' in question corresponds in the Hegelian text to that critique which is in truth essential to Hegelianism of Schelling's Absolute in which, as everyone knows, all cats are grey. The incriminated passage is one of the motor passages of Hegel's Logic in which the dialectic is at work, in all its purity. Above all this text poses me a question, having just said, as I have, that Lenin's operation consists of the retention from Hegel of the work of the Absolute on the subjective. How, in these circumstances, can he 'cast it aside'?

This is the crux of the question. My thesis is precisely that he casts it all aside, retaining only its effects. And I add that it is on this double condition that he is able to reveal the dialectic - but a dialectic which, having been subjected to these conditions, no longer retains anything from the Hegelian dialectic. Let me put it more correctly: no longer anything specifically Hegelian.

In order to prove this I must examine what has been

released by the critique of Kantian subjectivism: what Lenin calls a Hegelian 'objectivism'. The work of casting aside is carried out on this objectivism: it consists of cutting out its metaphysical presuppositions. But this is not a painless operation; the Notebooks reflect the difficult labour. Thus Hegel wrote: 'This movement, the path of knowledge, seems to be the "activity of cognition" external to being. However this movement is the movement of Being itself' (Logic, II, 15). The underlining is Hegel's and it stresses his attack on the Kantian conceptions then dominant; but it also brings out an essential thesis of his philosophy: it is Being, as the Absolute Idea, that thinks itself in man. An absolutely idealist thesis. Lenin's comment is rather bewildering in its brevity: 'Objective Significance!' (PN 130)!

Another example: just as it becomes slightly too glaringly obvious that 'Hegel = metaphysics' is as applicable as his 'Kant = metaphysics', Lenin gets angry: 'Very good! What has the Absolute Idea and idealism to do with it?' (PN 147). 'In logic, the Idea "becomes the creator of Nature"' writes Hegel. Lenin roars with laughter in the margin: '!! Ha-ha!' (PN 174).

This gives us the meaning of a detail from the short sentence I have constantly been commenting on: 'I cast aside for the most part the Absolute...'; in fact, although the Absolute is the Whole and cannot be chopped up, it is impossible to cast it aside completely, for then there would be nothing left. This detail is not unimportant: I shall return to it.

Let it suffice to gather the fruits of our efforts so far:

what we shall have is the non-Hegelian dialectic. We have seen:

- a) the casting aside of the Thing-in-itself
 - b) the casting aside of the subject
 - c) the affirmation of the movement of knowledge
 - d) the characterization of Hegelianism as 'objectivism'.
- Lenin also concludes, by combining (c) and (d), that the movement takes place in an internal manner. He writes: 'Movement and "self-movement" (this NB! arbitrary (independent), spontaneous, internally-necessary movement), "change", "movement and vitality", "the principle of all self-movement", "impulse" (Trieb) to "movement" and to "activity" - the opposite to "dead Being" - who would believe that this is the core of "Hegelianism", of abstract and abstrusen (ponderous, absurd?) Hegelianism?? This core has to be discovered, understood, hinüberretten, laid bare, refined, which is precisely what Marx and Engels did' (PN 141). A decisive passage: in order to draw the materialist dialectic from Hegel it has to be 'laid bare' or peeled; it is not enough to invert it. Let me add that, according to Lenin, this 'peeling' will leave 'nine-tenths' of 'chaff, rubbish' (PN 154). If so, before the intervention of the knife the peel is a tegument: deprived of it the vegetable dies, but it is good to eat. It would be easy to extend Lenin's metaphor.

That is enough. We have reached the heart of the question; that is why things are going so quickly. The movement is internal; but better: internally-necessary. This double structure depends on the unity of opposites. In On the Question of Dialectics, Lenin writes: 'The identity of opposites (it would be more correct, perhaps, to say

their "unity")¹⁴ is the recognition (discovery) of the contradictory, mutually exclusive, opposite tendencies in all phenomena and processes of nature (including mind and society). The condition for the knowledge of all processes of the world in their "self-movement", in their spontaneous development, in their real life, is the knowledge of them as a unity of opposites. Development is the "struggle" of opposites' (PN 359-60).¹⁵ These passages were to be repeated and brilliantly developed by Mao Tse-tung in On Contradiction.

The universality of contradiction that Lenin stresses in Hegel is the direct consequence of the objectivism he found there in the circumstances that I have defined. That is how he is able to write, copying an expression of Hegel's: 'Hegel's criterion of dialectics... has accidentally slipped in: "in all natural, scientific and intellectual development": here we have a grain of profound truth in the mystical integument of Hegelianism!' (PN 155).

I prefer to believe that this was no accident. But, it will be said, surely the contradiction introduced here, in its universality, is the Hegelian contradiction. If it were, the action of all these metaphors would be governed by one original and determinate metaphor: that of the inversion. I have already noted in passing one 'correction' of Lenin's which makes it impossible to assimilate Hegelian contradiction and Marxist contradiction: in the former there is an identity of the terms - i. e., the contradictories are not truly contradictory: they are always already identical - in the latter there is a unity

of terms which really are contradictory. Lenin reads the Hegelian contradiction as a materialist; he casts aside everything in it that gives it an idealist content in the Hegelian system. Indeed, one would look in vain for a passage in which Lenin adopts on his own account what constitutes the soul of Hegelian contradiction: the negation of the negation. When he wants to characterize the 'main content' of logic, Lenin writes that it is 'the relations (= transitions = contradictions) of concepts' (PN 196).

It is clear that what interests him is not Hegelian contradiction, but the necessity of the concatenation, the objective connection between all the aspects, forces and tendencies in a given set of phenomena and on the other hand what he calls 'the "immanent emergence of distinctions", the inner objective logic of evolution and of the struggle of the differences, polarity' (PN 97). It is in this respect that he is able to write that 'Hegel brilliantly divined the dialectics of things (phenomena, the world, nature) in the dialectics of concepts,' but adds immediately, 'indeed divined, not more' (PN 196). I shall say that Lenin saw here a theoretical anticipation. It is clear then that it is essentially from the standpoint of the theory of knowledge that Hegel's Logic seems most fruitful to him: insofar as Hegel, by developing the critique of the given, of the immediate, of the lived, defines the richness of a concept in determinations by its richness in relations (PN 117).

This gives a tangible meaning to the disproportion I signalled at the beginning and which coincides with

Engels's opinion that it is the Theory of the Essence that is the heart of the Hegelian Logic. Precisely: the Theory of the Essence which is encountered on the path from Being to the Concept, and which overthrows the way the 'problem' of knowledge had been posed by philosophy since Descartes.¹⁶ By this bias under the stated general conditions, a materialist and dialectical theory of knowledge can be extracted from Hegel. Here is Lenin at work: 'If I am not mistaken, there is much mysticism and leeres pedantry in these conclusions of Hegel, but the basic idea is one of genius: that of the universal, all-sided, vital connection of everything with everything and the reflection of this connection - materialistisch auf den Kopf gestellter Hegel [Hegel materialistically turned upside down] - in human concepts, which must likewise be hewn, treated, flexible, mobile, relative, mutually connected, united in opposites, in order to embrace the world' (PN 146).

I shall have to return to this text; but let me note straight away that in it, Lenin states what he regards as the basis of the dialectic, best illustrated by Capital, to which he refers on the same page. Now, with the exception of the famous aphorism which states that it is impossible to understand any of Capital without having read the whole of Hegel's Logic, there is one other reference to Capital in the Notebooks which is in remarkable agreement: Hegel wrote that logic gives 'the essential character of this wealth' (the wealth of the world view), 'the inner nature of spirit and of the world not merely an abstract universal, but a universal which comprises in itself the wealth of the particular'

(Logic, I, 68-9). Lenin picks up the expression and adds three notes: 'A beautiful formula'; 'Très bien!'; 'cf. Capital' (PN 98-9).

Elsewhere he was to write: 'Every individual is (in one way or another) a universal. Every universal is (a fragment, or an aspect, or the essence of) an individual' (PN 361). Once again, the dialectic conceived in this way can only give rise to a materialist theory of knowledge in so far as it is engaged in the polemic against every form of subjectivism and ideology of the given, and disengaged from its peculiar Hegelian function, hence from its idealist structure. It is therefore no accident that it is also vis-à-vis Hegel's criticism of Kant that Lenin outlines in terms reminiscent of those of Marx's 1857 Introduction a theory of scientific abstraction. 'Essentially', he writes, 'Hegel is completely right as opposed to Kant. Thought proceeding from the concrete to the abstract. . . does not get away from the truth but comes closer to it. . . The abstractions. . . of value, etc. , in short all scientific (correct, serious, not absurd) abstractions reflect nature more deeply, truly and completely. From living perception to abstract thought, and from this to practice - such is the dialectical path of the cognition of truth, of the cognition of objective reality' (PN 171).

Thus disengaged, peeled, extracted or whatever else you like - except inverted - this dialectic which I call non-Hegelian is 'on the eve' (PN 169) of becoming a materialist dialectic; it is very close to the idea that man proves the objective correctness of his ideas, concepts,

cognitions, by practice. Once again we should pay attention to Lenin's expressions: 'on the eve', 'very close. . . ' I shall return to this, but I can already say that they designate an omission: the categories of the non-Hegelian dialectic are not yet based on historical materialism, the science of history. A new example of what is possible - within its limits - for a theoretical anticipation.¹⁷

Let me sum up: Lenin's reading of Hegel's critique of subjective idealism has 'precipitated' an idea of the dialectic which is: internally-necessary movement of contradictory determinations in their unity without a subject.

Hence, whatever the appearances, it is not paradoxical that it is in the chapter of the Logic devoted to the 'Absolute Idea' that Lenin writes: 'It is noteworthy that the whole chapter on the "Absolute Idea" scarcely says a word about God (hardly ever has a "divine" "concept" slipped out accidentally) and apart from that - this NB - contains almost nothing that is specifically idealism, but has for its main subject the dialectical method' (PN 234). This comment is a very profound one, where both Hegelianism and dialectical materialism are concerned.

To simplify I shall say that in Hegel's Logic the expression Absolute Idea is to be understood more as Absolute than as Idea; by which I mean that any psychological conception of knowledge has been withdrawn from it and, as Lenin very acutely points out, every subject having been cast aside, all there is left in the guise of

a subject is the dialectical method, which is its own subject for itself. Or else: the Absolute Idea is the process which posits itself as a process. The absolute process. Such, I believe, is the basis of Hegel's Logic; it is certainly what Lenin discerned in it.

With the following reservation - the same one again - that he cast aside the Absolute. Given this subtraction, all that is left is the process. It is in this sense that it is possible to say that in the last chapter there is nothing that is specifically idealism, although absolute idealism appears as such.¹⁸ Hence if one wants to formulate the 'materialist' content of Hegel, the following equation can be given:

Dialectic = process without a subject.

V. THE INVERSIONS

The irreducible must be convinced. We know what it costs to hold that the materialist dialectic is the Hegelian dialectic 'inverted'; the idealist structure of the latter is re-introduced into dialectical materialism along with the corresponding notions of the negation of the negation, alienation, etc. But the irreducible - the revisionists in theoretical matters - find in the Notebooks a text that suits them: in these Notebooks Lenin uses the term 'inversion' several times (five to be exact), and, the height of satisfaction for them, he claims that it is impossible to understand anything about Marx without having read the whole of Hegel's Logic.

My demonstration should already have warned the over-hasty that things are not so simple. It remains for us

to examine these declarations of Lenin's, for obviously there can be no question of denying their existence. To put my cards on the table, I propose the following thesis: once the complex operation of extraction has been carried out, all that remains is to affirm the materialist principle of the primacy of being over thought and the non-Hegelian dialectic becomes the materialist dialectic.

The texts on the 'inversion' can be twisted as much as you like, nothing more will ever rigorously be found in them. Thus: 'Turn it round: Logic and the theory of knowledge must be derived from "the development of all natural and spiritual life" ' (PN 88), Lenin is here 'turning round' the following passage from Hegel: 'The movement' of consciousness, 'like the development of all natural and spiritual life' rests on 'the nature of the pure essentialities which make up the content of Logic' (Logic, I, 37).

It seems clear that this 'turning round' or inversion can only be understood if the Hegelian dialectic has first been reduced, according to the modalities I have established, to universal and contradictory movement ('all natural and spiritual life').

The same comment can be made on the text I used in my demonstration above, devoted precisely to the 'universal, all-sided, vital connection of everything with everything' (PN 146). Here, too, the only function of the inversion is to re-affirm the primacy of being over thought, but it is performed - could only be performed - on the condition of a previous extraction. No further comment is required. The other three texts on the inversion are:

PN167, 169 [⁷'transformation' in English] & 178.

As for the famous aphorism, it runs as follows; 'It is impossible completely to understand Marx's Capital, and especially its first chapter, without having thoroughly studied and understood the whole of Hegel's Logic. Consequently, half a century later none of the Marxists understood Marx!' (PN 180). Two specifications are enough to determine the exact import of this aphorism: a) Lenin speaks of the first chapter of Capital; but we know that there Marx, on his own admission, had coquetted with Hegelian terminology.¹⁹ b) Lenin is specific: without having read the whole of Hegel's Logic. I translate: without having read the Logic to the end, i. e., to the last chapter, which, as we know, contains, 'almost nothing that is specifically idealism'. A comment that as we have seen can only be made if one has already read Capital.

To which I should add that if Lenin were to be taken literally, one would have to believe that he had understood nothing about Marx until 1914, which is hard to accept once one has read, say, The Development of Capitalism in Russia. Hence it would be far better to conclude from the aphorism that it is impossible to understand anything about Hegel until one has read the whole of Capital: after which it is perfectly possible to say that one could not 'perfectly' understand the beginning of Volume One without having read the Logic to the end.

As for the last chapter of the Logic, on the 'Absolute Idea', it contains several expressions which might

foreseeably allow it to pass for the 'Great Inversion' of Marx - an inversion 'anticipated' by Hegel or completed by Marx and Lenin. Lenin says several times that materialism 'is within his grasp'. My thesis once again is simple: it specifies and develops the explications of this chapter that I have given above. Not only, indeed, does the chapter contain 'nothing that is specifically idealism' because its subject is merely the dialectic, but also Being and Thought are reconciled in it to such an extent that the materialist 'inversion' takes place, so to speak, on its own accord. Such that it is enough for the materialist reader to pivot the Absolute on itself at the moment of its suppression to find himself back on his own ground.

As a last point about the inversion, I believe that it is a good idea to determine the status of this metaphor in the history of philosophy. For it is plain to see that there is nothing original - or specifically Marxist - about it: Feuerbach uses it constantly to think his relation to Hegel,²⁰ and, more generally, it is a traditional image in the history of philosophy for great philosophies to state their relationship to previous philosophies. After all, Kant's image of the 'Copernican Revolution' is not appreciably different. Perhaps one might even be able to demonstrate that this image and other related ones constitute the substance of the metaphors by which philosophy registers and thinks its relationship to its own history in such a manner as to 'denegate' it.

One might then state that it is a traditional metaphor expressing the 'novelty' of Marxist philosophy that

Marx and Engels 'picked up' the inversion metaphor. And in two types of works: popular works such as Ludwig Feuerbach, or polemical ones such as Anti-Dühring, works in which their aim was to situate themselves in one of the two great camps of philosophy: idealism or materialism. The inversion would then be a crude, provisional image, critical in function.

The metaphor of the 'kernel', of the 'grain' as Lenin puts it here, or of the extraction, is quite different. This becomes clear once one realises what the kernel in question is: I have argued that it was 'uncovered', 'disentangled' in Hegel's criticism of Kant; it is the concept of a process whose only subject is the process itself. Anyone who has grasped this notion has grasped all that Lenin 'extracts' from Hegel's Logic; but with the reservation that it is not a question of the same process, or that the Hegelian structure of the process - the Hegelian content of the concept - is destroyed; to put it briefly, it is the teleology that is driven out, the soul of the Hegelian dialectic. In short, strictly speaking nothing is left in the extracted 'process' - perhaps one might say: the process extract - of that which enabled the category to function in Hegel.

What is left is a negation: 'no subject', and a word: 'process'. But the word 'process' (procès) designates a well defined concept in the system of historical materialism, very different from the Hegelian category.²¹ It is in this common word that the rupture between Hegelian categories and Marxist concepts takes place. How does it take place? The phrase 'without a subject'

suggests it: by the recognition of a homology in the elimination of the category of the subject. To use a metaphor in my turn, I shall say that it is by recognizing the same blind spot in the two systems of concepts: the blank of the subject. For both systems it is the process that assigns subjects their positions (function and 'consciousness') as subjects. Hence if the metaphor of the inversion must needs be saved, it will have to be used on the following level: the notion of the process is inverted around the absence as such of the subject. But it will then have to be admitted that in order to obtain some validity, the notion of 'inversion' in its turn has had to undergo a strange 'inversion'.

VI. THE MARX-HEGEL ENCOUNTER

I have now reached the end of the theses expounded in the Notebooks and the questions that Lenin asks in them: one question that I believe to be crucial remains, a question about which he says nothing. We shall see later that this silence can easily be justified. But the problem does seem to demand an answer for all that. It could be formulated as follows: what was it that enabled Hegelian philosophy to produce the category of a process without a subject? Or else: what is there that is specific about the Hegelian system and enabled it to lend itself to the 'treatment' we have seen it undergo? For an encounter to take place - even a theoretical one - it is necessary to be two.

But, let me repeat it, Lenin tells us nothing about this. I am therefore forced to venture a hypothesis which

further investigation will either confirm or refute.²²

Let me start from an obvious characteristic of Hegelianism: this philosophy contains a theory of the history of philosophy. I believe this feature can serve as an index: the specificity of the Hegelian philosophy lies in the fact that it makes something that all previous philosophies repressed, either by reduction or by elimination pure and simple, an object of thought. But more must be said: not only does Hegelian philosophy enable itself to think the history of philosophy, it also establishes a strict equivalence between philosophy and its history. Since we are at the level of indices, let me note that this object, history, is related in some way to the object of historical materialism. Another meeting point.

However, one 'small difference' obliges me to make a detour: in the first case it is a matter of a philosophical 'object', an object precipitated by philosophical intervention - in the other it is a matter of a scientific object.

In order to grasp the index as such, I must turn my attention to the theoretical mechanism that produces it as an effect. I know where to look for it: in the sciences and in politics. Hence I must examine Hegel's treatment of the sciences.²³ This question, whose breadth and difficulty take it far beyond the bounds of my purposes here, deserves a study for itself alone. I hope I shall be forgiven for taking a short-cut here. Meanwhile I have no intention of adding a few pages to Hegelian studies and commentaries; many eminent specialists can make more pertinent contributions to them than my own. My

concern is rather to go as far as I can in the examination of the relationship between Marxism and Hegelianism - taking into account the theory of philosophy inaugurated by Marx and developed and enriched by Lenin. That this attempt poses and leaves unsolved as many questions as it gives answers to, I know very well; but I have a feeling that if these questions turn out to be correct ones, then that will constitute its greatest merit.

Where should we look in the Hegelian system for the texts that discuss the sciences of the period? Essentially in three works: The Phenomenology of Mind (1807), The Science of Logic (1812-6) and The Encyclopaedia of the Philosophical Sciences (1817). The systematic character of Hegelian philosophy explains the simultaneous presence of these texts in these three works, but also the differences between them: each has its own theoretical place, and therefore its specificity. However, because of this same specific character, they exhibit a very remarkable structural identity which is based on the invariable order in which Hegel's philosophy classifies what it calls the 'empirical sciences'. This order can be presented as follows:

mathematics
mechanics
physics
chemistry
organics: geology
 botany
 science of the animal organism: zoology
 anatomy
 physiology

I have taken these terms from the section of the Encyclopaedia entitled 'The Philosophy of Nature'.²⁴ The length of this text and the minuteness of its analyses are my justification for this choice; but of course, the same order is found in the Phenomenology and in the Science of Logic: it coincides with the order of the development of the Idea. Whether the Idea is left to unfold the succession of its moments by itself, as in the Logic, the experience of a consciousness is described in its effort to reach the process of the Idea, as in the Phenomenology, or the system of the existing sciences is expounded in dogmatic and didactic fashion, as in the Encyclopaedia, this order is unaffected.

Having reached this point, two crucial comments need to be made:

a) Presented in this way, the sciences do not have the basis for their classification in themselves. This basis is extrinsic and derives from Hegel's conception of 'Science' (philosophical Science); hence it is Hegelian philosophy that posits it. A typical philosophical intervention by which philosophy establishes itself in power. Naturally, I shall have to return to examine this operation very closely.

b) The Hegelian order of the sciences is not a mere 'classification' with convenience its only justification. This order establishes a hierarchy among the sciences: the last science is the 'truth of' all the others. But as we have seen, the empirical science which the Hegelian system posits as the 'truth of' all the others is the science of the animal organism.

Here I shall permit myself the 'short cut' I mentioned: if it is true that the 'science of the animal organism' is placed by Hegel at the head of the order of the sciences, I believe that it is at this level that it is possible to grasp in a privileged manner the sense of the Hegelian philosophical intervention. In other words, if my initial hypotheses are correct, it is at this point that we shall find the conditions of production of the category 'process without a subject'. The decisive importance of the question is clear: if this can really be proved, then I believe it will be possible to resolve the problem of the relations between Marx and Hegel according to Lenin's concepts.

Hence I shall examine in detail the Hegelian texts on the science of the animal organism; this examination can only be meaningful with reference to the state of the sciences of the period. I give these reminders - abbreviated to the point of ellipsis - not as a display of erudition but as an essential part of the demonstration. To complete these preliminaries, I should add that the order I have adopted in my analysis of the texts is an arbitrary one, corresponding simply to a concern for expositional clarity.

I shall therefore begin with the text of the Phenomenology. Of course, more than one passage from the Phenomenology envisages the notion of organism, but the one that concerns us is the one on the knowledge of Nature, Hegel's treatment of the empirical sciences. I therefore stop in the field of phenomenology at a determinate form of consciousness; the one Hegel calls 'observing reason'.

A few sentences suffice to fix roughly the general drift of these developments: the empirical sciences correspond to a stage in which reason, sure that it is all of reality, is looking for itself, and finds itself, but without yet having self-knowledge. That is why these sciences are thought in the categories of externality and fixity. According to Hegel, to observe is to fix the concept in being and hence to seek the concept as being: 'Reason, as it immediately appears in the form of conscious certainty of being all reality, takes its reality in the sense of immediacy of being, and also takes the unity of the ego with this objective existence in the sense of an immediate unity, a unity in which it (reason) has not yet separated and then again united the moments of being and ego, or, in other words, a unity which reason has not yet come to understand.'²⁵

It is necessary therefore to note that these texts are to be understood in the mode of 'not yet'. These 'not yet's' are only so for us - philosophers (Hegelian philosophers) - who have Absolute Knowledge.

But on the trail of 'not yet's' that lead to Absolute Knowledge, the appearance of the organism marks a very important stage. From the inorganic to the organic, according to Hegel, there is an advance in the object; this advance in the object corresponds to an advance in the consciousness which is a consciousness of the object. Whereas the necessity of law was not for itself in the sensuous experience of the inorganic world, in the organic the concept becomes for itself: 'It exists as a concept; in the organism there thus exists what had

previously only been our reflection.'²⁶

In other words, what becomes the correlate of consciousness here is realised necessity. Or else, and here we are at the heart of our subject, the search for laws such as suit the inorganic world must be abandoned on reaching the organic. It is clear that Hegel's exposition then takes a critical turn: against every mechanistic conception of the organism. Without anticipating too much on developments to follow, it is a good idea to stress straightaway that the Hegelian texts on the organic have an essentially polemical value: I shall show that the object and effect of this polemic is to instill respect for the radical novelty of the latest developments in then nascent biology, against the still dominant physico-chemical theories of the living.

Too much attention cannot be paid to this point: Hegelian philosophy is intervening here to instill respect for a rupture that has just occurred in biology. I know of course that this is no more than a secondary effect of a system that as a whole shows little understanding of the production of scientific concepts. But this effect exists; and I believe that it is crucial for us (who are not Hegelians). Let me therefore return to the text of the Phenomenology: in it the polemic is directed against Kiehmeyer's attempt to establish physiological laws (e. g., laws of the relationship between sensitivity and irritability).²⁷ Taking up Kiehmeyer's proposed distinction between sensitivity, irritability and reproduction, Hegel shows that his error was to regard them as observable properties instead of envisaging them as moments of a dialectic. Take the law of the

inversely proportional relation between sensitivity and irritability; in Hegel's view it amounts to an empty formalism. The true relation between sensitivity and irritability has to be taken in a qualitative and not a quantitative sense. Irritability and sensitivity are two moments of the organic concept and they correspond to one another as a positive number does to a negative number or one pole of a magnet to the other. What Kierkegaard lacks is the concept of a dialectic of nature.

It is time to move on to the text from the Encyclopaedia: being more extensive, it making Hegel's intentions clearer. The text is organized around the same polemic, augmented by a critique of the then famous theories of the English physician Brown.²⁸ Basically, Hegel's polemic against Brown is the same as the one aimed at Kierkegaard in the Phenomenology.²⁹

Moreover the two texts both contain the same homage to Kant and Aristotle. In fact, for Hegel Kant is to be praised for seeing, like Aristotle, the specificity of an object like the organism, which imposes thinking the concept of an aim. A specificity recognized³⁰ but not thought adequately, precisely because of the limits of critical philosophy: Kant thought there could be an archetypal intellect capable of going from the whole to the parts as well as from the parts to the whole, but he denied man this intellect. He made Nature the production of an intelligent cause, but he was not consistent. If he had been he would have made Nature a 'contingent reason'; he would have seen in the organized being the presence of the concept in Nature,

he would have understood finality as a circular process, as the 'becoming of the already become'.

Allow me to leave these texts on Kant for the time being: their very great interest for us is easily inferred. The chapter of the Encyclopaedia I am considering contains many other riches. Besides the discussion of Brown's theses and the homage to Kant and Aristotle, Hegel specifies the theories of the organism that he intends to defend. An apparent paradox: the Hegel who has often displayed very little discernment in questions of physics (remember what retrograde theories of the nature of light he supported), resolutely takes sides with the new and revolutionary theories in zoology, physiology and all the disciplines dealing with living things. Careful to defend the specificity of the living against any intrusion of the physico-chemical mechanism he saw as formal and dead, he puts his philosophy at the service of the rupture then being laboriously achieved in the conception of life. Hegelianism, contemporaneous with the constitution of biology as a scientific discipline, was able to recognize and register this rupture as such.

Hegel's explicit or implicit references are significant: Spallanzani (Para. 365),³¹ Bichat (Para. 355), Cuvier (Para. 370 - 368 in 3rd ed) and Oken (Oken's ideas are scattered throughout the section).

Hegel clearly grasped the import of Spallanzani's experiments on digestion. Thanks to them it was decisively proved that digestion is achieved by the dissolution of nutriment ingested by the gastric juices, and not by mechanical trituration. Spallanzani's

investigations were made public in 1790: we can see how Hegel kept abreast of the developments in the sciences of his period. As for Bichat, his 'Recherches physiologiques sur la vie et la mort' date from 1801; the decisive importance of this work in the history of medicine is well-known. Read Michel Foucault: 'With Bichat, the medical gaze turns about and asks death to explain life and disease, its definitive stillness to explain their rhythm and movements. Did not medicine have to evade its most ancient concern in order to read in what bore witness to its failure what had to be the basis for its truth?'³²

It is also Michel Foucault who has demonstrated in The Order of Things and then in a recent colloquium³³ how Cuvier's theories, by founding comparative anatomy, produced a ruptural effect in the conception of life. From then on life was no longer conceived as a growth but as eroded internally by an essential death. Read Para. 375 of the Encyclopaedia and you will see how Hegel perceived this rupture. Even its title is significant: The Death of the Individual of its own Accord (aus sich selbst).

Examining the paragraph in itself, we find that Hegel adds something to these discoveries. He writes: 'The original disease of the animal, and the inborn germ of death, is its being inadequate to universality.'

This passage deserves all our attention, since in the development of the Encyclopaedia it introduces the Philosophy of Mind, it punctuates a Hegelian transition. Or rather: what is already present is mind in its immediacy. In short, we have here reached a critical

point in the Hegelian system. Now I propose - for the sake of clarification, and no doubt of information - to read this astonishing text of Lorenz Oken's: 'The association of the primitive animals (infusoria) in the form of flesh should not be conceived of as the mechanical junction of one animal to another, like a heap of sand in which there is no association other than the promiscuity of many grains. No. Just as oxygen and hydrogen disappear in water, mercury and sulphur in cinnabar, a true interpenetration takes place here, an intertwining and a unification of all the animalculae. They no longer lead their own lives from that moment. They all enter the service of the higher organism, they labour with a unique and common function in view, or even perform this function in their own self-realisation. Here no individuality is spared, it is all quite simply destroyed. But this is an inappropriate language, the united individualities form another individuality, the former are destroyed and the latter only arises by their destruction.'³⁴

In his attempt to determine Oken's role in the formation of the cellular theory, Georges Canguilhem sees in these texts an anticipation of the theory of degress of individuality and, at any rate, a rupture with respect to Buffon's ideas, to which they have nevertheless often been linked.

Attentive to the system of metaphors that provides the framework for the cited passage, he adds the following important commentary: 'The organism is conceived by Oken in the image of society, but this society is not the association of individuals as it was conceived by the

political philosophy of the Aufklärung, but the community as it was conceived by the political philosophy of romanticism' (my emphasis).³⁵

Everything is now becoming clear, I think: about the Hegelian intervention, and, in consequence, as we shall see, about the Marxist extraction. I therefore propose the following set of hypotheses:

a) A reading of Paras. 374, 375 and 376 of the Encyclopaedia in particular, the last ones in the Section devoted to the 'Philosophy of Nature', shows that the theory of the organism elaborated by Oken³⁶ dominates and unifies the biological conceptions selected by Hegel.

b) The ensemble of these conceptions, in a true rupture, inaugurated a new idea of living things as eroded by death; an idea on which scientific biology is based (if the tautology is permissible).

c) Oken, the agent of this rupture, borrowed a political model from philosophy, thanks to which he was able to anticipate the cellular theory, an effect of the rupture in the doctrines of the constitution of the organism. This model, functioning as an epistemological obstacle, sets limits to Oken's anticipation.

d) Hegel adopts the model as a 'unifying principle' of 'organics'; philosophy takes back from the sciences what it had craftily lent them, in the form of a 'spontaneous' philosophy. By this bias, it is able to recognize the rupture while misrecognizing it. A double process which is the motor of a philosophical 'revolution'.

e) Hegel says: it is the organism which demands that the dialectic be thought in an immediate fashion. Meanwhile, as we shall see, Life appears in the Science of Logic as the Idea in its immediate form. I shall say: it is the biological theory of the organism that is the terrain of origin of the main category of Hegelian philosophy.

f) This category only acquires a philosophical status through the intervention of a political 'model'. In other words, through the intervention of a certain (conservative) politics in (auprès de) a new scientific concept. It is this politics that shapes what is specific about Hegelian philosophy.

g) It could no doubt be demonstrated that the link at which this intervention takes place in Hegel is the coincidence of the new idea of life and an ancient theme of Lutheran theology: the theme of the Death of God.

The effect of this complex process in which the Hegelian system crystallizes is to produce from a new idea of life the notion of life as the Idea.

This effect returns us to our starting-point; but before that to the declared starting-point of Hegelian philosophy: the Logic, in which the process of the Idea is freely unfolded. A last detour which is the beginning of my return to the Philosophical Notebooks: the text from the Encyclopaedia that I have analysed at length makes constant reference to the categories of the Logic; it is the latter, according to the Hegelian system, that provides the framework for all these developments, and in particular for what Hegel calls 'the syllogism of the

organism'.

But what Hegel cannot say and what is presented as the 'discourse' of Being itself is only possible if one has available the concept of Being as Idea, i. e. , as a process. Now we have just traced the formation of this concept on its real terrain; hence it is necessary to state that it is in the Logic that Hegel practises the 'denegation' of his own philosophical operation. We can see what is specific about this denegation: it is based on a concept which allows all the categories of previous philosophies to be preserved even as they are suppressed. In this it is the 'denegation of all the denegations', and can set out to think philosophy as the history of philosophy; one of the apparent characteristics from which I started.

It is time to come to a conclusion about the encounter of Marx and Hegel: we can now understand how the extraction was possible: by cancelling Hegel's 'political' intervention in (auprès de) the new concept of the sciences of the organism, by taking sides in philosophy, Marx rediscovered this revolutionary concept - but in the free state. He rediscovered it in the free state, i. e. , worked by philosophy, having undergone variations in its extension and comprehension, ready to function as a norm in a new scientific field.³⁷

To conclude, allow me to quote a text by Engels which, I believe, proves that my hypotheses are not mere conjectures:

'It is much easier, along with the unthinking mob à la Karl Vogt, to assail the old natural philosophy than to appreciate its historical significance. It contains a

great deal of nonsense and fantasy, but not more than the unphilosophical theories of the empirical natural sciences contemporary with that philosophy, and that there was also in it much that was sensible and rational began to be perceived after the theory of evolution became widespread. Haeckel was therefore fully justified in recognizing the merits of Treviranus and Oken. In his primordial slime (Urschleim) and primordial vesicle (Urbläschen) Oken put forward as a biological postulate what was in fact subsequently discovered as protoplasm and cell. . . . The natural philosophers stand in the same relation to consciously dialectical natural science as the utopians to modern communism.'³⁸

I shall refrain from comment on this text for the time being; the analogy it establishes opens the field of another, wider study of the relations between the constitution and development of biology and historical materialism.

August 1969.

NOTES

- 1 Lenin: Collected Works, Vol. 1, p. 163.
- 2 Quotations from the Philosophical Notebooks (hereafter referred to as PN) give page references to Lenin: Collected Works, Vol. 38.
- 3 Louis Althusser: 'Preface to Capital Volume One', in Lenin and Philosophy and Other Essays, NLB, London 1971.

- 4 The inverted commas mark the specificity of the 'Marxist philosophy' which will become clear later on.
- 5 'Lenin and Philosophy' in Lenin and Philosophy and Other Essays, op. cit.
- 6 A theoretical problem, but also a pedagogical one: must one go through Hegel in order to understand Marx? Lenin gives us in factual form the outline of an answer: he had not read Hegel until 1914. And yet he understood Marx very well.
- 7 Quotations from Hegel's Science of Logic are generally given in the form in which they appear in Lenin: Collected Works, Vol. 38. Page references are to Hegel's Science of Logic, trans. W. H. Johnston and L. G. Struthers, George Allen and Unwin, London 1929 (two parts).
- 8 Selected Works of Marx and Engels in One Volume, Lawrence and Wishart, London 1968, p. 605.
- 9 'Hegel himself argu/es/ wholly and exclusively from the standpoint of a more consistent idealism' (PN 169-70).
- 10 As is well known, all the main themes of Hegelian philosophy emerged historically from a long debate between Hegel and Kantian and post-Kantian philosophy. This 'emergence' can be traced in the early works: Faith and Knowledge, for example; but the echo of these debates is still detectable in The Science of Logic. Look for example at the first pages of the 'Doctrine of the Essence' (Vol. 1, Book II, printed in Part 2), and on this point Jean Hyppolite's remarkable commentary in Logique et Existence (PUF, Paris 1953), p. 108: 'Kant's critical philosophy, despite the advance it constitutes over formal reflection, remains nonetheless a "reflection on", or a reflection which is already internal but does not know

itself as such. It starts from a sensuous immediacy in the Transcendental Aesthetic, and then reveals that this sensuousness conforms to the transcendental conditions of reflection in the Analytic. However, although this immediacy then becomes the authentic Phenomenon, although it is based on the essentiality of the categories, it still retains something foreign to reflection which has to start from it in order to found it. Kant does not understand this appearance as such, as the very structure of reflection! (my emphasis).

- 11 Appearance: 'If Appearance is called essence-less, then the moment of its negativity is thought of as though the immediate, as opposed to it, were the positive and the true; but in fact this immediate does not yet contain essential truth. Indeed, Existence ceases to be essenceless by the fact that it passes over into Appearance' (Logic, II 128-9).
- 12 'Sehr gut!! If we ask what Things-in-themselves are, so ist in die Frage gedankenloser Weise die Unmöglichkeit der Beantwortung gelegt' (the question, in thoughtlessness, is so put as to render as answer impossible). This is in the margin; he adds: 'This is very profound... The Thing-in-itself is altogether an empty, lifeless abstraction. In life, in movement, each thing is usually both "in itself" and "for others" in relations to an Other, being transformed from one state to the Other' (PN 109). There are many other examples, notably PN 100, 130-1, etc.
- 13 The passage from Hegel to which Lenin is referring is as follows: 'When the Critical Philosophy understands the relation of these three Terms so as to make Thoughts intermediary between Us and Things in such a sense that

this intermediary rather excludes us from things than connects us with them, this view may be met by the simple observation that these very things which are supposed to stand beyond ourselves, and beyond the thoughts referring to them, at the opposite extreme, are themselves things of thought, and, as being quite undertermined, are just one such thing (the so-called Thing-in-itself), the product of empty abstraction' (Logic, I, 44).

- 14 Certainly an opportune, but not a Hegelian correction. The difference between Hegelian contradiction and Marxist contradiction appears here in a single point: for Hegel, in the homogeneous and expressive whole of a unique Idea, there is an identity of opposites, whereas for Marx there can only be a unity of opposites. On these points cf. Louis Althusser: For Marx, Allen Lane, London 1969.
- 15 On contradiction, Lenin stresses the following passage from Hegel: 'For as opposed to it Identity is only the determination of simple immediacy, or of dead Being, while Contradiction is the root of all movement and vitality, and it is only insofar as it contains a Contradiction that anything moves and has impulse and activity!' (PN 139; Logic, II, 67).
- 16 It could well be argued that for Hegel strictly speaking there is no problem of knowledge.
- 17 What I write here is still very descriptive; the last part of this essay will attempt to give the theory of it.
- 18 Surely Lenin is stressing something very profound

here. There is only ever 'something that is specifically idealism' if it is supported by the category of the 'subject', in other words: the category of the subject is the elementary category of idealism: it is even possible that it could be proved to be the elementary category of all ideology.

- 19 Surely even his thought was affected by this coquetry. Althusser suggests it in his Preface to Capital Volume One (op. cit.).
- 20 Cf. Jean-Pierre Osier's Présentation of Ludwig Feuerbach: L'essence du Christianisme, Maspero, Paris 1968.
- 21 I shall show in the following section that this word is not a mere vocalization; I shall be led to propose for its characterization that it be called a 'concept in the free state', free with respect to its terrain of origin, which is scientific and not Hegelian.
- 22 This section repeats from a different standpoint the substance of a paper delivered in 1969 to Georges Canguilhem's seminar at the Institut d'Histoire des Sciences.
- 23 The question then deserves to be sub-divided:
A. what conception did Hegel have of Science in general?
B. what conception did he have of the individual existing sciences?
- 24 Quotations from Hegel's Philosophy of Nature, edited and translated with an introduction and explanatory notes by M. J. Petry, George Allen and Unwin 1970 (three parts).
- 25 The Phenomenology of Mind, trans. J. B. Baillie, George Allen and Unwin, London 1931, p. 282.

26 Cf. *ibid.*, pp. 293 ff.

27 Karl-Friedrich Kiemeyer (1765-1844), author of a text on the 'Relations of Organic Forces' in 1793 which is Hegel's inspiration here.

28 John Brown, born at Berwick in 1735, a disciple and then opponent of Cullen. According to Brown, man and other living beings only differ from inorganic bodies in their property of being affected by external things such that the functions which are attributes of life can be carried out. This property he designated as 'excitability'. In this way Brown distinguished between two sorts of disease: sthenic diseases, corresponding to an immoderate excitation, and asthenic diseases, corresponding to an insufficient excitation. For Brown, see the pages devoted to him by Georges Canguilhem in Le Normal et le pathologique, PUF, Paris 1966.

29 Hegel makes a precise analysis of Brown's doctrine on two occasions: 'A theory of medicine based on these arid determinations [of the intellect] is completed in half a dozen propositions, so it is not surprising that it should have spread rapidly and found plenty of adherents. The cause of this aberration lay in the fundamental error of first defining the Absolute as the absolute undifferentiation of subject and object being, and then supposing that all determination is merely quantitative difference' (Para. 359). The examination is extended and then taken up again in Para. 373.

30 Critique of Judgement, Para. 65.

31 'The researches of Spallanzani and others, as well as more recent physiology, have also demonstrated the immediacy with which living being as a universal,

employing no other means than simple contact and the taking up of nutriment into its heat and its own sphere in general, maintains its continuity within this nutriment.'

32 Michel Foucault: La Naissance de la Clinique, PUF, Paris 1963, p. 148; cf. Georges Canguilhem: Le Normale et le Pathologique, op. cit., p. 215.

33 A colloquium initiated by George Canguilhem at the Institut d'Histoire des Sciences de Paris in June 1969.

34 Cit. Georges Canguilhem: La connaissance de la vie, Vrin, Paris 1965, p. 61.

35 *Ibid.*

36 References to Oken are frequent in Hegel, as early as the Phenomenology, but also in his correspondence: cf. particularly two strange letters dated the end of May and June 9th 1821, one addressed to Creuzer, the other to Niethammer, in which Hegel says he feels that he has been 'endangered' after the King of Prussia has banned the teaching of Oken's natural philosophy.

37 These are the terms in which George Canguilhem proposes to think 'scientific loans'. We can see that philosophy - but not any philosophy - has its part to play in them.

38 Anti-Dühring, op. cit., p. 18n

STATEMENT

Antony Cutler and Michael Gane

On the Question of Philosophy - For a Theory of Theoretical Practice.

The critics of the Althusserian 'Theory of Theoretical Practice' have taxed it with being inconsistent with Althusser's own critique of ideological philosophy ('theory of knowledge'): if there is to be a Theory of Theoretical Practice then it must act as a 'legislator' of what is or is not scientific, a proposition raised and rejected in Reading Capital (part I), but subsequently adopted as part of the basis for rejection of the Theory of Theoretical Practice by Paul Hirst and Dominique Lecourt. ¹

It is thus a return to idealism for it assumes that the criteria of scientificity may be defined outside of the practice of science: it will be just another name for the myths of philosophy as a master science, or universal meta-science. Paul Hirst in a previous issue of this magazine gave a very clear formulation of this criticism which may serve as a particularly good example of this line of argument. He argues that the 'claim made for Theory installs a philosophy radically different from

Althusser's own practice in On the Materialist Dialectic and Reading Capital. A scientific philosophy's knowledge must be a knowledge of scientificity: of what is and what is not within knowledge. It is a knowledge which specifies the "essence" of scientific practice. Ideology and science are distinguished not by their effects and the form of discourse in which these effects are produced, they are distinguished because philosophy is itself a science and knows internally (in reflection upon its own knowledges) the difference of the instances of science and ideology. Theory, as a science of sciences, is a guarantee of this scientificity independent of (but not prior to) their own practice.' ²

This argument is based on a non-sequitur: that if the Theory of Theoretical Practice has a knowledge of the character of science, and of the distinction between science and ideology, then the distinction between ideology and science must be established exclusively within the Theory of Theoretical Practice and this precludes the possibility that the distinction between science and ideology is established at the level of their differential knowledge effects. The co-existence of both is regarded implicitly as absurd. Yet this is simply an assumption. The difference between the discourses of ideology and science is a difference in the character of the knowledge effects. This difference, however is not a difference known in the effects. The argument confuses the effect and the knowledge of the effect. The knowledge of the differential effects of scientific and ideological discourse is known within the Theory of Theoretical

Practice but the difference remains unaltered by this knowledge - to think otherwise is to conflate the real object and the thought object. Thus, the Theory of Theoretical Practice is not a legislator of the scientificity of science but knows the difference in the knowledge effects of science and ideology. The mechanism of this knowledge is the posing of a highly specific question: '.... The question of the mode of appropriation of the real, specific object of knowledge has to be posed.... in terms which form the concept of the knowledge structure, an open specific structure, and which, at the same time, are the concept of the question knowledge poses itself - which implies that the place and function of this question be thought even in posing the question. This last demand is indispensable in order to establish the distinction between the theory of the history of the production of knowledge (or philosophy) and the existing content of knowledge (the sciences), without thereby making philosophy that legal instance which, in 'theories of knowledge' makes laws for the science in the name of a right it arrogates to itself. This right is no more than the fait accompli of mirror recognition's stage direction which ensures philosophical ideology the legal recognition of the fait accompli of the 'higher' instance it serves.'³

If science consists of the definition of a theoretical object through the action of concepts then no 'methodology' of science in general is possible, for the idea of methodology relies on the myth of a radical exteriority of the method to the specificity of the science. The mythical basis of such a pretension is established in the Theory

of Theoretical Practice. The establishment of the 'new' definition of philosophy has led to two basic interpretations of its effects. On one hand, one position (that previously expressed in this magazine) maintains that the change in definition is seen as bringing the definition into line with the concepts established in For Marx and Reading Capital. The alternative position maintains that either some or even all of the concepts in the early works must be rejected. In our view adherents of the new definition are forced willy nilly to adopt the second alternative. We wish to pursue this point in respect of necessary consequences of the 'new' definition of philosophy for the crucial concept of problematic.⁴

Problematic versus 'Materialist Reading'

The theoretical problematic established by the adoption of the new definition of philosophy involves the replacement of the crucial concept of problematic by the concept of 'Materialist Reading'.⁵ The concept of problematic is first introduced as a crucial concept in the essay, On the Young Marx where the whole conventional definition of the 'Young' and the 'Old' Marx is brought into question. The adherents of either the 'Young' or the 'Old' Marx were taxed with three related errors in their theoretical practice. The first two concern us. 'The first presupposition is analytic: it holds that any theoretical system and any constituted thought is reducible to its elements: a precondition that enables one to think any element of this system on its own, and to compare it with another similar element from another system. The second presup-

position is teleological: it indicates a tribunal of history which judges the ideas submitted to it, or rather, which permits the dissolution of (different) systems into their elements, institutes these elements as elements in order to proceed to their measurement according to its own norms as if to their truth....' (For Marx pp. 56 - 7 emphasis in original).

Althusser maintains that the absence of the concept of problematic allows the illegitimate ideological assimilation of elements of a theoretical structure to another with no effective basis for such an assimilation. The elements are defined by the theoretical structure regarded as the 'true' system (in this case the 'true Marx'). Thus the presence of the 'element' within a distinct theoretical structure is dismissed as are the conditions of existence of posing theoretical problems. Similarly, the presence of an element within a theoretical structure is not defined by a construction of that problematic (a construction of the conditions of existence of the questions posed within a science or theoretical ideology) but by the presence of elements in the absence of the structure which conveys theoretical meaning on them. The relevance of these two errors applies not only to pre-Althusserian theory, notably to the so-called 'history of ideas', but also to the Althusserian theory of the new definition of philosophy. Althusser has now defined philosophy as a double intervention: a theoretical intervention within the realm of the political, a political intervention within the realm of the theoretical. This concept inaugurates a different

theory of reading: philosophy intervenes in a determinate conjuncture, it is an intervention in defence of the constituted sciences, defending them against the claims of any 'theory of knowledge'. The significance of the elements of any theoretical problematic 'encountered' in the intervention derives not from the structure of that problematic itself but on the contrary from the demands of the theoretical conjuncture. The inherent tendency involved in the new practice of philosophy is, therefore, by definition materialist: what is materialist and idealist can only be defined by the particular theoretical conjuncture (for materialism and idealism can only be defined in respect of the question of the defence of the science: if an element 'serves' the science then that element is defined as materialist).

However, this necessarily involves a quite distinct theory of reading from the theory of symptomatic reading. The latter relies on the concept of problematic and is based on the idea that the elements of a theory are defined by the problematic; in contrast, the theory of the new definition of philosophy involves defining the character of the element by the place it occupies in the conjuncture, i. e. by its function in that conjuncture. Thus, the theory of reading involved in this conception is the theory of materialist reading. Any text read from the materialist position involves identifying the way in which elements of a theoretical problematic function in materialist or idealist modes. The paradigm of this concept is Althusser's text Lenin before Hegel.⁷ Lenin's reading is not that of the construction of Hegel's problematic as an idealist problematic but rather the demonstration that

certain elements of Hegel's thought function in a materialist way. This involves on one hand the counterposition of Hegel and Kant; Hegel represents the possibility of scientific knowledge, Kant opens the door to a subjectivist scepticism based on the necessity of a speculative anthropology. On the other hand it involves the identification of the Absolute Idea as a 'process without a subject'. The fact that Lenin's reading precisely retains the characteristics of a speculative dialectic defined as a method external to, and predominant over any science may be discarded because one is not interested in Lenin's problematic but in Lenin's intervention. However, we may see strong affinities between this position and that criticised in the early Althusser. The method must inevitably lead to the opposition of the concept of problematic and the theory of symptomatic reading bound up with it, for the theory of materialist reading bases itself on the idea that the elements of the problematic are separable from the problematic and that their meaning is defined not by their presence within the problematic but by the intervention itself. Thus, the materialist reading repeats the analytic presupposition that the problematic may be broken into its elements. This pre-supposition as in the definition of the 'Young' and 'Old' Marx inevitably results in the necessary articulation with the second pre-supposition, the teleological. The teleological pre-supposition depends on the idea that the meaning of the element of a theoretical problematic may be defined by the theoretical problematic from which standpoint the materialist reading takes

place. The truth of the element can be nothing more than the truth imposed by the intervention. Any other meaning must be regarded as essential, but the alternative is to fall into teleology. The end (the intervention) will define the nature of the element, the validity of the element will be defined by its function, it is materialist if it 'serves the science'. If Althusser is to take a rigorous position then adherence to the theory of materialist reading and the double intervention involves an absolute rejection of his concept of problematic and an adherence to the necessity of the analytic and teleological pre-suppositions. This will necessarily involve defining the concept of problematic as 'idealist', ie, that to construct the problematic will be to stand above the need to define the elements in terms of a defence of the science. However, this involves the idea that the signification of the element is either empty or ever-changing within a materialist reading, that there can be no element within an 'original' problematic before a materialist reading, or if there is it is unknowable, that the materialist reading stands in the relation of the category to the element in the problematic as the thing-in-itself, and the element is only knowable through the materialist reading. There is no material existence to the element outside of its 'perception'. The 'materialist' reading necessarily reproduces the elements of an idealist philosophy in that the act of knowing defines the character of the known; the materiality of the known is either the construction of that which knows or is unknowable.

The Claims of the New Definition of Philosophy

The adherents of the new definition of philosophy claim that their own position solves many of the problems created by the 'old' definition of philosophy, notably the supposed 'positivism' and 'theoreticism' implied in the latter. However, any close reading of the presentation of the new definition leads to numerous problems as to (a) the status of philosophy and (b) the status of Althusser's new discourse in Lenin and Philosophy and through this the question of the status of Lenin's philosophy itself.

In Lenin and Philosophy we encounter a plurality of different definitions which each refer us to the other. At the beginning of his lecture Althusser stresses 'My talk will not . . . be philosophical' ⁶ but on the other hand 'nevertheless, for necessary reasons linked to the point we have reached in theoretical history, it will be a talk in philosophy.' ⁷ What are these theoretical reasons and what does 'in philosophy' mean? 'I hope, I can communicate to you something on philosophy, in short some rudimentary elements toward the idea of a theory of philosophy. Theory: something which in a certain way anticipates a science.' ⁸ Not philosophy, for certain unstated reasons in philosophy, but also on philosophy and, anticipating a theory of philosophy. The 'anticipation' of this theory is what Althusser and Lenin share: 'In fact, I believe that what we owe to Lenin, something which is perhaps not completely unprecedented, but certainly invaluable, is the beginnings

of the ability to talk a kind of discourse which anticipates what will one day perhaps be a non-philosophical theory of philosophy.' ⁹ But Lenin's practice is the 'new' practice of philosophy. So, Althusser's discourse which also 'anticipates' a non-philosophical theory of philosophy is non-philosophical, in philosophy, on philosophy, anticipates a theory of philosophy and is a new practice of philosophy. The new practice is thus a theory of philosophy from within philosophy not necessarily within philosophy, but within philosophy for reasons which are unstated.

It is notable that Althusser uses the blanket term 'philosophy' to signify three entirely different things: (a) philosophy as an idealist theoretical practice which denegates its role vis à vis science and politics (idealist philosophy); ¹⁰ (b) philosophy which recognises its conditions of existence (materialist philosophy); (c) philosophy which recognises its conditions of existence and states them and the practice of idealist philosophy i. e. presents a theory of the structure and function of idealist philosophy (Lenin's philosophy).

However, this is not simply a confusion in terminology. The 'new practice' of philosophy i. e. Lenin's practice is really within the problematic of philosophy. Althusser says as much himself: 'It is a fact itself worthy of a separate study that, even in the astonishing 'in lieu of an introduction' to Materialism and Empirio-Criticism which takes us back to Berkeley and Diderot, Lenin in

many respects situates himself in the theoretical space of eighteenth-century empiricism, i. e., in a philosophical problematic which is "officially" precritical. . . .¹¹ However, paradoxically Lenin situated within the empiricist problematic is a producer of non-empiricist 'résultats'. What are they?

1. the distinction of the scientific and philosophical conceptions of matter.

2. through this the distinction that philosophy and science are distinct practices.

However, the claim that these are anti-empiricist depends upon the thesis that philosophy is a discourse which always effects a reprise on the sciences by 'subordinating' them to 'knowledge', that is, to a relation between subject and object which constitutes the invariant terms of the philosophical problematic. Therefore, the distinction between philosophy and science is in no way by itself anti-empiricist: the anti-empiricist character of such a distinction is dependent on the mode in which it is thought, i. e. on the problematic from within which it is thought. To think otherwise is to present the distinction as a distinction with a signification in itself rather than with a signification demarcated by the concepts which produce the distinction. Therefore, we must reject Althusser's attempt to distinguish between the empiricist character of Lenin's problematic within philosophy and the anti-empiricist results of this problematic through the action of the new practice of philosophy. Lenin thinks the distinction between philosophy and science in empiricist terms, and the resultant

distinction within Lenin's philosophical problematic is also empiricist. Lenin thinks this distinction precisely within the subject-object problematic; the philosophical category of matter establishes that the subject always confronts an external object, an object independent of the mind. The scientific concept of matter refers to how matter is conceived in the science but again Lenin thinks this problem in an entirely empiricist fashion. The scientific concept of matter is thought in terms of the subject devising increasingly sophisticated theories of the physical world without fully achieving a total adequacy between theory and the world, i. e. within an asymptotic conception of knowledge. Science is thus a changing relation between subject and object; materialist philosophy expresses an unchanging relation between subject and object, i. e. that a material object always exists external to the human subject. The conception of subject and object as constitutive of a theory of knowledge are absolutely essential to Lenin's argument; Lenin's 'new' practice of philosophy is a materialist 'theory of knowledge', the new practice is a myth. Althusser equates the distinction between philosophy and science thought within his own problematic with that distinction as thought within Lenin's problematic. However, to effect this equation is precisely to regress to the level of the history of ideas, it is precisely to conflate word and concept, it is precisely to blur the distinction between an empiricist and an anti-empiricist problematic.

But there are more profound questions to be posed a

propos of the distinction between philosophical categories and scientific concepts of matter. This conception pre-supposes that the theory of theoretical practice is not a science. The implication for this distinction is firstly whether a scientific concept of matter exists within any science other than the theory of theoretical practice. It is clear that this problem raises difficulties analogous to those previously encountered in respect of the confusion of the knowledge effect and the knowledge of that effect. The concept of matter does not appear in any other science but the Theory of Theoretical Practice. The fact that the sciences study differential forms of organisation of matter does not mean that the concept of matter need appear in any of them. It will appear within the Theory of Theoretical Practice because the question of the materiality of different sciences must be confronted within that discipline. The knowledge effect of science is thus distinct from the knowledge of that effect, the concept of matter is crucial for the knowledge of the knowledge effect but this very statement involves the non-presence of the concept of matter in any science but that of the theory of theoretical practice. However, having stated this position it is equally necessary to insist that the concept of matter is in no way limited in the Theory of Theoretical Practice to the statement that matter exists external to and prior to the 'mind'. This must lead us to question Althusser's concept of the history of philosophy: Althusser conceives the Kampfplatz of philosophy to consist in the struggle between 'materialism' where the subject is always confronted with an external object which exists independent of him and 'idealism' which states

that external objects either do not exist or are not knowable. As we have already argued materialism and idealism remain on the same terrain because they both oppose an essential inside (a knowing entity) and an outside (the known object). This is precisely the mode of entry of (Berkelian) solipsism, i. e., that the outside is merely an element of the inside, but this in no way transforms the 'outsideness' of this element of the 'inside'. It is the weakness of this inside-outside relation which forms the basis for the 'materialist' attack on idealism, and it is precisely in these terms that Lenin criticises the empirio-critics, i. e. the existence of an outside is always equivalent to an external natural object. It is then no wonder that within this problematic of philosophy there can be no proof of the validity of materialism or idealism. The reason is simply that the distinction in these terms is totally meaningless. All philosophy is theoretically idealist. Philosophy by opposing the knowing subject to the known object interdicts the materialist scientific thesis that the inside (ideal) and the outside (real) are imaginary. There is nothing else but matter and the subject is an effect of particular modes of organisation of matter. The subject is thus an effect of the organisations of matter involved in the practices of the ideological and the psychic.

The Concept of Matter and the Metaphysical Reprise

The opposition between materialism and idealism as established by Althusser in the works of the new definition of philosophy involves a distinction between a practice of

philosophy still remaining ideological (materialist philosophy before Lenin) whose object was to erect a materialist 'theory of knowledge' i. e. a theory of knowledge establishing simultaneously the primacy of 'matter' over 'mind' and the existence of matter prior to and external to the 'mind'. Lenin's practice of philosophy retains these tenets of materialist philosophy according to Althusser but also includes an entirely new element, the concept of philosophy as a reprise on the sciences: Lenin thinks this problem through distinguishing between philosophy and science, notably as we have indicated above through the distinction between the scientific 'concept' of matter and the philosophical 'category' of matter. We have sought to demonstrate that the meaning of this distinction can only be determined by the examination of the means through which Lenin produces this theoretical result basing our argument on our prior defence of the concept of problematic against that of 'materialist reading'. It is precisely in this respect that Lenin's philosophical problematic remains identical to that of materialist philosophy in the sense of the 'materialist theory of knowledge'. The materialist theory of knowledge remains a metaphysics because it opposes a supra-sensible entity which is a source of knowledge (mind) to a sensible entity which is known (matter). This allows mind which is supra-sensible and thus undefined except in its knowing function to be a receptacle of the 'reflections' of matter. The reduction of mind to 'brain' does not change this relation fundamentally for while 'brain' becomes 'material' it is at the expense of a metaphysics of matter where the organisation of matter in respect of knowledge

is limited to an extension of matter in its biological organisation. Thus, the 'materialist theory of knowledge' is faced with the alternatives of relating a supra-sensible entity which constitutes the receptacle and centre of 'knowledge' to an 'external' object or else assuming an essence of matter allowing a mutual reflection between organic and inorganic matter. The limits of the materialist theory of knowledge are thus grounded in the variants of this essentialism; there is no possibility of a concept of essentialism; there is no possibility of a concept of knowledge as a process of production or of the specific forms of materiality which allows its production. It is for this reason that the 'materialist theory of knowledge' inevitably falls into speculative idealism. Thus, the re-construction of Lenin's philosophy by Althusser must reproduce the errors of the analytic and teleological presuppositions. The reading of Lenin's texts may only be sustained by the separation of the elements from their conditions of existence; the reading relies on the projection of the meaning of the distinction between philosophy and science in Althusser on to Lenin.

Philosophy as a Theory of the Imaginary Object

Althusser's rejection of the concept of a Theory of Theoretical Practice has been, as it has been pointed out above, instrumental in the retention of the term 'philosophy' for a plurality of distinct and variegated theoretical practices. The implication of this retention is precisely to abandon the theory of philosophy constructed from within the Theory of Theoretical Practice.

ice. The theory of philosophy constructed in particular in the first part of Reading Capital designates the object of philosophy as 'the theory of knowledge', a theory necessarily established on the basis of a variation in the invariant terms, subject and object. Philosophy thus seeks to establish on one hand the presence of a subject to an object through a theoretical mechanism. Clearly, there is no 'problem of knowledge' if knowledge is self-evident; on the contrary, the object of philosophy is the problematisation of 'knowledge'. However, while the actual character of knowledge is problematised the effect of philosophy is to reproduce the terms of subject and object in its problematisation. Of course, philosophy is in no way restricted to identifying the knowing subject with the empirical subject or the object with the perceived object, but philosophy remains within the trap of empiricism in 'reproducing' a presence of subject to object, a mythical immediacy of knowledge. In regarding the simple empiricist representation of knowledge, the knowing of an object, as if it were a 'reflection' in 'consciousness' philosophy nevertheless 'models' its theory of knowledge on that empirical presence. Philosophy's theory of knowledge is always ultimately reducible to a 'correspondence' of knowing subject to known object.

The correspondence is precisely what defines the imaginary object, for the first separation of the real object and thought object is denegated in the re-unification. The problem of correspondence becomes entirely imaginary when we situate the criteria of theory within the Theory of Theoretical Practice.

It is thus no surprise that Althusser has been read from the point of view of philosophy, that his concepts have been contorted in a reading which defines them in terms of the project of philosophy. André Glucksmann exemplifies this practice in his A Ventriloquist Structuralism.¹² Reading this text will allow the distance between the imaginary object and scientific epistemology to be measured.

A propos of the relation between the real object and the concrete in thought Glucksmann writes, 'How are we to understand that the structure of the real is to be the "absolute reference point" for theory without being its object of knowledge - except by presupposing some more secret correspondence between a theory and its object? This underlying correspondence everywhere present, is never theorized. It is mentioned once, vis a vis the modes of production: "we can set out the 'presuppositions' for the theoretical knowledge of them, which are quite simply the concepts of the conditions of their historical existence." The simplicity of this "quite simply" announces the transcendental correlation whose law was formulated by Kant: the conditions of the possibility of experience in general are at the same time the conditions of the possibility of the objects of experience. The kinship of thought and being is thus not conceived in the immediate relation of thought (theory) and its object, but more mysteriously, between the categories of thought and the elements of reality. This is precisely the minimum basis of any structuralism. While Kant explored his "at the same time", the critical

question par excellence, Althusser's 'quite simply' translates the transcendental zugleich only to obliterate the problem as soon as it appears.' 13

Althusser's pretensions are to be shattered, the dépassement of philosophy is to be another myth - like all 'ends of the world' it merely remains present in 'this world here'. This world is the world of philosophy. Althusser like all philosophers seeks the correspondence between the real object and the thought object. That the conditions of existence of 'modes of production' are the concepts which define their historical existence is thus made equivalent to the possibility of experience equaling the possibility of the objects of experience. But the concept of object betrays again its fatal ambiguity. The modes of production exist only within thought as does history; the historical existence of a mode of production is thus the definition of the variant of the invariant elements defined in the theory of Historical Materialism. The real 'modes of production' cannot be legislated in or out of existence by the theory of Historical Materialism because such real modes of production constitute an inexistent (imaginary) object. The equation is thus merely one which departs from a categorical imperative. The correspondence can only be necessary if it is assumed that theory may through its own fiat 'invent' the real objects which accord to its criteria of knowledge. Metaphysics must ultimately depart from the fact of knowing equalling the conditions of existence of the known. The comparison with Kant thus destroys the distinction between the real object and the thought

object. The concepts are the conditions of existence of the thought-object for Althusser; the conditions of experience are the conditions of the 'real' objects of experience for Kant, even if 'real' in the sense of an exteriority or 'something' experienced as an exteriority. The equation reveals the nature of Glucksmann's interiorisation within the problematic of philosophy and the necessary correlation of his projection of this problematic and its criteria on to Althusser. The split will be just a moment in the rapprochement for Glucksmann because the split can be no more than a particular ploy but for Althusser the split has no possible rapprochement because the rapprochement is defined through the concepts of the Theory of Theoretical Practice as an imaginary object.

The 'new' definition of philosophy through its representation of philosophy as a prise de position allows the theoretical definition of philosophy as an imaginary object to disappear through allowing the theory which can define this object and its imaginary character to disappear, that is, the Theory of Theoretical Practice.

Philosophy and Politics

The new definition of philosophy maintains that the concept of Theory of Theoretical Practice is theoreticist insofar as it denies the political component of philosophy. In opposition to the idea of the Theory of Theoretical Practice as a specific science the proponents of the new definition maintain that philosophy should be defined as

a 'double intervention', an intervention of 'politics' in the realm of theory on one hand and an intervention of theory in the realm of politics on the other. These terms, however, remain imprecise in their definition and the posing of questions on this definition also must involve an attempt at the construction of the definition itself.

The representation of politics in the realm of theory may be defined as meaning that the intervention takes place where the science is threatened by the reprise of philosophy. The intervention of materialist philosophy is to 'defend' the science against the reprise of idealist philosophy whose object is to construct the science in idealist terms, notably to assimilate the science to the 'theory of knowledge'. The intervention of materialist philosophy is only possible in terms of the new definition of philosophy and therefore the new practice of materialist philosophy for the specificity of the intervention can only be known within the new practice. Previous materialist philosophy is conceived of as forming a 'materialist theory of knowledge'. On the contrary the 'new' practice of philosophy establishes a distinction between scientific concepts and philosophical categories, its intervention is to demonstrate the illegitimacy of assimilating the former to the latter. This is a 'political' intervention because the science is conceived of as serving the proletariat and because the materialist philosophical position 'represents' proletarian ideology. However, the question of 'representation' is what is at issue. Even if we accept that the functions of such an intervention 'serve' proletarian

political interests this still does not solve the problem of what 'representation' means in the context. The problem of representation must be articulated through the question of the conditions of existence of the intervention itself.

How is the intervention possible, that is, how is the conjuncture in theory defined by the practice of the new definition of philosophy? This question is not answered. The intervention cannot be from the basis of a constituted theoretical structure or on the basis of a science, for philosophy is defined by the intervention itself. If we maintain otherwise then there must be a theoretical system prior to the intervention which governs it, but if this is to be the case the system or science will be defined as valid or otherwise irrespective of the intervention itself, precisely that position denied by the adherents of the new definition. In this case the theoretical system prior to the intervention will only be on one hand the adherence to a general materialist standpoint and also the adherence to the distinction between scientific concepts and philosophical categories. The intervention is said to have the object of 'defending' the science, but this implies a means of assessing the effect of the idealist philosophical intervention on the sciences. The intervention implies a selectivity and thus equally implies that a relative assessment is made of the relative importance of the various idealist reprises on the sciences. However, the question which the intervention must pose is whether the idealist reprise has an effect on the practice of the science or not. Furthermore, it is clear that the question de-

volves on the question as to whether the practice of the science has previously been attenuated or not. To think otherwise is to think that philosophy really can attenuate the practice of science itself. However, the possession of a materialist philosophical position and a concept of the practice of idealist philosophy or the concept of the distinction between philosophical categories and scientific concepts will obviously not allow such a judgement to be made for this pre-supposes a pre-existing effective practice of science. This may be clearly seen in Materialism and Empirio-Criticism. Lenin is supposed to demonstrate that the effect of the development of the natural sciences at the end of the Nineteenth century was to transform the scientific concept of matter rather than to amount to a 'disappearance of matter' but this pre-supposes that the transformation of the 'scientific concept of matter' is taking place, i.e. that the practice of science is continuing. Thus, the defence of the science is misplaced for the intervention based on the distinction between the philosophical 'category' and the scientific 'concept' of matter precisely pre-supposes that the practice of science is in no way threatened by the idealist practice of philosophy. If this is not to be the case the intervention must be on the basis of an assessment of the question as to whether the practice of science has been attenuated, yet if this is to be the situation then there must be a basis for reconstructing the epistemological break or the re-organisations of the problematic within the science and the distinction between this epistemological structure and that of the idealist reprise. However, the basis must then be a set of concepts which are valid irrespective of the in-

tervention. This is axiomatic for by definition the science whose practice has become attenuated can only be known through the theory which provides the criteria for a reading of the science. Thus, the theorists of the intervention as a representation of politics in the realm of theory are incapable of defining the basis of the intervention. Thus, the representation of politics in the realm of theory can be no more than the expression of a pre-determined 'political' position as a materialist position in theory but this intervention can in no way defend the science for it pre-supposes its effective functioning.

But the second representation presents equally difficult problems, the representation of theory in the realm of 'politics'. Clearly, this 'representation' can only be at the level of the theory of politics or of a political analysis combined with political practice. Thus, the representation of theory in politics will refer to the philosophical reflection on political analysis. A key example of such a representation is that provided by the struggle between Lenin and Kautsky over the theory of imperialism. In addition to the difference in analysis of the particular conjuncture (the possibility and necessity of imperialist war versus its impossibility) Lenin seeks to contrast the concreteness of his own analysis to the 'abstractness' of Kautsky's analysis. This comparison is one made very often in Lenin's theoretical writings on politics, sometimes the critique concerns the confusing of a level where abstraction is valid with one where a concrete analysis is necessary. However, the use of philosophical terms precisely constitutes a massive obstacle to the

reading of Lenin. His great advance in Marxist science, an advance equivalent to the re-organisation of the problematic of Historical Materialism, is the development of the theoretical analysis of the moments of a social formation in its concrete history. The problem posed to the Theory of Theoretical Practice by Lenin is that of how a concrete history may be constructed from the elements of Historical Materialist theory which is in no way an 'application' of the theory to the 'concrete'. Lenin's difficulty is that his massive theoretical advances remain enclosed within the great conjunctural analyses opaque epistemologically in the very brilliance of their scientific content. One of the components of this opaqueness is Lenin's reflection on his own theoretical achievements. This reflection is rooted in the opposition of 'abstract' theory and 'concrete' situation. The key error in political analysis is defined as the conflation of the former and the latter. This error is precisely idealist; the concrete analysis must be opposed to "The opposite mode of reasoning frequently met with among the Right-wing Social-Democrats headed by Plekhanov, i.e., the endeavour to look for the answer to concrete questions in the simple logical development of the general truth about the basic character of our revolution, is a vulgarisation of Marxism and downright mockery of dialectical materialism."¹⁴ The abstract is the idea, the concrete is the real, it is idealism to 'deduce' the concrete from the idea, that is how it is. But it is precisely in this reflection, this 'representation' that Lenin falls into idealism. The 'abstract' and the 'concrete' here are both within theory, the 'classes', the political representation of these classes are not 'given

in the real', it is not a question of looking, of being 'active enough to go beyond one's abstractions', on the contrary, the analysis of the concrete situation represents a development of scientific theory, a development constituted by Lenin himself and not present in Marx and Engels. But if we merely identify this representation we ignore the character of the different reflections on scientific analysis. Certainly, Lenin reflected on his political analysis but from the point of view of a Theory of Theoretical Practice, from the point of view of a scientific epistemology we want to question this reflection. The practice of Marxist-Leninist scientific theory has been attenuated, we must pose these questions to penetrate the epistemological opaqueness, to read these scientific texts scientifically. The break which has made this possible, which has revealed the physiognomy of the epistemological break in Historical Materialism is that made by Althusser notably in Reading Capital. To merely take Lenin's own reflections on his own practice at their face value is to reduce the scientific theory to the epistemological opaqueness, it is to put false limits on epistemological investigation. From the point of view of the new definition of philosophy these questions may not be posed because the limits of epistemological investigation are at the description of the intervention, the validity of the reflection remains again a thing-in-itself, an unknowable.

Notes

- 1 See Paul Hirst, Althusser and Philosophy Theoretical Practice 2 April 1971 and Dominique

Lecourt, Pour une Critique de L'Epistemologie (François Maspero 1972) to be published by NLB in 1973. Paul Hirst has asked us to point out that this article in no way represents his present position on the question of philosophy.

2 Hirst art. cit p.18.

3 Louis Althusser and Etienne Balibar Reading Capital (NLB 1970) pp. 55-6.

4 For this 'extreme' view stated from the position of a support of the new definition of philosophy see the article in Cinématique referred to in the editorial.

5 see Louis Althusser Lenin Before Hegel in his Lenin and Philosophy and Other Essays (NLB 1971) and more particularly Dominique Lecourt, Marx, Lenin, Hegel in this issue. This position is generally reflected in the book of Dominique Lecourt's cited above.

6 Lenin and Philosophy op cit. p. 32.

7 ibid. emphasis in original.

8 ibid. emphasis in original.

9 ibid.

10 Here we must signal an apparently puzzling change in Althusser's position manifested in his reply to John Lewis (part one). John Lewis is taxed with the error of putting philosophy somehow 'above politics'. 'It has to be said that this is precisely what the majority of so-called philosophy teachers do in our bourgeois society. The last thing they want to talk about is politics! they would rather talk about philosophy. Full stop.

That is just why Lenin quoting Dietzgen called them 'gratuated flunkies' of the bourgeois state. What a wretched sight they make! For all the great philosophers in history since the time of Plato even the great bourgeois philosophers - not only the materialists but even idealists like Hegel - have talked about politics. They more or less recognised that to do philosophy was to do politics in the field of theory. And they had the courage to their politics openly, to talk about politics.' Louis Althusser, Reply to John Lewis (Self Criticism) Marxism Today October 1972 (Volume 16 No. 10) p. 311 Our Emphasis. Here the denegation of the political role of philosophy from within philosophy is only a phenomenon of the banal philosophers, the great philosophers not only practice politics when they practice philosophy, not only recognise that they do so but openly state that they do. The concept of denegation seems to have disappeared. This may not be as surprising as it seems; we shall attempt to demonstrate its basis later in the text.

11 Lenin and Philosophy op cit p. 49.

12 New Left Review No. 72 March - April 1972 pp. 68 - 92.

13 Op cit. p. 74.

14 V. I. Lenin The Development of Capitalism in Russia, Collected Works Vol. 3 p. 32.

A Letter to Etienne Balibar on the Problematic of Historical Materialism

Letters on Historical Materialism

by ANTONY CUTLER

In working on a lengthy review article on Reading Capital I have encountered certain problems in your essay. These problems derive from the problematic nature of the consistency of your own analyses of certain problems with the general framework of Althusserian epistemology. If the remarks I propose to make have a notional coherence it derives from the general thread running through all the problems, the relation of your own analyses to the application of structural causality in respect of the particular problems.

In respect of this problem I think it is manifested primarily in the analysis of the concept of 'determination in the last instance' at the end of the section, 'from periodisation to the modes of production'. I should like to state my differences or confusions in relation to this section before dealing with other problems.

I am unclear from the text as to the precise object of this section but I think that a theoretical displacement has occurred. I take the object of the analysis of this concept to be that set out by Badiou in the article, Le (re) Commencement du Materialisme Dialectique.¹ That is, the problem is the reconciliation of the role of the economy as determinant in the last instance and the fact that in any social formation the economy exists as an instance among others. However, your problem is different. As I read your essay the problem you construct is that of the proof of the necessary misrecognition (méconnaissance) of the determinant instance, i. e. the impossibility of perceiving the determinant instance for the subjects/agents of any social formation.

Your approach to this problem is to depart from the social formation where the economy is both determinant in the last instance and also dominant i. e. the capitalist mode of production. Thus, the presumption of your analysis is that the proof of the necessary misrecognition of the determinant in the capitalist social formation is the establishment of the necessary misrecognition of the character of the dominant instance in that formation. Thus, if it is to be assumed that this process of proof applies not only to the capitalist social formation but to all social formations then one must always derive the misrecognition of the determinant instance from the misrecognition of the dominant instance and from the particular characteristics of this misrecognition. However, I cannot see that this form of proof is appropriate.

If we accept Badiou's formulation of the problem then the

misrecognition of the determinant instance is involved in the distinction between determinant and dominant. Thus, the economy as an instance is a representation of the economy as determinant in the last instance. This representation takes place through a 'space' which is purely within theoretical discourse for the posing of the economy as determinant in the last instance, this determinant being in necessary abstraction from the particular characteristics of the economy as an instance, can only take place within theoretical discourse. Thus, logically, whatever the character of the economy as an instance and whatever the subjects' relation to it, the character of the economy as determinant in the last instance would necessarily be misrecognised. Thus, I would maintain that the necessary misrecognition of the role of the economy as determinant in the last instance could be established independent of the particular characteristics of the economy as an instance.

You go on to say that the absence of fetishism as a form of misrecognition of the dominant instance does not involve (in pre-capitalist societies) the transparency of the social relations to the subjects of those relations in such formations. Here again the dominant instance is misrecognised. This misrecognition is still called fetishism. Here, the fetishism of the dominant instance in pre-capitalist society is used as a means of proof of the non-transparency of the social relations to the agents of pre-capitalist social formations. Fetishism is a necessary condition of this non-transparency in both pre-capitalist and capitalist societies so that, in general, fetishism is seen as a condition sine qua non of both the mystification of the determinant instance and of the necessary non-transparency of the social relat-

ions to the subjects involved. Thus, fetishism seems in this formulation equivalent to the structure of ideology as set out in Althusser's paper Ideology and Ideological State Apparatuses.² However, if this is to be so then fetishism is also equivalent to the structure of misrecognition in immediate recognition. But surely, fetishism is a particular form of this structure for it implies the immediate recognition of the commodity and of the relations between commodities as determinant of these very relations, that is, the necessary dissimulation of the social relations underlying these relations between things. Furthermore, if this precise use of fetishism as a particular form of ideology is not maintained it is hard to see how a fall into the idealist theory of reification can be avoided. If all ideology is fetishism then all misrecognition has the form of perceiving social relations as relations between things. If this argument is correct then in your analysis you have to a certain extent fallen into empiricism in conceiving a particular form of ideology as the general structure of ideology.

It seems to me that the use of this form of proof has led to another confusion. You say that the mystification always applies to the instance occupying the place of determinant in the last instance in any particular social formation. 'Indeed, it emerges that the "mystification" applies not to the economy (the mode of material production) as such, but precisely to that instance of the social structure which, according to the nature of the mode of production, is determined as occupying the place of determination, the

place of the last instance.'³ Here it seems to me that the dominant in any social formation has been conflated with determination in the last instance. In the passage, in effect, you clearly distinguish determinant ('that instance of the social structure which according to the nature of the mode of production...') and dominant, but then how can there be a determinant in the last instance for a particular social formation? Surely, you fall here into historical relativism for here we are faced with a determination in the last instance in general (the economy) and the determination in the last instance of a particular social formation. I cannot see how the two are compatible.

The danger of falling into a pluralistic position on historical causation is strengthened when the concept of more than one determinant in the last instance in one social formation is introduced: '.....it is possible to give this formulation a precise sense: that is to say, whenever the place of the determination is occupied by a single instance the relationship of the agents will reveal phenomena analogous to "fetishism".'⁴ Thus here you pose two possible determinants in one formation but I cannot see how two possible determinants are logically possible. Finally, you speak of phenomena 'analogous' to fetishism but previously you spoke of a 'displacement of fetishism'.⁵ So, in the former case fetishism was a pre-given structure and the effect produced was a fetishistic effect but now there is an analogous effect, but I cannot see what this analogous effect is.

To turn from this section the problem of the reflection of structural causality also seems to occur in your analysis

of the limitations of the concept of mode of production, in the section 'On Reproduction'. Here I agree completely that the concept of mode of production as a combination of specific elements does not give the possibility of the development of what you call a synchrony. Now, quite clearly insofar as the concept of mode of production functions under the form of a combination of elements the only way in which the reproduction problem can be 'solved' is through the postulation of a series of events. That is, we can derive surplus-value from the combination of elements but we cannot derive the necessary conditions of production, the necessary proportionate relations between capitalised surplus-value, the departments. However, as I see it, mode of production can be used in a different sense, i. e. in the sense in which you use it in the section 'From Periodisation to the Modes of Production'. That is, as the principle of the periodisation of history, and thus consequently as the principle of the mode of causality operative in Marxist discourse. That is, in this sense the concept of mode of production involves the absence of a constitutive subject and the correlative absence of linear and expressive causality. Thus, it seems that mode of production can be used in two different senses (a) as a principle of periodisation and thus as embodying the principles governing all discourse of the science of historical materialism and (b) in its particular role in the order of exposition of the fundamental concepts of historical materialism. I think in practice you distinguish these two meanings but it appears at the beginning of 'On Reproduction' that you do not. Thus, it appears as if the role of governmentation of discourse is conflated with a

place in the exposition of the discourse.

Finally, on the question of transition I would like to pose the following problem. The genesis of the different 'elements' of mode of production is independent of their final character as elements combined in a constituted mode of production. This genesis you call genealogy. The question of the mode of combination of these elements in the transitional mode must be posed in order that a scientific theory of transition may be generated. Clearly, in the absence of such a theory while the change from one constituted mode of production to another could not be treated by the arbitrary shuffling of elements within a combinatory, the combination of the pre-constituted elements could be treated in such a way, at least in principle. Now, I am very much aware of the fact that this section of your text is entitled 'Elements for a Theory of Transition' and that to take the absence of a scientific theory in it per se as a vitiating factor would be merely a philosophical reprise. However, I find it surprising that while you argue that a transitional mode of production is a mode of production you do not analyse the general characteristics of such modes of production, that is, that transitional modes of production effect a displacement of the dominant instance. Given this perhaps I could indicate a provisional approach to a theory of the combination of these elements in the transition from feudalism to capitalism which will of necessity have an 'elemental' form.

Given that the transitional mode of production is one in which there is a displacement of the dominant we may approach the transition from feudalism to capitalist in the fol-

lowing way. Firstly, while the particular combination of the elements of the labour process constituting a capitalist mode of production is possible in a pre-capitalist society, the character of the dominant mode of production, the absence of a generalised commodity economy, does not allow its expanded reproduction. Therefore, the dominant form of capital is that which works in the economic 'interstices' of the feudal mode, Merchant's capital. However, the displacement of the dominant means that the political level no longer interdicts entirely the development of a generalised commodity economy, for in the feudal formation it is essentially the character of the political level through its operations on the agrarian economy which defines the commodity sector as a limited one and thus as one necessarily independent of the generalised conditions of production. Given this we can assume the possibilities of the development of a capitalist labour-process for conjunctural reasons which cause the transformation of merchant's capital into industrial capital. Thus, the progressive displacement of the dominant (the replacement of the economic for the political as the dominant instance) increasingly provides the conditions for the expanded reproduction of the capitalist mode. The motor of this development as Lenin pointed out is the development of the means of production but here the inherent supremacy of the capitalist mode while in the long run determinant is not a sufficient cause of the process in the transitional period, the conditions of accumulation of capital must first be analysed. Here there is a particularly important point for the process of primitive accumulation is necessarily double-edged, that is, the development of the capitalist mode goes hand in hand with

an exceptional growth in absolute ground rent. The problem can be approached if the transitional mode is seen as acting on the elements of the prior mode and transforming their character. In this way, the character of various 'pre-capitalist' elements can be transformed. The following may serve as crude indices of this process: (a) the absence of the development of an average rate of profit allowing above 'average' accumulation, (b) the limited development of economic class struggle forcing the price of labour nearer the physical subsistence level, (c) the use of repressive state legislation to ensure the effective separation of the workers from the means of production, (d) the use of state intervention in the economy to ensure the export of commodities at a price exceeding their value.

~~Thus, the use of the concept of displacement of the dominant enables the transition process to be conceived in terms of the governance by the displacement of the dominant instance combined with the conjunctural determination of the formation of a specifically capitalist labour-process and the transformation of certain pre-capitalist 'elements' in accordance with the displacement process itself.~~ Furthermore, I think this enables us to treat the transition in a radically non-teleological way, for while the capitalist mode of production cannot by definition define the commodity sector and the capitalist mode as a limited sector, it is possible for a transitional mode to do this. Thus the different modality and temporalities of the displacement of the dominant necessarily condition the place of the capitalist mode of production in respect of other modes and thus the temporality of the progressive dominance of the capitalist mode itself. You will excuse the crude and factorial nature

of these indications but they too are elements, though, alas, in no way equivalent to your 'elements' it goes without saying.

In conclusion, may I say that any criticisms of your work or limited suggestions on its development have been made possible by the work of yourself, Althusser and your common associates. I hope to have made some limited contribution to this work in the communication, for it has been a revolutionary development for all of us in this country, not only in theory but in politics as well and you will know that this is determinant for us all.

Notes

- 1 In Critique Tome XXIII No. 240 May 1967 pp 438-467.
- 2 In Louis Althusser - Lenin and Philosophy and Other Essays (London, NLB 1971).
- 3 Louis Althusser and Etienne Balibar Reading Capital (London, NLB 1970) p 218
- 4 Ibid.
- 5 Ibid.

Self Criticism: An Answer to Questions from 'Theoretical Practice'

ETIENNE BALIBAR

Allow me to thank you for your letter and for the interest you have brought to my text of 1965. I am particularly grateful to you for having so vigorously emphasized a number of the weaknesses or contradictions that appear in it. It is the greatest service I could have wished for, and one that experience shows is not always easy to obtain. I shall try to answer you on the main points, not because I wish to 'defend' my text, which certainly is confused or wrong in several essential points, but because these very errors are highly instructive.

I. ON THE 'THEORY OF FETISHISM'

I broadly subscribe to your criticism of my formulations on 'fetishism' and 'determination in the last instance' by the economic (Chapter 1, Section 3 in my text in Reading Capital). It is indisputably a bad passage, although on one essential point I draw opposite conclusions from this to your own.

To get things clear, three aspects of the problem must be very carefully distinguished:

- what Marx thought about these two themes, which should be considered separately;
- what I was trying to do in the passage from Reading Capital;
- lastly what we should think about these themes, or the questions they suggest, in the current state of the problematic of historical materialism.

Just a few words on the question of fetishism.

In fact, in my text in Reading Capital, the question of fetishism has an accessory role: I simply wanted to use Marx's formulations as indices enabling me to ascend to the structural characteristics of 'determination in the last instance'. Thus I certainly did not think that the examination of the latter point had necessarily to proceed via a theory of fetishism. I made use of the fact that, precisely in the section of Capital on the 'fetishism of commodities', Marx proceeds to draw up a comparative table of the manifestation of social relations in different real or even merely possible modes of production. I did not intend to include the phenomenon of 'fetishism' in the very mechanism of 'determination in the last instance'.

On reflection, and here you are perfectly right not to be satisfied by such an empirical position, this proximity is, however, not completely the result of accident in Marx himself. Nor in consequence the considerable part played by the whole question of fetishism in the history of investigations into the dialectic after Marx. It is not by accident that it intervenes simultaneously with a characterization

of the capitalist mode of production as a historical structure compared with other possible ones in a kind of typology. And first of all because it is essential to the definition of the 'economic' in its relationship with the 'commodity-form' (the 'commodity categories'): i.e., insofar as the 'representation of the economic is essential to the economic itself', to its real functioning and hence to its conceptual definition.

The theory of 'fetishism' (and with it all the theory of Part 1 of Capital Volume One) thus really is the index of a fundamental problem, one which will only become clear when we go further into the historical study of the different aspects of the reproduction of capitalist relations of production (since the commodity-form is realised at the level of the circulation of the products of labour and of the functioning of the legal and ideological 'superstructures').

Only, as a theory (I insist on this specification), it is totally idealist. On this particular, but decisive point, the rupture with idealism has not taken place. In fact there has only been a change in the form of idealism, the discovery of a form which is, certainly, 'critical' and has played a necessary part in the process of constitution of historical materialism, but which remains ideological and thereby demonstrates to us the dialectical, i.e., contradictory, uneven and uninterrupted character of this process, as is the case for every scientific theory.

Why totally idealist? Because it prevents a materialist theory of ideology, it is an obstacle to it precisely where that theory is required: in the explanation of an ideological effect. As we are now beginning to realise, an ideological

effect (i.e., an affect of allusion/illusion, of recognition/misrecognition in social practice) can only be explained by a positive cause, the existence and functioning of ideological social relations historically constituted in the class struggle. Specific social relations really distinct from the relations of production although they are determined by the latter 'in the last instance'. Really distinct means realised, materialised in specific practices, depending on special ideological apparatuses, etc.¹ Of course, such a theoretical representation finds its verification in practice, the practice of the class struggle, in which the proletariat discovers the existence, the necessity of ideological social relations, the necessity and the means to transform them. Moreover, such a representation is already outlined in Marx, not so much in Capital, but as a function of certain conjunctures of the political struggle (cf. already the third section of the Communist Manifesto). But it does not begin to take a general form (and it cannot become a theory strictly speaking) until Mao Tse-tung or his period (on the practical basis of the 'cultural revolution').

The 'theory' of fetishism has a completely different character:

- on the one hand it makes the misrecognition/recognition a 'structural effect' (or 'formal effect') of the circulation of commodities, a (subjective) effect of the place occupied by individuals in the structure of exchange with respect to the commodity.
- on the other hand it makes the commodity itself, the 'object' of this misrecognition (in so far as the 'substance' of value is social labour) the source or subject of its own

misrecognition, which results from the 'auto-development' of its form. This is a direct consequence of the way, throughout Part One, Marx has 'logically' developed the abstract (universal) and simultaneously concrete (immediately present in 'no matter what' everyday exchange of 'no matter what' product of labour) form of the commodity, represented as a subject.

It is thus a genesis of the subject, comparable to others that can be found in classical philosophy, but with the following 'critical' variant: it is a genesis of the subject as an 'alienated' subject (a genesis or theory of cognition as misrecognition).

That is why, after having been stated by Marx in a Hegelian-Feuerbachian problematic, it has been possible for this theory to be adopted and developed enthusiastically in a structuralist or formalist problematic (as in Godelier, the editors of Cahiers pour l'Analyse, etc.). For 'structuralism' is the strict theoretical equivalent of this Hegel-Feuerbach combination, very precisely, as Althusser suggests, 'Hegel in Feuerbach', elaborated by Marx at the time of the constitution of historical materialism - 1844-6 - and which in this case he did not renounce. In this philosophical combination, 'Hegelianism' does mean process, but process of the manifestation of a subject, in this case an alienated subject - in Feuerbach's sense - in which the 'real' relation between essence and attribute is 'inverted'. That is why ultimately structuralism equals humanism: for the question of the (structural) place is equivalent to the question of the (human) subject, if the fact of occupying a place in the system of social relations in-

stitutes in addition a point of view, a representation, a consciousness of this system, and explains it of itself alone.

In consequence, not only does the theory of the fetishism of commodities prevent the scientific explanation of the special ideological effects implied by commodity circulation, it also prevents our thinking their revolutionary transformation: it makes it seem that the 'transparency' of social relations is an automatic effect (even if not immediately, which is anyway not very easy to explain) of the suppression of 'commodity categories', i. e., of the commodity. It is a theory of ideology in general, of the historically transitory role of ideology in general: if it is to be believed, one fine day not only will there no longer be class ideologies, but, as there will no longer be any commodities, there will no longer be any ideology at all. Alienation, then suppression of alienation.

I do not think that fundamentally one leaves this ideological circle by replacing the structure of the 'commodity form' with the more general structure of systematically varied modes of production, i. e., the 'place' in commodity circulation by the place in the structure of the 'whole' and with respect to that whole, and by thus introducing the possibility of allowing the point of application of 'fetishism' to vary. For what then remains unintelligible (and fundamentally useless) is a social practice of the material transformation of ideological relations (as a specific revolutionary practice), and hence the distinct reality of these relations. If the effect of illusion is the effect for the individual of the place in the 'whole' that constitutes him as a subject, then the lifting of the illusion is still no more

than a subjective, individual matter, however much it is socially conditioned by the structure of the whole, and however much it is repeated 'millions of times over' for millions of individuals occupying similar places: it is only the effect of a different place or of a coming to consciousness in one place.

In other words, the theory of fetishism can never truly think that 'subject' is an ideological notion (elaborated first of all within juridical ideology). On the contrary, it seems to make the notion of 'subject' the 'scientific' concept of ideology. Assuming that these schematic suggestions are correct, it is on this point, too, that Althusser's text cited above should be examined, for in it the problem is not perhaps solved in an absolutely clear fashion.

II. DETERMINATION IN THE LAST INSTANCE

I now return to the question of 'determination in the last instance' and to your question. About my text in Reading Capital, the following can be schematically said: the direct object of the section in question was not fetishism, but it was 'determination'. And the leading idea was to take up and generalize an argument already expounded by Althusser in his article 'Contradiction and Overdetermination' (in For Marx) on the subject of the historical conjuncture. This article is the source of my terminology: determination, domination, displacement of domination. In this reference there is something correct that we should try to retain: this is the fact that Althusser's text, however provisional the character of some of its formulations, does show the following: the 'dialectic' of history is not the pseudo-dialectic of development (linear, despite all the 'negations'

you like, and teleological, i. e., pre-determined, despite all the 'materialist inversions' you like), it is the real dialectic of the 'class struggle', the material forms of which are irreducible to the form of linear development, progress and teleology. It is thus the dialectic of the different aspects of the class struggle, really distinct from one another in their unity, as the practice of the workers' movement teaches (and not apparently distinct, like an 'essence' and its 'phenomenon' or 'phenomena'). The economic aspect (the 'economic' class struggle) is only one of these aspects, unevenly developed, unevenly decisive according to historical conjunctures, and never capable of producing revolutionary effects by itself. Which by no means rules out, but on the contrary demands, that in all historical periods, whatever the dominant mode of production and whatever the conjuncture, the ensemble of the class struggle is still determined by its 'economic' material conditions. For social classes themselves, or rather the class struggle in and by which alone classes exist, have no historical reality except as presuppositions and results of the process of material production and reproduction of the material conditions of production. Thus to define and study, for each historical period, the specific way in which each really distinct aspect of the class struggle ('economic', 'political' and 'ideological') depends on its material conditions, is precisely the object of historical materialism.

I insist on the role of this text of Althusser's (and of the next 'On the Materialist Dialectic' which complements it), for, reading it closely, one can derive from it an essential (perfectly correct) thesis: the only real his-

torical dialectic is the process of transformation of each concrete 'social formation' (implying the real interdependence of the different social formations); in other words, the 'social formations' are not the 'concrete' site (or environment) in which a general, abstract dialectic is 'realised' (for example the transition from capitalism in general to socialism in general, or from one stage to another in general in the 'development' of capitalism), in reality they are the only object that is transformed, because they are the only one that really contains a history of class struggles. This point is decisive. I add that it is by no means an accident that Althusser was able to advance in this direction on the basis of an analysis of the texts and practice of Lenin, for not only is Lenin clearer on this point than Marx, he even makes a true and as time passed more and more conscious rectification of certain of Marx's formulations. It is on this basis that we in our turn must take up, develop and possibly rectify the whole ensemble of the theory of historical materialism. I shall return to this.

To get back to my text, it is clear that in my attempt to 'generalize' Althusser's idea, I incautiously changed its point of application: what he had used to deal with the historical 'conjunction', I applied to the comparison of modes of production; I made the variation or displacement of the 'dominant' the principle of a comparative analysis (even a theory) of the forms (even the types) of modes of production. This displacement has serious consequences: not only does it introduce an ambiguity which is from then on found in every use of the 'topographical' concepts introduced by Althusser (the topo-

graphy of the instances of the 'complex' social 'whole'), but also it transforms anew the object whose dialectic this topography should make it possible to analyse. Instead of social formations, it is now (and anew) a question only of modes of production, i.e., of a still 'abstract' generality, of which, in practice, the social formations will appear only as particular and concrete 'realizations'.

Is there a 'General Theory of Modes of Production'?

First of all, indeed, the idea emerges that the theory of modes of production itself derives from a general theory of modes of production, which can only be a theory of the mode of production in general and of its possible 'variations': in short, a theory of typologicistic or structuralist inspiration, however consistent.

Naturally, this idea of 'theory' (this temptation of theory) must be taken in its strongest sense: i.e., in the sense of a theory providing real explanations of real history (so as not to revert to a positivist position). It must be understood that in such a perspective, the variation (the varied combination) of the play of the 'elements' is capable by itself of explaining historical effects. Such is undoubtedly one of the main ambiguities of the highly unsatisfactory expression 'structural causality'. The article by Badiou to which you refer ('Le (Re)commencement du Matérialisme Dialectique,' Critique, May 1967) avoids a whole series of intellectual confusions or slides

because it takes this tendency consistently as far as it will go, quite rightly thinking that a formalist theory of this type should be capable of formalization. At least this extreme attempt has the advantage of showing how one might (and how one obviously should not) transform historical materialism into a totally idealist 'theory of historical sets'.² But the same thing is just as present, though less apparent, in others (not to speak of myself) who discuss 'concrete' historical examples, for example Poulantzas. Each time the principle is the same: to endow the 'topographic' characterizations of the social formation with a real historical effectivity; for example, to explain the functioning of the capitalist State and its role in the reproduction of the relations of production by its 'relative autonomy' as an instance. Or else to explain the transformation of the social formation insofar as it is a 'transition from one mode of production to another' by the very 'displacement' or variation in the relationship of the instances which serves to compare them (to define them differentially). Or even, if this were not enough, to repeat this operation with elements 'of a higher order' - the modes of production themselves - merely by thinking the social formations as 'complex wholes in dominance' of several modes of production. In short, the idea of structural difference, suitably elaborated, is supposed to function ipso facto as the origin of the historical differentiation: a formula which, I think, shows well enough the idealism of the 'theory' in question.

You are quite right to emphasize and criticize the appearance in this chapter of the idea of analogy. This

idea is confused from the standpoint of historical materialism (in which it is useless: historical materialism cannot but encounter relatively persistent social forms - e.g., 'Roman' law, money, certain aspects of the State apparatus, etc. - despite the transformation of the dominant mode of production, and it will then try to explain such a persistence by the very characteristics of the unique historical process in which the mode of production has changed). From a typological or structuralist viewpoint, on the contrary, it is perfectly logical, or at least can hope to obtain a precise formulation. In this vein, the idea of analogy appears in my text not only vis-à-vis the place and nature of 'fetishism' but also vis-à-vis the structure of the modes of production as a whole (cf. the rather risky comparison between the forms of the appropriation of the surplus product in the capitalist mode of production and in the so-called 'Asiatic' mode of production, the craze of French Marxism at the time).

Do not Confuse the Real Object and the Formal Concepts of its Analysis

But there is something more basic and serious: from such a viewpoint, the very denomination of the 'instances' in the social formation cannot but tend to designate anew essentially invariant elements of historical analysis, contradicting what was postulated at the beginning of that part of my text. In clear language, this means that there is an essence of 'economic' phenomena and also essences

of 'political' and 'ideological' phenomena, pre-existing the process of their historical transformation (and thus of their historical definition). In other words, pre-existing the process of the determination by the action of the class struggle, itself having a determinate overall historical structure. That means that at a sufficient level of generality, but one capable nonetheless of explaining a historical causality, and definite effects, 'economic' has the same meaning in the feudal mode of production and in the capitalist mode of production, and in fact in any mode of production. In short, it is a return to the ideological presuppositions of bourgeois political economy and historiography, in the very sense that Marx called it 'metaphysical'. There is no doubt that this temptation was induced in our work by our concern to avoid any 'historicist' interpretation of Marx's criticism, and in consequence, in Lenin's words, to 'bend the stick in the other direction'. But the stick cannot be bent indiscriminately, or, if you like, the space in which it is bent is not a mere plane. Of course, this relapse is no accident, and I think that I am able to state that, in this and other analogous forms, it is the index of a real difficulty. I shall return to it.

Finally, the result of all this is that the section in question here partly contradicts the theses of the two preceding divisions ('Mode of Production: Manner of Producing' and 'The Elements of the System of Forms') and of the following Chapter Two ('The Elements of the Structure and their History'). Or at any rate, it helps to orient their interpretation in a direction which is not the only possible one, and precisely not the right one. As I

recalled a moment ago, my own text suggests that the 'general' concepts it is dealing with are not 'the atoms of a history', the given elements out of which varying combinations are to be constructed, but only the 'pertinent' categories of the differential analysis of social forms. These concepts only indicate and in some sense formally orient the general problematic (I say problematic and not theory) of 'historical materialism' at work in certain definite theoretical analyses of Marx's. They cannot anticipate their content. Logically this means that at most I can suggest the following: when the (social) form of the combination that characterizes the mode of production in the strict sense (a combination of determinate 'relations of production' and 'productive forces') changes, then the conditions in which an 'economic', 'political' or 'ideological' instance intervenes historically, i.e., the conditions in which effects, themselves combined, of specifically 'economic', 'political' and 'ideological' class struggles are constituted and occur, necessarily change too in a determinate manner. That is why, in opposition to all economism, the concept of mode of production in Marx, even at an abstract level, really designates a complex unity of determinations that derive from the base and from the superstructure. But we can in no way deduce the mode of this constitution, the process of functioning and the historical tendencies of the social relations considered, nor the laws of the combination of the different aspects of the class struggle, from the mere presentation of this combination in its formal characteristics, i.e., on the basis of a comparison between the different possible forms. That is why it is

impossible to invent 'possible' historical modes of production.

To the question, what is responsible for a theoretical slide on this point (which I made myself), it can be answered that it is notably the double sense in which the term 'combination' (Verbindung) is taken here, on two quite different levels.

In a first sense, it has to be said that the object of historical materialism when it is analysing a determinate mode of production is first to define and explain a particular combination (better: process of combination) of the social 'factors' of production, which can be described as a 'combination of the relations of production and the productive forces' so long as it is pointed out - better than I did at this time - that this combination is always made, on a given basis, in the (social) form and under the influence of the relations of production themselves. In other words, that the 'productive forces', although they have to be distinguished from the relations of production to which they cannot be reduced, do not however exist as such (as a system of the material transformation and appropriation of nature) except under the influence of their own combination with (in) determinate relations of production.³ Such, abstractly and briefly, is the object of Capital, notably in Volume One.

But alongside this first sense there is a second, quite different one: this is the idea that the theory of historical materialism proceeds, in different circumstances, as much vis-à-vis the mode of production itself, as, later, vis-à-vis concrete social formations, via a combination

of distinct aspects ('a synthesis of many determinations' said Marx). Strictly speaking, this last formulation, if it is correct, can only be provisional, precisely because this formal characteristic of the theory is not independent of the characteristics of the material object of which it gives us the knowledge. At any rate the two senses cannot be confused without playing on words, or rather without surreptitiously moving from historical materialism to a kind of 'meta-history'. Here too what has to be respected is the rigorous distinction between the real object and the concept, or object of knowledge, so as to stay on the razor's edge, without veering off 'to the left' into empiricism or 'to the right' into formalism.

III. IDEOLOGICAL PROBLEMATIC OR SCIENTIFIC PROBLEMATIC OF 'PERIODIZATION'

But by saying this I am touching on something much more profound that is capable of clarifying us as to the root, in the history of Marxism, of the preceding confusions and difficulties. You are quite right to stress that the concept of 'mode of production' was used in two practically distinct senses, as a historical 'unit of periodization' and as a 'particular combination of elements', two senses which seem to be confused later. One might say squarely: the only object of part of the text was precisely to identify the two senses, deliberately.

This position should be modified. But, to my mind, not at all for the reason you suggest: not because there is

any question of a fallacy, of a confusion between two levels of the discourse. If this confusion exists, it is only an effect. Besides, the movement of the argument was in fact as follows: to show how the construction of the concept of 'mode of production' by Marx in fact transforms radically the not specifically Marxist problematic of historical 'periodization'. Marx thus transforms a formal ideological a priori into a scientific problem whose solution is precisely the knowledge of tendencies implied in definite systems of social relations, and of equally definite processes of transition or transformation of the social relations. There are therefore two notions of 'periodization' or rather two uses of the notion of 'periodization', one ideological and the other Marxist and scientific. But that is not the fundamental mistake, which lies in the very way 'mode of production' is considered as a 'basic concept' of historical materialism.

Matters are especially delicate here: great care must be taken not to fall back behind what was correct. And above all care must be taken not to fall back behind what is indeed in Marx a theoretical revolution on which depends the whole construction of historical materialism: the definition, vis-à-vis capitalism, of the concept of mode of production (material mode of production in the necessary form of exploitation) and of its historical tendencies.

Schematically, let me put it as follows: taken as a whole, my text contains a curious paradox. Leaving on one side the section devoted to the critical examination of the notion of 'productive forces', the main objective, which

only appears in the fourth chapter, can be said to be to show that 'transition' (speaking plainly, social revolution) cannot be explained in an evolutionist way, even by translating an evolution into the language of the 'negation of the negation', 'qualitative change', etc. It is easy to understand what practical, political reasons (reasons that are more actual than ever) drove us to work in this direction and to demonstrate that transition is not, is never, for reasons of principle, mere supersession, an 'internal' results of 'tendencies' observable in the mode of production itself and responsible for the development of its characteristic relations of production, even if this development is simultaneously a development of contradictions.⁴ Hence, from the theoretical point of view, it was essential to demonstrate that transition requires the analysis of other material conditions and other social forms than those implied in the concept of mode of production alone (in this case: of the capitalist mode of production alone). Or else the analysis of the material results and social forms (re)produced by the development of the capitalist mode of production in another respect than the capitalist relation of production alone.

But paradoxically, this 'demonstration' consisted essentially of accepting for the mode of production itself, and at the same stroke, to coin a phrase, for periods of 'non-transition', a purely 'internal', linear and hence predetermined development or dynamic. In other words, if it was essential to recognize in 'transition' the characteristics of a 'history' in the strongest sense (unforeseeable in the reality of its concrete forms), this was in the event because 'non-transition', for its

part, was not to be a history (in the strongest sense).

Let me say that this conception inevitably remained captive to the very ideology that underlies the ordinary practice of 'periodization' which, according to my initial project, was what was to be superseded. Indeed, it comes down to identifying the notions of history and 'transition'; simply, instead of saying: everything is always transition or in transition since everything is historical (ordinary historicism), I said more or less: there is only real history if there is (revolutionary) transition, and every period is not a period of transition. Which, let it be said in passing, is a fine example of the setting to work of the empiricist-linear representation of time as an a priori form presupposed by periodization.

The Persistent Ambiguity of the Concept of 'Reproduction'

But above all this means that, despite certain epistemological subtleties, I did not succeed in escaping from a basic ambiguity in the notion of the 'reproduction' of social relations (of course, I was neither the first or the last in this). I still thought within this concept both the social form of the (re)production of the conditions of production modified and partly destroyed by production itself, and on the other hand the identity with themselves, the persistence of the given relations of production. To sum up, I said: since, in Marx's analysis, the tendency towards the accumulation of capital (and all the secondary tendencies resulting from it, including the tendency for the rate of profit to fall) is identical with the process of the reproduction of the relations of production itself, this means that, on the one hand, this tendency exists

of itself so long as the capitalist relations of production 'remain unchanged', and, on the other, that this tendency cannot of itself exceed, 'explode' the very limits of its existence.

Behind this 'argument' there is an old philosophical representation, and it is no accident that throughout this work I was guided approximately by certain reminiscences of Spinozist formulae.⁵ There is the idea that identity with itself, persistence (including in the form of the persistence of relations implied in a cyclical process) needs no explanation since it explains itself by itself, needs no cause (or production) since it is its own cause. Only 'change', as 'real' change, i.e., abolition-transformation of the essence, could need a cause and an explanation. Let me say that this is a survival of the philosophy of the 'principle of inertia', of substance and the ontological argument. . . . But what also explains my 'relapse' is the power of an old economic idea, an old idea of the economists, which enabled them to define their object as a set of natural laws, against narrowly 'political' and institutional representations, and which is preserved even in the 'Marxist' thesis of the so-called autonomy of the 'economic' process (with respect to the 'rest' of the social practices, institutions, etc.).⁶ I mean the old idea that the economic process can be assimilated to an automatic, 'self-regulating' mechanism, assuming, of course, that it remains within the 'natural' limits of its functioning. An idea that the economists have attempted to verify, with temporary successes, at the level of the market, of price equilibrium, etc. But it must also be said: an 'economistic' idea which Marx

seems never quite to have escaped, even when he shifted his object from the 'superficial' sphere of the market to the sphere of the production and reproduction of the conditions of production 'as a whole'. In Capital this is revealed by the fact that the 'economic' theory of Volume Two, which is the site at which the scientific concept of the reproduction of social relations emerges from the 'critique of political economy', can and must nevertheless, if it is isolated, inevitably appear incorrectly as a complete theory of the reproduction of the conditions of production 'as a whole'. And as the theory of Volume Two does nothing but show how the different immediate production processes 'intertwine' at the social level and through the intermediary of the commodity circulation of their products, this means that the process of production does not reproduce only a part (means of production, means of consumption) of the conditions of production (which is indeed one of Marx's fundamental discoveries), but also reproduces the totality of them, or reproduces them all 'in potentia'. Which is manifestly false, if only because the reproduction of the means of consumption is not yet, of itself alone, the reproduction of labour power (the process of which obligatorily includes the practices of the superstructure), but only its pre-conditional basis.⁷ In other words, this means that the form of the immediate process of production is thus not only held to be what materially determines the ensemble of the process of reproduction of the social relations, but also what constitutes it completely, by the mediation of the market (a point with far-reaching consequences which unfortunately I cannot develop here), and in con-

sequence that all the other (non 'economic') social processes can only be expressions or inessential phenomena of that form.

Let it be said in passing that a close examination of the texts shows convincingly that this residual 'economism' of certain isolated formulations of Marx's is directly linked to the idea he had of the object of Capital, which gave us so many problems from the beginning because of its plainly empiricist-formalist character: the idea that Capital studies 'the capitalist system in its ideal average', i.e., ultimately, the model of the capitalist system. An idea that must be totally abandoned in order to think the object of historical materialism as the process of transformation of concrete social formations, which are unique as such and in consequence absolutely incapable of appearing as the variants of a single 'model', even if, what is very different, the history of social formations in the modern period is basically the history of the development and of the effects of their transformation by a single dominant mode of production, first constituted 'locally' but necessarily extending itself globally.

There is no 'General Theory' of Historical Transition

I return to my text in Reading Capital. In it it is visible that the paradoxical attempt I have been discussing, and for which, I repeat, Marx (or at least the isolated reading of certain of Marx's texts) is partly responsible, had one rather 'logical' effect, come to think of it, where the 'theory of transition' is concerned.

After having posed the problem in this way, I had to ask

myself whether Marx himself had, in Capital, broached the problems of 'transition', given that it was insufficient for its analysis to 'extend' the tendency defined in the body of the work. What presented itself naturally enough was the set of texts on primitive accumulation, the genesis of ground rent, the origins of merchants' capital, etc. I have no reason to modify the essential orientation of this analysis. It is fundamental to compare these different texts and to draw conclusions from their comparison. One specification only, since you raise it, concerning the expression 'genealogy': obviously I did not mean that the transition process was itself a 'genesis' or 'genealogy' (which anyway would not be very meaningful), but that Marx had had, and could not but have had to treat this problem in the (provisional) theoretical form of a genealogy, i.e., of a series of retrospective historical 'soundings' starting from the elements of the capitalist mode of production taken one by one. Which led me to state simultaneously:

- that it is precisely this theoretical form that enabled him to discover and expound to us the relative independence and real distinctness of the historical processes in which the elements of the capitalist structure (labour power as a commodity on the one hand and money-capital on the other in the hands of a mercantile bourgeoisie) are constituted. Hence the fact that the constitution of capitalist relations of production is not pre-determined, i.e., that the constitution process is not teleological.

prevented Marx from treating the transition from capitalism to socialism in the same mode. It is precisely this form that thus led him (in Capital, let me make it clear) to treat the transition from feudalism to capitalism in a 'historical' mode, though incompletely, and the transition from capitalism to communism in a 'logical' mode, i.e., not to treat it at all. And this even though the necessary historical connection between the development of capitalism and the proletarian revolution is from beginning to end the very object of Marxist theory.

What, for my part, did I do to remedy this state of affairs? I postulated that these two problems were, ought to be, formally the same in nature. And as the 'genealogy' can only be a provisional theoretical form I sought to conceptualize what it involved. Now to explain the necessity and the causality of a historical process the only concept I had at my disposal was that of 'mode of production'. I therefore suggested that the analysis of transition consists of the definition of a new mode of production, different from the capitalist mode of production itself, although 'complex', or 'contradictory', and therefore 'unstable' (characterized by a fundamental 'non-correspondence'). But by this fact not only did I cancel out part of my own earlier presuppositions, since, logically, a new 'mode of production' cannot be anything but a new tendential process of reproduction, like the capitalist mode of production itself. But above all, (1) I introduced the germ of an insoluble problem: what is the specificity of the relations of production defining such a 'mode of production'? - a problem that is unavoidable once one has recognised the primacy of the relations of

production over the productive forces in their 'combination'; (2) I introduced an indefinitely renewable aporia concerning the formation of this new mode of production, or, if you like, the 'transition' to this 'transitional mode of production'; (3) I introduced the possibility of a 'general theory of transition' or 'transitions', itself conceived as an aspect of a 'general theory of the combination - or articulation - of modes of production'. Such a theory is in fact the substitute for a real elaboration of the dialectic of the history of social formations in the sense in which Althusser had outlined it in his text 'Contradiction and Overdetermination'. But this could not be clearly perceived so long as we did not think distinctly the two concepts of 'social formation' and 'mode of production', and the nature of their relationship (which is still far from having been perfectly worked out). That is why it is particularly interesting that some of us initially attempted, following the line of Reading Capital, definitions of the social formation as a 'combination of several modes of production', or as an 'articulation of modes of production', i.e., as a 'complex' mode of production, or else as a 'higher ranking' mode of production in a kind of scale of types.⁸

I cannot here go into great length on the difficulties of such a theory, of which the idea of a 'general theory of transition' is a particular application. Let me say that such a theory is substantially equivalent, though more complicated in detail, to the formulations of the Preface to A Contribution to the Critique of Political Economy (1859) (which are themselves a reprise of themes from The German Ideology), which have been a very heavy

burden in the history of Marxism in that they suggest, though by different means, the existence of a universal mechanism of the transformation of social formations, deducible from the structural schema of 'the' social formation in general (cf. the famous 'narrowness' of the envelope of relations of production with respect to the development of the productive forces). This comparison simultaneously illuminates a basic epistemological fact, the necessary solidarity and even interdependence of evolutionist representations and relativist representations (typological or structuralist representations) of history, which seem to be opposed but are both non-dialectical. These two representations both arise from the fact of posing separately (1) the analysis of the historically relative character of a mode of production (the capitalist mode of production is not a mode of production of wealth 'in itself', but only, 'neither more nor less' than feudalism or slavery, a mode of appropriation of the unpaid labour of others which is only distinguished by a 'different way' of extorting it), and (2) the analysis of the role of the class struggle in history (arising on the basis of very ancient material conditions - the 'scarcity' of products, the 'non-development' of the productive forces - and destined to be abolished on the basis of new conditions: the 'impetuous development' of the productive forces, 'abundance'). Once these two problems are separated, it is no longer possible to pose in scientific terms the question of why no new form of relations of exploitation is possible beyond capitalist relations of production: the social revolution that destroys capitalist relations of production appears merely as a particular

case of the general mechanism of contradiction/readjustment between the relations of production and the productive forces, and its specific result, the abolition of all the forms of class rule, remains inexplicable. It is then possible to leave the field, together or separately, to relativism in the definition of the relations of production and to evolutionism in the analysis of the development of the productive forces.⁹

To go right to the point, let me say that one of the basic theses of historical materialism seems to me to be the following: there is a general problematic (to borrow an expression of Duroux's) of 'transition' in social formations, i.e., of 'revolution in the relations of production'. This pertains to the fact that the concept of 'class societies', resting on modes of production which are at the same time modes of exploitation, cannot be constituted without reference to the historical transformation of modes of exploitation (in other words, there is no such thing as exploitation in general, only determinate forms of exploitation). But for all that there is no such thing as a general theory of transition, in the strong sense of an explanation of the causality of a process. On the contrary, it emerges that each historical 'transition' is different, materially, and therefore conceptually. This point is of fundamental political importance if it is true that Marxist theoreticians, starting with Engels himself, have occasionally tended to consider the 'transition' from feudalism to capitalism and the 'transition' from capitalism to socialism as analogous processes, e.g., by representing the modern proletariat as the 'representative' of the movement of the productive forces in the same way

as the bourgeoisie 'represented' that movement within feudal society, or by explaining that at a certain period the bourgeoisie becomes a 'superfluous' class because it is a class 'outside production', in the same way as the feudal aristocracy had become a 'superfluous' class of rentiers, etc.¹⁰ It is essential to pose the general thesis that historical materialism is not only a theory of the necessity of the (revolutionary) transformation of the social relations, but also a theory of the transformation of the mode of transformation of social relations. Such that two 'revolutions' never have the same concept.

In order to Analyse the Real History of the Capitalist Mode of Production, all Evolutionism must be Removed from the Concept of 'Tendency'

Finally it turns out that this thesis is closely linked to a rectification of what I have thought elsewhere as the development or evolution of a mode of production (in particular capitalism). In order to explain this, it is enough to say the following: that it is impossible to account for the specificity of each revolutionary 'transition' unless it is related not only to the specific general form of the preceding social relations (e.g., the form capital/wage-labour, and the type of combination of the relations of production and the productive forces it implies), but also to the specific history of the preceding mode of production i.e., to the history of the social formations that depend on the development of that mode of production.

In fact, the first person to realise all the theoretical importance of this fact, as a result of the constraint of circumstances, was not Marx, but Lenin, and this discovery implies ultimately a rectification of certain of Marx's formulations. It was Lenin, insofar as he demonstrated that the process of 'socialist' revolutionary 'transition' was not linked to the existence of capitalist relations of production in general, but to the existence of a determinate stage in the history of capitalism: imperialism, i.e., of determinate 'transformed forms' of capitalist relations of production (and not only, of course, of productive forces inside the 'framework' of unchanged relations of production). Such that the problem of an analysis of the socialist (proletarian) revolution and of what 'socialism' itself is as a historical epoch becomes inseparable from the problem of the analysis of imperialism, and hence of the determinate historical phases (or periods) of the history of capitalism. It has to be stated that one of the orientations of my text in Reading Capital led precisely to making these phases, i.e., these historical transformations, strictly unthinkable, except in the economic-evolutionistic sense of developmental phases, linear stages in the realisation of a tendency unchanged in itself.

Still very schematically, it is clear therefore that the examination of the problem of the socialist transition presupposes among other things an overall critical review of the problem of the history of capitalism, and a recasting of our 'reading' of Capital as a function of this problem, a review and a recasting made all the more difficult by the fact that Marx himself partly mis-

recognized its nature. In particular it presupposes going back, even at the most abstract level, to the question of reproduction and of the 'tendencies' of the capitalist mode of production. From this point of view, I should no doubt invert my normal formulation: it should not be said that there is in the mode of production a tendency to reproduction of the relations of production, or rather a tendency (to accumulation, the concentration of capital, a rising organic composition, etc.) which realises the reproduction of the relations of production. On the contrary, it should be asked how a 'single' tendency can turn out to be reproduced as a tendency, in a repetitive fashion, such that its efforts are cumulative according to an apparent continuity. It should be asked in what form a tendency can be realised (produce historical effects), taking into account the conditions of its own reproduction. It should be asked how this reproduction is possible even when in the social formation, the sole real 'site' of the process of reproduction, its material conditions have been historically transformed.

In other words, it is essential to break once and for all with the ideological illusion I have been discussing according to which the existence of a historical 'tendency' seems simultaneously to be the tendency of this 'tendency' to persist, hence to be realised, etc. And for that it is essential to understand that it is not the mode of production (and its development) that 'reproduces' the social formation and in some sense 'engenders' its history, but quite the contrary, the history of the social formation that reproduces the mode of production on which it rests and explains its development and its trans-

formations. The history of the social formation, i.e., the history of the different class struggles of which it is composed, and of their 'resultant' in successive historical conjunctures, to use a metaphor frequently employed by Lenin. That is, the history of class struggles and of their results in successive materially determined historical conjunctures. In this I shall perhaps be able to make an effective contribution to Marxism-Leninism: not to Marxism followed by Leninism, but, if I may say so, to Marxism in Leninism.

January - October 1972

NOTES

1 Cf. on this point Louis Althusser: 'Ideology and Ideological State Apparatuses,' June 1970, in Lenin and Philosophy and Other Essays, NLB, London 1971, pp. 121-73.

2 Let me make it clear that here I am aiming at this particular point in Badiou's work and absolutely not at all its aspects. None of us, particularly at this period, succeeded in being perfectly 'consistent'.

3 I have attempted to make this materialist thesis of the primacy of the Relations of Production inside the combination of relations of production and productive forces more clearly explicit in my forthcoming article: 'Capitalisme et théorie des formations sociales' in L'Economie, dir. A. Vanoli, coll. 'Les Sciences de l'Action', CEPL Paris.

4 Given that it is absolutely excluded that it could be a matter of an 'external' effect, since there is no exterior to the historical process. As Mao Tse-tung explains in On Contradiction: 'The fundamental cause of the development of a thing is not external but internal' (Selected Works, Vol. I, p. 313). But it is precisely the structural modality of this internal contradiction that has to be made explicit. From the Communist Manifesto on Marx took as his object its principal aspect: the 'internal/external' position of the proletariat as a class in the structure of capitalist relations of production.

5 I say formulae, for Spinoza's materialist dialectic is quite the opposite of this bad application of it.

6 Note that this 'autonomy' could also be stated in our jargon as 'the economic is both determinant and dominant', or at least this is one of the possible interpretations of that obscure formula.

7 Cf for the time being on this point Althusser's article 'Ideology and Ideological State Apparatuses', op. cit.

8 This was the case for myself, for Althusser, for Terray (Le marxisme devant les sociétés "primitives", Maspero, Paris 1969) and above all for Pierre-Philippe Rey whose text Sur l'articulation des modes de production has been published in Problèmes de Planification, dir. Charles Bettelheim, Ecole Pratique des Hautes Etudes, VI^e Section, no. 13-14. Note that in the same issue there is an already old and unfortunately very elliptical 'note' by Duroux, who had seen these difficulties very clearly.

9 This ideological complementarity of relativism and evolutionism, which is only apparently surprising, has been clearly pointed out recently by Claudia Mancina:

'Strutture e contraddizione in Godelier', Critica Marxista, 1971 no. 4.

10 Marx pronounced such formulae in determinate conjunctures as a reminder of the fact that the proletariat had in its turn to make 'its' revolution, as the bourgeoisie had made its. But Engels almost theorized this analogy, or rather made this analogy the very basis for the exposition of historical materialism, notably in Socialism utopian and scientific and more clearly still, if that is possible, in his article 'Social Classes - Necessary and Superfluous', (The Labour Standard 6th August 1881, in Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels Articles on Britain, Progress Publishers, Moscow 1971 pp. 384. ff.), which provided Kautsky with much of his inspiration. Lenin, though, never said it.

I have recently attempted to analyse Marx's formulations on the analogy between the bourgeois revolution and the proletarian revolution where the State is concerned from the Communist Manifesto to The Civil War in France ('La rectification du Manifeste Communiste', La Pensée, August 1972).

RESPONSE

ANTONY CUTLER

In replying to your letter I should like to measure my own differences with your position by reference to your text On the Fundamental Concepts of Historical Materialism.¹ It would be difficult to summarize the character of this difference in position in a few words but for want of a better designation I would regard myself as closer to the theoretical problematic of that text in the sense of regarding its object as a legitimate one, but perhaps not to the specific theoretical analyses produced there. It may be hoped that these cryptic statements will serve to express the conclusions I would draw from the analysis which follows.

Is the Concept of 'Mode of Production' a 'basic' concept of Historical Materialism?

I begin with perhaps your most startling statement. In responding to my own argument a propos of the concept of mode of production you remarked that the error concerning this concept arises from 'the very way 'mode of production' is considered as a basic concept of historical

materialism'. If I interpret your argument correctly I think that your statement must be understood in terms of a rejection of the idea that historical transformations can be understood in terms of a 'displacement of the dominant instance', that in the theory of social formations the mode of production can be conceived in Badiou's terms as the structure which structures the relation of instances and therefore the place of the dominant instance. This conception precludes according to this argument either the possibility of a 'concrete analysis' (for the historical transformations take place through changes in the mode of production) or the effective periodisation of a mode of production (the dominant instance means that a mode of production with a dominant instance is 'always the same'). Equally, this position involves a sophisticated economism: the transformation in the social formation is always determined by the mode of production 'in the last instance' but the last instance does come, for the displacement of the dominant instance does take place within the mode of production.

In this reading Marxism is transformed into a 'structuralism'. The mode of production fulfills a role such that after the identification of the dominant instance has been effected the characteristics of the particular social formation can be 'read off'; Marxism becomes a deductive system departing from an elementary structure.

Your strictures against such a theory are well-taken but your conclusion may be challenged for its unilateral character. There is no question that a concept of mode of production can lead to such results; your proof of this fact

may not be doubted. The question arises whether all concepts of mode of production involve this conclusion. However, to pose this question I should like to return to the concept of mode of production in Reading Capital.

Mode of Production as a Structure in Dominance

In analysing the 'elements of any mode of production, a table of the invariants in the analysis of forms'² in Reading Capital you made the following construction of the mode of production which was composed of the following invariant elements:

- '(1) labour
- (2) means of production
 - (i) object of labour
 - (ii) means of labour
- (3) non-labourer
 - (a) property connexion
 - (b) real or material connexion'³

This construction involved the conception of the mode of production as the combination of two articulations, the real or material connexion and the property connexion. Every mode of production was conceived as a double articulation, a combination of a labour process and a mode of extraction of a surplus labour (perhaps rather confusingly called 'property connexion'). The elements of the mode of production were considered the pertinences of a differential analysis of the structures of different modes of production, the differences being conceived as the variation in combination of these invariant elements. Therefore, the pertinences were never equivalent to the 'atoms of a history' because the invariant elements were always effectively defined through

the construction of particular modes of production; the elements were in no sense essences (I shall discuss this question at greater length later in the text).

However, the difficulty involves the question of the 'pertinence of the pertinence'. The double articulation stresses and in fact (I use the word advisedly) translates a famous thesis of Marxist theory, namely that the 'forces of production' never exist but in combination with the 'relations of production'. The construction of the concept of mode of production in Reading Capital rigorously thinks through this thesis in the sense of rigorously formulating it but does not transform it. The implications of this translation are more significant than they might at first appear.

The original thesis in fact always goes beyond stating the necessary combination, it equally states a correspondence between the 'forces and relations of production'. The difficulty in this 'correspondence' is that it exists as an imperative prior to and as a condition of any investigation; thus one 'looks for' a correspondence between the forces and relations of production. This means that the question of determination within the concept of mode of production is avoided. The thesis of correspondence involves the idea of (a) reciprocal determination (b) consistency; thus, what is absent is a hierarchy of determination, i. e. it is impossible within this concept to think the dominance of one articulation over the other. In other words this particular concept of mode of production possesses the characteristics of what Althusser has called an 'expressive totality' whose 'centre' is a teleological 'correspondence'.

The implications of this position involve in particular the

relation between the construction of a mode of production from these elements and the theoretical construction of the possible variations of any mode of production. The correspondence between the forces and relations of production, in this case, the correspondence between the real or material connexion and the 'property' connexion, involves firstly that either at the outset or eventually⁴ there will be one dominant form of extraction of surplus labour. This is because if there is to be correspondence then one thing must correspond with another thing or one unit with another.⁵ If there are variations there cannot be a correspondence between variations unless their specificity is collapsed, that is, if their effectivity is denied. The implication of this position is that if in this concept of mode of production one is to approach the problem of possible variations or of periodisation then the variations must be conceptualised as external to theory itself. The concept of the mode of production as the correspondence of unitary labour processes and unitary modes of extraction of surplus-labour makes this conclusion inevitable. Therefore, the variations will be conceived as real variations from an ideal model (the mode of production).

If this problem is to be avoided, if these variations within a mode of production are to be theoretically analysed, then the mode of production must be conceived as a structure in dominance. The mode of production as a structure must be determined by one of the articulations which acts as a 'structuring structure'. This is necessary simply because if variations are to be thought then they must equally be variations of an invariant, the invariant being the structure whose existence defines the character of the mode of produ-

tion itself. In seeking this solution it is necessary to pose the question of the precise character of this structure in dominance.

What structures the 'Structure in Dominance'?

The necessity of analysing the mode of production as a structure in dominance must obviously involve the question of the 'structuring structure' and the basis of its primacy. The Marxist tradition has furnished a concept of this primacy, the combination of relations of production and productive forces under the primacy of relations of production. However, the concept remains too undefined and it is necessary to consider the primacy as the combination of labour process and mode of extraction of surplus-labour under the primacy of the mode of extraction of surplus-labour.

This statement must be justified in particular by reference to the alternative thesis that the structuring structure of the mode of production is the labour process itself, i.e. the reversal of the primacy of the articulations to the one proposed here.

To pose this question it is necessary to return to the analysis of the epistemological structure of Historical Materialism and in particular to the definition of the crucial concept of the economic. It is well known that the definition of the economic within Historical Materialist theory is a radical break with any technicism, i.e. the reduction of the economic to technique. Therefore, the economic as has been pointed out above always refers to a necessary combination of the labour process and the means of extraction of surplus-labour. There is no 'technical' prior to and independent of

this combination. The constitution of the concept of economic thus involves establishing an entirely different theoretical object in no way reducible either to personal relations (relations of production cannot be reduced to intersubjective relations and thus cannot be the object of a sociology) or to technique (the means of organisation of labour and technique are not given by technique).⁶

The mere statement of this position takes us no further than the thesis of correspondence referred to above but there is involved in this break a relation of hierarchical determination.⁷ The labour process it will be recalled is defined by combination of labourer, means of production, object of production and non-labourer: that is, every labour process involves a means of combining direct labour, a means of labour applied with direct labour to a material object and the presence or otherwise in a directing role of a non-labourer.⁸ The study of the labour process in isolation will involve necessarily conceiving it as a technical process. Thus the relations obtaining between the labourer and the non-labourer can only be conceptualised through a plurality of technical possibilities. The relations are functions (there is a determinate function of both the labourer and non-labourer) but the variation in these functions according to a determinate social division of labour will remain unknown, for the particular mode of social division of labour will by definition be unknown. Thus, if we start from the premise of the primacy of the labour process we can never derive the social division of labour on which the latter depends. The labour process only becomes a concept of Historical Materialism insofar as it is analysed as an effect of a particular social division of labour; thus the analysis in

combination implies the analysis of the terms of the relation between a labourer and non-labourer as 'already constituted'.⁹

The Weakness of the 'genesis' of the 'mode of production' from the Labour Process

The thesis outlined above may be exemplified by dealing with an argument in Marx which at least evidently attempts to effect a 'genesis' of the mode of production from the characteristics of the labour process. The analysis will take the form of a commentary on the texts which are all drawn from the crucial section on transition to capitalism at the level of the labour process, Part IV of Volume 1 of Capital. This commentary of itself remains unable to do justice to the richness of these texts but will serve as an illustration of the epistemological theses put forward in the last section.

Marx analyses two possible roads in the development of manufacture at the level of the labour process: 'By the assemblage in the workshop under the control of a single capitalist, of labourers belonging to various independent handicrafts, but through whose hands a given article must pass on its way to completion'.¹⁰ It seems that this road starts from a non-capitalist labour process but acts as a transitional form 'tending towards' capitalism, transitional because 'internally contradictory'. The following passage seems to lend support for this view: 'The tailor, the locksmith and the other artificers, being now exclusively occupied in carriage-making, each gradually loses through want of practice, the ability to carry on to its full extent, his old handicraft'.¹¹ A similar construction might be

made in respect of the other road: 'Manufacture also arises in a way exactly the reverse of this - namely by one capitalist employing simultaneously in one workshop a number of artificers. . . .'¹² Again we seem to be able to derive an internal genesis of the capitalist labour process from within the labour process under the period of manufacture: 'He still works in his old handicraft-like way. But very soon external circumstances cause a different use to be made of the concentration of the workmen on one spot, and of the simultaneousness of their work. An increased quantity of the article has perhaps to be delivered within a given time. The work is therefore re-distributed. Instead of each man being allowed to perform all the various operations in succession these operations are changed into disconnected, isolated ones, carried on side by side; each is assigned to a different artificer, and the whole of them together are performed simultaneously by the co-operating workmen. This accidental repartition gets repeated, develops advantages of its own, and gradually ossifies into a systematic division of labour.'¹³

In both cases we seem to have a case of an internal change in the labour process effecting a transformation of the labour process under manufacture, 'the transitional mode of production'. Yet, in the second road we have a case of the 'capitalist' being already mentioned. Further, Marx introduces this section in the following terms, 'That co-operation. . . . is based on division of labour, assumes its typical form in manufacture and is the prevalent characteristic form of the capitalist process of production throughout the manufacturing period properly so called'.¹⁴ (Als

charakterische Form des kapitalistischen Produktionsprozess herrscht sie während den eigentlichen Manufakturperiode).

The capitalist mode of production pre-figures the transformation which takes place within the labour process of the manufacture period. A close examination should make this less surprising. In the first road, before we can explain the division of the labour process we have to pre-suppose a separation of the artisans from the means of production, i.e. an end to the independence of the artisans. The process thus already pre-supposes a process of separation of labour and labour-power. Similarly, the argument given in the second road is unconvincing in the sense that it tries to situate this pre-condition in the labour process. The division is seen to take place through particular relatively fortuitous events but the possibility of such events is a prior potentiality of the social division of labour. The artisan no longer stands in relation to his work as a proprietor for the separation of the artisan from his job allows for the alteration in the character of that labour. The position in the social division of labour structures the possibility of changes in the technical division of labour. This is what differentiates the artisan labour process under the capitalist mode of production from that under the feudal mode of production. The form of division of labour established under the feudal guild system is rigidified by the fact that the guild is the condition of existence of production, of itself. Under capitalism the artisan organisation of labour has already been subdued by the capitalist; the capitalist mode of production has constituted a new division in the history of the world, the division between labour and labour-

power.

Clearly the artisan labour-process can in no way be conceived as a full capitalist labour process. Its notable 'absence' is the development of machine industry. There is an obvious difficulty in seeing the labour-process under manufacture as a 'transitional mode of production' for the reason pointed out that this development itself pre-supposes the existence of a capitalist relation of the extraction of surplus-labour. Further it might be added that the form of this genesis reproduces the Hegelian concept of contradiction. It should thus be apparent that the transformation in the labour process is effected by a transformation in the means of extraction of surplus-labour. The capitalist means of extraction of surplus-labour is a condition of existence of the development of the labour process.

Marx argues: 'The labour-time necessary in each partial process for attaining the desired effect is learnt by experience; and the mechanisation of Manufacture as a whole is based on the assumption that a given result will be obtained in a given time. It is only on this assumption that the various supplementary labour-processes can proceed uninter-ruptedly, simultaneously, and side by side. It is clear that this direct dependence of operations, and therefore of the labourers on each other, compels each one of them to spend on his work no more than the necessary time, and thus a continuity, uniformity, regularity, order and even intensity of labour of quite a different kind is begotten than is to be found in an independent handicraft or even simple co-operation. The rule, that the labour-time expended on a commodity should not exceed that which is socially necessary

for its production, appears in the production of commodities generally to be established by the mere effect of competition; since, to express ourselves superficially, each single producer is obliged to sell his commodity at its market-price. In manufacture, on the contrary, the turning out of a given quantum of product in a given time is a technical law of the process of production itself.' ¹⁵ Marx again produces two determinations, on one hand those internal to the labour process under the period of manufacture itself, the other the constraint of competition. Of course, there is no question that the very collective characteristics of the labour process under the period of manufacture exert a constraint over the individual labourer and begin to develop an integrated process of production 'of their own accord'. However, this determination is itself conditioned by a set of relations of extraction of surplus-product. Firstly, the dominance of the capitalist over the collectivity of labourers assumes the division between labour and labour-power, it pre-supposes that the labourers have lost the power to exert a direct constraint over production. Secondly, the constraint exerted by competition equally pre-supposes the generalised separation of labour and labour-power.

The imposition of a strictly defined socially necessary labour-time to produce a range of commodities itself implies that the circulation of commodities has reached a particular stage of development and therefore that labour is separated from the means of production. The constraint imposed by competition thus structures the constraints imposed by the labour process itself. Further, even though within the labour process under manufacture there is a tendency to impose an average socially necessary labour time to produce a commodity, this tendency has definite limits

if studied from the point of view of the labour process. It should be clear that the effects of the 'collective labourer' are only sufficient to establish a relation of mutual constraint upon the labourers. The labourers remain able to limit this constraint within the labour process itself by direct control over the collective tempo of work. This constraint on the development of a capitalist labour process is overcome firstly by the development of the machine (by the direct constraint imposed by its action as a continuous mechanical process interiorising the worker) and secondly, by the development of mechanical means of transmission of the product from one stage of production to the other. In both cases the only control the worker can have over the process is one established prior to the process itself: the speed of the machine may be an area of class struggle but once it has been set to work it exerts a direct constraint which cannot be altered. ¹⁶ Thus, the collective labourer allows for a certain degree of calculation of the average socially necessary labour-time required to produce a commodity but this is highly limited by the fact that this time itself is in part determined internally to the labour process itself by the workers. Even economic class struggle under the capitalist labour process cannot but accept the complete distinction between labour and labour-power; the socially necessary labour-time required is only limited by constraints of organised economic struggle arising outside of the labour process. The fundamental elements of the capitalist labour processes are effects of the development of capitalist relations of extraction of surplus-labour.

Limits of Variation of Modes of Production

Having sought to establish the mode of production as a

structure-in-dominance and the character of the 'structuring structure' it may now be possible to establish a concept of the limits of variation of distinct structures in respect of this concept.

However, it may be valuable at first to raise the question of the ideological use of the concept of limit. This idea has been previously used in a historicist sense but also adapted to structuralist uses. ¹⁷ These uses depend on the concept that there are strict limits set to any mode of production by the relation between the forces and relations of production, a concept exemplified by the following well-known statement of Marx: 'No social order ever perishes before all the productive forces for which there is room in it have developed, and new, higher relations of production never appear before the material conditions of their existence have matured in the womb of the old society itself.' ¹⁸

The concept of limit proposed in the evolutionist thesis seeks to pose the limit at the level of the general relation between forces and relations of production. This concept must therefore derive from the thesis of correspondence outlined earlier, thus precluding a concept of variations of either the labour process or the form of extraction of surplus-labour (a form necessarily working within the framework of the general concept of the mode of extraction of surplus-labour eg. the forms of rent in relation to the general concept of ground rent in the feudal mode of production). This concept of limit thus cannot, by definition, furnish a concept of limit allowing for the scientific study of variations in the mode of production as a structure-in-dominance. This task involves a number of complex problems and the position

proposed here can be no more than description. The concept of mode of production as a structure-in-dominance dominated by the mode of extraction of surplus-labour involves firstly the specification of a mechanism of extraction of surplus-labour. The concept of surplus-value involves a mechanism working through the separation of labour and labour-power, the concept of ground-rent a mechanism involving the existence of a separation between producers and non-producers the latter having differential rights to portions of surplus-labour.

The definition of the mechanism of extraction from the concept of extraction first establishes limits on the forms of extraction and their character. Under capitalism the forms of extraction vary between the primacy of absolute and relative surplus-value where the value-form (the fact that surplus-value is 'realised' through the sale of commodities) remains common to both. This limit is brought into effect by the separation of the labour and the labour-power, this involving the necessity of the generalised circulation of commodities, necessarily co-existent and conditioned by the existence of labour-power as a commodity. Therefore the form of extraction does not vary at the level of the value-form (both modes of surplus-value are realised as commodities) but rather at the level of production. Both forms necessarily co-exist but there is a necessary relation of domination of relative over absolute surplus-value as there is a tendency to increase the organic composition of capital following the development of machine industry ie. the installation of a capitalist labour process. However, this tendency is reversible under determinate conditions which in no way alters the general tendential relation. In contrast in

the case of feudalism there is variation at the level of the value-form under which surplus-product is extracted. The existence of ground-rent involves the necessary existence of a plurality of forms of extraction limited by the parameters of possible value-forms; the ground-rent as a mode of extraction of surplus-product exists through the dominance of either money rent, rent-in-kind or labour rent. The fact that the mode of extraction is established by a political intervention in the economic thus allows the mode to vary between the plurality of value-forms. Furthermore there is no tendency toward the development of one form over the others. Money-rent may involve a higher level of the circulation of commodities but if this is not combined with the transformation of money into a commodity then the conditions of existence of the dominance of money-rent in a tendential form no longer exist, ie. the increase in the circulation of commodities is not the effect of a transformation of the social and technical division of labour but inscribed within a particular economic conjuncture. The same goes for labour-rent: while labour-rent allows the abstract possibility of transforming the labour process by taking the peasant under the direct control of the feudal lord within the labour process, the combination of this process with the sale of commodities will not alter the impossibility of transforming this rent into a dominant form unless again the separation of labour and labour power is effected. Thus, at all points the forms of rent have no tendency to engender the relative dominance of one form over the other. The analysis of the mode of production as a structure-in-dominance has revealed the space of the play of variations within the structure of the mode of extraction of surplus-

labour.

The concept of variations may equally be exemplified with reference to the possible variations of the labour process. The variations may be defined with reference to the mechanism of extraction of surplus-labour; the labour process must work within the space established by that mechanism. Under capitalism the labour process must work within the space established by that mechanism. Capitalism thus may not merely be identified with machine industry but also with the labour process under manufacture given that both reproduce the fundamental mechanism of the separation between labour and labour-power. Under feudalism, in contrast, the mechanism of extraction of surplus-labour involves a radical non-separation of the labourer from the means of production, notably of course the land, the primary means of production. Therefore, the labour-process involves a highly constant labour-force to be utilised thus precluding the development of a labour-process (machine-industry) based on the reduction of the quantum of direct-labour within production.

These suggestions may serve to indicate how the concept of mode of extraction of surplus-labour may serve to allow us to conceptualise the variations in specific modes of production and it might be added, and here we enter into a difficult terrain, that it provides a principal for the periodisation internal to a mode of production. Again, for example, the concept of the mode of extraction of surplus-labour under capitalism indicates that the conditions of competition vary with the dominance of the reproduction of the division between labour and labour-power. The tendency

towards monopoly capitalism relates to the tendency (within a necessary uneven development) to progressively 'abstract' units from the sphere of the equalisation of profit rates. While the value-form remains constant the role of competition between capitalist enterprises disappears. The production forces are progressively socialised under capitalist relations of production. Under capitalism the periodisation must centre on the condition of variability (the socialisation of the productive forces, the variations of the relations between capitalist enterprises) within the invariants, private property,¹⁹ commodity circulation,²⁰ ie conditions of existence of the separation of labour and labour-power. These remarks are merely gestures towards a theory but they indicate that it is the concept of correspondence which engenders the unity of evolutionist and structuralist concepts of mode of production and that this is not interiorised within 'any' concept of mode of production. However, to highlight this problem it is necessary to return to directly epistemological questions.

Is it Possible to have a Scientific Concept of 'Instances?'

I have not unconsciously used concepts of the 'instances' of the social formation throughout my response while your strictures have inevitably haunted my analysis. You argue: '..... there is something more basic and serious: from such a viewpoint, this very denomination of the 'instances' in the social formation cannot but tend to designate anew essentially invariant elements of historical analysis, contradicting what was postulated at the beginning of that part of my text. In clear language, this means that there is an essence of 'economic' phenomena and also essences of 'political' and 'ideological' phenomena, pre-existing the process of

their historical transformation. . . .'

The objection seems misplaced for how is the mode of combination of the instances to be known if the concept of instance does not pre-exist the history of this combination? It is not maintained it is difficult to see how the dead hand of old historiographical ideologies cannot but weigh on the problematic of science. To be specific: if we are to know the instances only in their transformation/combination then we know only a historical present. The instances are 'as they are now' as they are transformed and being transformed and if there is no pertinence of the knowledge of this historical transformation then the historical transformation can only be known as transformed as 'here and now'. 21

Here there is a conflation of the real object and the thought object. The instances exist in combination in the real therefore the separation of the instances involves the denial of their conditions of existence. However, the instances do not exist in the real at all, they exist in the discourse of science as the primary pertinences of any theory of historical transformations - allusions to an actual combination are neither here nor there. The choice lies between a scientific knowledge of the process of historical transformation and empiricism. The latter, of course, will not be short of 'realistic' reasons why theory does not correspond to 'history' while surreptitiously projecting its own ersatz theory on to the real which it seeks to make the final arbiter of 'theory'. The implications of this position necessarily involve the general epistemological position of its protagonist. Limits on theory, limits imposed by the real, must necessarily accompany this position on the

knowledge of history. The resonance of these postulated limits has accompanied us through this reply.

Limits of Theoretical Discourse

"As I recalled., my own text suggests that the 'general' concepts it is dealing with are not 'the atoms of a history', the given elements out of which varying combinations are to be constructed, but only the 'pertinent' categories of the differential analysis of social forms. These concepts only indicate and in some sense formally orient the general problematic (I say problematic, and not theory) of 'historical materialism' at work in certain definite theoretical analyses of Marx's. They cannot anticipate their content. Logically this means that at most I can suggest the following: when the (social) form of the combination that characterises the mode of production in the strict sense (a combination of determinate 'relations of production' and venes historically, ie. the conditions in which effects, an 'economic', 'political' or 'ideological' instance intervenes historically, ie. this conditions in which effects, themselves combined, of specifically 'economic', 'political' and 'ideological' class struggles are constituted and occur, necessarily changed too in a determinate manner. That is why, in opposition to all economism, the concept of mode of production in Marx, even at an abstract level, really designates a complex unity of determinations that derive from the base and from the superstructure. But we can in no way deduce the mode this constitution, the process of functioning and the historical tendencies of the social relations considered, nor the laws of the combination of the different aspects of the class struggle."

These are the 'limits of theory' but at the same time they seem to infringe other 'limits'. We see reference to the 'instances' yet their legitimacy is questioned. Marxism is equated with a non-economism but the concepts of the economic and the non-economic ('the other instances') are themselves questionable. They have been previously condemned for their 'essentialism'. Yet even if this problem itself is bracketed, what does it mean to say that the 'superstructure has an effect'? The ambiguity of this concept in the history of Marxist discourse indicates that it will be insufficient simply to state it.

After all, we can read in Engels' letter to Bloch that the superstructure has effects; it just happens that they cancel each other out, the base re-asserts itself 'in the long run'. 22 But this is deductivism! This is the criticism from the terrain of an empiricist history, or rather it is the conflict between two empiricisms, Hegelian empiricism versus Neo-Kantian empiricism. The events work so that the play of contingencies 'add up' to the necessity teleologically inscribed within the 'system'. No, the contingencies are a law in themselves, their outcome is unpredictable, unknowable 'a priori'. The charge of deductivism comes from an empiricist concept of history. The problematic of your text has thus taken a step backwards not only from your own text in Reading Capital but also from the Althusserian concept of historical time.

Conclusion

I have sought to show that the terms in which you have criticised your text in Reading Capital are such as to make the project of that text appear an ideological one. I have equally

sought in an extremely inadequate way to pose an alternative 'critique' of that text, which I hope allows the retention of the advances of that text. That is, I must conclude that your own critique must lead whether this is the aim or not to the rejection of those advances. It would be difficult to measure these advances in any detail in that neither of us have produced a fully worked out balance sheet of the advances and weaknesses of that text. However, it seems to me that in combination with Althusser's text 'On the Concept of Historical Time' it has entirely revolutionised the science of history. Entirely because it was based on the development in Althusser's work of a scientific epistemology. The wholesale rejection of this text (which is at least implied in your text) thus must involve a return to empiricism. This reprise cannot be measured simply in terms of a retreat, for there is no planar space in which the science and the empiricist ideology of history can co-exist. Similarly, it is not a question of turning the clock back; at the present time the adherence to the problematic of Reading Capital is the pre-condition for the development of Marxist-Leninist politics, the combination of proletarian position and scientific theory. To reject it is inevitably to open the door to revisionism. It has been my object in this response to defend that problematic.

Notes

- 1 In Louis Althusser and Etienne Balibar, Reading Capital (London, NLB, 1970).
- 2 ibid p. 215
- 3 ibid.
- 4 Either at the outset or eventually because the mode

of production can be conceived as remaining the same or 'realising itself' by attaining its 'pure form' in history. For example Marxist theorists of the 'transition from feudalism to capitalism' conceive the development of money-rent as the development of a form of feudalism which contains the maximum of contradictions thus leading to its supersession; the pure form is also as it must be in this Hegelianism the most contradictory. The necessity of teleology and the suppression of variants are necessarily co-existent.

5 The correspondence reproduces the problem of knowledge as posed in classical philosophy, the correspondence between subject and object is the correspondence between two homogenous 'centres'. The structure of knowledge cannot be conceived as a process of production since the unity of a 'knower' (and also of a 'known') is destroyed by the process.

6 In stressing the mutual articulation of the social and technical division of labour I do not want to imply that no distinction exists; on the contrary knowledge of the distinction is the condition of knowledge of the articulation.

7 Hierarchical determination within overdetermination, in other words, 'structural causality'.

8 Thus, under feudalism the non-labourer may not be present in the direct labour process in certain forms of rent.

9 Synchronically but not diachronically ie. not within the linear history of events but in terms of the 'history' of a structure.

10 Karl Marx, Capital Volume I (Foreign Languages

Publishing House, Moscow 1961) p. 336.

11 ibid.

12 Op Cit. p. 337.

13 ibid.

14 Op Cit. p. 336.

15 Op Cit. p. 345.

16 Of course, there remains the question of sabotage but this necessarily remains of secondary importance in the action of the structure.

17 See Maurice Godelier, System, Structure and Contradiction in Capital in The Socialist Register 1967 edited by R. Miliband and J. Savile (London Merlin Press 1967).

18 Karl Marx Preface to The Critique of Political Economy (1859) in Karl Marx and Frederick Engels Selected Works Volume I (Moscow: Foreign Languages Publishing House 1951) p. 329.

19 I cannot go fully into this question raised in a work of the greatest importance, Charles Bettelheim, Calcul Economique et Formes de Propriété (Paris: François Maspero 1970), except to say at this point that Charles Bettelheim has not (and I believe cannot) solved the problem of the mechanism of distribution of surplus-value in terms of differential access to exchange-values and that his study remains at the level of 'indices' of capitalist development in the USSR, a method inevitably leading to a sophisticated empiricism.

20 Commodity circulation must be considered as an invariant of the capitalist mode of production and is relatively autonomous from the question of competition. The circulation of commodities is a necessary corre-

late of the separation of labour and labour-power ie. the transformation of labour-power into a commodity.

21 In other words, the problematic of the historical present as the means of the supersession of all past history is opposed to a scepticist empiricism.

22 F. Engels Letter to Bloch September 21 - 22 1890, in Marx and Engels Selected Correspondence Second Edition (Moscow: Progress Publishers 1965) pp. 417-419, and Althusser Appendix to Contradiction and Overdetermination in For Marx (London: Allen Lane 1969) pp. 117-128.

REVIEW

Godelier's 'Rationality and Irrationality in Economics

ATHAR HUSSAIN

The book is collection of heterogenous articles, but all of them, as Godelier claims, refer to a common theme: rationality and irrationality. The terms rationality and its converse irrationality have a dual referent: Economics and what Godelier chooses to call economic structures and systems. For Godelier, the problem of rationality is a nodal problem: its solution has diverse and wide ranging effects: (i) foundation of Comparative Economics (Godelier's term) and (ii) suppressions of dogmatic Marxism and bourgeois Political Economy. This review is a critique of Godelier's critique. Briefly, critique is regarded here as a discursive operation carried out on a specific raw material to produce a determinate product. In the terminology employed by Althusser, a critique is governed by a problematic, which may be either ideological or scientific.² The critique of a critique seeks to discover the problematic, or the set of laws, which govern the critique in

question. More specifically, this review seeks to answer the following questions.

- (i) What is it that Godelier criticises in bourgeois Political Economy? Further, what are the pertinent differences between what Godelier sets out to criticise and what his critique eventually produces?
- (ii) How does Godelier represent the basic concepts of Historical Materialism?
- (iii) Does Godelier furnish the theoretical pre-conditions for the constitution of what he terms as a fully developed Comparative Economics?

These questions are interrelated: the problematic which governs Godelier's critique of bourgeois Political Economy is also that which governs his representation of the basic concepts of Historical Materialism. The second and third questions are interrelated in the sense that Historical Materialism furnishes the concepts for the production of the differential History of Social formations,³ a complex totality which includes the economic as one of its instances, and Godelier's representation of the basic concepts of Historical Materialism eventually determines whether or not he succeeds in furnishing the theoretical foundation of a fully developed Comparative Economics.

To invert the usual order of presentation of the discourse: the main conclusions of this review are: Godelier's critique of bourgeois Political Economy remains in the problematic of the discourse he sets out to criticise, he grossly misrepresents the basic concept of Historical Materialism and he does not furnish the theoretical preconditions for the constitution of a fully developed Comparative Economics.

To start with Godelier's critique of established bourgeois Economic Theory (what is dispensed through universities and embodied in books and articles), Godelier, in the first and the last article in the book, starts his critique of Economic Theory by pointing out that the definition of the economic and economic rationality put forward by Robbins⁴ and shared by a large number of economists, including Lange⁵, a revisionist economist, is formalistic: it can be indiscriminately applied to all forms of behaviour (Godelier's terms). According to Robbins' definition all kinds of behaviour are economic in the sense that all of them are directed towards the achievement of one of the various competing ends. The formalism of Robbins' definition is, as Godelier points out, noted by a number of bourgeois economists. Godelier rightly points out that Robbins' definition is based on the ideology of homo-economicus: an ideology which explicitly or implicitly postulates the existence of a self-constitutive subject, an attribute of God in Theology, endowed with certain attributes, e. g., the maximisation of utility, profit etc. What is the theoretical status of the charge that Robbins' definition is formalistic? Godelier regards formalism as a serious charge; he leaves it to Burling,⁶ an anthropologist, to elaborate on the ramifications of the definition of the economic and to the reader to appreciate the obvious absurdity of formalism. Godelier takes it for granted that differences in different forms of behaviour are obvious to everyone except those who are blinded by Robbins' definitions. The postulated transparency of the difference does not produce the concept of the

difference, it merely creates a place for the notions of differences inscribed in different practices. To assess the theoretical status of the charge of formalism it needs to be asked: is the mere recognition of differences in different forms of behaviour an adequate index of break or rupture with the ideology of homo-economicus? In answering this question it is necessary to point out that the ideology of homo-economicus is a variant of Philosophical Anthropology. The problematic of Philosophical Anthropology leaves open a series of choices which are the condition of the existence of variations within the problematic. It might be asked: why? The problematic of Philosophical Anthropology is characterised by the postulate of the existence of the self-constitutive subject. The self-constitutiveness of the subject defines a play: the assignment of attributes to the subject. This play admits of infinite solutions because any restriction on the attributes of the subject violates the definition of the self-constitutive subject. The attributes of the self-constitutive subject are susceptible to variation in the sense that one set of attributes can replace another set of attributes. In the terminology of Linguistics, sets of attributes stand in a paradigmatic relation to each other. The diversity of the attributes of the subject, permissible in Philosophical Anthropology, gives rise to the possibility of differentiating between different forms of the behaviour of the subject. In short, what is demonstrated here is that the mere recognition of differences does not depose the self-constitutive subject or constitute the adequate index of rupture with the ideology of homo-economicus. The example of the young

Marx is pertinent here: Marx of the 'Economic and Philosophical manuscripts' accuses the classical economists of reducing the diversity of the human essence (formalism in the terminology of Godelier): but the critique of the young Marx, as Rancière has demonstrated, remains a play within the problematic of the discourse which the young Marx sets out to criticise. At its best, Godelier's critique does not go beyond the critique of the young Marx. Godelier opposes the formal definition of the economic formulated by Robbins to what he terms as the real definition. 'That what is in general economic be defined in real and not in formal terms, in terms of structure, not behaviour' (p 14)⁸. If the substitution of the real for the formal is not to remain a nominal operation, a play on words, then it has to be specified what constitutes the reality of the real definition. The presence of the real cannot constitute the reality of the real definition because the real and the definition of the real are two distinct objects. Further, the reality of the real definition cannot be characterised by invoking some form of correspondence between the definition of the real and the real; because the real is only known by means of the definition (concept) of the real. Godelier does not specify what constitutes the reality of the real definition. There is only one conclusion to be drawn here: Godelier's critique of the established definition of the economic remains a nominal operation, a play on words.

Godelier's epistemology, discourse on discourse, relies heavily on the couple: structure/individual. Throughout the book Godelier affirms that science takes the structure rather than the individual as its point of departure. For

Godelier, scientificity demands the substitution of structure for individual. The demand for this substitution has acquired the status of a slogan. It needs to be asked: what is the theoretical problematic which offers the possibility of the substitution of structure for individual? Before one answers this question it should be noted that the substitution presupposes the separation of the individual from the structure. This separation is inadmissible in Historical Materialism, which asserts that Man in general does not exist. Instead, what exists is subjects under determinate historical conditions. The individual, subject, is inseparable from his historical conditions of existence, it is the latter which constitutes the subjectivity of the subject. The lack of separability has an important theoretical consequence: elimination of the self-constitutive subject. Further, this lack rules out the possibility of the substitution of structure, determinate historical conditions, for individual, a concrete subject; this substitution is an inadmissible operation in Historical Materialism. However, the substitution of individual for structure is an admissible operation in the problematic of Philosophical Anthropology. To quickly demonstrate the admissibility: man, the subject, is endowed with certain attributes, which are independent of the concrete conditions of the existence of man. It is this separation of the individual from the historical conditions of his existence which gives rise to the possibility of the substitution of one term for the other. In fact, the substitution of structure for individual has a specific name in Philosophical Anthropology: reification. As before, what I have tried to demonstrate is that the substitu-

tion of structure for individual is not an adequate index of a break from Philosophical Anthropology.

To demonstrate the idealism of Godelier's epistemology further: take another of Godelier's oppositions: visible/invisible. For Godelier, the structure is invisible and the behaviour visible; further, science takes the former rather than the latter as its point of departure. One wants to ask: who is it whose field of vision determines the visibility of the visible? Note, that the subject in question occupies an important position in Godelier's epistemology: his field of vision determines the object of sciences. We are at a loss again. Godelier does not specify whose field of vision determines the visible. This absence is symptomatic: symptomatic of the postulate of the existence of a subject whose vision determines the visible and the invisible. In spite of his polemics against empiricism, Godelier remains a prisoner of empiricist epistemology. Godelier gives the following quote from Marx a place of prominence: 'All science would be superfluous if the outward appearance and the essence of things directly coincided.' One need not waste time on the linguistic analysis of this quote; instead, one should look at the discourse of Capital to specify its mode of operation. In Capital, the outward appearances of things, e.g.: the rate of profit, the wage rate, etc., are notions inscribed in practices specific to the capitalist mode of production. For example, notions of the rate of profit, cost price etc. are embodied in calculations determined in the last instance by the relations and forces of production which characterise the capitalist mode of production. The so called outward appearances of things are not specified by reference to

the field of vision of an imaginary subject, they are material objects which exist under a specific social formation. The distinction between the real essence and the outward appearance, when it refers to Capital, merely expresses the disjunction between ideology and science. To pick up the loose threads of the argument above: what is shown above is that Godelier's epistemology merely reproduces the problematic of Philosophical Anthropology.

Godelier is impressed by what he calls the success of the marginalist theory of prices in explaining the formation of price in the so called short run and medium run. 'Marginalism has succeeded in solving a number of real problems' and 'Marginalism gives us some knowledge of part of the mechanism of price formation, in the short run (and middle) term.' (p.28). The terms short run and medium (middle) run are not defined by Godelier. In accounting for the 'positive partial' success of the marginalist theory Godelier indulges in the most crude form of empiricism: 'Some economic problems have a structure such that the marginalists hypotheses account for some of their aspects' (p.28). Further, in his discussion on marginalist theory, Godelier thinks that the assumption that an enterprise cannot modify the given market prices is against the basic principles of marginalism. Any elementary text on Economic Theory will make it abundantly clear that in marginalist theory a firm cannot, by assumption, affect the market price in a competitive situation. Godelier's discussion of the marginalist theory of prices, in 'The theme' and 'Marginalist and Marxist theory of Value and prices' is full of homespun generalities; it does not even come up to the theoretical standard of a

text book on bourgeois Economic Theory. To give an example: 'Now, if the supply of commodities exceeds the effective demand, some of these commodities will not be sold, or will be sold at less than their real cost of production, and thereby a part of social labour will have been superfluous and "consequently useless". Society's resources will have been partly wasted.' (p. 28). The assessment of established Economic Theory is an important task, but the assessment, if it is to be adequate, cannot be based on crude empiricist criteria of 'partial' successes and failures of the established theory. To indicate the adequate mode of assessment of the marginalist, Walrasian, theory of prices: to start with the following needs to be answered: what is the function which prices are determined to perform in the Walrasian theory? In the Walrasian theory prices are determined to equate supply and demand. In Walras, prices are assigned the function of ensuring that all the commodities, including labour power, offered for sale are eventually bought. Certain important consequences of the role assigned to prices should be noted: since there exists no determination of the composition of social product in Walrasian theory, the price of a particular commodity, which may be labour power, may have to be zero in order to equate its supply and demand. Further, for the same reason, Walrasian prices do not imply the equalisation of rates of profit in different branches of production. In the terminology of Historical Materialism, Walrasian prices do not imply the reproduction of the conditions for the repetition of the process of production. It would not be necessary to rehearse these generally recognised weaknesses of the

Walrasian theory had Godelier adequately familiarised himself with the theory he sets out to assess.⁹ Godelier talks of combining the Marxist and marginalist theories of prices and value. Godelier accounts for the possibility of combining the two theories in the following terms: 'The possibility of combining these two theories on the plane where they are not mutually exclusive (price theory) seems to me to be based, in the last analysis, on the fact that the category of prices is more complex than that of value' (p. 233). Godelier has set himself a quixotic task; there is nothing to be admired in Godelier's discussion on value and prices except his errantry.

Godelier plays havoc with the basic concepts of Historical Materialism. He consistently confuses the concepts of value and price and their respective theoretical function in Capital. For Godelier, the difference between prices and value consists in the fact that the former is more complex than the latter. 'In my view, price ought, in an advanced Marxist theory, to be seen as a category more complex than value because it reflects not merely social cost (exchange-value) but also social utility and scarcity (use-value)' (p. 235). Godelier is oblivious to the simple fact that exchange-value is price expressed as the rate of exchange between a pair of commodities. Further, what has the notion of scarcity in common with the notion of use-value? In Godelier, the complexity of prices amounts to the fact that a number of different factors enter into the determination of prices; but a number of different factors also enter in the determination of values. Godelier not only postulates imaginary differences between values and prices but also confuses the relation between the two in

the capitalist mode of production. Without any exaggeration it can be said that the analyses of volume III of Capital have had no knowledge effect on Godelier. Consider the following sample statements: 'Indeed according to Marx, prices coincide with value under the special condition in which supply corresponds to demand, in which no monopoly affects either sale or purchase, and in which the higher productivity of some enterprise is balanced by the lower productivity of others.' (p. 63), and 'Marx, following Ricardo, put forward the hypothesis that in a market economy prices tend, in the very long run, to coincide with value' (p. 229). Need it be said to a Marxist economist that the supply is equal to demand by assumption in volume III but the price of a commodity does not coincide with its value. To quote what is said clearly in Capital volume III.¹⁰ 'In reality, supply and demand never coincide, or, if they do, it is by mere accident, hence scientifically =0, and to be regarded as not having occurred. But Political Economy assumes that supply and demand coincide with one another. Why? To be able to study the phenomena in their fundamental relation in the form corresponding to their conception, that is to study them independent of appearance caused by their supply and demand' (p. 190) and 'Now if the commodities are sold at their values, then, as we have shown very different rates of profit arise in the various spheres of production.' (p. 195). Further, 'But Capital withdraws from a sphere with a low state of profit and invades others with a high rate of profit. Through this incessant outflow and influx,, it creates such a ratio of supply to demand that the average rate of profit in the various spheres of pro-

duction becomes the same and values are therefore converted into prices of production'. (105 Vol. III). It is easily deduced from these statements that the competition equalises the rate of profit in different branches of production, and as a result it implies that the value of a commodity does not coincide with its price. Godelier, like a vast number of commentators of Marx confuses the prices of production with the values of commodities. However, there is a difference between Godelier and other commentators of Marx: the more sophisticated of the commentators, unlike Godelier, realise that the postulate of the equality of the price with the value of a commodity is inconsistent with the requirement that the rate of profit in all branches of production be the same. Leaving the quotes from Capital aside, Godelier should have asked a simple question before embarking on the analysis of the relation between values and prices: if the value of a commodity is equal to its price then why does Marx spend the first two hundred pages of Capital volume III analysing the process of formation of prices and the general rate of profit? A cursory glance, not even a reading, would make it abundantly clear that very little of those two hundred pages is concerned with the analysis of monopoly and other factors which Godelier mentions to account for the divergence of values from prices.

Godelier wants to combine Marx's theory of value and prices with the marginalist, Walrasian, theory of value and prices. To demonstrate the futility of Godelier's enterprise, it is necessary to indicate the incompatibility of the two theories. In Walras the composition of the social product is a given and, as pointed out above, prices are

determined to equate supply and demand of commodities. The notion of scarcity is crucially linked to the fact that the composition of the social product is left undetermined. In Marx the composition of the social product is determined so as to equate supply and demand of commodities and prices are assigned the function of equalising the rate of profit in different branches of production. Note, prices perform the function assigned to them only when supply is equal to demand by assumption. In Marx, prices are assigned this function because in the Capitalist mode of production, 'Commodities are not simply exchanged as commodities but as products of capital which claim participation in the total amount of surplus-value proportional to their magnitude, or equal if they are of equal magnitude'. (p.175, vol. III). The main point to be made here is the one neglected by Godelier: in Walras commodities are exchanged simply as exchangeables not as products of capital. There is no effectivity of the relations of production specific to the capitalist mode of production on the function performed by the Walrasian prices. To say, as Godelier does, that, the marginalist theory explains the formation of prices in the short and the medium run is to imply that there is no effectivity of the relations of production on the determination of prices over the two undefined spans of time. Further, for Godelier, in the very long run the price of a commodity is equal to its value; in Godelier's long run too there is no effectivity of the relations of production on the determination of prices. There is only one conclusion to be drawn: Godelier's discussion of prices does not refer to any mode of production; it is in ideology.

Godelier's discussion is comprehensive; after the discussion on values and prices, Godelier goes on to reformulate the notion of contradiction. For Godelier, the capitalist mode of production is the structure of structures, relations and forces of production. The structure of structures, one is told, is characterised by two distinct forms of contradictions: the contradiction within the structure and the contradiction between the structures. Further, the two contradictions are not at par with each other. The contradiction within the structure is primordial: the existence of the capitalist mode of production entails the existence of this contradiction. The contradiction between the two structures is not primordial but appears later on. As is usual with Godelier, he does not specify the cause of the delayed appearance of the second form of contradiction. For Godelier, though the contradiction within the structure is primordial it is the contradiction between the structures which governs the course of history. '...this contradiction, which is fundamental, since it has to account for the evolution of Capitalism and for the necessity of its disappearance...' (p.79). If the contradiction between the structures governs the course of history then it follows that history is suspended when this form of contradiction is absent. Godelier's assertion that it is the contradiction between the structures, relations and forces of production that governs the course of history amounts to historicism. It is true that one can, and many do, cite the following formulation in the preface to 'A Contribution to the critique of Political Economy' in support of the argument that history is governed by the contradiction between the forces and relations of

production. 'At certain stages of development, the material productive forces of society come into conflict with the existing relations of production... From forms of development of the productive forces these relations turn into their fetters. Then begins an era of social revolution'. (p.21). The quote clearly supports the argument. If one is not to remain at the level of exegesis it has to be answered: what is status of this statement in Historical Materialism? I will briefly indicate that the detailed analyses of relations between the forces and relations of production in Marx make this statement invalid. To start with note that: in the statement the relation between forces and relations of production takes either one of the two simple forms: conflict or the lack of conflict. Further, though the statement postulates two different forms of the relationship it does not specify the criteria for identifying the pertinent differences between the two forms. The statement is ambiguous, it does not furnish the means to know the relationship between the forces and relations of production. The analysis of Volume I of Capital, in the section on 'Production of relative surplus value', surpasses this characterisation. There, the relationship between the forces of production and the relations of production is analysed not in terms of the two general forms but as specific articulations between the two. There the couple: conflict/lack of conflict is replaced by a series of specific articulations. In this connection Chapters XIV and XV on manufacture and machinery are of special importance. Further, in the statement above the forces of production, so to say, constitute the dominant term of the relationship in the

sense that when the forces of production come into conflict with the relations of production it is the latter which gives way: it changes to correspond to the former. In Capital, this hierarchy of dominance is inverted. To quote: 'The object of all development of the Productivity of labour (forces of production - A.H.), within the limits of capitalist production, is to shorten that part of the working-day, during which the working man must labour for his own benefit (necessary working-time - A.H.), and by that very shortening to lengthen the other part of the working day, during which he is at liberty to work gratis for the capitalist (surplus working-time - A.H.)' (p.321, Vol I). It should be noted that in this passage compared to the one from the preface to 'A contribution...' the hierarchy of the two terms is reversed: the relations of production dominate the development of the forces of production. In Capital, the forces of production are always the forces of production of a specific mode of production. If there is no production in general, as Marx says in 1857 Introduction¹¹, then there are no forces of production in general. Further, the fact that the forces of production are always specific to a particular mode of production implies that the forces of production of different modes of production cannot be ranked on the basis of a simple criterion in terms of less developed and more developed. Notice that the notion of relations of production being a fetter to the development of the forces of production in the quote from 'A contribution...' rests on the simple ranking of the forces of production in terms of 'less developed' and 'more developed'. What I have briefly indicated is that

Historical Materialism suppresses the notion of the general contradiction between the forces and relations of production being the motor of history.

The discussion so far has demonstrated the first two of my conclusions: Godelier remains in the problematic of the discourse he sets out to criticise and he grossly misrepresents the basic concepts of Historical Materialism. Now, I shall briefly go on to show that Godelier does not furnish the theoretical preconditions of a fully developed Comparative Economics. The last article of Godelier's 'Rationality and irrationality' is concerned with the specification of the subject matter of Economic Anthropology, which in conjunction with Political Economy constitutes, for Godelier, Comparative Economics. The basic theoretical requirement for the constitution of 'Comparative Economics' is the specification of the concept of the economic. Godelier characterises the economic as 'combination of three structures, those of production, distribution and consumption.' (p. 263). But this characterisation does not furnish us the means to know the pertinent differences of the economic in different social formations. All we get in Godelier is a description of the economic activities of the Siame New Guinea, the Blackfoot indians, the Inca ayllu etc. The description of economic activities in different social formations, which is never innocent of ideologies, is not a substitute for the concepts. All that needs to be said here is that Godelier does not provide the means to compare what the Comparative Economics sets out to compare: the economic instance which governs different social formations.

- 1 Maurice Godelier: Rationality and irrationality in Economics, NLB 1972.
- 2 L. Althusser: Reading Capital, NLB, 1970, esp Part I.
- 3 See E. Balibar in 'Reading Capital'.
- 4 L. Robbins: An Essay on the nature and significance of Economic Science, London 1932.
- 5 A Polish economist who worked in the U. S. during the thirties and forties.
- 6 See 'Rationality and irrationality' pp. 13 and 252-253.
- 7 J. Rancière: The concept of the critique and the critique of Political Economy in Theoretical Practice, 1 January 1971.
- 8 All the references to Godelier refer to the English edition of 'Rationality and irrationality'.
- 9 Joan Robinson: Essays in the theory of economic growth, Macmillan 1964, Chapter 1 'Normal Prices'.
- 10 All references to Capital refer to: Capital, Progress publishers, Moscow 1966.
- 11 In 'A contribution...', not to be confused with the preface.

Index to Editions 1-6

AUTHOR

Balibar, Etienne (co-author)	Definitions	3-4	10-12
Brewster, Ben	Revai and Lukacs	1	14-21
Brewster, Ben	Althusser and Bachelard	3-4	25-37
Cutler, Antony	The Young Marx and Ranciere	1	30-35
Cutler, Antony	Fascism and Political Theory	2	5-15
Cutler, Antony	The Concept of Epistemological Break	3-4	63-81
Cutler, Antony (co-author)	Theoretical Remarks on the Theory of the Transition from Feudalism to Capitalism	6	20-31
Fichant, Michel	The Idea of a History of the Sciences	3-4	38-62
Foucault, Michel	On the Archaeology of the Sciences	3-4	108-127
Gane, Michael	Althusser in English	1	4-14
Gane, Michael	Leninism and the Concept of Conjuncture	5	2-17
Hindess, Barry	Materialist Mathematics	3-4	82-103
Hindess, Barry	Lenin and the Agrarian Question in the First Russian Revolution	6	3-19
Hussain, Athar	A Brief Resume of the Archaeology of Knowledge	3-4	104-107
Hussain, Athar	Marx's Notes on Adolph Wagner: an Introduction	5	18-39
Lecourt, Dominique	Bachelard's New Problematics	3-4	13-24
Marx, Karl	Marginal Notes on Adolph Wagner's 'Lehrbuch der Politischen Okonomie'	5	40-65
Pechoux, Michel	Definitions	3-4	10-12
Rancière, Jacques	The Concept of 'Critique' and the 'Critique of Political Economy': Part 1	1	35-52
	Part 2	2	30-49
	Part 3	6	31-49
Revai, Jozsef	A Review of 'History and Class Consciousness'	1	22-30

Taylor, John
(co-author)

Theoretical Remarks on the Theory of the
Transition from Feudalism to Capitalism

6

20-31

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THEORETICAL PRACTICE 7/8

Editorial	1
<u>ON THE NEW DEFINITION OF PHILOSOPHY</u>	4
THE CONDITIONS OF MARX'S SCIENTIFIC DISCOVERY	
Louis Althusser	
LENIN/HEGEL/MARX	12
Dominique Lecourt	
STATEMENT	37
ON THE QUESTION OF PHILOSOPHY FOR A THEORY OF	
THEORETICAL PRACTICE	
Antony Cutler and Michael Gane	
<u>LETTERS ON HISTORICAL MATERIALISM</u>	51
A LETTER TO ETIENNE BALIBAR ON THE PROBLEMATIC	
OF HISTORICAL MATERIALISM	
Antony Cutler	
SELF CRITICISM - AN ANSWER TO QUESTIONS FROM	56
'THEORETICAL PRACTICE'	
Etienne Balibar	
RESPONSE	73
Antony Cutler	
<u>REVIEW</u>	86
GODELIER'S 'RATIONALITY AND IRRATIONALITY IN ECONOMICS'	
Athar Hussain	