

The Balancing Act: Economic Determinism and Humanism in

Marxism

By

Christopher Leighton Taylor

**A thesis
presented to the University of Waterloo
in fulfillment of the
thesis requirement for the degree of
Master of Arts
in
Political Science**

Waterloo, Ontario, Canada, 2007

© Christopher Leighton Taylor 2007

Author's Declaration

I hereby declare that I am the sole author of this thesis. This is a true copy of the thesis, including any required final revisions, as accepted by my examiners.

I understand that my thesis may be made electronically available to the public.

Abstract

I argue that there are two interpretations of the Marxist dialectic, both of which examine how human beings interact with objects around them conceptually and how society evolves over time, from different points of view. In the present paper, I undertake three tasks. First, I demonstrate that there is a clear difference between these two strains of Marxist thought which I here call humanist and determinist. Second, I show how Marxist thought has evolved from Hegel and Marx to the present in light of these two different models. Last, I argue that the determinist model is flawed, and that the humanist model stands as a more solid logical and epistemological perspective for Marxist theory.

Acknowledgments

I first wish to thank Professor Richard Nutbrown, my supervisor, who has been a huge help from the very beginning of my work on this project with his gentle critiques and in guiding me through my first major work of this sort. Supervising a hundred-plus pages of a master's level thesis is, I'm sure, not always easy: doing so whilst balancing dozens of other commitments as graduate and department chair only made it more complicated. For doing all this with such good humour and care demonstrates the high calibre of his teaching and his person. My humblest thanks.

I also wish to thank Professors Colin Farrelly and Richard Helmes-Hayes for being willing to take on the roles of second and external readers, respectively, on such short notice. Their constructive criticism over the course of the writing and editing of the paper, and during the defense, are greatly appreciated.

I also need to thank Carole Gray, secretary of the Department of Political Sciences at the University of Waterloo, for constantly providing assistance with the various technical and bureaucratic steps required to publish the present paper.

Thanks to my parents are due to their financial and emotional support throughout my life and university career, and for always attempting to help me achieve my potential.

I thank God, for both the miracle of existence and for every day with which I am blessed.

Last, but not at all the least, to my partner, best friend, and the love of my life, Jennifer: For reading and re-reading the paper a dozen times, for constantly reassuring me that, yes, I am going to succeed, but most of all, simply for being with me for seven wonderful years, and many more to come: Thank you. I love you.

Both Jennifer, and Professors Nutbrown, Farelly, and Helmes-Hayes, provided suggestions on editing at various (in some cases, several!) points in the writing process of this paper. I greatly appreciate their patience in helping me to make the paper readable. Any remaining errors are entirely my own.

Homo sum, humani nil a me alienum puto.

Table of Contents

Author's Declaration	ii
Abstract	iii
Acknowledgments	iv
Table of Contents	v
Chapter One: Purpose and Methodology.....	1
Chapter Two: Marx, Marxists, and the Dialectic ...	12
Chapter Three: Determinism	60
Chapter Four: Humanism	81
Chapter Five: Concluding Remarks	113
Bibliography	125

Chapter One: Purpose and Methodology

I. Purpose and Goals of the Paper

In this particular essay, my research goal is to examine varying interpretations of the dialectical model used by Marxists and to provide an analysis of what the dialectic meant to Marx and those who followed him. Thus the question I sought to answer was what the dialectic meant to various writers, and what was the difference in the meaning of that word to - and in the model of the dialectic used by - Marxist theorists. The present section details both my answer, and the methodology I use, to interpret the texts in question.

First, my answer to the question “what is the Marxist dialectic?” led me to two different interpretations of Marxism: one is humanist, the other economically determinist. The former places the human being as a creative individual at the centre of the dialectical process, hence, humanist. The latter argues that the social organization in which human beings live is driven by economic forces such as the struggle over the ownership of the tools we use to create products in society. By and large, this latter view holds the economic element of society to be what determines the structure of the society, and discounts the human element. That is, determinism sees humans in society as merely the embodiment of these social forces, playing roles determined by their position in the distribution of power over the economy. Also, the humanist model remains a conceptual model: it is a method by which human beings understand the social structures around them, and the way they interact with them. The determinist model, however, argues that the dialectic is an ontology, that all of reality obeys dialectical laws.

Marxist thought demonstrates a continuing tension between its humanist and economic determinist elements. Marx himself emphasized the former in his youth, and in his later years

emphasized the latter. After Marx's death, Engels argued that nature itself obeyed dialectical laws, and the debate has continued since, though it has not always been explicit. At times, it is implied by the manner in which a Marxist thinker describes the problem with which he or she is confronted. It is my goal then to: 1) tease out the differences between the two models; 2) demonstrate how the dialectic was developed by Hegel and Marx, and how it was used by later Marxist writers; and 3) establish the humanist argument to be a better model for Marxist theory as opposed to the determinist model, and to clarify the humanist position so that it might be used by future writers. I recognize that some authors, like Marx, at times fall on both sides of the divide, and I will show why this is so. I am hesitant to suggest a 'permanent' solution to the tension, as it is something with which Marxism will always struggle.

II. Research Method

The study of political theory, especially the history of ideas, occupies a slightly difficult position with regards to the theoretical models of political 'science.' The main body of the field remains in a struggle over what type of science it is that we use in studying politics, a debate that has, on occasion, intruded into the sub-field of political theory. David Easton, perhaps rightly, once accused those who work within the discipline of political theory of being historicist, a charge that political theory still struggles with.¹ While we lack, in the sense of Thomas Kuhn, a proper paradigm--a dominant methodology, epistemology, and school of thought²--there are various schools that describe what is to be studied within this discipline, with varying degrees of support and effectiveness. I do not wish to enter into a debate over which methodology is best, only to

¹ Gunnell, John G., *Political Theory: Tradition and Interpretation*, (Cambridge: Winthrop Publishers, Inc., 1979), 4-6.

² See Kuhn, Thomas, *The Structure of Scientific Revolution*. Kuhn uses the concept of paradigm in various ways, but the primary meaning in this particular context refers to a commonly held set of methods in a discipline for analyzing the subject of that discipline, as well as a commonly shared "school of thought" within the discipline about what it is that is to be studied and why.

provide a brief discussion of the various schools, and where my own methodology fits into the scheme of things.

Easton represents, in some sense, the positivist or behavioural school, that came to dominate much of the discipline of political science at the mid-point of the 20th century. I have already mentioned his thoughts on political theory's historicity; that is its tendency, in his mind, to uncritically impose modern values onto the writing of the past.³ The positivist school is what one might define as 'classical science,' but this is slightly disingenuous. Positivism does not necessarily require a view that there is an ontological truth to be discovered, but instead that one should strive for a value-less study of the facts.⁴ One should strive to eliminate subjective bias as much as possible, and instead seek to determine what is factual in any given area of study. Positivism runs into trouble in the study of the history of ideas. Whether one can know, objectively, what an author ten, twenty, a hundred, or a thousand years in the past meant, especially given the gulf between cultures and time periods, not to mention differences in linguistic meaning, has been the subject of debate within the discipline of political theory for some time. As the reader may have guessed, I will not be using a positivist approach to study this particular issue.

There are a few other broad schools in political theory. One is that of Leo Strauss and others like him who assert the presence of a tradition within the history of ideas, and this has a specific meaning for students of those ideas. Several schools have emerged from the reaction to the idea of the tradition: of particular concern here are the contextual (Oxford) approach and, for lack of a better term, the textual approach. The former can be seen in the work of Quentin Skinner, Eric Hirsch, as well as John Pocock and John Dunn. The latter can be seen in the work

³ Gunnell, 5.

of Hans-Georg Gadamer, Robin George Collingwood, and Wilhelm Dilthey, to name a few.

Leo Strauss arrived at two positions: that political philosophy is a search for essential meaning or ‘the true,’ and that there is a tradition within the history of ideas that one can trace from Plato to the present (usually, one ends with Marx or Nietzsche).⁵ Strauss used these two concepts to attack both positivism and political philosophies of the past that he did not like, especially some of the modern schools of thought. For Strauss, the classical philosophy of the Greeks stood as the greatest contribution to political philosophy, providing both a filter through which later philosophers looked at politics,⁶ and a moral basis upon which one could rest in the face of tyranny in the modern age.⁷ Strauss argued that modern political theory and practice had abandoned the values of the past as the tradition evolved, and he blamed this primarily on Machiavelli. Instead of seeking the true and the good as did the Greeks, Machiavelli sought to deal with practical politics without any concern for a search for essential truth.⁸ Political philosophy according to Strauss should strive to argue for Platonic principles upon which one might base a political order, something Strauss believed had been abandoned in the modern age.⁹ Strauss therefore saw Socrates, Plato, and the philosophers of Ancient Greece as representing the ideal form of political thought, since they strove to create a normative basis for a social order, something the true philosopher (read: the Straussian) could understand and make use of, even across centuries of time. Machiavelli, Marx, Nietzsche, and others of the ‘modern’ persuasion inverted this schema by placing the emphasis on facts/empirical knowledge and historical/contextual interpretation.

⁴ Ibid., 6-9.

⁵ Strauss, Leo, *What is Political Philosophy and Other Studies* (Westport: The Free Press Corporation/Greenwood Press Publishers, 1959/1973/1975), 10-11, 27.

⁶ Ibid., 27.

⁷ Gunnell, 36-40.

⁸ Strauss, 40-42.

The idea of the tradition emerges in Strauss when he argues that the ideas of the classical writers, and all who followed them, exist as a filter through which political philosophy interprets political life.¹⁰ Thus, Machiavelli responds to Cicero, Cicero to Aristotle and Plato--and by proxy, to Socrates-- Locke fights with Hobbes, and Marx and Nietzsche attack them all. The modern interpreter studies the past to understand what happens in the modern age, and looks for meaning in the great debate in which political philosophy has engaged for millenia.¹¹ Strauss then argues that the tradition had been ‘deliberately’ undermined by Machiavelli in that he focussed on empiricism and practicality instead of that which is essential to human life.¹² This began a long process of debasement through to the modern era, by which point political philosophy had largely died out.¹³ This explained in Strauss’ mind why the modern era had seen the rise of fascism and Communism, as both were the result of the deficiencies of the political philosophies of Marx, Nietzsche, and others. In short, Strauss reads in a grand meaning to the tradition of political thought, which he uses as justification to attack the political movements of the modern day.¹⁴

While there may be some analytical merit to Strauss’ method, in that it narrows down the field of study for the historian and also provides some grounds upon which to attack other modern schools of thought, I choose not to use it for this project. For a study on Marxism, removing Marx and Marxists from their historical context and attempting to posit their role in a “Great Debate”¹⁵ strikes me as defeating the very point of Marxism, to understand human beings in their contexts. I do accept the idea of a tradition within Marxism, but this is because the

⁹ Ibid., 37.

¹⁰ Ibid., 27.

¹¹ Gunnell, 36-7.

¹² Ibid., 39-40.

¹³ Strauss, 51-55.

¹⁴ Gunnell., 36-37.

writers of interest here tend to accept or at least use the concepts of Marx, Engels, and Hegel. For the purposes of this essay, the idea of a 'tradition' is strictly analytical. It is used solely to help the reader see some of the connections between the writers, particularly as their texts relate to the idea of the dialectic.

The textual approach of Gadamer was based on his argument that one could not free oneself from the present in which one lived, but that despite linguistic, cultural, and temporal distance, one could still understand what an author wrote and what it means.¹⁶ This school tends to follow the idea that while various people in different time periods may interpret some elements of reality differently, they all share the same reality, and this is also true of the history of ideas.¹⁷ The act of interpretation is based on common linguistic meanings (Wittgensteinian 'language games,' for example), and while one cannot fully escape the meaning established within one's own context, one can still derive some common understanding from a given text. The process of interpretation is dialectical, where the interpreter and text interact to create a new set of ideas in the interpreter when he or she finishes a text. By reading it, one's own perspective is changed, and the text comes to have new meaning to that person as well.

The contextual approach arose as a reaction against the Straussian idea of a tradition, and, ironically, as with positivism, it often accused its opponents of reading modern values into the work of past thinkers. It differs from the textual school in trying to find meaning for what one writer says in a text based on the social context in which they lived. Where it differs from positivism is its argument that one ought to study the historical context of the author in question, and try to determine what he or she meant within that context. Positivism argues that science

¹⁵ Ibid., 71.

¹⁶ Ibid., 110-112.

¹⁷ Ibid.

should concern itself with discovering objective facts, something with which the contextual approach takes issue with. Skinner, Dunn, Pocock, and Hirsch all place emphasis on the idea that one ought to try and understand what the author meant, based on historical context, the audience to whom the text was directed, and the meaning of the text within the society one lived.¹⁸ So, what Marx wrote as a young man in Germany, while reasonably wealthy, in a piece that was meant as a doctoral dissertation, likely has a different meaning to Marx than it might have had he written it during the years of poverty he spent in London.

Skinner's approach moves away from pure contextualism. Since I intend to use Skinner's approach, I shall outline it in brief here. Skinner wrote an attack on both the purely textual approach, Strauss, and the purely contextual approach. One cannot, he argued, divorce one's own values and ideas from what one reads.¹⁹ So, merely reading the text 'as it is,' as Gadamer suggests, or as Strauss does, leads to the problem that one may insert meaning into a text that is not there, or clarity where there is none. This leads to two problems: one, that there may be a misreading of what the writer said; and two, that anachronisms can appear. The first occurs when one attempts to read the text in the sense of a grand tradition, or to look for a specific concept (the Social Contract, Separation of Powers, and so forth) in a text. One tends to find it, Skinner argued, reading the idea into a text even when it is not actually there.²⁰ Anachronisms occur when one argues that a writer 'anticipates' a concept from a later time-period. This problem follows from the first, in that if one is looking to find an idea such as the social contract in writers before Hobbes, and finds something similar in Plato or Aristotle, one might be seeing a pattern where there is none.²¹

¹⁸ Ibid., 98-100.

¹⁹ Skinner, Quentin, "Meaning and Understanding in the History of Ideas," *History & Theory* 8/1 (1969): 6.

²⁰ Ibid., 9-10.

²¹ Ibid., 8-9.

The contextual approach, Skinner argued, sometimes missed the point of interpretation. One cannot simply understand the context of a writer as if that explains what it is they said. Skinner argued that there is a difference between the reasons for why a text was written--the context-- and what the text actually meant.²² Skinner argued that each text was an action with a particular meaning, a particular audience, and a particular purpose, and that neither the text nor the context determines the meaning of the given source.²³ The text in question must be understood as a specific question being analyzed at a certain time and place.

In each writer's case I attempt to place the writers in their proper historical context, and try to ascertain what the writers meant given their audience. In this, I follow the contextual approach that Skinner sets out. So, for example, when analyzing the young Marx, I provide at least a few words regarding his audience, what it meant in that context, and what the discussion in the text itself is about. I do, however, agree somewhat with Gadamer's school of thought: while I am not living in the context of Marx, Lenin, or Althusser, it is still possible to comprehend the meaning of the original text to a reader in a meaningful way, as long as I am honest about my own bias and the effect of my own historical context on that interpretation. Unfortunately, none of the schools I have discussed here establish a fully-fleshed out methodological doctrine, and so I must pick and choose from amongst them what is best for this study.

My method, then, is to describe the contextual background within which each writer produced his or her text, and to avoid inserting meaning into the work of various thinkers that they themselves may not have intended. Some Marxist thinkers did not examine the nature of the dialectical model in any kind of depth--Lenin, for example, takes the model he uses very much as

²² Ibid., 47.

a given. Nevertheless, some form of dialectical model is present in the works of most Marxists: if it is not there, then in many ways they have abandoned the Marxist project, since Marx relied on the dialectical model in some form or another to explain his philosophy at all points in his career. That the model changed over time I will endeavour to prove by showing this change in Marx's own work, and how it was variously interpreted throughout the 'canon' of Marxist thought.

In summary, I use a combination of the Skinner's approach and that of Gadamer. I readily accept that the social and historical context within which I am writing will have an impact on my interpretation of the texts: I was born and have lived during the last years of the collapsing Communist government of the USSR and during the subsequent rise of America to global dominance, and not during the height of early capitalism as did Marx. Nor am I writing, as Althusser, Miliband, and Poulantzas were, immediately following Stalin's death, during the struggles to dig Marxism out from the baggage under which it found itself. Recognizing this, I endeavour to let the texts speak for themselves, to determine what it was that each author meant to do with each text given the context and the audience to whom it was directed.

III. Outline of the Paper

I begin my discussion of this topic with an analysis of Marxist literature, beginning with Hegel and Marx, and give a brief survey of the writings of some of the major writers to follow--Lenin, Luxemburg, Kautsky, and Gramsci, for example. I include these thinkers to show how the concept of the dialectic was developed, and how various thinkers used the idea after Marx. I limit myself to ending my review of Marxist literature with Althusser, Poulantzas, and Miliband, as well as a few modern interpreters--Alex Callinicos, for example, and Martin Carnoy--as the debate over how to use the dialectic within Marxism died down shortly after the Poulantzas-

²³ Ibid., 48-50.

Miliband debate in the 1960s. I place the literature review first in order to demonstrate how Marx, Hegel, and Marxists have used and developed the dialectic over the course of the history of Marxist ideas, and to provide the reader with context for the third and fourth chapters. In these, I examine, first, determinism, providing more depth to the argument made by determinist Marxists. I critique it for failing on three points: failing to acknowledge the impact of human agency, providing predictive inaccuracy, and for being a tautological argument and therefore incapable of being tested. With this critique finished, I turn to humanist Marxism, establishing what the humanist position argues, and why it is superior to the determinist model. It is my argument that humanism does not fall prey to the three critiques I level against determinism, and that it therefore has more to offer to both political theory and practice for Marxism in the future. I finish with a brief summary of the paper as a whole, and some thoughts as to why this project is of value to Marxism and what it might mean for Marxist theory and practice.

IV. Summary

It is my goal to examine the conflict between determinist and humanist Marxism, as I do not believe that the debate between the two has been properly resolved, or that the tensions between these two variations of Marxism have been adequately examined or explained. It is also my goal to show that the humanist model has both analytical and normative value. It allows for a Marxism that is able to adapt to the times, but that never forgets the original purpose of Marx's writings or of any form of socialism: to challenge exploitation and oppression, not to further it. It does this by providing a conceptual model that enables people to understand the effects of their actions and of others in society. In many respects, I view the humanist model to be far superior to the determinist model, and will demonstrate why this is so.

Throughout the essay, I attempt to tell the story of the concept of the dialectic, how it

evolved from Hegel to Marx, and on to Marxists of varying stripes, and how the debate between determinist and humanist Marxism has evolved. I do not endeavour to place Marx within a grand historical tradition, nor Marxists within a grand tradition of Marxism: each writer has his or her historical place, and will be considered on their own terms. What the dialectic means to determinist and humanist Marxism will be examined in the remainder of the text. To a certain extent, writing a review that analyzes the development of the dialectic over time means that I do accept the idea that ideas and concepts can evolve over time, but to this I would point out that Marxist thinkers consciously adopted the model that Marx, Engels, Kautsky, and Lenin developed, and this includes the idea of a dialectic in either its humanist or determinist form. Each writer used the idea for a different purpose. Some writers occasionally used both humanist and determinist models at various points in their careers.

Thus the dialectical method of Marx has had an existence and a history of its own over time. My point is to show how each author used it and why, and what form of dialectical method he or she used. Through this, I hope to demonstrate the difference between the humanist and determinist dialectical model, and argue that the humanist model is both logically sound and normatively closer to what Marx had originally intended. I accept that there is a strong normative component to my argument, and that I am biased towards the humanist model. I nevertheless endeavour to provide the reader with a fair review of both models. While it is impossible to be entirely neutral on the subject, I have endeavoured to spare criticisms of both models in chapters three and four until after I have established each in full. This said, let us now turn to the literature, and see how the Marxist dialectic was developed.

Chapter Two: Marx, Marxists, and the Dialectical Method

I. Outline

In this chapter I examine the history of the dialectic, as established first by Hegel and then Marx, and as it had been used by selected Marxist writers since then. My goal is to establish the ideas discussed in more detail in the third and fourth chapters on determinism and humanism, and provide the reader with the context of how the dialectic has evolved over the course of the history of Marxist ideas. This is by no means a complete study in the subject: many writers have been left aside due to time and space constraints. I am confident, however, that the review will provide a solid foundation from which the argument I present in this essay may be developed. I begin with Hegel, before moving on to Marx. I divide the latter's work into two periods, the young Marx's writings, and the older Marx's. I establish this division due to the epistemological break that occurred in Marx's writings around 1844-1845, around the time he was writing the *Economic and Philosophical Manuscripts of 1844*. This break was the point at which Marx switched from using a humanist dialectical model to the determinist model. This subject is discussed a bit further in the text of the present chapter, and also towards the end of chapter four. From Marx, I move on to some of the interpreters of Marx's writing: Lenin, Luxemburg, Kautsky, Korsch, Gramsci, and the Soviets. Once this is done, I examine the writings of three major figures from the post-Stalin era: Althusser, Poulantzas, and Miliband. Althusser in particular is important as he helped lead the attack by the structuralist movement on humanist Marxism, while Poulantzas and Miliband stand as an example of a specific debate between two Marxists of the opposing camps. Through this, the reader may come to see how the humanist and determinist models were defined by Marx, and how they evolved after his death. This said, let us begin with Hegel.

II. Hegel

Any analysis of Marxist thought must begin with Marx, and any analysis of Marx's thought must start with Hegel, the man upon whose method Marx relied in developing his own theories. While I do not intend to present Hegel's work as a whole, since that is not the topic under discussion, I will endeavour here to present a sketch of Hegel's ideas and his understanding of dialectical method.

Hegel, reared in the 18th century, worked and wrote in the 19th century, and was deeply affected by the theories and experiences of the Enlightenment and its culmination in the French Revolution.²⁴ As with the thinkers of the 18th Century, Hegel was interested in articulating a theory that would explain the totality, or whole, of reality.²⁵ As Heiss argues: "All of Hegel's great works and lectures were built up and expanded according to the dialectical schema, all were conceived from the viewpoint of an "Absolute Spirit," which comes to knowledge of itself through its own workings."²⁶ He was therefore interested in creating a summary of knowledge, an awareness of the totality of human thought and the history of ideas.²⁷ However, whereas thinkers in the Enlightenment may have believed in finding absolute truths through their work--that is, that the laws of God's Creation might be understood, and these laws were permanent and unchanging--Hegel used dialectics as a conceptual tool to help comprehend contradictory phenomena in the real world, and in the logic and thought of human minds.²⁸ For Hegel, the world was the result of a process where Pure Mind or Spirit interacted with its own creation, and

²⁴ Heiss, Robert, *Hegel, Kierkegaard, and Marx*, Translated by E.B. Garside (New York: Dell Publishing Company, Ltd., 1975), 3.

²⁵ *Ibid.*, 3-4.

²⁶ *Ibid.*, 4.

²⁷ *Ibid.*, 5-6.

²⁸ *Ibid.*, 8-9.

became self-aware, through the process of history.²⁹ For Hegel, the world, societies, and people changed over time as a result of this interaction between Absolute Mind and humanity. His dialectical model would, he believed, resolve the tensions that emerged between individual's freedoms and the rules society created to govern those individuals, and explain how it was that human beings come to understand the world.³⁰ On the one hand, then, the Hegelian model describes how society evolves as a result of the conflict between subjective reality and objective truth, and how human beings themselves conceptualize reality. Since the latter, conceptual element of the model helps to explain the former, we turn first to Hegel's model of human logic and cognition.

With regards to the conceptual model, Hegel's dialectical model explains how people come to understand the world around them. In examining the objects around oneself, one comes to differentiate between what an object is, and what it is in essence: for example, calling something a body of water, versus defining what 'a body of water' actually means.³¹ By qualifying this difference, Hegel demonstrated how the dialectic was a process where the human mind uncovered a contradiction between two categories of thought, and transcended them.³² In the case of the body of water, there is a difference between the category of a body of water and what a body of water actually means: x is a body of water and a body of water is y. These two different definitions/understandings and the struggle of the human mind to understand them leads to the creation of a synthesis, a new concept of 'a body of water' that both incorporates both categories of meaning and annuls those meanings at the same time: the new concept is not the same as either one of the two categories of meaning individually, but incorporates both into the

²⁹ Ibid., 14.

³⁰ Steinberger, Peter, *Logic and Politics: Hegel's Philosophy of Right*. (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1988), 4-6, 41.

³¹ Ibid., 54, 49-50.

new definition.³³ Basically, then, Hegel's dialectic was a method by which human beings come to understand the objects with which they interact in the real world, and how they come to develop new meanings/understanding as they examine those objects. This model was applied by Hegel to the individual mind's internal processes, to society as a whole, and even to the divine itself. Objective truth, the Idea as Hegel called it, was the sum of a vast range of particular definitions and smaller truths.³⁴ He believed that human beings were capable of achieving a subjective and partial understanding of the truth, but not an objective, absolute truth. Hegel was concerned with understanding the movement of knowledge: how it arose, how it broke down, and the cycle that generated its development over time.³⁵ He sought to develop a system that could understand how thinkers, who are inherently limited by their humanity to subjective, partial understanding, seek after objective truth, and the societies that arose--and eventually fell--as a result of the ideas of their time.³⁶ In his argument, the dialectical model was a system where a concept came into conflict with its negation, its opposite, and in the interaction a new concept emerged.³⁷

In society, this interaction between parts of the social whole tended to be destructive, and through the interaction something new emerged.³⁸ Hegel argued that "consciousness [concrete] confronts itself in self-consciousness, and reason as synthesis unites consciousness and self-consciousness."³⁹ Put simply, Hegel saw the real world as being the subjective incarnation of Spirit. Recognizing that the subjective real world was no longer truly the same as its objective

³² Ibid., 61.

³³ Ibid., 64-6.

³⁴ Ibid., 99.

³⁵ Heiss, 55.

³⁶ Ibid. 162-163.

³⁷ Ibid., 16.

³⁸ Ibid., 39-43.

³⁹ Ibid., 48.

self, Spirit attempts, through history, society, and people, to realize itself objectively in the real world. Alienation, for Hegel, was the separation between Spirit and the real world, in that the real world, being subjective, is the Spirit but is no longer truly the same as its objective self. The subjective understanding of a specific time and place is one particular manifestation of the Absolute Mind's objective knowledge. This subjective understanding is a particular society, which comes into conflict with its own negation: an opposing truth or the recognition that the subjective reality is not the same as the objective truth. The tension between these two visions of truth creates a new society that attempts to redress the failures of the old society.

Each dialectical relationship would lead to a destruction of thesis and antithesis and the creation of some new concept, a synthesis. This process would result from the alienation one experienced from the ideas that the people of a time created, a recognition that the ideas either no longer fit the times in which one lived, or that they had taken on a life of their own divorced from the people who originally created them (becoming a fetish).⁴⁰ This alienation created the negation of the thesis, the opposition within a society, within the thinking of a time, and with different levels of meaning in human consciousness, which would lead to transformation: for every idea, there would emerge an opposite to that idea. Society and people would face that negation head on until it was transcended by a new society and/or a new set of ideas.⁴¹

It would be left to Hegel's followers and detractors to destroy the basis of his system, both the idealist and theological elements of it. His method would remain with Marx and others. Marx retained the concepts of alienation (flipping the whole system around so that social structures were alienated from people), and would keep elements of the conceptual model of Hegel. However, before progressing to Marx, let us summarize three key elements of Hegel's

⁴⁰ Ibid., 66-68.

thought, as they bear on both Marx and Marxists who would follow his methods.

First, Hegel's dialectic is neither progressive nor conservative, although his followers and detractors used it to suggest he was one or the other. It did explain how progress could occur within the history of ideas or in the social order.⁴² He used the dialectic as a tool to understand the process by which ideas and societies changed over time, but did not suggest the process would necessarily lead, in each step, to a permanent resolution of the conflict between thesis and antithesis. Hegel did believe that there would be an end *goal*, where Absolute Mind/Spirit entered into synthesis with human subjects, but that the process could go be both progressive and regressive: there would be many steps taken towards that end goal, but many steps leading away from it as well. Many missed his argument that progress is a historical process, an evolution that could succeed or fail at any time.⁴³

Second, and more important, is the fact that Hegel's dialectic is first and foremost a conceptual model. Hegel's argument describes how it is that human beings come to understand the world around them. The process of this understanding was the dialectic in which different categories of meanings for a given object are examined, and a deeper definition is determined by synthesising the previous categories of meaning into a new category that transcends and annuls the previous meaning.⁴⁴

Last, Hegel's concept of alienation has a different meaning than Marx's. Alienation in society is seen as the difference between the subjective knowledge of society/individuals, and the objective knowledge the Absolute Mind. Alienation is seen as this divorce between

⁴¹ Ibid.

⁴² Ibid., 192.

⁴³ Ibid., 193.

⁴⁴ Steinberger, 67.

Spirit/Absolute Mind and the real world that is its subjective manifestation.⁴⁵ Marx would come to reject this in favour of a new definition, where human beings come to impart a value to objects/ideas that they create that is separate from the objects themselves: money, for example, comes to take on a value above and beyond that of a currency to define how much a given product is worth.

Having established Hegel's theoretical perspective with this brief sketch, let us now turn to the focus of our study: Karl Marx and those who followed in his footsteps.

III. Karl Marx

Marx struggled to accommodate Hegel's thought with his own materialist conception of history throughout his life.⁴⁶ Born the son of Jewish parents who had converted to Protestantism, Marx was well-educated, and was supported financially by his father throughout his university years.⁴⁷ Despite being born to a reasonably financially secure family, Marx struggled with poverty throughout his life, losing a daughter and son to starvation and illness in England.⁴⁸ Thrown out of his native Germany, out of France, out of Belgium, Marx was forced to live the life of an expatriate in recently-industrialized England. His poverty, his expulsion from countries due to his writing in left-leaning papers, his work with the revolutionary movements of 1848, his presence in England of the 1800s; all these things contributed to his writing and theory.

While the older Marx broke somewhat with Hegel, nevertheless he was influenced by Hegelian thought due to his instruction in university, and his association with the Young Hegelians--particularly, Ludwig Feuerbach and Bruno Bauer. He continued to use the dialectical

⁴⁵ Althusser, Louis, *The Humanist Controversy*, in *The Humanist Controversy and Other Writings*, edited by Francois Matheron, translated by G.M. Goshgarian (London: Verso, 2003), 249.

⁴⁶ McLellan, David, introduction to *Karl Marx: Selected Writings*, 2nd Edition, edited by David McLellan (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000), 5.

⁴⁷ McLellan, David, *Karl Marx: His Life and Thought*, (London: Macmillan Press Ltd., 1972), 1-5, also 16-21.

⁴⁸ *Ibid.*, 262-280.

method of Hegel throughout his life, but rejected Hegel's position that it was an examination of the evolution of ideas/Spirit over time. For the purposes of the present work, I look back on some of Marx's early writings and their interpretation of the dialectic. While there may have been, as Tucker and Althusser argue, a break between the early and later Marx, it is my contention that elements of Marx's earlier humanism remained buried within Marx's later thought. While the humanism is not as prominent in his later work, Marx continued to draw on it throughout his life.

III.A. The Young Marx

Marx began working on a doctoral thesis on Greek philosophy, which is reasonably unimportant except for the glimmers of Marx's break with Hegelian thought. He had expressed in a letter to his father a few years earlier an interest in Hegel's ideas, even though even then he was uncertain about its abstract idealism.⁴⁹ His doctoral thesis furthered this attack, as Marx took aim at 'unphilosophical' Hegelianism that focussed more on abstract thinking as opposed to an examination of the way society worked 'in the real world.'⁵⁰ This was the beginning of Marx's rejection of Hegel's subject of the dialectic: Marx's dialectic was one in which human beings created the objects and ideas around themselves, became alienated from them, and transcended that alienation, while Hegel's was one in which Absolute Spirit/Mind, through history, transcended subjective understandings of itself to become objectively realized in the real world. Marx acknowledged that the dialectic of Hegel was useful in understanding the development of philosophy and thought over the course of human history, however, Marx was already beginning to question whether Hegel's thought applied to the real world. Marx sought to determine what Hegel's dialectic could tell him about the way that societies evolved over time.

⁴⁹ Marx, Karl, "Letter to his father," in *Karl Marx: Selected Writings*, 2nd Edition, edited by David McLellan (Oxford, Oxford University Press: 2000), 11-12.

⁵⁰ Marx, Karl, "Doctoral Thesis," in *Karl Marx: Selected Writings*, 2nd Edition, edited by David McLellan

A brief comment is needed here on the difference between the young and old Marx: while I accept the idea that there is an epistemological break in Marx's writings, I am not convinced that it is a clean break, nor that the definitive point of the break can be firmly established. This break is Marx's transition from humanism to determinism in his writing around 1844. It is this break that makes it necessary for me to classify Marx into the early and later Marx: the former's writing is humanist, the latter's is determinist. Elements of the humanism of his youth remains in his later texts--particularly in the *Grundrisse* and *The German Ideology*, but elsewhere as well. Thus, the idea of a clean break does not seem right: Marx subjected his theory to constant self-examination. That he came, in time, to reject some ideas and kept others should come as no surprise. Since I have divided the texts here between the 'young' and 'old' Marx, however, some clarification is necessary. I will, for the sake of argument, accept Althusser's idea that the break occurs roughly around 1844. I would further argue that part of the break resulted from the presence of Engels in Marx's life, whereas before 1844 he and Engels had not become collaborators. This is especially relevant considering that Engels acted both as an editor for Marx during his life, and that he was responsible for popularizing Marxism. I comment on Engels momentarily. It is my position here that an epistemological break does occur within Marx's writing in around 1844-1845: between humanism and determinism. Marx switches from a position that accepts human agency as the cause of social changes over time to one that sees the economic structure of society as responsible for social changes over time. Even then, the division is tentative, and exists simply to establish that Marx, in his youth and earlier writing, put more stress on the humanist elements of his thought than the later focus on economics. In many ways, both the "German Ideology" and "The Communist Manifesto" are, perhaps, the real beginning of

(Oxford, Oxford University Press, 2000), 17-18.

the shift in Marx's thought--the former is where Marx identifies his work as explicitly breaking from Hegel. The latter is an example of a polemical work written jointly by Marx and Engels, at which point the lines between the authors blur due to Engel's involvement. At any rate, the focus of the so-called early works remains on the human agent, who was seen as being the cause of social change. The later works shift towards an analysis of the economic foundations of society and argued that the structure of the economy was responsible for changes in society over time. While there is always a blending of both elements throughout Marx, I have used this division in Marx's works to place emphasis on the two conceptions of Marxist theory being studied here: the humanist and the determinist.

Marx took Hegel's idea of the division between civil society, the family, and the state and adapted it to his own thought. Civil society for Marx was, at this point in his development, defined as "political" society: it was the social relations one entered into outside the family unit based on private property.⁵¹ Human beings make religion, the state, and the economic systems in which they live.⁵² These structures, which exist because of the actions and ideas of human beings, take on a life outside of the people that create them.⁵³ As with Hegel, Marx viewed civil society as a form of alienation, a division between the human being as conscious creator and the society he created/inhabited. It was to balance the relationship between the family, that is, the personal sphere, and civil society, the relations that existed between different people within the society, that the state emerged. And it was in taking part in the state's existence, in voting, for example, that the human being was able to bridge the gap between civil society and political society. If one was alienated from oneself as a creator of one's society, then taking power over

⁵¹ Marx, Karl, "Critique of Hegel's *Philosophy of Right*," in *Karl Marx: Selected Writings*, 2nd Edition, edited by David McLellan (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000), 34-35.

⁵² Ibid., 34.

⁵³ Ibid., 34-5.

that society through the state was the way to reach a synthesis between the opposing forces in the relationship of person, family, and society.⁵⁴ That Marx viewed civil society as being a form of political society is likely a result of Hegel's focus on the state as the balance between an immoral realm outside the immediate family and the family as the moral guide for the individual.

Marx shifts his focus, however, from the political realm and the idea of the state to the economy, with the "Theses on Feuerbach," "On the Jewish Question," and the *Economic and Philosophical Manuscripts of 1844*. The former emerged as Marx was beginning to leave behind the Young Hegelian movement and branch out on his own.⁵⁵ The latter was an unpublished document in which Marx struggled to come to terms with his previous attachment to Hegel's idealism.⁵⁶

A brief note on Feuerbach's arguments will help to illustrate Marx's thought at this point. Feuerbach was one of the various students and disciples of Hegel in Germany who tended towards liberal or radical leftist interpretations of Hegel's writing. Feuerbach rejected some of Hegel's ideas, and in particular, "inverted" Hegel's ideas.⁵⁷ Feuerbach argued that, instead of an alienation from the ideas which we create, as in Hegel's thought, and instead of viewing these ideas as the dialectical process that history followed, man's alienation from his own labour and from the things that he is able to consciously create leads human beings to seek to reclaim themselves in their labour.⁵⁸ Feuerbach rejected "Hegelian... consciousness in which spirit is alienated from itself and striving to transcend its alienation," arguing it was "nothing but a fantasy reflection, a mystical representation of the condition of man in the real world."⁵⁹ Instead

⁵⁴ Ibid., 39-41.

⁵⁵ Althusser, *The Humanist Controversy*, 244.

⁵⁶ Ibid., 230-231.

⁵⁷ Ibid., 234-237.

⁵⁸ Ibid., 240-242.

⁵⁹ Tucker, Robert C., *Philosophy and Myth in Karl Marx* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1961, 1972),

of arguing that spirit was the alienated consciousness of God or ‘the Idea,’ seeking to transcend the conditions of its own alienation through history, Feuerbach argued that human beings had created God as the mental incarnation of their own alienated selves. Human beings were no longer in control of the things they created (such as God), and thus alienated from a key part of themselves. Marx inherited much from Feuerbach: It is from Feuerbach, and others of the Left Hegelian movement, that Marx inherited the idea of examining the material conditions in which human beings live instead of the spirit or philosophy, and the idea that alienation is a part of the way human consciousness understands itself and the world around itself.⁶⁰

This conflict over material conditions was the dialectical relationship Marx set out to examine. Instead of the Spirit as the subject/agent of history, Marx put human beings in the role of agent in the dialectical process.⁶¹ Marx argued, for example, that “religion does not make man, but man makes religion,” or that human beings make the constitution of a state, the constitution does not make them.⁶² In the “Critique of Hegel’s Philosophy of Right,” Marx criticizes Hegel’s argument that the state is the objective agent that determines what human beings are in a given society. He follows Feuerbach’s argument that, instead, it is human beings that create the state, that it is a social object alienated from themselves. He argues that the “first premise of all human history is, of course, the existence of living human individuals.”⁶³ The only reason that human society exists in any context is because human beings began to produce their own subsistence.⁶⁴ This act of creating our own subsistence creates an imbalance in power in society, between those who have ownership over the means of producing such subsistence and those who do not, and

96-7.

⁶⁰ Althusser, *The Humanist Controversy*, 241.

⁶¹ *Ibid.*, 249.

⁶² Marx, “Critique of Hegel’s Philosophy of Right,” 34.

⁶³ Marx, Karl, *The German Ideology*, in *Karl Marx: Selected Writings*, 2nd Edition, edited by David McLellan (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000), 176.

therefore the struggle known as class conflict. In time, Marx came to focus on the specific structure of the economy, how it evolved over time, and how its internal contradictions defined how society evolved. This second model is what I argue defines the determinist model, but more on this issue later. For now, it is enough to show the reader the arguments at the heart of his early writings, and from there to provide a basic definition of the humanist Marxist dialectical model. Let us turn to this now.

The “Theses on Feuerbach” represents Marx’s rejection of Feuerbach. While he maintained some of the ideas Feuerbach ‘lent’ him, he rejected Feuerbach’s teleology-- Feuerbach’s theory never properly explained how it was that human beings were alienated from their labour, themselves, and their societies. Feuerbach simply says that it humans were so alienated.⁶⁵ The “Theses” are to the Early Marx what the later “Preface to a Contribution to a Critique of Political Economy” are to the later Marx: in many respects, they sum up the ideas that Marx would later flesh out in the unpublished *Economic Manuscripts*. The individual is not an abstract concept, Marx argued. Every individual lives in a specific social context, a particular society.⁶⁶ The point, for Marx, is to understand the material condition of human beings and society, and then to translate this knowledge into *praxis*, into action.⁶⁷ All human beings and human activity are part of revolutionary practice, that is, acting in their societies, human beings change their societies. Instead of simply providing an understanding of the alienation of humanity from its labour, and from itself in society, the point was to see how this alienation and humanity’s consciousness of it created change in the system. Thus “the philosophers have only

⁶⁴ Ibid., 177.

⁶⁵ Althusser, *Humanist Controversy*, 242.

⁶⁶ Marx, Karl, “Theses on Feuerbach.” in *The Marx-Engels Reader*, 2nd Edition, edited by Robert C. Tucker (New York: WW Norton & Company, 1978), 145.

⁶⁷ Marx, Karl, “Theses on Feuerbach,” in *Karl Marx: Selected Writings*, 2nd Edition, edited by David McLellan (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000), 172.

interpreted the world, in various ways; the point is to change it.”⁶⁸ Human beings act upon their societies with every action they take, and it is those actions that drive social change over time.

Marx’s work “On the Jewish Question” is more than a bit controversial. That Marx was Jewish makes his arguments seem more controversial: was it the anti-Semitic rant of a converted and self-hating Jew; was it satire; or was it a subtle attempt to attack German capitalism through a play on words? While I do not intend to wade too deeply into the debate, the fact that Marx was friends with Hess, a Jewish left-Hegelian, and that Judaism meant commerce in the colloquialisms of his time, suggests that Marx did not intend to be racist, although perhaps politically incorrect. This does not excuse the metaphor, by any means. Marx argued that what held the Jews back from emancipation was their attachment to the idol of money, and that money had become the god that man had created in his alienation from his own labour.⁶⁹ As long as this subordination to money existed, neither Jew nor Christian could ever truly be free. One can argue that the whole text was an extended metaphor for the effect of capitalism on both bourgeoisie and proletariat, but due to the controversial nature of the metaphor, I shall leave the text behind with only one further comment. It is here, and in the other early writings, that Marx’s humanism and socialism emerges: so long as all human beings continued to be alienated from themselves due to commerce, money, and the division of labour, no human being could truly be free until all were free of that alienation. Marx argues that by creating a god out of money that human beings have created a social structure over which they no longer have any control. To be free requires human beings to understand that they have created money as a new god, and to reject it, among other things. It is here that Marx’s concept of alienation emerges. He defines alienation as when human beings come to associate value with an object they have created,

⁶⁸ Ibid., 173.

above and beyond what it actually is: money, for example, is no longer just currency, it becomes something of worth in and of itself, and is almost worshipped as a form of god. I shall, of course, discuss alienation in greater depth in chapter four, but for now, this shall suffice as a working definition.

The *Economic and Philosophic Manuscripts of 1844* are more in depth, and remained unpublished until after Marx's death. It is in the *Manuscripts* that Marx, along with Engels, begins to challenge the idealism of Hegel's thought. In particular, Marx was trying to determine how it was that the economy affected other aspects of society.⁷⁰ Marx presupposes the idea of the division of labour and other liberal economic ideas (labour theory of value, for instance). For Marx, the more one worked, the more one was stuck within a certain division of labour that divorces the labourer from the things that labourer creates.⁷¹ Instead of owning the object that the agent creates, the object of one's labour becomes a separate thing from the agent. This object takes on a life and a value of its own, above and beyond what its creator gave to it. This is alienation. The division of mental and manual labour is a further division of humanity from what Marx defines as humanity's 'species-being.' At the risk of enraging Marx's ghost, this species-being is, in a way, his definition of human nature: human beings are defined as different from the majority of animals in that our actions are conscious, and in that we create the means of our own subsistence.⁷² We can, as opposed to other animals, conceptualize the actions we take. Labour, particularly but not exclusively in capitalism, divides human beings from this human nature, in that humans are forced by the division of labour within society to work for survival, as opposed

⁶⁹ Tucker, *Philosophy and Myth in Karl Marx*, 111-112.

⁷⁰ Marx, Karl, *Economic and Philosophic Manuscripts of 1844*, in *The Marx-Engels Reader*, 2nd Edition, edited by Robert C. Tucker (New York: WW Norton & Company, 1978), 67.

⁷¹ *Ibid.*, 72.

⁷² *Ibid.*, 74-76.

to a free, self-conscious activity.⁷³ In addition, however, human beings act to create the society in which they live: the manner in which they act to resolve the various needs they have--food, shelter, procreation, and so forth--create social structures like the state, the economy, gender, the family, and so forth. Not all of these social structures are created consciously: the choice to grow wheat as opposed to rice may be due to the farmer's understanding that he will have more success with wheat in his area of the world, as opposed to the desire to create an agricultural economy based on wheat production. In making that choice, however, the worker both A) is able to consciously plan out his own actions with regards to whether or not it will be successful, how he will implement the grain growing on his farm, and so forth, and B) takes an action that helps shape the society around him.

This is particularly true in the case of the factory worker, whose work is anything but mental. The factory worker may be able to conceptualize the product that the factory will produce, but his or her job is simply to push a button. The factory worker may help build the product, but he or she does not own that product. This alienation from the thing that one creates is present in all societies, so long as private property exists.⁷⁴ And since the factory worker takes part in a form of social contract with his employer, he creates a social structure and helps shape the structure of society itself into a wage-labour economy. Even Communism, whatever form it may take, will not be truly free from alienation until private property and the division of labour no longer divide human beings from the things that they make with their own hands.⁷⁵ Private property divides human beings from each other, separating ownership into those who have and those who do not. In Marx's ideal world, labour and property would be collectively owned, to

⁷³ Ibid., 76-77.

⁷⁴ Ibid., 82-4.

⁷⁵ Ibid., 84.

allow the labour of all to be owned by all.⁷⁶ So long as a human being owes her existence to another human being, that person is neither free nor fully human.⁷⁷ Whether this would resolve the conflict of alienation is, frankly, debatable--it is possible that even collective ownership would still separate a human being from the object he or she creates in some way.

More importantly, Marx argues that it is through a dialectical model that cognition can be understood.⁷⁸ When we study a thing, we not only study the thing, but the concept of that thing.⁷⁹ We understand the object as being separate from the self, and can recognize ourselves as being both a subject and object: we are subjects in that we are able to examine the world around ourselves, and objects in that other subjects can study us as well.⁸⁰ Marx argued that this understanding of the self as subject and object was self-consciousness.⁸¹ This cognitive process also explains the humanist concept of social evolution. Society is a series of structures that are built as human beings develop ways of resolving their various needs. The need for food results in a production system designed to resolve that need, while the need for order results in the state. Humans endow these social structures with a value and power outside of what they are in our own minds. Whereas the state exists as a result of human actions that create rules for society, it comes to be seen as having a value and power in and of itself, even though human beings had created it. Humanist Marxism is an attempt by Marx, and others, to conceptualize alienation, and how alienation occurs in society and social structures. Furthermore, the humanist conception of Marxism allows the thinker to understand how various societies have changed over time as human beings attempt to resolve their needs and the conflicts caused by alienation of the self and

⁷⁶ Ibid., 85.

⁷⁷ Ibid., 91.

⁷⁸ Ibid., 84.

⁷⁹ Ibid., 124.

⁸⁰ Ibid, 116-117.

⁸¹ Ibid., 117.

of the social whole.

With this in mind, we can at last define the humanist dialectic as the young Marx saw it. In this version of the dialectic, it is humanity that creates society and the structure of the economy, not the other way around. There are two aspects to the dialectical process for the young Marx. The first is the conceptual process we have already described, in which the subject (human) interacts with the object (whatever he/she observes) and assigns to the objects being studied a value that is later perceived to be intrinsic to the object in and of itself beyond the object's original definition and/or use (alienation). This dialectical model helped Marx to describe how human beings come to understand the world around them, and to be changed by their experiences of that world. The other aspect of the dialectical model examines society. Unlike Marx's later, more economic model, for the younger Marx, the dialectical process as it applied to society had to do with the way human beings shaped society. In this, the human being enters into society as a conscious, creative being (remembering Marx's idea of species-being).⁸² Human beings have given needs. To resolve those needs, people create methods by which they can resolve those needs--these methods become social structures through the process of alienation: what once were simple methods of production eventually come to be seen as structures over which human beings have little to no control and which are imbued with a power that they would not otherwise have. The various methods of production create a division of labour, as each individual takes on certain tasks. We are assigned certain roles in the division of labour created by the methods of production of that society: in capitalism, for example, one is made into a labourer, or a manager, or what-have-you. The division of labour in capitalism is but one manner in which human beings can resolve their needs in society. But the result is a human

⁸² Ibid., 113-115

being who is less than what Marx's ideal human being is: in capitalism, the labourer is a machine, not a human being, and is alienated from himself.⁸³

The conceptual model Marx developed helps to explain the change in the social model of the dialectic. Human beings can naturally see things as objects, and identify themselves as subjects. But for Marx, this process was dialectical, that is, in so doing, the human being is aware of the difference between herself and the object.⁸⁴ And since we are also able to understand ourselves as objects, we are able to identify ourselves as alienated beings.⁸⁵ Once we come to understand this alienation, we can struggle to change both the alienated objects and the social systems we have created and that are now divorced from us. One can annul alienation through action that is conscious of the causes of that alienation.⁸⁶ Marx would spend the rest of his life trying to determine how this process would occur, specifically in the rejection of capitalism.

Marx's later works are founded on this basic humanism. The heart of the problem with capitalism is an alienated human being, struggling to understand his own alienation and to overcome it. Something that should be remembered, however, is Marx's concern about Hegel: the dialectical model is an abstraction of what is. The real world is made up of real objects, but our understanding, our conceptual model, is dialectical.⁸⁷ Marx may have lost sight of this at times, but later Marxists, including his friend Engels, took the dialectical model and applied it to everything, assuming that the world itself operated by the laws uncovered by their own theories. For the young Marx, and even in some of the writing of the later Marx, this was seen as a fallacy. It was through the use of a dialectical model that one could understand oneself, and the society in which one lived. This knowledge allowed one to act more effectively in society to change the

⁸³ Ibid., 114.

⁸⁴ Ibid., 116-117.

⁸⁵ Ibid., 116-117.

⁸⁶ Ibid., 117-120.

social structures around oneself: by being aware of the way that they have been formed. The resulting effects could be measured through the dialectic. But the action of praxis would also create changes in the system one measured, and in the self. The dialectic of the humanist Marx was ever-changing, ever in flux. While there was a kernel of stability present in Marx's concept of the human animal as a conscious creator, his idea of human beings suggests that we are constantly in flux because our understanding of ourselves and our equally unstable social world, is always changing.

I comment further on this version of Marxist dialectics in the fourth chapter. There, I provide more depth to the concept of alienation, to the humanist dialectic and human agency, to the epistemological break, and to the difference between Feuerbachian and humanist Marxism. For now, let us turn to the later Marx, and thence to Engels and those who followed in both men's footsteps, in order to see how the dialectic evolved from its humanist roots into something entirely different.

III.B The Later Marx

After 1844, Marx began to examine in more depth the economic basis of capitalism: what it was, how it was formed, and where it was likely to go. Part of the reason for the shift was undoubtedly the continual expulsions he faced from various countries. It is easy to write a theory that suggests capitalism may be short-lived, but the concern for Marx rapidly became determining how it would fall. That Marx was continually removed from his place of residence, and forced to live in England under the deepest poverty, undoubtedly had an impact on his ideas. Another part of the transition may have been the presence of Friedrich Engels. I do not wish to suggest that Engels attempted to sabotage or deliberately misrepresent Marxism, but it is quite

⁸⁷ Ibid., 123-124.

likely that Engel's editing and later work created a different translation of Marx's ideas than perhaps Marx himself might have envisioned.⁸⁸

At any rate, as Marx aged, and took part in the various workers' movements of his time, he continued to write and attempt to formulate a theory of the transition from capitalism to socialism. Where his early theories seem to focus more on the relationship of the human being to his social environment, the later theories focus far more on the structure of that social environment. While elements of his earlier humanism remain, the shift towards 'scientific socialism,' that which I here call determinism, had begun.

The shift had begun in some respects as early as *The Holy Family*, but the real 'coming out' of the new vision of socialism was, of course, *The Communist Manifesto*. *The Holy Family* takes aim at Proudhon and political economy, both of which Marx accuses as taking private property as a given.⁸⁹ The idea of alienation continued to be of importance to Marx,⁹⁰ as the rage that it engendered in the proletariat would act like a goad to the workers as part of the freedom of all of humanity--since the proletariat were directly exploited in this economic system, and since the system itself was based on economic exploitation, the only way the system could resolve its own contradictions was the eradication of all economic exploitation.⁹¹ Again, we can see the break with Feuerbach and Hegel, here: "ideas can never lead beyond an old-world system but only beyond the ideas of the old-world system."⁹² Whereas Feuerbach and Hegel may have believed that the act of realizing the existence of alienating leads to change in and of itself, for

⁸⁸ For a further discussion of the subject of Engels, see Frederick Bender, *The Betrayal of Marx*, particularly his introduction. He argues that Engels' version of socialism and the dialectic was an ontological argument that reality itself operated on dialectical, absolute laws that could be determined by human reason (p 24-29). Marx may have disagreed. I touch on Engels shortly, but further examination of his contribution and impact on Marxist theory is an extremely broad subject which the present text cannot but briefly touch upon.

⁸⁹ Marx, Karl, "The Holy Family," in *Karl Marx: Selected Writings*, 2nd Edition, edited by David McLellan (Oxford, Oxford University Press, 2000), 146.

⁹⁰ *Ibid.*, 148-9.

Marx, that realization was only the first step.

The second step was the transformation of the material conditions in which humanity lived and worked. The *Manifesto* and the “Preface to a Contribution to the Critique of Political Economy” summarize this new focus quite well. Marx’s youthful concern with the way the human mind dealt with the world around him, with alienation and its impact, is now blended into an economic analysis of capitalism and all societies. “All history is that of class struggle,” all societies have class and class struggle, and understanding this can lead to an understanding of how societies change.⁹³ Marx’s argument in the *Manifesto* was no longer that the human being in society necessarily transformed the society, it was that the society would be changed by economic necessity. The bourgeoisie’s exploitation of the proletariat creates the seeds of the system’s own destruction, as the capitalists use the workers as part of the industrial process that dehumanizes those workers.⁹⁴ Their training in the workplace gives the proletariat the knowledge they need to gain ownership over the products they manufacture--in some ways resolving the alienation Marx first affirmed in his youth. So far, Marx appears to maintain a humanist perspective.

And yet, it is the material conditions of society that conditions the consciousness of the men (and one presumes, women) living in that society, Marx wrote in the “Preface.”⁹⁵ The material conditions of society, Marx thought, were the arrangements by which society provided for the basic needs of all human beings. How a society divides the labour that is necessary to

⁹¹ Ibid., p. 149.

⁹² Ibid., p. 161.

⁹³ Marx, Karl, and Friedrich Engels, *Manifesto of the Communist Party*, in *Karl Marx: Selected Writings*, 2nd Edition, edited by David McLellan (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000), 246.

⁹⁴ Ibid., 251-255.

⁹⁵ Marx, Karl, “Preface to a Critique of Political Economy,” in *Karl Marx: Selected Writings*, 2nd Edition, edited by David McLellan (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000), 425.

provide for these needs determines the structure of the society itself.⁹⁶ It is no longer the conscious creator that Marx envisions as the determinant of human existence, it is the social structure that creates the human being. Upon the economic base of society rests a social, political, and ideological superstructure, in which the members of the society engage in conflict over the control of the base.⁹⁷ “At a certain stage of their development,” Marx writes, “the material productive forces of society come in conflict with the existing relations of production, or--what is but a legal expression for the same thing--with the property relations within which they have been at work hitherto.”⁹⁸ The very structure of the society, the manner in which society resolves the needs of its members, comes into conflict with the property relations that this division of labour creates, and the ensuing conflict leads to a revolutionary transformation of the society. A new base emerges, and a new superstructure rests atop the new order. Gone is the creative human being from the centre of Marx’s theory, although she makes her return at the end of history in communism, where each human being is a creative individual, an artist in the morning and a labourer at night.⁹⁹ Replacing her is the social structure based on the economy. Humanism is replaced with economic determinism.

Marx is not so vulgar about this determinism as some of his followers. He retains the sense that it is the human beings within society who must resolve the tensions engendered by the clash of the division of labour with the ownership of the economy. But the human labourer is no longer the agent of history, he is swept up in the machinery and production system within which he lives.¹⁰⁰ Marx tried to balance his analysis of the economic base of a social structure, the form

⁹⁶ Ibid.

⁹⁷ Ibid., 425-426.

⁹⁸ Ibid., 425.

⁹⁹ Marx, *The German Ideology*, 185.

¹⁰⁰ Marx, Karl, *Grundrisse*, in *Karl Marx: Selected Writings*, 2nd Edition, edited by David McLellan (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000), 414-415.

which it takes, and the human individuals who act within that system. But his later works still put forward a deterministic view of human social existence.

In the *Grundrisse*, written before *Capital*, it is the act of production that starts the process of creating commodities, for without production there is no commodity.¹⁰¹ And the production of a commodity is a dialectical process, for the production process not only creates the commodity, but the very act of creating a product in a society based on the division of labour creates the proletariat as such.¹⁰² Whereas in previous societies, workers used tools, the creation of the machinery of modern society transforms a creative, individual action of production into a new form--modern capitalism and industrial labour.¹⁰³ The alienation that results is that of a human being that has, instead of being the conscious creator that Marx envisioned in his youth, become a cog in a vast productive machine. Tool-based labour in previous societies resulted in human beings who were conscious creators of the products they made with their own hands. Machinery, Marx argued, was explicitly designed so that it would produce something for another human being's ownership: the capitalist owned the whole process of labour.¹⁰⁴ Instead of being a conscious creator who must simply part with his own product, the proletariat is divorced from his role as a conscious creator to begin with in capitalism.

In *Capital*, his final major work, Marx continues to retain the concept of alienation, adapting it to the commodities that he studies. It is a thing external to us that satisfies our wants.¹⁰⁵ But the commodity is the basis of the system of capitalism, a thing that has an value in

¹⁰¹ Marx, *Grundrisse*, 384.

¹⁰² *Ibid.*, 385.

¹⁰³ *Ibid.*, 408.

¹⁰⁴ *Ibid.*, 413.

¹⁰⁵ Marx, Karl, *Capital*, Volume I, in *Karl Marx: Selected Writings*, 2nd Edition, edited by David McLellan (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000), 458.

exchange for other commodities.¹⁰⁶ Capital itself takes on a life of its own, outside of the people who create it.¹⁰⁷ To sustain capital, value must be infused into commodities, and it is labour that creates this value.¹⁰⁸ I will refrain from an in-depth discussion of the concept of surplus labour value here, except to provide a basic sense of Marx's economic theory. Essentially, Marx argued that the only way for capitalism to derive a profit from labour was surplus labour, that is, labour above and beyond the basic requirement to produce enough commodities to balance out the cost of production (machinery, labour, and so forth). The latter would only balance things out, but the capitalist would soon find him or herself out of business as others profited. The means of profit came from extracting more work from the labourer than he was paid for. One can argue the validity of this model outside industrial labour, and outside capitalism, of course, but it remains a basic point: if one does not make more money than one puts in to the production of a commodity, one will not long survive as a capitalist!¹⁰⁹ Marx argued that production would reach a point where labour was no longer able to provide enough value to handle the rising costs of production and that capitalism would no longer be able to make profit (the tendency of the rate of profit to fall). The result of this tendency was a series of economic crises, at which point the system itself might be changed via a revolution of sorts.¹¹⁰

Again, the shift towards economic determinism is present, here. While the labourer may be alienated from the work he puts into capitalist industry, while capital itself may be alienated from the people who created it in the first place, the capitalist is the system personified.¹¹¹ He functions according to the dictates of the role he is made to play by the system in which he lives,

¹⁰⁶ Ibid., 459-460.

¹⁰⁷ Ibid., 487.

¹⁰⁸ Ibid., 489.

¹⁰⁹ Ibid., 500-510.

¹¹⁰ Marx, Karl, *Capital*, Volume III, in *Karl Marx: Selected Writings*, 2nd Edition, edited by David McLellan (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000), 527-529.

not independently of the laws of capitalism. The proletariat's wages, the price of their labour, has nothing to do with labour as an agent in production, it is instead a function of the surplus value that must be created in order for capitalism to survive.¹¹² Revolutions do not occur at the behest of the proletariat, they happen as a result of the mechanism of capitalism, its tendency to lose wealth without constant expansion.¹¹³

And yet, there was always tension in Marx's writing between the economic system that 'determined' human consciousness within that system, and the human as a conscious producer of her own existence. *Capital's* productive agent exists within that economic system, alienated from his labour and from his own productive power due to the division of labour: one's labour has no value in capitalism except as a product,¹¹⁴ and the proletarian, instead of producing her needs for herself, instead must sell her labour on the market in order to survive. Instead of the individual producer as the agent of history, Marx argues that value and the system are socially created.¹¹⁵

This tension between the economic determinism found in the "Preface," in *Capital*, and in other later works by Marx, and the humanism of the earlier dialectical model, continued throughout all of Marx's life. Marx's economic analysis provides a framework that allows for social analysis, and yet it reduces the process of social change to shifts in the economic form of society. Marx's humanist arguments lack the depth of his later works--primarily because he shifted towards a more economic point of view-- but implied that even in a social structure, the way that societies changed depended on the action of the members of that society: how they resolved the alienation created by the social structure was the determinant factor, not the social structure.

¹¹¹ Ibid., 534.

¹¹² Ibid., 537.

¹¹³ Ibid., 526-527.

¹¹⁴ Marx, *Capital*, Volume I, 469.

One potential criticism of the summary thus far would be the argument that there was no epistemological break, that Marx continued to use the idea of alienation, perhaps implicitly, throughout his entire life and that his humanist arguments were present in his later works. Certainly, the presence of the concept of alienation in the *Grundrisse* might confirm this, and the “Preface” uses similar ideas. And yet, there is the break, explicitly stated by Marx himself in the *Economic and Philosophical Manuscripts* in 1844, and in the Preface in 1858-9. If Marx himself did not think there was such a break, why mention it?

To give the problem its due requires me to overcome two different issues with regards to the later Marx: first, whether or not the humanist element was present, and second, if it was present, why am I arguing there is a difference between the young and old Marx? Was the humanist element no longer dominant, perhaps? Certainly, some of Marx’s later work includes elements of humanism. I have already discussed them above, and will spare the reader too much rehearsal of my summary, but the *Grundrisse*, *Capital*, the Preface, and the “German Ideology” all have elements of humanism in them. Certainly, Marx did not completely abandon his earlier work.

First, the difference between the young and old Marx is striking. In the *Manuscripts*, the “Theses on Feuerbach,” and his youthful writings, the emphasis is on the human agent. The dialectical model of the young Marx is a conceptual model that describes how the human being interacts with his world, and how that interaction shapes his society. The later Marx’s model is how society shapes the human being. Now, this may be something of a chicken-and-egg problem, since the dialectical model does not just leave the human being in isolation. By shaping his society, the human changes his own world and thus himself. And yet the human being is still

¹¹⁵ Ibid., 467.

the agent, for she can change the world again by her actions. The determinist model sees human beings as the embodiments of social forces.¹¹⁶ The capitalist personifies the capitalist system, while the proletariat embodies the antithesis of the capitalist. The emphasis is on the elements of the dialectical system--human beings-- as elements of a system, or a structure, and changes in the structure create new types of people. Gone is the emphasis on the human being as conscious creator of that structure. If the human being as conscious creator is present in the later Marx, she has been badly short-changed.

Secondly, if humanism is still present in the later Marx, it is in a very different form. At times, Marx seems conscious of this problem, for why would a determinist model need any one element of the system to lead a revolution, or any form of change for that matter? The message of the *Communist Manifesto*, delivered as a call to arms to the workers of Belgium, would surely not have been necessary. There is, then, something of a paradox within Marx's writings, a tension that continues in most later Marxist writing: if the dialectical model is deterministic, then there is nothing to be done except wait for the inevitable change. And yet, there is the need for agency to push the transition along. But Marx's later model, and the determinist Marxism that follows the line of reasoning of the later writings, assumes that a system's own internal contradictions would lead to its dissolution, and the creation of a new social order. This, then, is the epistemological break within Marx's writing: his transition from a humanist model to the determinist model. This break is crucial, as the two models are entirely incompatible: either human agents cause changes in society, or the internal contradictions inherent in a structure cause those changes. I will comment further on the determinist model in chapter three, but for now, let us continue our review.

¹¹⁶ Marx, *Capital*, Volume III, 534.

IV. Interpreters

Marxists who followed Marx would contend with this dichotomy in their own way. Marx himself appears to have tried to balance the tension between the two models of the dialectic--humanism intrudes in the determinist later model, to some extent, and the early model is not completely mindless of the effect of society on the human agent within that society. However, the transition to a deterministic model was helped along in many ways by the writing of Friedrich Engels and later writers, to whom we turn now.

IV.A. Friedrich Engels

Engels' version of the dialectic was, of course, influenced by his proximity to Marx. Engels had a great impact on Marx as both his friend and collaborator, and especially as an editor of his work. Engels had read Hegel as had Marx, but where the young Marx applied Hegelian dialectics as Hegel intended (a conceptual model), Engels began to see the dialectic as an ontology ('that which *is*'). Where Marx asked 'how do we understand the real world?' and answered with a dialectical model, Engels sought to answer the question "what is the real world?"¹¹⁷ The fact that Engels came, in time, to defend Marx's arguments against Mikhail Bakunin and others,¹¹⁸ put him in the interesting position of creating what was considered orthodox Marxism after Marx died.

Engels argued that the basis for all social change was to be found in the mode of production and changes in it.¹¹⁹ The dialectic of Hegel, Engels argued, and that of Marx sought to examine

¹¹⁷ Levine, Norma, *Dialogue within the Dialectic*, (London: George Allen & Unwisch Publishers, Ltd., 1984), 10.

¹¹⁸ *Ibid.*, 20-21.

¹¹⁹ Engels, Friedrich, "Socialism: Utopian and Scientific" in *The Marx-Engels Reader*, 2nd Edition, edited by Robert C. Tucker (New York: WW Norton & Company, 1972/1979), 701.

changes in society over the course of history.¹²⁰ Engels believed his dialectical model was accurate: science had, in his mind, shown that the basis for dialectics was that organisms shed and gained atoms from their environment, and that all reality was reducible to atoms moving against one another in a “dialectical” fashion.¹²¹ The scientific model of socialism saw history as a process of human evolution, and analyzed the conflict between classes in the economy which would drive social change.¹²² The proletariat and the capitalist played their roles within this dialectical process in the current epoch, and the economic base of society was, in his famous words, “in the final element” the determining factor of social change.¹²³ The very first division of labour in human society was that caused by child bearing and rearing.¹²⁴ This division leads to the creation of the patriarchal family, and thus to the “first form of slavery:” that of husband and wife.¹²⁵ This first division of labour is one of the first principles upon which the division of people into classes occurs, Engels argued.

That there is a change from Marx to Engels should be readily apparent, but this requires a hammer-blow to drive the point home: Marx, especially in his youth, but also to a certain degree in his later years, established that his dialectical model was conceptual: it was a tool to examine the world and how human beings might understand it, particularly the society in which one lived. However, Engels argued for an ontological dialectical model, one that explained the way the world actually worked. To Engels, history, society, and economics followed the laws established by the dialectical model.¹²⁶

¹²⁰ Ibid., 694.

¹²¹ Ibid., 696-7.

¹²² Ibid., 698.

¹²³ Ibid., 760-1.

¹²⁴ Engels, Friedrich, “The Origin of the Family, Private Property, and the State,” in *The Marx-Engel’s Reader*, 2nd Edition, edited by Robert C. Tucker (New York: WW Norton & Company, 1972/1979), 739-740.

¹²⁵ Ibid., 737.

¹²⁶ Bender, Frederick, *The Betrayal of Marx* (Toronto: Harper and Row Publishers, Inc, 1975), 21-24, 28-9.

IV.B. Karl Kautsky

Kautsky wrote in Germany towards the end of the 19th Century, and continued writing in exile during the Nazi period all the way until the end of the 1930s during the rise of Stalin in Russia.¹²⁷ Like Marx, Kautsky argues that it is the economic structure, the manner in which society handles the production necessary to deal with basic needs (food, shelter, sex, etc.), that determines society's organization as a whole.¹²⁸ Kautsky argued that the demand for commodities that resolve these and other needs--and eventually, wants-- required "a form of production which could and would adapt itself to the demand; in other words, a form absolutely in command of the merchants."¹²⁹ Again, it is not the human agent who creates the social order, it is the social order that creates the people within it: the labourer's work defines him as member of the proletariat.¹³⁰ And since the proletariat play the role of opposition to the capitalists, the dominant class, only they can oppose the capitalists and defeat them.¹³¹ The only way to end any of the exploitation that occurs within capitalism is to abolish the system itself.¹³² Human agents within the system play the role that society puts them in; unlike in the humanist Marxist approach, it is not conscious agents that create the social world in which they live, it is economics. But the social relations of power, Kautsky argues, transform productive processes and vice versa.¹³³ Thus, the political and ideological 'superstructure' of a society does have an impact on the economic base. This allows Kautsky to argue that human action is necessary to change society in his defense of

¹²⁷ Hook, Sydney, introduction to *Social Democracy vs. Communism*, by Karl Kautsky, edited and translated by David Shub and Joseph Shaplen (Westport: Hyperion Press, 1990), 7.

¹²⁸ Kautsky, Karl, *The Class Struggle (Erfurt Program)*, translated by William E. Bohn, (New York: WW Norton & Company, 1971), 9-10.

¹²⁹ Ibid., 15.

¹³⁰ Ibid., 19-20.

¹³¹ Ibid., 159.

¹³² Ibid., 24.

¹³³ Kautsky, Karl, *The Economic Doctrines of Karl Marx*, translated by H.J. Stenning (London: A&C Black, Ltd., 1925), 4.

democratic reform as opposed to Lenin's and Rosa Luxemburg's support for revolutionary activity. However, the division of labour, the way in which labourers are divided into various social tasks to produce commodities and goods, occurs without conscious or unconscious agency on the part of the labourers.¹³⁴

At times, Kautsky implies that it is human beings who determine the course of the process of history. Kautsky argued that the workers were required to change the system, something that implies that they have a role to play as more than simply the embodiment of social forces. Towards the end of his life, his perspective appears to have become much more closely aligned to humanism. Kautsky argues in *Social Democracy versus Communism* that Marx and Engels wanted to determine the way that economic society evolves,¹³⁵ but he also points out that Marxism as an argument is an interpretation of how human beings understand the world.¹³⁶ Lenin and Stalin's Marxism, Kautsky believes, is based on a determinism that "would mean making the emancipation of the workers dependent upon historical accidents," since the only way that change in the social order occurs in the economic determinist account of Marxism is when the proletariat rebels against capitalism in times of crisis.¹³⁷ It is Kautsky's argument that this takes away from the workers, and from Marxism, denying both the usefulness of democratic reform and the possibility of useful action on the part of the workers outside of crises.

IV.C. Karl Korsch

Korsch, like Kautsky, was forced to flee Germany during the rise of the Nazi party to power. Korsch ended up in America, where he continued to write until his death.¹³⁸ He was concerned,

¹³⁴ Ibid., 9-11.

¹³⁵ Kautsky, Karl, *Social Democracy vs. Communism*, edited and translated by David Shub & Joseph Shaplen (Westport: Hyperion Press, 1990), 24-5.

¹³⁶ Ibid., 30.

¹³⁷ Ibid., 45.

¹³⁸ Introduction to Korsch, Karl, *Marxism and Philosophy* (London: New Left Books, 1970), 15.

like Kautsky, by the growing dogmatism and intolerance of the Soviets, and wrote *Marxism and Philosophy* as an attack on the Soviet Union's theory and practice.¹³⁹ Korsch argued that the 2nd Soviet International, having abandoned any discussion of Hegelian philosophy and dialectics, was therefore incapable of understanding the position of Marxism itself.¹⁴⁰ Since Hegel's dialectical model was the basis of Marx's position, understanding Hegel and earlier philosophy was the key to understanding Marx.¹⁴¹ Hegel's argument was an expression of the revolutionary activity of the bourgeoisie when they first arose and took power in society from the nobility.¹⁴² But the bourgeoisie, having power, no longer accepted revolutionary practice, and could therefore no longer understand dialectics, that is, the theory of transition and revolution.¹⁴³ Since dialectics was, in Korsch's argument, the relationship of a given thought or perspective and actions that resulted from it vs. a set of thoughts/perspectives and actions in contrast to it, the position of Marxism could only be understood as the position of the proletariat in opposition to Hegel and the bourgeoisie.¹⁴⁴ The bourgeoisie could not allow themselves to go any further philosophically than liberalism, and in practice no further than capitalism, for to do so would be to negate their own existence.¹⁴⁵ Marxism, and the movement of the proletariat, could move further as it represented something dialectically opposed to the current, bourgeois and capitalist, position.

The dialectical model for Korsch was, in some respects, humanist: it was an attempt to understand how it was that human beings saw the world around them at a given moment in time, and how they could act to change it in that moment in time. And yet, Korsch is essentially

¹³⁹ Ibid., 13-15.

¹⁴⁰ Korsch, Karl, *Marxism and Philosophy* (London: New Left Books, 1970), 36.

¹⁴¹ Ibid.

¹⁴² Introduction to Korsch, 12.

¹⁴³ Korsch, *Marxism and Philosophy*, 40.

¹⁴⁴ Ibid., 42-44.

arguing that one can only understand a position within the dialectical system if one occupies that position, that is, if it is the way that one understands the actions one takes in a given social system. If ever that system is transformed into something new, a new position must be taken up to explain the changes.

IV.D. Rosa Luxemburg

Rosa Luxemburg, like Lenin, believed firmly in the need for revolutionary activity. In some ways, however, she appears to lean further towards determinism than Kautsky. Luxemburg was, from the beginning, at odds with the establishment within the Social Democratic Party, particularly with Bernstein (a reformist) but also with Kautsky.¹⁴⁶ *Reform or Revolution* was written during Luxemburg's first few years in Germany, as an attack on Bernstein.¹⁴⁷ The book is interesting for the purposes of this paper in that it briefly touches on the ideas of agency and dialectics. She accused Bernstein of breaking with Marxism and with Marxism's 'scientific' socialism.¹⁴⁸ Bernstein, she argued, was incorrect in asserting that capitalism's adaptability meant that no real crisis would ever occur--since crises were, in the orthodoxy of Marxism at the time, the key moments when a revolution might occur--and as a result, his position that socialism should concentrate on slower, reform-based moves and work within capitalism to make the system better for the poor and working classes struck her as being non-Marxist.¹⁴⁹ Instead, Luxemburg argued that scientific socialist theory believed that it was through these crises and revolutionary activity that the transition to socialism would occur.¹⁵⁰ The social organization of

¹⁴⁵ Ibid., 40.

¹⁴⁶ Waters, Mary-Alice, introduction to *Reform or Revolution?* by Rosa Luxemburg (New York: Pathfinder Press, 1970/1973), 5-6.

¹⁴⁷ Ibid.

¹⁴⁸ Luxemburg, Rosa, *Reform or Revolution?* (New York: Pathfinder Press, 1970/1973), 10.

¹⁴⁹ Ibid., 10-11.

¹⁵⁰ Ibid., 12.

capitalism, and the way it would be transcended, was “dialectical,”¹⁵¹ in that the capitalist system and its parts, as an organic whole, could not survive the loss of its parts and remain capitalism.¹⁵² Thus Bernstein’s reforms could only mitigate conflicts within capitalism, not resolve them. Luxemburg displays a distinct tendency towards determinism here, in that these ‘crises’ of capitalism, not necessarily the actions of the workers themselves, would bring about the revolution. Certainly, the workers would have to act on these crises, taking advantage of them to change the social structure.¹⁵³ The workers would need to act on these crises. Yet, if the workers are seen as agents, it should not matter whether there is a crisis in capitalism for their actions to have an effect on the society in which they live. Instead, it is the social structure, the contradictions within capitalism, that determines when crises emerge, and thus when change can occur in society according to Luxemburg’s argument.

IV.E. Vladimir Ilyich Lenin

Lenin’s writing is often polemical, and is usually an attack on some socialist or anarchist writer or another for what Lenin perceived to be their--sometimes numerous--errors. Lenin at times embraces humanism in his calls for activism on the part of both workers and a political party, but at times shows a tendency towards determinism. Lenin wrote *What is to be Done* in part as an attack on ‘economism,’ which he saw as a tendency to see the transition to socialism as inevitable.¹⁵⁴ This sort of language makes classifying Lenin a humanist or determinist difficult. He wrote against economism throughout his career, and yet at the same time that he argues against economism and ‘spontaneity,’ or the idea of a revolution that would spontaneously occur at times of crises--Luxemburg’s position--Lenin also argued that the revolutionary movement

¹⁵¹ Ibid., 19.

¹⁵² Ibid., 33.

¹⁵³ Ibid., 54.

must call for action at times of outrage and crisis.¹⁵⁵ He argued that revolutionary leadership, the vanguard of the proletariat, would ensure that the movement did not act prematurely when the time was not right for a revolution.¹⁵⁶ Yet what determines the timing? On the one hand, the party serves as a humanist Marxist might see it. It acts as a conscious, albeit collective, agent made up of individual human beings, and has a role in creating the social structure around it. But, on the other hand, Lenin believed that there were “dialectically correct solutions” to “objective contradictions.”¹⁵⁷ Lenin argued that it is the productive systems that lie at the base of society that lead to “comprehensive socialization of production,” or the form the rest of society takes, not the actions of human agents.¹⁵⁸ The economic system, the way in which material needs are resolved, determines the structure of the society. The creation of organizations on the scale of the modern state and the modern corporation inherently socializes production because of the ownership of all productive processes by the few, creating the conditions necessary for the rise of the proletariat in opposition.¹⁵⁹

Furthermore, Lenin also argued that the economic role of the proletariat was what allows them to lead the class struggle.¹⁶⁰ The workers, being subjected to direct economic oppression, will, when they are in power, refuse to allow any power relations to dominate them.¹⁶¹ Yet it is not the agency--the choice-- of the workers that gives them this role, it is the economic conditions they face due to their being oppressed in a dialectical system. Only a change in the

¹⁵⁴ Lenin, V.I., *What is to be Done?* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1963), 25-6.

¹⁵⁵ *Ibid.*, 69-70.

¹⁵⁶ *Ibid.*, 127.

¹⁵⁷ Lukacs, Georg, *Lenin, the Unity of his Thought*, (London: New Left Books, 1970), 87.

¹⁵⁸ Lenin, V.I., *Imperialism: The Highest Stage of Capitalism*, (Peking: Foreign Languages Press, 1969), 25.

¹⁵⁹ *Ibid.*, 154-5.

¹⁶⁰ *Ibid.*, 23.

¹⁶¹ *Ibid.*, 23-25.

economic system will allow equality.¹⁶² However, if the economic system is seen as determining the structure of society, then there is no place for human agency in such a system. Human agency simply does not matter. Lenin, like many Marxists, is caught between both humanism and determinism, bouncing back and forth between both at various points in his career depending on to whom he wrote and when he did so. Due to the impact of the Soviet Union Lenin created, it will help to turn to them next, and see the results of Lenin's labour.

IV. F. Soviet "Diamat"

The Soviet Union's dialectical model is often difficult to determine since Stalin and the Communist Party tended to change their definition of Communism and Marxism to fit the needs of any given time. J.M. Bochenski wrote a small text called *Soviet Russian Dialectical Materialism (Diamat)* in the 1960s, as an attempt to explain the Soviet point of view. He argues, interestingly, that it was Engels who perfected Marx's position.¹⁶³ Soviet Dialectical Materialism, Bochenski argues, emerges from Marx's concept that it is the economic structure of society that determines the social structure and the consciousness of its members.¹⁶⁴ He considered Engels' "more scientific" model to be the real basis for Marxism, and more accurate.¹⁶⁵ The dialectical model of the Soviets, Bochenski argues, is based on Lenin and Engels in that it accepts their view of the dialectic as being ontological or a model that explains the real world as it is, as opposed to epistemological, describing how it is that human beings perceive the real world. One's role in the social order is determined by one's relationship to other parts of the

¹⁶² Ibid., 79.

¹⁶³ Bochenski, J.M., *Soviet Russian Dialectical Materialism (Diamat)*, (Dordrecht: O. Reidel Publishing Co., 1963), p. 9

¹⁶⁴ Ibid., 17.

¹⁶⁵ Ibid., 18-19. From the footnotes in Bochenski's text, it is very much unclear what exactly he means by "more scientific." One is lead to assume that it means "more in line with current Communist doctrine."

social whole: if one is proletarian, it is because there is a bourgeois element in society.¹⁶⁶ On the whole, Bochenski would have one believe that Marxist thought in the Soviet Union was based on a dialectical model that establishes general rules for how the world works. It is both ontological, and deterministic, in that it is the material conditions of society that determine everything within the structure of society.

IV. G. Antonio Gramsci

Antonio Gramsci worked with the Italian Communist party in the 1910s and 1920s. He began to run into difficulties with the rise of Mussolini in the 1920s, when he tried to form alliances with both workers and other political parties against the fascists.¹⁶⁷ He would later die in prison.

During his incarceration he wrote *The Prison Notebooks*, from which I draw a small piece in the present essay.¹⁶⁸ Something that stands out almost immediately is Gramsci's idea that all human beings are "philosophers," helping to define the ideas around them, and that they therefore play an active role in the world around them.¹⁶⁹ Gramsci in general rejected "mechanistic"

(deterministic) views of Marxism, saying that the faith in the inevitable failure of capitalism had more to do with European Christian ideas than political philosophy.¹⁷⁰ Marxism rose above concepts of universalism such as in Christianity, by trying to connect people in their contexts to the reality of the social organizations in which they lived as opposed to universal truth.¹⁷¹

Gramsci did not believe there was "one rule and no other for thinking and functioning that

¹⁶⁶ Ibid., 91.

¹⁶⁷ Dr. Marks, Louis, introduction to *The Modern Prince* by Antonio Gramsci, translated by Dr. Louis Marks, (New York: International Publishers, 1957/1968),13-17.

¹⁶⁸ In particular, I review here "What is Man?" "The Modern Prince," and "The Study of Philosophy and of Historical Materialism."

¹⁶⁹ Gramsci, Antonio, "The Study of Philosophy and of Historical Materialism," in *The Modern Prince* by Antonio Gramsci, translated by Dr. Louis Marks (New York: International Publishers, 1957/1968) 58.

¹⁷⁰ Ibid., 69-70.

applies equally to all men.”¹⁷² Since, for example, the authoritarian regime in place in Russia could fall to a revolution, revolutionary doctrine made sense for Lenin’s work in Russia.

However, the more advanced countries of Western Europe had deep support for their own capitalist regimes. This support had to be attacked where it was strongest: civil society. To do this, Marxism in the West, he argued, would have to cut away the support for capitalism by appealing to the masses.¹⁷³ Each member of society, in their given role, played a part in the dialectical relationship: the intellectuals helped support the superstructure of capitalism (the ideologies and political structure that maintained it), which required a counterpart in the proletariat: the party.

In Gramsci there is a mix of the determinism of the Soviets and the later Marx, and the humanism of the early Marx: the roles which one plays in society are determined by the social structure and the economy as part of the context of the society,¹⁷⁴ while the party had to educate the masses to play their part and take the lead in the struggle against capitalism. To lead the response of the proletariat against their oppressors, Gramsci argued for a Modern Prince, the political party, that would build a coalition of supporters which would stand against capitalist power in democratic societies and begin to involve the masses in the political process to overturn capitalism.¹⁷⁵ The Communist party would build support among the common people, giving them cohesion and a presence in politics.¹⁷⁶ Thus we have in Gramsci both a rejection of fatalism¹⁷⁷ and

¹⁷¹ Ibid., 60-67.

¹⁷² Gramsci, Antonio, “What is Man?” in *The Modern Prince* by Antonio Gramsci, translated by Dr. Louis Marks (New York: International Publishers, 1957/1968), 77.

¹⁷³ Ibid., 92.

¹⁷⁴ Ibid., p. 121-122.

¹⁷⁵ Gramsci, “The Modern Prince,” in *The Modern Prince* by Antonio Gramsci, translated by Dr. Louis Marks (New York: International Publishers, 1957/1968), 137, 142.

¹⁷⁶ Ibid., 150-152.

¹⁷⁷ Ibid., 159-160.

a demand for “consciously planned struggle” to change society,¹⁷⁸ at the same time as he argues that intellectuals and others in society play specific roles dictated by the structure of the economy.¹⁷⁹

V. The Dialectic Returns to the Forefront

Throughout much of the period until Stalin’s death, the tension between humanism and determinism was often not examined deliberately. In part, this is likely due to the fact that many of Marx’s early works were left unpublished until after the 1st World War, and due to the strict control exercised by the Stalinists. Thus we next turn to the post-Stalin period, when Louis Althusser and others began to openly examine the dialectic and what he thought it actually meant to Marxists.

V.A. Louis Althusser

Louis Althusser was a member of the French Communist Party and is of particular interest here since he examines the concept of humanist Marxism openly. Following the death of Stalin, there was, as Althusser argues, a flourishing of writing that was, in his mind, humanist to a fault.¹⁸⁰ In *The Humanist Controversy*, Althusser takes up the question of what interpreters call the epistemological break, the shift between humanism and determinism in Marx’s writing or the division between his youthful, Hegel-and-Feurbach influenced position, and his later economic analyses. Althusser believes that the two different versions of Marx he has uncovered are a humanist and a ‘scientific’ Marx, and that if one traces the development of Marx’s writing, one

¹⁷⁸ Ibid., 160.

¹⁷⁹ Gramsci, “What is man?” 124, 121.

¹⁸⁰ Althusser, Louis, foreword to *Lenin & Philosophy, and Other Essays* by Louis Althusser, translated by Ben Brewster. (London: New Left Books, 1971), 7-9.

can find a sudden shift from what Althusser calls Marx's Hegelian radical liberal¹⁸¹ roots to communism in the years 1843-45.¹⁸² The shift that occurs in Marx's writing is the rejection of man as the subject (or agent) of history.¹⁸³ Instead, Althusser's later Marx believed that human beings were social animals, with particular functions, in a given context and system of production.¹⁸⁴ Humans do not create things, societies, and history due to the actions they take; they are the product of the social relations that a given economic system creates.¹⁸⁵ The later Marx used the dialectic to understand how the ownership of property, and the power that this provided, would create divisions in society, and tensions as a result.¹⁸⁶ Althusser argued that Marx's early humanism was simply a holdover from his youthful, Hegelian idealism.¹⁸⁷ The abstract idealism of the young Marx had no practical value: his early theory had no understanding of the process of history, that is, of how social relations evolved over time, and therefore provided no basis for political *praxis*.¹⁸⁸ Marx's great theoretical contribution was therefore his analysis of the way in which productive forces--the way humanity builds the things it needs to survive in a society-- shape society, and his later attack on humanism as being ideological and unscientific.¹⁸⁹ The later Marx's views provided an opportunity for human beings

¹⁸¹ Althusser, Louis, *The Humanist Controversy*, edited by Francois Matheron, translated by G.M. Goshgarian (London: Verso, 2003), 230.

¹⁸² Ibid.

¹⁸³ Ibid., 258.

¹⁸⁴ Ibid., 263.

¹⁸⁵ Ibid., 273.

¹⁸⁶ Tucker stands as something of a counterpoint to Althusser, in that where Althusser rejected the young Marx and his "utopian" idealism, Tucker accepts the same epistemological break as Althusser and yet Tucker sees the Hegelianism of the younger Marx continuing through Marx's later career. Althusser sees it as a complete break. While the older Marx may have kept some elements of Hegel's model, Althusser argues that this model is the only significant element of the young Marx that continues past the epistemological break. For a further discussion of the epistemological break and Tucker's own perspective on this, see Tucker, Robert C., *Philosophy and Myth in Karl Marx*.

¹⁸⁷ Althusser, Louis, *For Marx*, Translated by Ben Brewster (London: The Penguin Press, 1969), 223-6.

¹⁸⁸ Ibid., 241.

¹⁸⁹ Ibid., 227.

to become conscious of their place in society¹⁹⁰ and therefore to challenge both capitalism's ideological support and actual structure.¹⁹¹

Humanism was not Marxism in Althusser's definition, because any concept of human nature that implied transcendence or universals outside of social context ignored the economic and social systems in which human beings lived, and which shaped them. It was not "Man" who made history, it was the masses who made history by their actions within a society.¹⁹² But there is no subject in the "masses," no human agent at the heart of their actions.¹⁹³ No human beings are free from "forms of historical existence of the social relations of productions," from living within a society and socio-economic order that affects how they live and whom they are.¹⁹⁴ Althusser argues that Marx broke from a theory based on a concept of human nature or essence, and shifted to a theory based on the actions of the masses and which sought to understand the process of history.¹⁹⁵ The Marxist thesis as Althusser defines it analyzes the structure of society, and how it changes through revolutionary change.¹⁹⁶ Those within society are indoctrinated by social structures such as education and religion: these provide the rules of good behaviour, or "the attitude that should be observed by every agent in the division of labour" and the "rules of the order established by class domination."¹⁹⁷ These structures "reproduce" the system, for they ensure that labour is willing and able to continue to work for capitalist production.¹⁹⁸

¹⁹⁰ Ibid., 244.

¹⁹¹ Ibid., 233.

¹⁹² Althusser, Louis, "Reply to John Lewis," in *Essays in Self-Criticism*, by Louis Althusser (London: New Left Books, c1976), 46.

¹⁹³ Ibid., 48.

¹⁹⁴ Althusser, Louis, "Remark on the Category: Process without a subject or goals," in *Essays in Self-Criticism* by Louis Althusser (London: New Left Books, c1976), 95.

¹⁹⁵ Althusser, Louis, "Elements of Self-Criticism," in *Essays in Self-Criticism* by Louis Althusser (London: New Left Books, c1976), 109-110.

¹⁹⁶ Ibid., p. 130.

¹⁹⁷ Althusser, Louis, "Ideology and Ideological State Apparatuses," in *Lenin and Philosophy and Other Essays* by Louis Althusser (London: New Left Books, 1971), 127.

¹⁹⁸ Ibid., 141.

My complaint with this position, which I discuss in more depth in later chapters, is that if one takes Althusser's argument to its logical conclusion, and one accepts the assumption that social structures inculcate acceptance of the ruling system and the ruling class's ideologies and dominance, then there is no reason to believe that the lower classes would ever have reason to revolt. If one takes the economic and political system to be determinant, then it is not very far to say that the system will reinforce itself infinitely, and there is no explanation in Althusser of how it is that these structures change or create change over time.¹⁹⁹

V.B. The Miliband-Poulantzas Debate

This leads us quite naturally into the debate between Ralph Miliband and Nicos Poulantzas. I review here the debate itself, and the positions both men articulated in some of their major works. The debate took place as a result of Poulantzas' 1969 review of *The State and Capitalist Society*. The primary argument Poulantzas makes is two-fold: that Miliband's analysis over-emphasizes the role of elites within the state, as opposed to class conflict;²⁰⁰ and Miliband's analysis ignores the power of ideology to shape agents within the state, and society.²⁰¹ Both criticisms stem from Poulantzas' idea that class conflict forms an overarching structure in all elements of society, and that shapes the ideas, language, and actions of members of society. So, the state, like every other part of society, serves the ruling class in the end.²⁰² While he does not describe it in any depth here, a major part of Poulantzas' arguments elsewhere involve the concept of over-determination. Over-determination, in essence, is the idea that regardless of whatever social structure in a given society is defined by Poulantzas as being dominant, it is still

¹⁹⁹ Callinicos, Alex, *Althusser's Marxism* (London: Pluto Press, 1976), 105-6.

²⁰⁰ Poulantzas, Nicos, "The Problem of the Capitalist State," in *New Left Review* 58 (November-December 1969): 70.

²⁰¹ *Ibid.*, 76-8.

²⁰² *Ibid.*, 74-5.

the economic basis of that society which determines which such social structure is dominant according to the distribution of ownership at the economic level.²⁰³ While the state, or religion, ideology, or class, may play the ‘lead role’ in any society, the economy over-determines this by placing each of these into the lead role. Poulantzas believes Miliband placed undue emphasis on the power of elite agents instead of an analysis of class conflict.²⁰⁴ The elites within society who are placed in leadership positions within the state bear that social role due to their class positions.²⁰⁵

Miliband replied in the following issue of *New Left Review*, in the first months of 1970. He retorted that Poulantzas was essentially accusing him of preferring facts to theory: instead of looking at the roles elites in the state actually play, Poulantzas had already decided to argue that whatever role they played had to be seen as part of class conflict and explained as such.²⁰⁶ The epistemological position of Poulantzas, he argued, was that agents in society play roles given to them by the structure of society. Instead of acting as independent agents of the state within capitalist society, Poulantzas’ argument goes so far as to suggest that structural constraints caused by class conflict determine the actions of those agents.²⁰⁷ This Miliband labels “super-determinism,” in that ideology and class position enforce strict rules of action on agents despite any other roles a person may have outside of his or her class.²⁰⁸ That they do not always do so should be readily apparent, and yet by clinging to an epistemology that says these agents *must* operate according to their class, Poulantzas has, in Miliband’s opinion, ignored facts that might

²⁰³ Nicos Poulantzas, *Political Power and Social Classes*, translated by Timothy O’Hagan (London: Verso Edition, 1978, c1973), 14-15.

²⁰⁴ Ibid., 70.

²⁰⁵ Ibid.

²⁰⁶ Miliband, Ralph, “The Capitalist State: Reply to Nicos Poulantzas,” in *New Left Review* 59, (January-February 1970): 53-55.

²⁰⁷ Ibid., 57.

²⁰⁸ Ibid., 57-8.

contradict a theory.

To provide the reader more depth on the subject, let us next turn to the arguments these two writers made in their other works.

V.C. Nicos Poulantzas' Position

Poulantzas, like Miliband and Althusser, wrote after the end of the Stalinist period in Russia. A French Communist Party member of Greek origins, Poulantzas continued to write until his death in October, 1979.²⁰⁹ In Poulantzas' conception of Marxism, the dialectical structure of society involved a discourse between the various parts of that society, wherein each individual part's actions affected every other part and the structure of the whole. The structure of that society was 'over-determined' by the economic system that the society relied upon to handle its material needs. The mode of production that society uses to fulfill its various needs, he argues, acts as a schematic for the economy, politics, and the ideas a society holds in common.²¹⁰ While some particular structures are on occasion dominant, taking the lead in deciding the organization of society, it is the economic model that over-determines which structure plays this lead role.²¹¹ The relationship is one in which "the structure in dominance governs the very constitution (the nature) of the regional structures, by assigning them their place and by distributing their functions to them."²¹² Social structures, such as religious organizations, the state, firms, families and individuals, form a social matrix, or a society's make-up, character, and so forth, as determined by the dominant structure. These relations of production, caused by the division of labour necessary to produce society's needs and wants, determine, in the last instance, the

²⁰⁹ Hall, Stuart, "Nicos Poulantzas: State, Power, Socialism," in *New Left Review*, 119 (January-February 1980): 60.

²¹⁰ Poulantzas, *Political Power and Social Classes*. 13.

²¹¹ *Ibid.*, 14-5.

²¹² *Ibid.*, 13-14.

structure of the system.²¹³ An agent or structure's role is determined by the class conflict, which is in turn determined by the relations of production at the base of the whole system.

Poulantzas' position becomes more complicated when he attempts to deal with the role of the agent within his model. He argues that agents are principally defined by their role in the economic sphere, that is, where it is within the division of labour in a given society that they operate, and the relative power this role assigns an agent.²¹⁴ In the end, Poulantzas argues that it is those who have ownership over the economic system, and ownership of the ability to produce goods in society, who have the most power, for they control the ability to create wealth and power in the first place.²¹⁵ His answer to the issue of determinism is that the role of the state or any agent to the economy is that of a discourse: they affect each other in turn by what occurs within them.²¹⁶ The economy may be determinate in the last instance, but the actions that occur at the level of the state have a feedback effect, changing the economy and thus the structures above it, the state included. This would be a fine answer to the humanist/determinist debate but he still argues that the economy over-determines the structure of society, even if and when other structures are supposedly dominant. The role of agents and the structure of society itself are previously determined by the economy, and any action is constrained by the social structures that result from a given economic foundation.

V.D. Ralph Miliband's Position

Miliband wrote in England, after fleeing Belgium during the Second World War, teaching in the US during the McCarthy era, and writing after Stalin's death.²¹⁷ Miliband argues that while the

²¹³ Ibid., 25-6.

²¹⁴ Poulantzas, Nicos, *Classes in Contemporary Capitalism*, (London: New Left Books, c1975), 14.

²¹⁵ Ibid., 19.

²¹⁶ Poulantzas, Nicos, *State, Power, Socialism*, (London: New Left Books, 1978), 44.

²¹⁷ London School of Economics, "Ralph Miliband,"
<http://www.lse.ac.uk/collections/miliband/ralphMiliband.htm>

ruling class, that group which owns the means of production in society,²¹⁸ has power in the state, it is not because of structural reasons. The bureaucrats who are already members of the ruling class act in favour of policies that support business and capitalism, because it is the group to whom they are closest and because it is in their interest to do so as members of that class.²¹⁹ They are not bound solely by their class positions, however, since they must often act against the short-term goals of capitalists to defend workers and the ruled classes and thus prevent uprising. Agents within the state can act independently of their class to ensure the conservation of the society as is.²²⁰ While Miliband recognizes the power that social structures have in affecting the actions of members of a society, he argues that the actions of agents within society also affect the structures. Political activity helps to shape the economy, as even the later Marx himself admitted.²²¹ Miliband argues that while there is the possibility of succumbing to economic determinism, the core of Marxist philosophy remains an analysis of the conflict between classes and of the social structures *that result from the class struggle*.²²² The social structures that result from the struggle do not stay static, because the various sides in that struggle continue to jockey for more power. Furthermore, it is the actions of agents within the struggle that shape the societies in which they live, not the structure of the economy that determines those actions. His argument remains deeply humanist: it is people, not structures, who control the economy.²²³ Social structures may impose some restraints, but these structures in and of themselves provide only a form of power to be used by agents within the society.²²⁴ How it is used depends on the agents in question.

²¹⁸ Miliband, Ralph, *The State in Capitalist Society*, (New York: Basic Books, 1969), 23.

²¹⁹ *Ibid.*, 34.

²²⁰ *Ibid.*, 147.

²²¹ Miliband, Ralph, *Marxism and Politics*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1977), 8.

²²² *Ibid.*, 17-21.

²²³ Miliband, Ralph, *Socialism for a Sceptical Age*, (London: Verso, 1994, 1995), 47-8.

VI. Summary

This chapter has attempted to summarize the history of the dialectic, as best as possible. As such, I can only provide examples of how the various Marxist thinkers, as well as Marx and Hegel themselves, understood the dialectic in their writing. I have therefore identified two strains of Marxism: the humanist model, which sees the dialectic as a way of understanding how human beings, as creative agents, interact with the world and society around them; and the determinist model, which seeks to establish laws for how it is that society evolves over time. Thus the one is, as Norma Levine argues, an epistemology, the other an ontology: one is a way of understanding the world through conceptual models, the other is an argument as to how the world actually is. I shall, in the following chapter, attempt to flesh out the determinist model, and then demonstrate what I believe to be its logical flaws. I shall then turn to the humanist model, and attempt to demonstrate why it is a more logical position for Marxism to take in the future.

²²⁴ Miliband, *Marxism and Politics*, 71-2.

Chapter Three: Determinism

I. Outline

This particular chapter examines the theory of determinist Marxism. Thus far, I have attempted only to classify writers and theoretical models that appear to fit into what I call determinism, which I define in more detail here, along with what determinism means within Marxist thought. I will endeavour to provide a general definition of determinist Marxism, and examine what it is that determinist Marxism makes of Marx's dialectical model. I shall then examine, in brief, the determinist idea of social change, in particular, its focus on the economic 'necessity' of the fall of capitalism. I shall endeavour to show that determinism often espouses a belief in prophecies of the future, and in particular, of the inevitability of socialism. I will also establish the differences between structuralism and determinism, since at first glance, the previous chapter could provide the reader with the impression that I am conflating the two, which is not my intent. There are differences between these two schools of thought, but they share similar flaws. I will examine the differences between these two variations of determinism below. Last, I shall try to break down the determinist model on the whole, and examine some of its flaws. I will try, throughout this chapter, to provide the reader with a fair description of the determinist model of Marxism, and spare critical commentary as much as possible until the last section.

II.A. What is Determinism? The Model

Determinist Marxism takes the economy to be the element within society that is responsible for the way society is organized, and that the distribution of ownership over the economy influences how change occurs over time in a given society. This above all is what defines a model of Marxism as being determinist: the idea that all social change and the structure of any society is

caused or determined by the distribution of the economy.²²⁵ Every individual in a society has needs, such as the need for food to avoid starvation, shelter to avoid exposure to the elements, and so forth. The manner in which the society resolves these needs is through the economy, or the various methods/means of production that result in the satiation of needs within the society. Since no individual human being can, by him or herself, handle every single task that needs to be performed for his or her survival, a division of labour occurs.²²⁶ One person, for example, might be responsible for growing the grain in a field, and another for processing the grain, and another for distributing it. The larger a society is, the larger the division of labour becomes as it allows for more complicated production processes, and more output. The division of labour also creates power for those who own the means of production. The means of production are both the raw materials and tools necessary to produce a given product. No production process can exist without some form of property, Marx argued.²²⁷ Someone inevitably has to own both the tools and the land one uses for production, and also the goods that are produced as a result of that production process. Whomever has control over the means of production in a society is therefore a member of the dominant class, since they own the ability to produce wealth and the needs of society in the first place.

Marx defined the relations of production as the ownership over the means of production, which create the various political, ideological, religious, and social structures that form in society. So, for example, if a small number of hereditary rulers have control over the land that is farmed in an agrarian society, it is because of this that they are the ruling class, and many of the political structures in that society will be based upon enforcing their rule at the economic level.

²²⁵ Marx, *The German Ideology*, 182-3.

²²⁶ *Ibid.*, 185.

²²⁷ Marx, *Grundrisse*, 383.

The owning class is involved in a dialectical struggle with its antithesis, the class that it directly exploits and oppresses, economically and politically, to ensure its dominance. In feudalism, the lord oppressed the peasant. In capitalism, the capitalist oppresses the worker.

At first glance, it might seem like capitalism has a perfectly acceptable balance of power between the labourer and the capitalist. After all, the capitalist cannot make money without the labourer to produce the goods the former must sell. Meanwhile, the labourer needs the capitalist for the job that will provide her with the money she needs to buy food and shelter.²²⁸ Marx based his analysis of how wealth was produced on the concept of surplus value in labour. Marx believed, like Adam Smith and other economists of his time, that value in a commodity was only derived from the amount of human labour put into it.²²⁹ To make money, the capitalist must somehow make more money than she puts into the process of production: the labour cost and the cost of the tools and raw material necessary for a given product. To do this, the capitalist must derive surplus value from the labour put into the production process. The pay that the labourer receives is, supposedly, enough to keep her fed and sheltered. But any labour above and beyond this basic amount creates surplus labour, and therefore, more product and value than the labourer is paid for.²³⁰ This creates a conflict as the labourer's work is exploited by the capitalist for the sole profit of the latter. This makes sense, in a way, in that without doing this the business of the capitalist would not survive, for he would not be making any money. And this is an obvious enough antagonism in any employer/employee relationship: the conflict between profit and wages. The result of this antagonism, Marx believed, was a conflict over the means of production. It is this conflict in capitalism, and similar conflicts over ownership of the means of

²²⁸ Marx, *Capital*, Volume I, 464, 465.

²²⁹ *Ibid.*, 460-1.

²³⁰ *Ibid.*, 503-506.

production in previous eras, that determine the way in which societies change. As one group gains more power at the economic or political level, the society is therefore changed in turn. But it is, in the end, the economic distribution of power that determines the structure of society, since ownership and power at this level grant control over the very foundation of the society itself: its ability to create both wealth and the goods necessary for its continued survival.

Marx argued that it was inevitable that there would be a decline in the rate of profit, as labour would no longer be able to provide enough surplus value to maintain growth.²³¹ With this decline in profits would come crises, when capitalism's reliance on surplus labour and exploitation would cease to be able to provide wealth and profit to the society.²³² At these times, the unemployment of labourers, combined with the inability of capitalism to produce wealth, would necessitate revolutionary change in the ownership of the means of production, and with this change in ownership of the economy would come changes in the rest of the society. In other words, society would have to adapt and find new ways to handle the production of the goods it needed to survive. Marx believed that such crises would eventually destroy capitalism, and result in the creation of a new social order: socialism.

Thus the determinist dialectical model of Marxism believes that the relationship between the dominant and subordinate classes of a given society is the result of the difference in the degree of their ownership of the means of production and the economic distribution of power in a society. The conflict between them is at the base of all social change; it determines the structure of society, and the way it evolves.

II.B. Differences of Interpretation.

Determinist Marxism has two different forms, outside of structuralism. The first is that of the

²³¹ Marx, *Capital*, Volume 3, 537

later Marx, and the second is that of Engels and later interpreters. I have, thus far, described the model of Marx, which forms the basis of Engel's brand of determinism. However, a more fundamental difference emerges between Marx and Engels in terms of what they believe the dialectic to be. Even the later Marx still held his vision of the dialectic to be a model, as a means of understanding how it was that society evolved over time. Engels, however, believed that the dialectic explained the way society actually was. This difference is very important since Engels, as the person who largely defended Marxism after Marx's death and became in many ways the founder of what was considered 'orthodox' Marxism, was therefore responsible for much of how later Marxists understand their own theory. The difference between Marx and Engels is this: where Marx believed that his model could explain how society evolved over time, within reason, Engels believed that the model was, in fact, the way society was actually structured and evolves.²³³ Therefore, the economy actually did determine the structure of the rest of the society. To be a Marxist, in Engels' sense, meant to be someone who understood how society actually evolved, as opposed to 'bourgeois' pretensions of philosophy and humanist Marxism which claimed such knowledge but was in fact a form of false consciousness. I make this distinction here for one key reason: it helps to explain why it was that determinist Marxism was and is so appealing to Marxists. If one could claim one's argument to represent the real world, as it is, as opposed to the 'false consciousness' of humanists and the bourgeoisie, it makes one's argument seem more powerful. This claim to ontology, to an understanding of the real world as it actually is, also led later Marxists to accept their theoretical model as a doctrine and a dogma. If their theory really explains how the world works, then of course it must be accepted by all Marxists as an article of faith!

²³² Marx, "Preface to a Critique of Political Economy," 425

III. Base and Superstructure, or Organic Whole?

In discussing the role of the economy in determinism, it will be helpful to take a brief detour and discuss the difference between two concepts within determinist Marxism, particularly within the writings of the later Marx. Melvin Rader establishes these two models as being the “base and superstructure” model, and the “organic” model, although he does not consider either as part of a division between determinism or humanism in Marxism.²³⁴ He considers these to be two of the three models used by Marx in his lifetime. The third model is closer to Hegel’s position of a conflict between parts within a whole, which through their interaction create change.²³⁵ The first two, however, were the ones used by Marx in his later life, the period in which he established the determinist version of Marxism. The base and superstructure model in particular is perhaps the most famous Marxist approach to the relationship between the economy and the other social structures in a given society. In this model, the relationship between the base and superstructure is quite often interpreted in what Rader calls a “fundamentalist” fashion, meaning that many determinist Marxists interpret the relationship between the base and superstructure as causal.²³⁶ The base is described by Marx as being the economic foundations of society, that is, the means of production as we have thus far described them. The superstructure, meanwhile, includes the state, religions, education, and a host of various social structures that result from the manner in which the economy is structured. Marx himself, however, may not necessarily have believed that the relationship was strictly causal, that is, that the base determines the manner in which the superstructure acts and is formed.²³⁷

²³³ Engels, “Socialism: Utopian and Scientific,” 694.

²³⁴ Rader, Melvin, *Marx’s Interpretation of History*, (New York: Oxford University Press, 1979), xviii

²³⁵ Ibid.

²³⁶ Ibid., 6.

²³⁷ Ibid., 9-10.

That Engels, and some determinists, take the base and superstructure to be literal and causal should be readily apparent. The relationship almost requires a causal link: a base must precede a superstructure, after all.²³⁸ This explains to a certain degree the way in which determinism sees the relationship between the economy and the rest of society. If, as I have previously argued in this chapter, the distribution of economic power forms the basis for how the rest of society is structured, then it is only logical to assume that such things as politics, ideology, and religion play a secondary role akin to that of a superstructure built atop the base of the economy.

Marx did come up with a second model in his later life, that of an organic relationship between all parts of society. In this model, all the various parts of a social whole interrelate, and affect each other by their interactions.²³⁹ This model appears much closer to his original Hegelian concept, as Rader defines it, wherein the model of society Marx creates is one in which all the intricate parts of a social whole interact in a dialectical conflict, and thus create change with each action.²⁴⁰ Similarly, the organic model helps explain how it is that society maintains itself in a given form, for a society can only continue to be called capitalist if it has certain relations of production and methods of producing the goods necessary to its survival. Without any one of those parts it will cease to function as a capitalist society. Determinist Marxists have used this model as well. For example, in the previous chapter, I briefly discussed Rosa Luxemburg's *Reform or Revolution*. One of the points she makes throughout the text is that, in her mind, the problem with the reformist agenda was its misunderstanding of the nature of capitalism. In particular, she believed that capitalism could not survive as capitalism without any one of its

²³⁸ Ibid., 10.

²³⁹ Ibid., xviii.

²⁴⁰ Ibid.

various parts.²⁴¹ Since reformism sought to change capitalism without, in her mind, transcending it or truly changing the methods or relations of production within capitalism, the project was doomed to fail from the start. Nicos Poulantzas's model is similar to the organic model, in that the whole of society acts in what I have earlier called a discourse. Each part of the society, including the economy and the state and religion, all act upon each other, and thus change both each part and the social whole.

Like the base/superstructure model, the organic model remains determinist. At first, this might seem odd, considering that the organic model proposes that each part of the social whole has a role to play in shaping each other part. However, there is no human agency in this model any more than there is in the base/superstructure model. Instead, each part of the society acts upon each other part, and, like the base/superstructure model, each person plays a specific role in that society.²⁴² In some cases (Poulantzas, in particular), the organic model is explicitly 'over-determined,' meaning that the economy still determines what form the society takes and the strength and weakness of the other parts of society.

To be as clear as possible, then, the major difference between the humanist model and the determinist model is that the former argues that it is human agents who make changes in their society, and the latter argues that it is social structures and the economic structure of society that determine how society changes over time. Any model that espouses human agency is a humanist Marxist model, while any that argues that it is social forces, social structures, or the economy that determines the structure of society and change is inherently determinist. At this point, it will therefore be appropriate to examine the determinist Marxist position on how social change occurs.

²⁴¹ Luxemburg, *Reform or Revolution*, 33.

IV. Structuralism versus Determinism

Up until now, I have included structuralism within the larger category of determinism. While I still hold this to be an accurate assessment of structuralism, the reader would not be at fault if he or she does not yet see why this is so from the argument thus far. Structuralism is different from determinism in its emphasis, but remains similar in its conclusions, in that it focuses in on the power and the effect of social structures--the state, church, education, and so forth-- but, like 'classic' determinism, it still holds that human agency does not determine the course of the development of a society over time. Instead, structuralism argues that social structures are organized due to their positions within the class conflict over the economy, and that the internal contradictions that result from their role in the class conflict help determine how they will act and how they affect social changes. Above all, structuralism focuses, in particular, on defining the nature and function of social structures within society as understood by Marxism. Thus both Poulantzas and Althusser attempt to understand the role of the state, church, religion, and so forth within capitalism, and their impact on the other social structures in a given society. Althusser spells out the difference between structuralism and humanism quite clearly when he argues that there is no "Man," no agent, in the "masses," which he defines as those large agglomerations of people in a society who act in a society.²⁴³ No human being is free from the social and economic structures that exist within their society at the time in which they live.²⁴⁴ Determinism, in the classic sense that I have described above, sees social change occurring as a result of changes in the ownership of the methods/means of production in a given society. The primary difference between the two, then, is that classic determinism sees the economy and

²⁴² Marx, *Capital*, Volume 3, 534.

²⁴³ Althusser, "Reply to John Lewis," 46, 48.

²⁴⁴ Althusser, "Remark on the Category: Process without a Subject or Goals," 95.

control over it as that which determines the course of social evolution in society. Structuralism takes this as a given, as well, but argues that social structures have specific roles to play in the economic struggle, and a form of agency of their own as a result of the power granted to them by those roles.

For example, Althusser describes the effect of social structures ‘above’ the economy (in the superstructure) that have an impact on the relations of production as well. Althusser analyzes the impact of “Ideological State Apparatuses,” such as religion and education, that play a role in indoctrinating the members of society in both the practical skills they need to support the economy and the ideological “rules of the game.”²⁴⁵ Poulantzas, similarly, examines the manner in which the various social structures affect each other, and act in a massive feedback loop upon the economy, affecting each other in turn.²⁴⁶ Both, however, accept that the economy determines which structures have the most power, and the role they play, but that the structures do have a certain degree of power within, and a degree of autonomy as a result of, those roles.

Structuralism, however, seems to follow Rader’s organic model of Marxist dialectics, while the determinist follow the more classic base-and-superstructure model. The organic model, recall, is one in which it is argued that the whole of society acts like a giant organism, with each part playing specific roles necessary to the survival of the organism and acting upon each other part, while the base/superstructure model posits that the economy forms the base for all the other parts and determines the role and actions the other parts play/are capable of in the class struggle. In any case, both models share the same position about the ‘agent’ of change in society in history. Both structuralism and determinism do not accept the idea that human agents make history. Instead, it is social structures, or the economy, in any given society that condition human beings

²⁴⁵ Althusser, “Ideology and Ideological State Apparatuses,” 127.

within that society to play certain roles, whether those roles be ‘capitalist,’ ‘managerial,’ or ‘proletariat.’ Both accept that these roles govern the rules of behaviour for human beings within the society, and that it is therefore social structures of some sort that determine how changes will occur. This is because a change in a structure would, logically, have an impact on the role and behaviour of the human beings who ‘inhabit’ those structures. The only major difference between the two models of determinism is which structures have more power: the economy, for classic determinism, or other social structures within a given society, for structuralist determinism. That the economy over-determines or is responsible for deciding what role and what degree of power each structure has is the connection between the two theories: the economic control over resources and the power to produce the necessities for survival in society grant both classes and the structures of society with the power they possess. This division of control and power in society determine the manner in which society will evolve over time as the contradictions internal to the economy, or the social structures, will result in conflict and revolutionary transition from one form of society to another.

V. Crisis and Prophecy

The determinist model, overall, describes the way in which the economy in a society determines the structure of the society. Inherent to the determinist position, however, is the idea that the way the productive forces of society are set up will, in Marx’s words, “come in conflict with the existing relations of production, or--what is but a legal expression for the same thing--with the property relations within which they have been at work hitherto.”²⁴⁷ In other words, the various social structures that the economy has created and the antagonisms between classes that result will, in time, become fetters that prevent the economy from continuing to develop, and thus

²⁴⁶ Poulantzas, *Political Power and Social Classes*, 25-26.

“begins an epoch of social revolution.”²⁴⁸ Marx fleshes this concept out in *Capital*, when he describes the tendency of the rate of profit to decline. He argues that there will come a point when the social structures that result from the division of labour within capitalism will prevent capitalism from producing enough wealth for the society to function.²⁴⁹ It was believed that Marxism could predict when these crises would occur, and therefore help Marxists lead the working class within capitalism to a successful revolution against the bourgeoisie. Ironically, it is at this point that determinist Marxism shows a mild degree of humanism or voluntarism: the working class must act upon the crises of capitalism in order to ensure that the revolution will occur. However, with these crises comes the tendency of the various social structures to react in favour of capitalism. The simple version of this theory involves the idea that the state will always act as a simple tool of the capitalist class and come to its defense. The role and function of any given structure depends, in the determinist model, upon its position in the class struggle, and its actions are to be understood in light of the conflict between classes to control the means of production and the various tools of the ruling class such as the state.

These crises are considered inevitable by determinist Marxism, and it is a commonplace in this theory that the revolutionary transition that will result will transfrom capitalism into socialism. This has been for so long the common prophecy of determinist Marxism that it is often held to be one of the core ideas of Marxist theory in general. And to a certain degree this belief in their own prophecies makes sense given the determinist position. If determinism believe that every society is structured in such a way that there will be a conflict over the means of resources, then it is inevitable, based on this assumption, that the conflict will eventually result in

²⁴⁷ Marx, “Preface to a Critique of Political Economy,” 425.

²⁴⁸ Ibid.

²⁴⁹ Marx, *Capital*, Volume 3, 526-530.

changes in the society. That socialism is the inevitable result of the end of capitalism is perhaps more problematic: since the relationship between bourgeoisie and worker is a directly economic antagonism, determinism believes that the result of the showdown between the two will result in the working class' victory and the installation of a socialist society. That this has not occurred at all within predominantly capitalist societies is the source of much internal debate within Marxism, since the majority of socialist countries that have emerged have primarily been in the agrarian Third World, not the industrialized countries.

In any case, determinism accepts the concept of crises, and that if there is change in society, then it is usually the structural configuration of society--how the economy is set up, who owns what, and so forth--that determines both the strengths and weaknesses of a society. The conflict between classes in any given social structure creates internal rifts that will inevitably lead to conflict and to revolution and change. If societies are set up in such a fashion as to create internal contradictions and conflict between parts, and the various social structures determine the actions and consciousness of members of the society,²⁵⁰ then it is logical to conclude that it is inevitable for that conflict to result in changes in the control of various social structures and therefore changes in the society itself. These internal contradictions--the conflict between wages and profit, the exploitative nature of labour within capitalism, the creation of the industrial reserve army of labourers--create tension in any given society and conflict over the control of the means of production. Any change in the ownership of the means of production creates changes in the structure of the rest of society but, in particular, Marx, and the determinist Marxists believed that the biggest changes would be the transition from a capitalist to a socialist society. Instead of private property and exploitation, society would be transformed by revolutionary activity such

²⁵⁰ Althusser. "Remark on the Category." 95.

that every human being would have ownership over the means of production. As I have mentioned, these crises are determined, not by the actions of the proletariat but, as Marx argued, by the very nature and structure of capitalism itself.²⁵¹

Marxists, of course, did not expect the capitalists to simply accept these revolutions and settle down to a quiet death. Instead, they would use every means at their disposal to repress and prevent revolutionary activity and the success of the proletariat. Thus we have the various analyses of the methods and tools by which the ruling class can hold power. Lenin argued that the state, as a tool and weapon, must be smashed due to its role in controlling the workers; Althusser and Poulantzas analyzed the state and other social structures, and their power to control the actions and beliefs of human beings in any given society.

Determinist Marxism takes it as a given that, in any crisis, the various structures and ‘agents’ within society will act according to their role in the class struggle, seeking to control the economy and the various elements of the superstructure and to use them to maintain or destroy the status quo. Inevitably, determinism argues, the very nature of capitalism itself will create its own destruction, since society is structured in such a way that the capitalist ruling class must exploit the proletariat, and yet simultaneously provide the proletariat with the training to run the industries and commerce of the capitalists for themselves.²⁵² This training is the knowledge of how factories work, how production occurs, and how to make the products that machinery in the modern age allows society to create, and with it, Marx argues, the working class can, in a socialist economy, perform the same tasks but own the results of the production process themselves. Combined with their role as the exploited class, the conflict between proletariat and capitalist renders the capitalist superfluous to the system, and therefore revolutionary change is

²⁵¹ Marx, *Capital*, Volume III, 526-527.

required for further development.²⁵³

Thus, determinism assumes that history will take a progressive route, since schisms within society can only be transcended by revolutionary transformation. To some degree, the conflicts between various groups within society can be mitigated or ended, but to assume that they can be transcended permanently (in socialism) or that the dialectical process has an endpoint seems to fly in the face of what Marx and Hegel originally argued: that society is an ever-evolving thing, and that there is no true end to the process of the dialectic. Indeed, to assume an end to history or that the process of the dialectic results in progress towards ‘better’ or more evolved societies/human beings implies a direction and end to the dialectic that might not exist.

VI. Strengths and Weaknesses of the Determinist Position

I have endeavoured, until now, to define the determinist point of view and to present it in a neutral light, the last paragraph notwithstanding. Having done so, it is time to turn to an examination of the strengths and weaknesses of the model.

If determinist Marxism does anything well, it is that it seems to explain why society is set up in a given fashion. Determinist Marxism has always sought to be able to provide an explanation for how it is that social structures are set up, and how they evolve. Determinist Marxism, recall, argues that the structure of the economy determines the organization of the rest of the society, as ownership over the means of production provides power and tools for the ruling class in any given society. Changes in this ownership create changes in the rest of society, and to a certain degree, this is true. If one group owns a great deal of the economy, this does give them a degree of power elsewhere in society by dint of the wealth this ownership creates. If determinism takes the economy to be determinant, then the rest of its arguments about the role of

²⁵² Marx and Engels, *Manifesto of the Communist Party*, 246.

human agents within society (such as it is), the role of social structures, and the process of social change would be accurate. It must also be admitted that the determinist strain of Marxism has had a great deal of success, for better or for worse. It had been adopted by the original major Communist state in Russia, becoming the doctrine of one of the most successful Communist regimes in China, and dominating Marxist thought throughout the middle of the 20th century. It also has a certain intuitive appeal in claiming to understand the way the world ‘actually works,’ and providing an explanation for social evolution.

And yet, I am not entirely certain that determinist Marxism has as much validity or explanatory power as it might seem. Determinism runs into three major problems that I will outline below: the first is the problem of agency; the second, the problem of historical veracity; the third is the problem of tautology.

By agency, I mean choice and the ability to make choices. Determinist Marxism assumes either: a) in the classic sense, that the economy is that which controls the structure of society and how society evolves; or b) in the structuralist sense, that structures, such as ‘the masses,’ the state, the church, and so forth, are what determine the evolution of society. In either case, the agency of human beings is considered irrelevant. A human being may make choices in his or her daily life, of course, but determinists do not consider these choices relevant to the evolution of society. Instead, the agent plays a role within the context of their society and the structures within it according to the division of labour and their place within it and the larger struggle between classes. So, for example, a working-class person plays the role of opposing the bourgeoisie, who play the role of the ruling class in their society by dint of their ownership over the means of production. Some classic determinists are a bit less formal about the roles of the

²⁵³ Marx, “Preface to a Critique of Political Economy,” 245.

members of society, as Marx, Lenin, and Kautsky all accepted that voluntarism--the actions of human agents--had an impact on the social order, at least to a certain degree. Even so, determinist Marxists largely accept that the actions of human agents only have as much effect as the social structures around them allow them to have. The role of agents within any social system is determined by their class and by the needs of that class.²⁵⁴ Given the assumptions of determinist Marxism, this makes sense. However, this over-emphasis on the structures of society as the 'agents' of history ignores the fact that it is the human beings within a society that actually make those structures. If the young Marx was correct about nothing else, he was correct about this: human beings create the society around them in and through their actions.²⁵⁵ The social structures that result from those actions--the church, the state, what-have-you--are either reinforced further or degraded by later actions: the church ceases to be as important as people begin to live secular lives; the state acts in the name of the capitalist class because capitalists within the state pressure the state's leaders and power-brokers to do so; unions rise and fall with support from workers, and so forth.

To put the structure ahead of the human agents within those structures puts the cart well ahead of the horse, because no structure can exist without human beings to create that structure in the first place! It cannot be denied that these structures have a certain degree of power once they have been created. But this power is not a static thing, and the very concept of 'structures' in the first place implies, falsely, that power can ever be a static, unchanging tool to be used. All social structures are dynamic, evolving and dependent upon the actions of human beings within any given society. The degree of power that people have within a given social structure varies with the amount of power that they give to it in resources and legitimacy, and this constantly

²⁵⁴ Marx, *Capital*, Volume III, 534, 537.

changes over time with the new actions of human agents. To assume that the economy, or social structures, are determinant is completely incompatible with the basis of Marx's thought: that human beings are defined by their ability to create their own world. Even in his later life, Marx had not wholly abandoned this thesis.²⁵⁶

Secondly, determinist Marxism has long held that its model accurately reflects the way social evolution will occur in the industrialized world. That Marxism has been wrong in many of these predictions should merit only a cursory review here, though this issue is extremely important. Determinist Marxism holds that it is the internal contradictions within a society that create the necessity for society to evolve over time. Therefore, it was believed that there was a certain logical progression to the process of that evolution: feudalism was believed to be unlikely to have the prerequisite conditions that would allow the development of a communist society, since the development of industry and therefore a working class was believed to be the basis of the latter. To arrive at this development of industry required the growth of the bourgeoisie into the ruling class. The progression was held to be from agrarian societies, to feudal societies, to capitalism, and thence to communism.²⁵⁷ Put simply, determinist Marxists largely assumed that it was only possible for communism to emerge in the most advanced industrial economies--the developed First World--and that it was highly unlikely if not impossible for communism to emerge in the agrarian Third World. One would have hoped that the Russian experience would have changed their minds. However, ever since the Russian Revolution, determinist Marxism has clung to the idea that it should still be in the industrialized world where the revolution occurs. Perhaps, as Gramsci argued, it was simply necessary to change tactics. And yet, if one believes it

²⁵⁵ Marx, "Theses on Feuerbach," in McLellan, 172, 173.

²⁵⁶ See, in particular, the *Grundrisse*, in which the concepts of the young Marx make a re-appearance. Particularly, the concepts of alienation and agency are integrated into the later Marx's economic model.

²⁵⁷ Marx, "Preface to a Critique of Political Economy," 426.

is simply a matter of tactics and not historical necessity that the change from capitalist to socialist society should occur, then one has already left determinism far behind.

Furthermore, if determinist Marxism wishes to make a claim to scientific veracity or to being ontologically accurate, then the experience of the past hundred years should prove the determinist Marxist theory false. It has not been in the First World that socialist revolutions and societies have emerged. Instead, socialist countries have always arisen in the agrarian Third World. Perhaps this is because of the strength of support for capitalism in the First World. Perhaps it is because of the acceptance of individualism and the separation of civil society into pluralist groups. Perhaps it is that Karl Polanyi is correct that the kind of mobilization necessary to create the kind of change from feudalism to capitalism, or capitalism to communism, is not possible without large-scale state intervention--and the state, as determinists argue, has never been on the side of the oppressed classes.²⁵⁸ Whatever the reason, determinist Marxism has been wrong time and time again in its predictions of the transition from capitalism to communism. The response for most Marxists has been to return to our theories, and see where we went wrong in our calculations. It is my suggestion here that any determinist Marxist position misses something crucial: the ability of human beings to make choices within society will necessarily create chaotic results that do not fit into a deterministic pattern. It is possible to make guesses as to the results of those choices, but accurate prophecies of future changes are much harder to come by.

²⁵⁸ See Karl Polanyi's brilliant work, *The Great Transformation*. Polanyi largely sets out to challenge the idea that the free market, and the concept of economic man, is natural. He therefore has two theses: the first is that the transition to capitalism was not a process of markets becoming free on their own--it required a great deal of intervention by the English state to get the process of the Industrial Revolution going. The second is that the difference between capitalist and other societies thus far seen in history has been the fact that the marketplace has always held a specific role within any given society, usually that of redistribution of goods and wealth. Free market capitalism, however, removes the market from this role, and makes the market out to be a guide for the rest of society's actions. This is something that has never before existed in previous societies, and has absolutely

The last issue I present here with determinist Marxism is the problem of tautology and is in many ways related to the last issue of historical veracity. Determinist Marxism assumes that the structure and makeup of all societies are determined by the economy.²⁵⁹ Determinism then argues that social structures and society will evolve according to changes that occur in the distribution of power in the economy. But if everything is already determined by the economy, then it is tautologically always true. If one holds that society's structure is determined by the economy, then of course any changes in the economy will result in changes in the rest of the society. There is, in effect, no way to prove or disprove the determinist theory according to its own logical precepts. If determinist Marxism wishes to claim to be scientific, then its hypothesis must be testable. Instead, this tautology allows determinist Marxism to claim, even in the face of historical evidence that it has been wrong, that it is still accurate. Even if every other criticism I have raised here about the determinist theory of Marxism is found to be invalid or is corrected by later determinist thinkers, it is this particular issue that the determinist Marxist school of thought must confront, since it above all renders its theory questionable at best. If determinist Marxism is to be taken seriously, it must avoid this tautology--something I truly do not believe is possible given the determinist thesis and argument.

VII. Summary

I have in this chapter set out to explain the determinist model of Marxism as best as I am able. At its heart, determinist Marxism holds two things to be true: that social structures, not human agents, are what act to create changes in society, and that it is the economy in particular that determines how every other social structure is set up and the roles they are to play in the dialectical model. I find the determinist thesis to be unsatisfactory for three main reasons: it

devastating consequences when implemented in capitalism.

ignores the role of human agents, it suffers from a lack of historical veracity, and it appears to fall into tautological argument while claiming a desire to be considered scientific--if it is the latter, its hypothesis must be testable. With this in mind, it is time to examine the humanist model, and to see if it both avoids these problems as well as those inherent in humanism.

²⁵⁹ This is also true of structuralism, in that it is still held that the economy is determinant in the final degree.

Chapter Four: Humanist Marxism

I. Outline

Having in the previous chapter discussed determinist Marxism, I now turn to examine the humanist Marxist approach. My goal here is to define humanist Marxism as clearly as possible to provide the reader with a fair sense of the differences between it and determinist Marxism. To do so, I shall first define the humanist Marxist approach as it appears in Marx in more detail than was provided in Chapter Two, and move on to examine some of the major characteristics of the humanist model. These include the concepts of alienation and human agency, and, of course, the dialectical model of social change espoused by this particular brand of Marxism. I shall also briefly consider the epistemological break that occurred in, roughly, 1844-1845 in Marx's writing, and examine the effects of this break on Marx's work and theory--in short, I wish to establish that while some elements of his humanist youthful work continued to exist in the later works, Marx largely abandoned the fundamental core of what made his early work humanist. Finally, I shall examine some potential criticisms of the humanist model, and attempt to argue that, despite its flaws, the humanist Marxist model remains a better model than the determinist. So, let us first examine in a bit more detail the humanist model of Marxism.

II. What is Humanist Marxism?

Last chapter, I endeavoured to spell out what it was that made determinist Marxism 'determinist.' There, I argued that the fundamental belief of determinist Marxism was its argument that it was social structures, particularly the economy, but not human agency, that determined the way societies were organized and evolved over time. So, let us be equally clear here: that which defines humanist Marxism as such is its belief that it is the human beings within

a society who create the society in which they live, and it is because of the actions of those human beings that societies evolve. This is, I believe, at complete odds with the determinist strain of Marxism, for while they often will use similar terminology and even accept some points in common, the two fundamentally disagree about what causes social change. Humanist Marxism, then, takes as its primary assumption the argument that Marx once made that it is human beings who make their world, consciously or unconsciously.²⁶⁰ That is, even if they are not fully aware of the results of their actions, human beings are agents capable of affecting the social structures around them in their society. This idea is derived primarily from the writing of Marx when he was a young man, and as I have pointed out elsewhere, from the period extending up until the epistemological break in 1844-45 that occurred shortly after or during the writing of the *Economic and Philosophical Manuscripts*.

The reader may recall my commentary on the young Marx in chapter two of the present text, but it may help to provide a bit more detail on his argument here. The young Marx, influenced by Hegelian dialectics and the thoughts of Feuerbach, Hess, and others, argued that human beings were different from other animals in their ability to consciously create products in the real world. Just as in his later writing, Marx accepted that human beings were social animals who came together in any given society in order to create the goods necessary to their own survival, since no human being could survive on their own.²⁶¹ Unlike his own later writing, however, the young Marx argued that it was the actions these human beings took in society that determined how the economy, the division of labour and the material conditions of production, would take shape: our actions, unlike other animals, are conscious, and define both ourselves and

²⁶⁰ Marx, "Critique of Hegel's *Philosophy of Right*," 34-35.

²⁶¹ Ibid.

the societies in which we live.²⁶² Human beings engaged, as he put it in the “Theses on Feuerbach,” in revolutionary *praxis*, or activity, since their every action in a social structure helped to define and then redefine that structure’s organization.²⁶³ Where the determinist position is that the material conditions of societies condition or determine the way in which the economy and division of labour are set up, humanist Marxism argues that it is the choices human beings in a given set of social and economic conditions make that determines the way the economy and the society itself are set up.

But there are two models of the dialectic within the young Marx’s writing, and the differences between them must be examined first before we can continue and examine some of the concepts described thus far in more detail. The first is the model that Marx turned to as he followed, however briefly, in Feuerbach’s footsteps. The second model is one that is closer to Hegel’s own. The first is derived from both Feuerbach and Marx’s own interpretations of his writing. The reader will recall that in the second chapter of this text that I briefly discussed how the young Marx came to be associated with the Young or Left Hegelians, one of whom was Feuerbach. Feuerbach, like Marx, took from Hegel the concept of the dialectic, and its particular application to societies and the way that they evolve over time. Feuerbach rejected Hegel’s emphasis on the evolution of ideas over time, calling for a materialist conception of history.²⁶⁴ Hegel’s analysis was certainly more complicated than I suspect Feuerbach makes it out to be, but there is a kernel of truth to his argument: Hegel saw much of the movement of history to be the result of changes in human conception and understanding of the world. Hegel argued (among other things) that history was the process of Spirit coming to understand itself.²⁶⁵ Instead,

²⁶² Marx, *The Economic and Philosophic Manuscripts of 1844*, 72-76.

²⁶³ Marx, “Theses on Feuerbach,” in McLellan, 172.

²⁶⁴ Althusser, *The Humanist Controversy and Other Writings*, 234, 236.

²⁶⁵ *Ibid.*, 238.

Feuerbach argued that the historical process occurred as the result of the alienation of human agents from the objects they produced--an idea Marx would use at various points throughout his career.²⁶⁶ In creating an object, a person objectified herself in that object. Once it was created, however, the object ceases to be under her control, and has an existence outside of her.²⁶⁷

Feuerbach saw the entirety of history as the struggle to overcome this alienation, and to some extent, Marx continued in this vein. The Feuerbachian version of humanist Marxism, then, took the dialectic to be an examination of the way in which reality actually worked: a conflict between human beings that results from the alienation of their own creative activity. Much of the humanist period of Marx's writing was taken up with his examination of this particular model of Hegel's dialectic, his other version of the model (detailed next), and then the rejection of both in favour of his later, economic determinist model.

But Marx, as I said, rejected the Feuerbachian conception of the dialectic. Much of his efforts shifted towards the creation of an economic model of the dialectic, and one that could be used more easily for polemics and mass-agitation: in many ways, the *Manifesto of the Communist Party* is the result of this work, by which point, Marx had largely abandoned his earlier humanism. What little there is of Marx's non-Feuerbachian humanism I shall now attempt to describe. Marx had, in the "Critique of Hegel's *Philosophy of Right*," described his concept of the dialectic in terms similar to that of Feuerbach: a struggle, internal to human beings, to overcome the alienation that occurs in the process of creating an object (this object can be a simple tool, a product, even something more complicated like an idea).²⁶⁸ But by the time of the *Economic and Philosophical Manuscripts*, Marx had already begun to flesh this out in the

²⁶⁶ Ibid., 241.

²⁶⁷ Ibid., 244-5.

²⁶⁸ Marx, "Critique of Hegel's *Philosophy of Right*." 34-5, 39-41.

context of social change. Marx argued that alienation occurs in a social context when one is involved in the division of labour. Because one is involved in a small part of the production process in a society, one is divorced from the product one creates--the labourer does not own the fruit of her own labour.²⁶⁹ At first, this may read like the Feuerbachian conception of the dialectic I have described above: it might be taken as a description of the world as it actually is.

And yet, there is a fundamental difference between the two models, for Marx describes the dialectic as the means by which one can understand the real world: it is a conceptual construct, a tool to be used. The dialectic is the process by which human beings interact, as subjects, with the objects around them and with themselves. This is described in some depth in the *1844 Manuscripts*, and follows very closely Hegel's own model. This dialectical model here describes how a human being, as subject, perceives an object as different from himself. But to understand the object as different from the self requires that the human being understand what is meant by self, so the dialectical 'gaze' is directed inward: one recognizes oneself as both subject and object.²⁷⁰ This is because the human being sees oneself as an object that can be examined (by the self and by others), but also as the subject that is performing the act of perception (the self).²⁷¹ This is, in itself, a form of alienation, in that one recognizes that while one might identify oneself as a subject, to others, she is merely an object of study. This objectified version of herself becomes something that, like any other alienated thing, takes on value in and of itself, separate from the object in question (the idealized self, or one's public image/reputation). This takes on a value external to the object in and of itself. This is alienation, the division of the self, or objects, from their real existence by the process of human understanding. In objectifying other things in

²⁶⁹ Marx, *The Economic and Philosophic Manuscripts of 1844*, 82-84.

²⁷⁰ *Ibid.*, 116-117.

²⁷¹ *Ibid.*

the world, including the things we ourselves create, we give them a false value, and this value can take on a life of its own (of a sort). As a classic example, one can look at money, as Marx did at various points.²⁷² Money has no intrinsic value, it is simply a particularly shiny metal, or a piece of paper. But we recognize it as having value in commerce, and soon, this takes on a value all its own: the pursuit of wealth is seen as a virtue, and the accumulation of wealth soon has other, related meanings--power, fame, and such.

The point, however, of this long digression on alienation, is that that alienation only exists because we, as conscious human beings, objectify the things around us and give them meaning through a dialectical process, which Marx struggled to identify. Society and all the social structures within it only had the meaning given to them because human beings *gave those structures that meaning*. The state has meaning and power because human beings conceptualize it as such. If one could understand the method by which human beings alienate themselves and create meaning for the objects around them, Marx argued that one could come to understand how societies came to be and how they change over time.²⁷³ If one assigns meaning to the state as an object, that meaning can be challenged through action. The actions of human beings in a society give strength to those meanings or challenge them-- for example if one supports the state through actions such as joining the military or accepting the laws that the state drafts for the society.

The division of labour, recall, was the process by which people were assigned to different parts of the production process. This in itself was a result of human activity, and was largely responsible for the make-up of the rest of society. The problem is that frequently human beings had not been conscious of the effect of their actions, and it had been a haphazard process at best. In trying to resolve the exploitation and class conflict that resulted from the division of labour,

²⁷² See, for example, "The Jewish Question."

the actions human beings took established social structures and rules by which the society would operate. In early societies, this may not have been explicitly set down-- a tribal chieftain may have ruled by might and whim, establishing and breaking laws as he or she saw fit. In modern societies, these rules are given form in laws and constitutions. But these too have come to have a value external to themselves: laws were the manner in which human beings codified the division of labour, providing it with a legitimacy it might not otherwise have. While many use the “Theses on Feuerbach” to their own cause, I admit to some mild hope that this is the meaning of Marx’s comment that “it is essential to educate the educator himself... The coincidence of the changing of circumstances and of human activity or self-changing can be conceived and rationally understood only as revolutionary practice.”²⁷⁴ In plain language, then, by understanding the manner in which human beings have set up society as a process of alienation and various methods of resolving that alienation, Marx hoped that human beings would be able to both comprehend and change the society around them.

The difference, then, between humanist Marxism and Hegel’s model, or that of Feuerbach, is as follows: humanist Marxism accepts the primacy of human beings as the agents of history (unlike Hegel). Marxist humanism accepts that its model is conceptual: it is a manner of understanding social evolution, but that change must occur in the real world as the result of this understanding-- unlike Feuerbach, who believed both that his model accurately reflected the real world, and that understanding it was enough (that this understanding was a change in the world in and of itself).²⁷⁵ Human beings, by their actions, shape the societies in which they live, and the humanist Marxist model is an attempt to understand how this occurs. By understanding

²⁷³ Ibid., 117-120.

²⁷⁴ Marx, “Theses on Feuerbach.” In McLellan, 172.

²⁷⁵ Ibid., 171-173. Also, Althusser’s *The Humanist Controversy and Other Writings*, particularly 241-249.

it, Marx hoped that it could lead to action that would change the structure of society--in effect, humanist Marxism is a method of making social change a conscious affair on the part of human beings. Each action, of course, would create new changes in society to be analyzed, and in turn, the analysis of society and the self within it, like the process I described above, would create changes in the self because one has a new understanding of the world. Marxism of this humanist variety, then, is a conceptual model that serves as a rough guide for understanding the way we have built our social world, and for changing it. It is, for lack of a better phrase, a form of philosophical scientific method for understanding the object it studies: the evolution of human society.

Now remains the task of establishing the implications of this model, and its concept of human agency--that is, how is it that humanist Marxism understands human action and its effects on the object of its study (society). I must also discuss the source of some of the major difficulties in examining the young Marx: the epistemological break that occurred shortly after the writing of the *1844 Manuscripts*, the result of which was that the humanist model was never given the depth of analysis that was given his later, determinist model. But first, let us examine alienation in some further depth, in order to give the reader a sense of what it is that, along with human agency, is at the core of the dialectic of the humanist Marxist position.

III. Alienation

The two key elements to the cognitive model of humanist Marxism that I am endeavouring to describe here are alienation and human agency. Let us look at alienation first, here, since it is a key part to understanding what it is that Marxist humanism believes human agency is directed towards resolving. Again, it must be mentioned that this idea of alienation is a conceptual construct, a way of understanding how it is that human beings comprehend and interact with

their world. In other words, alienation is not a physical thing, but something that human beings construct in their own minds. What is alienation then? I have touched on this topic elsewhere in the paper, albeit briefly. Alienation has several meanings within Marx's writings, but the clearest definition of it that I can provide here is that alienation is the mental realization that an object (the self, a product, society, or what-have-you) is not part of the self.²⁷⁶ Where Hegel, for example, would have been content enough with this classification, Marx took alienation to involve the realization that is made by the mind of the separation between oneself and the product(s) of one's labour.²⁷⁷ Partly, then, alienation is caused by the realization that one does not own the thing that one creates, particularly since society divides labour in such a way that the product one creates is never wholly produced by or owned by those who make it--although capitalism certainly simplifies the process by having ownership of most of social production in the hands of a very small number of people. And yet, alienation is also, as I have mentioned, an internal thing to the human being. Alienation occurs whenever a human being produces anything--since production also involves consciousness in the act of conceptualizing what we produce-- including both physical objects and "social constructs" like the state and society. When human beings produce a thing, it is no longer contained in the mind, but separate from it. This separation is the first part of alienation. What happens next is a large part of how Marxist humanism sees as the 'cause' of changes in society--if such a cause can ever be isolated.

The next part of alienation is the transition from the divorce between the self and the other, the subject and the object, to the reification of the object as having a value separate from the human mind that creates that value in the first place.²⁷⁸ A famous example is the reification of

²⁷⁶ Heiss, 66-68.

²⁷⁷ Marx, *Economic and Philosophic Manuscripts of 1844*, 72.

²⁷⁸ Marx, "The Critique of Hegel's *Philosophy of Right*," 34-5.

money. Marx once wrote that money had been given a value in and of itself.²⁷⁹ Money was, in and of itself, meaningless. And yet, once created and used in society as a form of wealth and something that could define the value of other objects, it was taken to have a value in and of itself. As the reader may well have already gathered, this second form of alienation has a very real aspect to it in society: it is a conceptual metaphor for the value that human beings assign to social structures, such as money. By giving these objects value, the human beings within a society have already ceded some degree of power to the objects. Marx's point, however, should be equally clear. What power these structures possess is not due to any intrinsic virtue or vices in themselves. They are given meaning, and power, only so long as people allow them to have it.

The last stage of alienation involves the transformation of the alienated object into a fetish.²⁸⁰ A fetish is often a symbol of holy power, a talisman that is believed to be possessed by spirits, gods, or to be a god-like thing in and of itself. For example, someone might hold up a crucifix in prayer, believing that the symbol of the murdered Christ is, in itself, holy, and has a power in and of itself. A symbol that once represented one's faith in the divine comes, with the process of alienation, to be something holy in and of itself in the mind of the subject believing in it. So too with much else in human society. Take for instance our earlier example of money possessing a value in and of itself. This was the second part of the process of alienation, but money becomes a fetish when it is believed to possess not just value, but power and, in the most extreme examples, a sentience of its own.²⁸¹ But again, this 'intrinsic' value is something that

²⁷⁹ Tucker, *Philosophy and Myth in Karl Marx*, 111-112.

²⁸⁰ Marx, *Capital*, Volume I, 472-474.

²⁸¹ One should not read this into Adam Smith's argument too deeply, but anyone who feels that an "Invisible Hand" is guiding the markets of the world is probably looking, quite sincerely, for a new form of god. For an interesting discussion of the topic, I suggest the reader look at *The Passions and the Interests* by Albert O. Hirschman. He provides an insightful analysis of the rise of liberal theory, based largely on the goal many liberals had of replacing faith in the divine and the virtue intrinsic to humanity with something akin to Mandeville's *Fable of the Bees*: private vices would lead, naturally, to public virtue. If one ever wishes to understand how it is that money

human beings have given these objects, whether consciously or otherwise. If money, or commerce, or the state, have *any* value in and of themselves, it is because human beings, in the process of the division of labour, assigned people certain tasks within society that needed to be completed in order for society to survive.²⁸² A brief note should be made here that these three types of alienation, while presented in a sequential order, are not seen as occurring in that order by Marxism. Instead, they are three parts of the same phenomenon, the process whereby human beings become alienated from the objects they make and with which they are surrounded-- including themselves.

These tasks, the property relations that result from the division of labour, and everything within society, come, through the process of alienation, to have a meaning and a value outside of basic survival activities. Alienation occurs very much without conscious activity on the part of the person in question, in that it is, as I have mentioned, a process that occurs whenever the human subject recognizes that an object is different from the self. In assigning meaning to that other object, it is natural to assign a value to the object in assessing what the object is, what it does, and how a human being interacts with it. This is a natural process, in a way, in that it has to happen as a result of human self-consciousness: if there is to be a self, it cannot be recognized as such by a sentient being without there being an other, and an object that can be recognized as different from the self. That this process is unconscious and part of the human psyche may have been part of Marx's point in developing his model: if human beings could be made aware of the nature of the 'power' and 'value' of the fetishes that they themselves had made, perhaps they could come to change them. Again, it must be mentioned that this is, in the end, a conceptual

and commerce have taken on the meaning and value assigned to them in the modern world, this is an excellent place to begin.

²⁸² Marx, *Economic and Philosophic Manuscripts of 1844*, 82-84.

model, a tool for understanding society. In educating human beings as to the humanist Marxist position, people can use it as a method for deconstructing how social relations are set up, and determining what purposes, if any, a social structure has been assigned by the people living in a society. It is by no means perfect, and it is certainly a more complicated theoretical model than the determinist position, but it has its advantages, which I shall discuss in more detail shortly.

For now, let us turn to human agency. Since we have discussed what it is that humanist Marxism thinks human agents do, I should discuss what humanist Marxism thinks human agency actually is in and of itself.

IV. What is Agency?

Human agency at the simplest level is the ability of human beings to choose their actions.

Charles Taylor, though not a Marxist, provides a rather good definition of human agency in his *Philosophical Papers*: “To be a full human agent, to be a person, or a self in the ordinary meaning, is to exist in a space defined by distinctions of worth. A self is a being for whom certain questions of categoric value have arisen, and received at least partial answers.”²⁸³ Human agency, in Taylor’s argument, is the ability to make decisions based not simply on utilitarian principles of benefit/cost, but to distinguish between two different moral visions: any choice, he argues, is one between different versions of whom one wishes to be.²⁸⁴ Marxist humanism has, perhaps not surprisingly, a similar take on this basic concept, in that Marx saw human beings as essentially conscious, creative beings. The difference between the human animal and others was that human beings are able to form thoughts about the actions that they take. So, while the bees of a hive are equally capable of creating things of complexity, monkeys may use tools, human

²⁸³ Taylor, Charles, *Human Agency and Language: Philosophical Papers*, Volume I, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1985), 3.

²⁸⁴ *Ibid.*, 33, 34-35.

beings are able to use their minds to envision the object they will make before they make it. In other words, at some basic level, there is a cognitive gap between humans and other animals in that we are able to plan out what we are going to do.²⁸⁵ Alienation, in some respects, can be seen as the natural result of societies in which human beings are not free to be conscious creators: their labour is not done by choice, but because it is necessary to society, and because they are forced to do so to survive. We are truly human when we are able to make choices that will define the objects we create with those actions, and in turn ourselves as a result of changes in our experience and minds that follow from those actions. Since our actions create an object that a person can recognize as different from ourselves, and against which we can define ourselves, every action that a person takes and everything that he or she creates redefines that person's concept of themselves. They can identify themselves as x or y in relation to the objects, social structures, and people around them, and by their different actions, change both the definition of those other objects, people and themselves.

This is the second aspect to human agency within Marxist humanism, one that is far more important here: the role that it plays within the dialectic. Recall that in the section on alienation, I discussed that human beings come to assign meaning and intrinsic value to the objects they perceive or that they create. How they go about doing this results in the creation of social structures. So on the one hand, there is the Marxist humanist argument about human beings as conscious creators, but the other side of the humanist position is that human beings' actions and the manner in which they act to deal with alienation results in the changes in society that the dialectic proposes to trace. If human beings come to use money to represent a value for exchange, this takes on meaning in the society and, as human beings come to accept money's

²⁸⁵ Marx, *Economic and Philosophic Manuscripts of 1844*, 76-77.

fetishistic value, as a social structure. So too with any other element within society, whether it is the state, the family, or religion.²⁸⁶ Marxist humanism accepts that these social structures help to define the beliefs and ‘roles’ of human beings in the society, but that humans in turn shape the society by their actions.²⁸⁷ So, taking again the example of money, if a person grows up in a market-society where money has a fetishistic value as we have thus far discussed, that person will be quite likely to accept that value in their own minds. But by doing so, and continuing to use money in the fashion of a fetish--by pursuing it as a goal in and of itself, by accepting, tacitly or not, the role of money in society--then he is contributing to the continuation and reinforcement of that fetish, and vice versa for actions that challenge it.

The actions we take are seen in Marxist humanism to be a kind of continual feedback system, where the human beings in society conceptualize all kinds of objects, create them according to a division of labour, and fetishize the worth of those objects via the process of alienation. Social structures are created by human beings as ways of institutionalizing and/or legitimating the social relations that occur as a result of our actions and the alienation process. But they are only seen to have power so long as we continue to accept them. Many writers in the Marxist tradition, and outside it, have written on both the issue of agency and its role in social life. Many writers, both within humanist and determinist Marxism, have written on the concept of ‘voluntarism,’ or the need for human beings to act in order to realize the communist dream of revolutionary victory. I would like to examine the concept of voluntarism, very briefly, in order to fill out the concept of human agency described thus far.

There are basically three ‘strains’ of voluntarism within Marxism. The first is the idea of spontaneous revolution, the second is that of planned revolution, and the third is democratic or

²⁸⁶ Ibid., 85-6.

gradual reformism. The first is primarily found in Luxemburg, though others have made the argument as well. The second is found in both Lenin and Gramsci. Luxemburg, for example, argued that the eventual revolution against capitalism would be led by a spontaneous uprising of the entire working class.²⁸⁸ These uprisings would occur as a result and reaction to the crises that occurred in capitalism, once the workers were made aware of it. In a way, this variation of voluntarism is linked to the determinist Marxist tendency and, if at all linked to humanist Marxism, to the naturalistic position of Feuerbach. This is because it assumes that the movement of history will A) create a series of economically predetermined crises, and B) that the workers will play a specific role in acting to resolve the tensions created by these crises. On the one hand, Luxemburg's spontaneous uprising would be an action on the part of the workers, but if that action is determined by the crises created by economic contradictions in a society, we are already veering strongly into a form of determinism. The position of Lenin, despite occasional lapses into determinism, also is one of the few occasions when voluntarism is linked with revolutionary uprising. Instead of a spontaneous action that results from the workers' becoming conscious of tensions within capitalism that they must overcome, Lenin argued that the power of capitalist control over society required the continued guidance of a cadre of revolutionary professionals.²⁸⁹ Since capitalism was so well organized, he believed that the only way that the socialist revolutionary movement could respond was to become equally well organized. While I hesitate to argue that there is an explicit link between the ideas, Lenin's argument does come close to that of the humanist position I have thus far outlined: using the conceptual model of Marxism to understand the tensions and choices made within a society that have resulted in the accumulation

²⁸⁷ Ibid., 86.

²⁸⁸ Luxemburg, *Reform or Revolution*, 54.

²⁸⁹ Lenin, V.I., *What is to be Done?* 48, 69-70.

of wealth and power due to the division of labour, and making changes accordingly. Lastly, there is the concept of democratic reform, of which Kautsky stands as an example in his later life. Also, while Gramsci does not explicitly call it this, his argument is an example of something mid-way between the positions of Lenin and Kautsky. Kautsky argued that socialism had as its goal the emancipation of human beings from oppression of any sort, and that democratic reform was equally effective as revolution, especially given the strength of support for liberal democracy in the Western world.²⁹⁰ Similarly, Gramsci called for a Modern Prince (a political party) to lead the leftist movements in democratic Western countries in a “war of position,” where the goal would be piecemeal gains in opposition to the ruling class and its allies.²⁹¹ The working class, in both men’s argument, had an active role to play in leading the drive for change in capitalist societies.

If there is any problem with the voluntarism argument, it is that it drifts occasionally into, or takes some of its inspiration from, the determinist Marxist position, or, if on occasion it relies on humanist Marxist arguments, draws too heavily from Marx’s Feuerbachian writing. In other words, in all three variations of the voluntarist argument, there is a tendency to argue that the reason the working class will develop into a leadership role in the struggle against capitalism is because of the role that class plays in the structure of society. Their oppression and the structure of society can be seen as ‘forcing’ the working class into the role of revolutionaries, something that history has not borne out, and that denies the human agency at the core of the humanist Marxist position. Humanist Marxism is meant as a tool to help people understand the structure of society, and perhaps to act as a guide for action based upon the knowledge developed through its use. It is a choice on the part of the workers in that class, the political parties that purport to lead

²⁹⁰ Kautsky, *Social Democracy vs. Communism*, 23, 34-5

them, and the Marxists who hope to guide them both, to see the world through the lens of Marxism or liberalism or any other political perspective. If a Marxist revolutionary or reformist position is to develop in society, it is not because the role the proletariat plays in society forces them or gives them special insight, it is because they are educated by people who believe in Marxism. Those people, in turn, have to choose to see through the lens of Marxism themselves. Marxism is as much a social structure as anything else, and Marx himself was, despite his continual poverty and debt, born and raised amongst the middle class! Anyone can come to see through the Marxist lens, although I will be the first to admit that someone who benefits from capitalism will, like the biblical allegory of the rich man and the eye of a needle, perhaps be less likely or happy to do so.²⁹²

Human agency lies at the heart of humanist Marxism, in that it is the basis for both the conceptual model, and the goal of Marxism in the first place--to establish a society in which human beings have control over their own lives and the society in which they live. It is, certainly, a utopian ideal, and this is a criticism I shall field below, but it is nonetheless one of the key ideals to which Marxism adheres. Seeing as it is a conceptual model, and that it places agency at the forefront of the dialectical evolution of society, it is now appropriate that I provide a summary dialectical model of humanist Marxism. How does society evolve, and into what? And what, if anything, does humanist Marxism say of the prophetic hopes that determinism takes to such extremes?

V. The Humanist Dialectic, Present and Future.

How does society evolve? This question is answered by humanist Marxism with whatever the

²⁹¹ Gramsci, Antonio, "The Modern Prince," 137, 142.

²⁹² Engels certainly stands out as an example of those amongst the capitalist class who are capable of seeing through the Marxist lens.

people in that society choose. The answer may seem, at first, a bit simplistic, but it follows naturally from the humanist dialectical model. Marx, in his youth, still believed that the result of the dialectical process in capitalist society would be the radical transformation of capitalism into socialism. This, I believe, was in error, although the Feuerbachian version of humanist Marxism might accept that as a logical outcome. The humanist dialectical model I have tried to establish in this paper, however, does not propose a definitive end to the process of history. Instead, it is a conceptual model that allows the person who uses it to understand how society evolves, and perhaps, based upon that understanding, to act to change the world around her. But the dialectic is an examination of how the entire body of society acts, and the clear-headed person must realize that Marxists are, for all their effort, but one group amongst many. Their goals can and will be opposed by the members of other groups. Indeed, this follows from the nature of the dialectical method we have thus far seen. Humanist Marxism takes it as given that the structure of society results from the various actions of human agents within that society, regardless of how ‘conscious’ or ‘aware’ they are of the results. Thus every human action within society helps to reinforce or challenge those various structures. A person who goes to the local supermarket every day for groceries, knowingly or not, is reinforcing the capitalist form of food production and the market economy. A person who instead chooses to buy from local producers who operate outside of the corporate market might be helping to swing the pendulum away from capitalism towards something different--socialism is but one of many such alternatives.

The point of this should be readily apparent: there is, as Camus once put it, no real end to that process which dialectical models analyze.²⁹³ If it has an end then it is not really a dialectical model at all. Recall that in the determinist chapter, I briefly mentioned the work of Melvin

²⁹³ Camus, Albert, *The Rebel: An Essay on Man in Revolt*, (New York: Vintage International, 1991), 202.

Rader, who proposed that Marx had three variations on his analysis: one was the now famous base-superstructure model, another was a more organic, but still determinist model, and the third was the early Marx's Hegelian dialectic.²⁹⁴ Hegel's model was one in which the entirety of the dialectical process was engaged in continual change and evolution as its various parts interacted. This process involved the conflict between antagonistic elements where one part or another would achieve a form of victory over its antithesis. The result was a change in the thing being analyzed by the dialectic, but this change was the result of new tensions and conflicts emerging as a result of the synthesis of the old antagonisms.²⁹⁵ Similarly, Marx's early model of the dialectic assumed that the antagonisms between classes--made up of agents with varying degrees of power and control over the economy and other parts of the society-- would help define the structure of the whole society. The manner in which human beings acted to resolve the conflict over scarce resources, and the power imbalances these actions created, would result in the way a society was set up. The conflict between these various parts would result in changes in that society, which he assumed would be revolutionary. But these transformations cannot be absolutely deterministic: the changes that result from different degrees of ownership and power simply create a new type of social order, *to which the dialectical model still applies*. The humanist Marxist dialectic, recall, is a conceptual one: it only measures the changes that have occurred, pointing out the potential results of human action and the manner in which society is organized. A change in the society being studied simply means that, like any other tool, one must re-calibrate one's instruments and see what has changed, not that the end of the dialectic or the process of history is already written. Indeed, to suggest that, because the dialectical model suggests x and therefore x will happen, is a lot like suggesting that the only reason why the

²⁹⁴ Rader, xiv-xvii.

revolutionary prophecy of Marxism has failed to be realized is because we Marxists have to get the formula right in order for reality to follow suit.

The Marxist dialectical model, then, is a method for analyzing the way that human actions have shaped society, and why a society takes a certain form. It arrives at this by analyzing the actions of human agents within the given society, and may be able to suggest possible results if certain actions are taken by the members of society--including the dialectical thinker in question. Human agency is defined as the ability of human beings to make conscious choices between different goals/morals/actions and to make choices in general. The human agents within society act as parts in a complex social whole, whose choices are a reaction to the material conditions they face, the pressures they feel from the actions of other human beings (and the structures they make), and the alienation that they experience in the division of themselves from the objects around them. Let us define these three elements a bit more fully within the context of the dialectic.

First, human beings live in various conditions: in one area, food is scarce, where in another it is abundant. Marxism argues that human beings are inherently social creatures, and so, given the various conditions they face, human beings react to these conditions with varying forms of production necessary to their survival with various social structures. One of these is the economy, which humanist Marxism sees as the manner in which human beings provide necessities for themselves in a society. It is not my intention to suggest here that humans consciously plan out every single detail of their economic lives. Instead, the economy is the result of a series of choices made by human beings within a society--to farm wheat instead of rice, to produce clothing by industrial machinery as opposed to by hand, and so on. These

²⁹⁵ Heiss, 16.

choices are often made as the result of both groups and individuals making decisions based upon the tools they have at hand and the options they see available to them. The grain farmer may believe there is economic advantage in producing grain instead of rice, or perhaps the soil does not favour the latter, or perhaps she has better tools for harvesting grain than rice. These and thousands of similar everyday actions by human beings create the economic structure of a society, and change it over time. Human beings create new tools, react to changes in the environment, and come up with new ways to resolve their needs in society: the actions that they take in these and other situations change the structures of the economy, and the rest of society.

It should be readily apparent this is related to the second pressure I mentioned above, that of the actions of other human beings and the social structures that result from such actions. In any given society, the choices human beings make about how to govern themselves result in the creation of social structures. These structures are seen in humanist Marxism as being the collective results of thousands of human actions. The state, for example, in any society, is the result of thousands of human beings developing rules by which people shall act in that society, and those to enforce and reinterpret those rules over time. Education arises because human beings see the need to teach their youths. And philosophy and religion arise as natural reactions of humanity to its fears and hopes of the afterlife, the meaning of this life, and so forth. Unlike determinist Marxism, though, humanist Marxism sees these structures for what they are: the result of human activity. That social structures accumulate power is both partly a form of alienation and a result of those actions that created them in the first place. On the one hand, human beings come, over time, to associate power and meaning to the structures they themselves have created in addition to the actual purpose (whatever that may be) of those structures. On the other hand, the very creation of such structures over time gives them a form of power, in that

people come to accept given structures as a legitimate manner of performing a given function in society. Human beings also often provide those who act within those structures--priests in religion, teachers in education, and bureaucrats in the state--with the power necessary to act within a given role. These structures, in turn, act upon the various members of society as a result of the choices made by the people within those structures. The leadership of a church outlaws gay marriage, for example, and this action has a tangible effect as the weight of that church group is brought to bear against gays within a society. Again, these structures are the result of human action, and how they are used and changed over time depends a great deal on how human beings choose to use them.

This relates to the third element I have identified as being a part of the dialectical model of humanist Marxism: alienation. Human beings give the very things they create a meaning and power that is divorced from creation of those things in the first place. So, for example, the state, originally a series of rules and offices for enforcers of those rules, comes to have a grander meaning in and of itself. Instead of seeing its role as an enforcer of the rules of society, the state is seen as being the sole legitimate power in society, the place where one goes to flex one's social muscles, and the site of power and agency for the whole country in its dealings with the rest of the world. How human beings react to this new meaning of the state creates more social structures: lobby groups emerge in democratic states, or uprisings occur in autocracies like Russia, *ad infinitum*. Marxist humanism sees this as one other way in which societies evolve over time: human beings create new forms of alienated meaning, and often find themselves in conflict over the division of power within society between the various social structures they have created. Marx's model was, perhaps, an attempt to make human beings aware of this alienation, and how the actions of human beings unconscious of their effects created vast social, economic,

and political structures over which they rapidly ceased to have control thanks to the division of power and authority in the society and due in no small part to the organization of the social structures in question.

Human actions change society and social structures over time, as I had mentioned above. If a society's economic structure is capitalist, the choice to continue using the massive, corporate-owned grocery store down the street is as much a force for preserving society in one form as is the larger choice by the government (and the agents within it) to maintain the freedom of the economy. Actions that oppose the social structures human beings have created have an effect on transforming them in ways both subtle and overt: burning down a church has an obvious and immediate impact, whereas protests against the state may result in gradual changes to the state's policy over time. In the end, however, the humanist Marxist version of the dialectic is one which sees the whole of society made up of many human agents with varying degrees of power and influence: any number of choices made by the various members of society have an impact on the rest of society in some way or another, creating a change in the whole of the social system. This can lead to a new society--communism instead of capitalism, for example--or it may simply mean that the society re-organizes certain elements within itself as a result of the choices made by the people within it--welfare emerges as a manner of dealing with unemployment and the poverty of the working class in capitalism. This, then, is the humanist dialectic: one that sees social changes occurring over time as the result of the choices. These choices can be made conscious of the effects on society--perhaps Marxism can assist human beings to become conscious of those effects: however, the choice to cease going to the superstore mentioned earlier may be because one actively opposes corporate capitalism (one is conscious of the impact of one's actions on social structures), or it may simply be because one wants a

specific product that is not available at the superstore (one is unconscious/uncaring of the impact of their actions in society). Given enough of such choices over time, the various structures affected by those choices change over time, and change the whole of society as well. Humanist Marxism can, from this basis, make arguments as to the effects of such activities by human beings, and perhaps make modest predictive models. It can also be used to explain what role a given structure plays in society, or what the effect of various actions by human beings in the past has been.

But it is a far cry from this to suggest that the answers we derive from using the humanist Marxist method are going to provide us with definitively accurate prophecies, and indeed such a faith in prophecy goes completely contrary to the nature of humanist Marxism. If the actions of human agents determine the way society is structured, then those choices may certainly be measured to some degree. But these actions do not remove the society from the dialectic, as determinist Marxism suggests will happen at the 'end of history' in the communist utopia. Instead, these actions simply create changes that, once again, can be measured with the dialectic. And since it is the action of human beings that determines the outcome of the dialectic, the only way that the process of history is going to follow a given path is if human beings *choose to make that outcome happen*. Even then, the outcome is not determined due to the fact that other human beings will make choices that oppose that outcome. The humanist dialectic does not and can not guarantee a given outcome to the tensions it detects within a society: it can only suggest possible outcomes and possible causes. For science, that is usually the best that anyone can come up with, and it is truly unfortunate that Marx, and later the Marxists, tended to abandon healthy scepticism in favour of a determinist model that promised their cause victory with a faith unrivalled by all but the most devout of organized religions.

What happened to cause this change, of course, is open to interpretation. That there was an epistemological break in Marx's writings around the time of 1844-1845 is readily apparent, despite the occasional scholarly dispute about exactly when or with what writing it occurred. The epistemological break I refer to here is the sudden change in Marx's writing from his Hegelian early writings towards the later, determinist model. In short, he exchanged the conceptual humanist model for one that argued that it was the ownership of the economy, and the structure of the society itself--its internal contradictions and the class struggle that resulted--that determined the manner in which that society evolved. After this break, Marx would only infrequently return to and use the themes of the humanist model. At times, he blended alienation into the later model--in Volume Three of *Capital*, for instance, where fetishistic alienation makes a sudden return in his analysis of commodities, or the *Grundrisse*, where Marx toys with introducing Hegelian concepts like alienation and agency into his later economic model. But the emphasis had largely shifted towards determinism, and the fact that most of his early works remained unpublished until the early and mid-20th Century, combined with the suppression of alternatives to Stalin and Soviet Diamat, prevented humanist Marxism from emerging in any real sense until after Stalin's death. Even then, humanist Marxism has been often vilified by determinists as a kind of poor cousin, a return to Bernstein's reformist tendencies, or as bad science. The latter accusation, in particular, seems rather odd given determinism's blind faith in its own prophecies. The problem Marxism faces in the modern day is the struggle of its theorists to determine what the core of the theory is: determinism or humanism. It is my hope to show that humanist Marxism, despite its flaws, is the better model of the two, and the one to which Marxism should now turn in the present as its own.

But why should Marxism seek to escape the trap of determinism? Why should one

consider humanist Marxism to be the preferred model of Marx's theory? Part of my answer is that humanist Marxism escapes the flaws of determinism, as I shall outline in the next section. In addition to this, however, I argue that humanist Marxism allows Marxism to analyze social change in a more effective fashion, and allows for a more meaningful *praxis* than does determinist Marxism. Both strands of Marxism claim to analyze social change, however, I have already demonstrated several flaws which I believe make determinist Marxist analysis incoherent. Humanist Marxism can be a useful tool for both philosophical and empirical analysis. On the one hand, it does not fall prey to the logical fallacies of determinism (the tautological issue, and the problem of agency), while still providing a model that may be applicable to several contexts. I do not wish to suggest here that humanist Marxism claims to be universally true. Instead, the model can be seen as being a method for understanding how it is that structures in many societies have evolved over time due to class conflict and the choices made by human beings over time in that conflict. Humanism may very well miss some other factors, but in arguing that it is the choices made by agents within a given society, it certainly allows Marxism to analyze a large number of social structures and potential causes for their development--is the state organized to control racial tension, to control a specific gender (women), to impose class dominance, etc. Humanist Marxism also allows for more flexibility in this sort of analysis: instead of arguing that everything is the result of internal, class-based contradictions within society (and thus arguing for some sort of absolute, universally true constant) humanist Marxism argues that societies evolve in a given context as a result of human choices. It allows the analyst to demonstrate why it is that various societies evolved in different ways due to the choices made in a given context. It also provides, as I mentioned, a more meaningful tool for political *praxis* or action. Determinism argues that it is largely inevitable that

crises, and therefore revolution, will emerge in a society due to internal contradictions or economic necessity. Thus any action that a person takes is irrelevant: it inevitably contributes in some way or another towards the end of a social order. Frankly, this is both bad logic and bad for political organization. On the one hand, actions that fortify the current social order may very well curtail revolution and change, and may make the “inevitable” transformation of society much more evitable. On the other hand, the argument that utopia is inevitable (whether that utopia is religious afterlife or communist society) is a double-edged sword. It may work to convert some, and to provide something on which people may hold in difficult times, but it also makes human action inconsequential: why bother acting if the end is already written?

Instead, humanist Marxism argues that every human action is significant because it either contributes to or challenges the current social order. Why should this matter? It provides Marxists with a powerful argument as to why people should continue to act in the name of socialism, reform, and political change. If every human action is significant, then becoming aware of how one’s actions affect the society around him or her becomes incredibly important, as does acting consciously to make positive change. Our earlier example of the choice of grocery store will help to make this somewhat more clear. If the revolutionary transformation of society is inevitable, then surely it would not matter where one buys one’s groceries, or, for that matter, what anyone does at all, since the collapse of capitalism is already assured. If it is a matter of choice, then choosing what sort of grocery store one prefers--corporate superstore or local, worker’s collectives, for example--becomes incredibly important. Humanist Marxist political programmes demand conscious change on the part of its followers, not blind adherence to utopian ideals. It therefore has something very practical to bring to the Marxist political cause: a call for action, and a reason for that action.

No normative disagreement can be wholly resolved by argument, and there is an element of a normative difference between humanism and determinism in Marxism. Both believe in fundamentally opposed models as to what causes social change. It is my argument, however, that the determinist model is logically incoherent, has been proven wrong many times in its analysis and predictions, and lacks political capital. If Marxism is to continue to be used as a political tool and philosophical model, I do not believe that the determinist model can be accepted any longer. It remains for me to defend humanism as best as I am able against potential criticisms, in order to demonstrate that it stands on its own merits. Let us turn to this project now.

VI. An Essay in Self-Criticism: Flaws of Humanism?

Recalling my criticisms of determinism in the last chapter, I argued that determinism had three problems: that it ignored agency to its own detriment, lacked historical veracity, and was tautological and non-testable. Let us review how well humanist Marxism answers these concerns. To the first concern, that of agency, the trouble now is that the argument is largely reversed: instead of structures or the economy causing every change in society, humanism argues that human beings within the society cause the changes in a society. So, how well does humanism deal with social structures? Humanism argues that human beings act to create social change, and create changes in social structures. The difference between the two versions of Marxism, however, is that humanism accepts the presence of social structures: it simply sees them for what they are. Social structures, within humanist Marxism, are seen as the result of numerous decisions made by groups of human beings within society, and these structures are still granted a modicum of autonomy in humanism, in that human beings, by their actions, use, reinforce, or challenge various social structures. The power of social structures is acknowledged in that humanism accepts that social structures exist, and because of the support of those groups

of people within society that use and accept those social structures, they are granted a form of power. That human agents remain central is clear, and this strikes me as far more logical a proposition than to suggest that social structures have a form of arbitrary power divorced from the human beings whose actions allow the structures to exist in the first place!

As to historical veracity, humanist Marxism, as I have already mentioned in this chapter, suffers from the fact that it was never worked out in any full format by Marx himself, and few Marxists have really used the humanist model since his death. I have pointed out a few exceptions above but few Marxist humanists have made any predictions. Indeed, much of humanist Marxism's history has been a struggle to denounce the determinist position and establish itself as a legitimate alternative for Marxism. Kolakowski's *Main Currents of Marxism* is a thorough examination of the various writings of Marxist thinkers, and he demonstrates this point rather well. Most humanist Marxism, when it has emerged, has been a reaction to more dogmatic and frequently determinist positions--Gramsci and Kautsky's voluntarism in opposition to Stalinism, Miliband's rejection of structuralism, or the Yugoslavian humanists under Tito, for example. He argues in his conclusion that Marxism has failed as a political programme, and that while some of its contributions to human knowledge have become accepted generally, it has little more to offer analytically or otherwise.²⁹⁶ That I disagree on the latter point is, I hope, quite apparent, but I will endeavour to present a brief argument on why this is so in the final chapter and to what remains for the Marxist political programme.

However, with regards to historical veracity, the humanist Marxist perspective, if it is 'true' to its own logical precepts, would likely be more than a bit tentative about any predictions it makes. Humanist Marxism does hope for socialism, as Miliband and others like him have

²⁹⁶ Kolakowski, Leszek, *Main Currents of Marxism*, Volume III (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1978), 524,

mentioned.²⁹⁷ However, accepting the humanist position leads me to argue that socialism is but one of many alternatives that may result from human activity within a society. Other alternative social systems are quite possible as well. Until a Marxist predictive hypothesis is put forward that takes the humanist position forward as its theoretical basis, its veracity will be more than a bit difficult to judge. Admittedly, both determinist and humanist Marxism have been reasonably decent at demonstrating how it is that societies have come to be as they are: various groups within society come to have more power and wealth and come to dominate society. This is, to be honest, not that surprising a conclusion. For an argument that claims to have some degree of analytical veracity, humanist Marxism has yet to have an opportunity to prove itself, while determinism has already been demonstrated to be inaccurate in its predictions.

The issue that relates to this is whether or not the humanist position is tautological: can it be tested in the first place, or does it make an argument that is true by dint of its own logical precepts? That humanist Marxism makes a claim to being a conceptual model makes it inherently more open to being used as a serious hypothesis to be tested. Instead of a form of faith in the inevitability of its own success, Marxism seeks to examine how it is that society evolves and where it might go. As such, it is certainly testable. But is the humanist argument tautological? My argument here is that it is not. There is a difference between determinism and humanism in that determinism argues that the economy is both the cause of social change and the result of it: the economy causes social change, and a new economic form is the result. The humanist argument however is that human agents act on the economy and other social structures. The results of human actions are not 'new human agents' (unless the structure is, perhaps, reproductive processes) but new social structures. Thus the argument is not assumed to be true

528-30.

by its own precepts: the results of human actions may be hypothesized, but whether that hypothesis is true or not can be tested. Even if humanism did not have some degree of historical veracity or if it failed to take structures (the other side of the debate, here) into account, that it succeeds in avoiding the trap of tautology at the very least prevents it from being invalid from the start. For all determinism's strengths, it fails to solve this third problem, while humanism, despite the flaws from which it may suffer, is not subject to determinism's failings. It can be tested over time, and as such, is certainly a more appropriate position for Marxists to take.

Determinist Marxists might complain, however, that the humanist perspective lacks determinism's political 'weight,' and that my contention that determinism is politically bankrupt is incorrect. Such claims, given the history of determinist Marxist politics--Stalin is an obvious example--and that determinism has been promising a revolution and communist utopia for over a hundred years and not delivering, is in somewhat bad taste. That said, let us consider the issue, briefly: humanist Marxism argues that human choice is the cause of social change. As such Marxism's political goal of socialism requires, in the humanist perspective, only that people continue to challenge social inequality and become conscious of the effects of their actions on the organization of society. It certainly has a political future given that exploitation, oppression, and a host of other evils continue to plague humanity, and humanist Marxism therefore provides a tool for understanding how one's actions affect society and can perhaps help resolve some of those evils. As such, humanist Marxism has something quite powerful to offer to Marxist political action: a call to action, and a perspective from which people can come to see why it is necessary to act.

VIII. Conclusion

²⁹⁷ See in particular Milband's *Socialism for a Sceptical Age*.

It has been my goal in this chapter to present humanism as honestly as possible as an alternative interpretation to determinism in the history of Marxist ideas. I have attempted to argue that there is a reasonably significant difference between these two models, and to differentiate between the humanist Marxism of Marx's interpretation of Feuerbach and that of some of his other early writings. I have endeavoured to define the non-Feuerbachian humanist Marxist position, including its interpretation of alienation and its contention that human agency is what drives social evolution. Lastly, I defended the humanist Marxist position as best as I could from the similar criticisms I levelled against determinism. In the final chapter, then, I shall turn to potential criticisms of my overall argument, and endeavour to dispel them, and will offer some final comments on the essay as a whole.

Chapter Five: Concluding Remarks

I. Outline

In this final chapter I will be doing two things: attempting to defend my interpretation of humanist Marxism from potential criticisms of my argument; and summing up the argument I have made in this paper with some concluding remarks. The former task is different from the task I undertook in Chapter Four, in that in the chapter on humanist Marxism I sought merely to defend my definition of humanist Marxism from the criticisms I had levelled against determinism. Here, however, my goal is to bring up potential criticisms of my argument on the whole, and demonstrate that it stands against these potential critiques. I will then wrap up this project with some final comments, and hopefully in so doing provide the reader with a sense of what Marxism can take from the present paper and its conclusions. This is largely speculation on my own part, as I will mostly venture commentary on what I feel the implications of this paper on Marxist theory and practice may be. Without further ado, then, let us turn to the first project, defending myself from potential criticism.

II. A Final Essay in Self-Criticism: Theory and Interpretation

The reader may recall that, in my introductory chapter on the purpose of, and methodology used, in this paper, I had put forward the goal of this paper as being an examination of what it was that the dialectic meant to Marxists. I then endeavoured to show, both in that first and in subsequent chapters, that such a question invariably leads into a discussion of the different forms of the dialectic within Marxism. In my case, I argued that the difference between various Marxist dialectical models could be linked to determinism and humanism within Marx's own writing, and that of his followers. From this, I had hoped to move on to a discussion of the differences

between these two models of Marxism, and provide an argument as to why humanist Marxism might be preferred over its determinist counterpart. We will see, first, how well I have accomplished this task.

In short, I believe that I have succeeded in presenting the two sides of Marxism as clearly as possible. I have argued why it is that humanist Marxism is preferable, and what this may mean for Marxism. Yet there is potentially a problem, one which relates to my research methodology. In my introductory chapter I had presented my methodology as being based largely upon Skinner's contextualist approach, and to a lesser degree that of Gadamer. I rejected Strauss's concept of 'the tradition,' and sought to avoid the potential for both reading in meaning to texts where there is none, and for presenting the texts of writer as having a coherency that may not exist. From this latter part of the chapter, I can see the following potential criticisms of my argument: 1) the choice of humanism/determinism as terms in my argument; 2) the presentation of the texts throughout as presenting a tradition of sorts within Marxism, and/or that I may have left out important or contradictory theories 3) that the present paper argues in favour of a "more true" Marx--the humanist one; 4) the problem of deriving a coherent humanist or determinist Marxism from the texts I have analyzed here; and 5) that I may have created a false dichotomy. These criticisms largely stem from political theory and the problems of interpretation, and must be resolved in some sense in this paper if its argument is to be successful. Let us now see how we fare with each.

II.A. Choice of Terms

There is always the potential for problems when one uses a given set of terms. In this case, the choice made in this paper to use humanist and determinist as definitions of two different forms of Marxism may present problems to some readers. Humanism and determinism have many

different meanings, certainly. There is the classical humanism of the Greeks, that of the Renaissance, and that of a host of other political and philosophical positions throughout the history of ideas. Similarly, determinism is often affiliated more with religious issues, and specifically, is often used in the context of the debate over whether human beings can have free will in a universe inhabited by an omnipotent/omniscient deity. My intent, of course, was not to drag any of these other theoretical positions into the paper. I selected the terms humanist and determinist largely because the former implied a connection to, or concern with, human beings, while the latter is associated with the idea that something or someone (mortal or divine) is responsible for the events of the real world. Since the early Marx's writings largely revolved, as I have argued, around human agency within a social context, I felt the term humanist was appropriate as a form of label for his works--and those of later Marxists--who accepted human agency as central to their theoretical models. Since the later writings of Marx often assumed that economics, or other social structures, were the determinant factor of social change and formation, I selected determinism as a label for that particular brand of Marxism. There, I admit, the religious meaning may have somewhat of a role to play: like religious beliefs, the determinist Marxist strain believes that some agency external to that of human beings is responsible for all of history. In short, however, my argument uses these terms loosely, and in so doing I am not seeking by any means to argue that Marx was a member of a larger, humanist or determinist, philosophical or religious movement. While I do not doubt that such an argument is quite possible to make, in my case, the terms I have used were out of convenience and a desire to distinguish the differences between the two strands of Marxism.

II.B. The Problem of Tradition

In the introduction, I attacked Straus' argument that there is a tradition within political theory. I

argued, as have others, that the idea that there is a grand tradition/canon within political theory may make it easier to organize teaching on the subject, but it may lead the student of the history of ideas to feel, incorrectly, that writers were consciously writing to each other throughout the ages. I bring this issue up here because one potential criticism of my own argument is that I may have posited the idea of a humanist and determinist set of traditions within Marxism itself. Certainly, my review of the literature lends itself to this to some degree: I largely analyzed the canon of Marxist thought including, for example Lenin, Luxemburg, and Marx and Engels. There are, I admit, many Marxist writers both past and present whom I have chosen not to include in my survey of the literature, and in my argument. Largely this is a function of the time and space available to me: a thesis at the Master of Arts level grants me a great deal of space to work with, but does not afford me the space to include everything. I will discuss this in more depth in a moment.

More importantly, however, is the issue of the tradition. I do accept, to some extent, that Marxist writers have been writing to and/or responding to each other over the course of the history of Marxist ideas. However, unlike the 'Grand Tradition' of Strauss, I accept this with legitimate cause: Marxist writers have often explicitly been writing about past thinkers and replying to and/or updating the works of the past to the modern day. Indeed, much of Marxist literature can be seen as a long and arduous battle to keep Marx's own writing relevant to the context of later writers. I would, however, also argue that my use of a concept of a humanist and determinist set of traditions in this paper is more akin to Kuhn's paradigms: two opposing models that explain phenomena to be studied by a discipline. Marxism, itself, is but one paradigm within the fields of economics, political science, and philosophy. The two schools I have presented here are, similarly, merely two different interpretations of the same phenomena.

While I have generally sought to avoid using language like ‘the tradition of Marxism,’ or similar statements, if there is a tacit acceptance in my paper of such an idea, it is in this latter form, and not in the sense of a ‘Grand Tradition’ or a historical debate such as in the Straussian argument.

As mentioned earlier, another and related criticism for this paper is that have left out other writers within the Marxist school of thought. This is, however, conscious on my part. As I had mentioned, there is a limit on the space and time that I have had to prepare and write this project. While my original plan was to include writers from the modern day, I was inevitably forced by time constraints to leave them out. There may well be similar arguments made within the body of Marxist literature, and there are likely some more recent writers who make arguments to which I might have referred. In this, I must apologize, however, I maintain that my argument still stands given the literature I have presented. My understanding of modern Marxism leads me to the conclusion that there has not been much debate on this particular issue. I hope with this paper to have begun such discussion.

II.C The One True Path to Enlightenment

A more compelling criticism of my argument might be arguing that I am positing in some sense a Marxist perspective that is ‘more true’ to Marx than others. This is particularly important in political theory, as it is often difficult to determine what an author, long dead, truly meant. It is, of course, possible that I have erred in my analysis and my interpretation of the texts presented in this paper. To the charge of potential inaccuracy I can only contend that I have tried to be as accurate as possible, and I am open to the possibility that I may be wrong. I have, throughout this paper, endeavoured to present the literature I have used in as complete a fashion as possible. I have also endeavoured to let these texts ‘speak for themselves,’ that is, to present a writer’s argument in as much depth as possible given space constraints, and in so doing present the

argument of each writer as if I believed it to be true. I have done this so as to provide a fair assessment and a summary of the works of various authors that is neither taxing on the reader's patience, nor contradictory to that writer's own arguments. That I am critical of many of the writers I have presented is readily apparent, but this is not the same as misrepresentation.

As for whether or not there is a Marxism that is 'true' to Marx's own writing, such a position is open for debate. Most scholars in political theory and particularly the history of ideas will be quite quick to point out that any act of interpretation is exactly that: an interpretation. I have endeavoured to avoid positing that humanist Marxism is 'more true' than determinism, and instead to present both sides as fully as possible. Many Marxists would, I hope, be hesitant to argue that there is one true version of their theory, given Marxism's emphasis on the differences that occur in various given social contexts. My argument, instead, is that humanist Marxism stands up more effectively than does determinist Marxism to the criticisms I have presented thus far. It is on this basis alone that I have condemned determinist Marxism and chosen to argue in favour of humanist Marxism. To be frank, then, whether or not humanism could be called a truer Marxism is entirely irrelevant: simply put, it is my contention that it works and can provide a more compelling theoretical and analytical model, while determinist Marxism does neither. I have no interest whatsoever in a debate on what is to be considered the 'one, true Marxism,' for such a debate has only the potential to lead into the sort of dogmatism that Marx himself would have, and did, condemn and which I abhor.

II.D The Problem of Coherence

A related element to the issue of a true or 'more accurate' reading of Marx is the issue of coherence. One might accuse this paper of seeing coherency in Marx's early works, or imposing such coherence, when there is in fact none to be found in Marx's writing. To some degree, this is

a fair criticism: I freely admitted in Chapter Four that much of the problem with the humanist Marxist interpretation is that it was not, by any means, given as much detail by Marx as his later model. Similarly, much of humanist Marxist writing since Marx has been an attempt to denounce the determinist approach and establish itself as an alternative. To some degree, this paper is a current example of the latter trend. If there is no coherency in what Marx wrote, however, upon what am I basing my interpretation of Marx? For the most part, my argument has attempted to find the humanist Marxist element in writings that were either: A) written before the epistemological break of 1844-1845, and thus in the category of his early works; and B) those early works that take a non-ontological view of the dialectical model being developed. Marx often wrote that his argument *reflected* the real world, and there are several points throughout his writing career where he points out that the dialectic is meant to examine the way human beings interact with the objects around them. It is this latter, epistemological interpretation of Marx that I have endeavoured to flesh out here. Certainly, the charge that I have imposed some clarification on Marx's writing is appropriate: I have had to find writings that took the humanist view I wished to establish, separate them from Marx's Feuerbachian writings and his later writings, and present the argument, however limited, with which I was left. Most of what I have gleaned from Marx, and from later Marxists, however, is actually written within his and their writings. The only 'clarification' I have made is to present it as being all of one piece--for example, I include all of the young Marx's writing in a single section in the second chapter. I will admit to this, but to present a common theme or argument in my paper is not the same as to suggest that Marx was more clear than he actually was. Instead, I have simply attempted to show some of the arguments Marx and others made over the course of their careers, and to differentiate between various epistemological claims Marx and others made about the dialectic in so doing.

II.E. The False Dichotomy?

Finally, it could be argued that in presenting the humanist and determinist Marxist arguments as I have done, I have perhaps created a false dichotomy. In the manner I have presented the two sides, I have certainly taken pains to show how the two arguments are opposed to each other, but one might be concerned that either: A) the two ‘sides’ do not in fact exist, or that B) I have left out other potential versions of Marxism. To the former, I think the argument has already been made reasonably clearly in this paper, but it is my position that these two variations of Marxism exist, and are almost entirely incommensurable (Marx was, I think, more successful than others at blending the two in some of his later works). I have taken pains to show evidence from various Marxist writers whose arguments are clearly on one side or another of a large epistemological gulf: some see the cause of social change over the course of history as being caused by human agency, the other sees it as part of the internal structural contradictions of societies. The former sees its own argument largely as epistemological, or as presenting an interpretation of how human beings understand the world. The latter largely argues, with a few exceptions, that it is an accurate ontological description of reality. To my mind, the dichotomy exists rather clearly within Marxism.

Let us then examine the second criticism: that I have, in emphasizing determinism vs. humanism, left out other potential interpretations. For example, the case of Marx himself is rather ambiguous. At many points throughout his life he seemed to prevaricate between the humanist and determinist perspectives. Similarly, there have been other interpretations of Marxism, which I have touched on, such as voluntarism, reformism, or ‘trade-unionism,’ and so on. However, my primary contention in this paper has been that there is a fundamental conflict within Marxism between the supporters of two very different theoretical and epistemological

perspectives: those who argue that human agents cause changes in history, and those who think that society's own structure/the economy causes changes in history. While perhaps my grouping of various Marxists can be changed a little--some might argue Luxemburg is more of a humanist or that Miliband has elements of determinism in his argument--I argue that the division between humanist and determinist Marxism is fundamental: one can accept only one or the other as true in one's argument, not both. Thus while there are, and have been, other interpretations of Marx's theory, almost anyone writing from a Marxist perspective has to, at some point, take sides on this issue, whether explicitly or not. It has been my goal in this paper to establish the differences between these two sides, and demonstrate that the humanist perspective, however flawed, is still superior to the determinist model. Marxists should therefore be careful in how they structure their arguments so as to avoid falling into the trap of the latter model.

III. Final Remarks

It would now be appropriate for me to conclude the project with some final remarks. I have, in this paper, argued two major points: that there is a difference between the determinist and humanist models of Marxism, as I have outlined in previous chapters; and that based upon the assessment of those two models, the humanist model stands as a stronger argument upon which to stand. I also argued that the humanist model provides Marxism with a more compelling political stance. Let us review these ideas, one last time, here. First, I originally asked the question "what is the Marxist dialectic?" I concluded that, upon review, there were two forms of dialectic: the humanist and the determinist models within Marxism. I therefore set out to examine these two concepts in more depth, and to determine which was more useful for Marxist theory. The determinist model, I argued, was based upon the idea that social structures of various sorts were responsible for creating social change. This is due to the argument that these

structures are, by their very design, seen as being full of contradictions as a result of the class conflict in a society. Various social structures are built to contain the conflict over resources between classes in society, but end up creating further conflict as a result of the division of power and labour that they create in turn. This leads to revolutionary change. I argued that this position was incapable of dealing with three criticisms: that it failed to take agency into account, that it had been largely falsified by history, and that it was tautological. From there, I began to build a case for humanist Marxism, arguing that it was a conception of the dialectic that held the actions of human agents as being responsible for social change. It was largely a conceptual model, that is, a tool for comprehending how it is that the actions human beings take result in objects being created and moving beyond the control of their creators. I argued that it saw power relations in society being the result of the actions of collective groups of human agents. I also argued that, unlike determinism, the humanist model holds up to the three earlier criticisms: it takes structures into account as well as agents, and it has the opportunity to make testable hypotheses that may yield accurate results--as it has largely been untested up to this point, the question of veracity has yet to be fully examined.

The point of this project, then, has been to establish a new model of Marxism, based on the oldest model of Marx's writing we have--that of his writings when he was a young man. There are elements of determinism even here, in the form of his association with Feuerbach's form of naturalistic arguments. Feuerbach's position, while closer to the humanist perspective, still argued that the position it took was closer to ontological truth than an epistemological perspective. I endeavoured to differentiate between this Feuerbachian position and that of the humanist Marx. This latter position may also be seen as being closer to Hegel's model than that of the others examined, though this is also a matter of debate as Marx continued throughout his

early and later writings to denounce Hegel's 'idealism' in favour of a study of human beings in the real world. I also tried to demonstrate that there are those who have adopted humanism in the course of the history of ideas from within the Marxist theoretical perspective, and that it is to this humanist position Marxism must now turn for inspiration in the future. While it is not the focus of this paper, it is certainly no accident to my mind that the determinist position led into the arguments of VI Lenin and, later, Joseph Stalin, that there could be a one, true, Marxism, and that to deviate from this perspective would be to commit the highest heresy. That it has been proven wrong by history is bad enough--at some point, one must throw out a theory if it is proven wrong by facts--but that one of the greatest examples of determinism was the dialectical model in use by the Soviet Union and was used as justification for the crimes of its leaders should give Marxists pause. This is not, by any means, to suggest that a dialectical theory can be blamed for the tragedies of the real world, but it is not far off to suggest that it played a part in giving Stalin and the Soviets a dogma upon which they could fall back when dissent arose.

Does humanist Marxism, then, offer us a way out of this trap? I argue that it does. On the one hand, as a theoretical perspective it does not fall prey to the errors of determinist Marxism. On the other hand, however, is that humanist Marxism argues two key points that Marxists must continue to take into account: that it is human beings that make their society, and that it is the goal of Marxism to ensure that all human beings are able to make the choices that they wish without oppression or exploitation. As such, this gives us two important points to remember for political action. The first is that, in order to change any society for the better, one must have the support of the population of that society. This certainly goes without saying, but it is a lesson that is sometimes forgotten by the determinist model: humanist Marxism argues that in order to make changes, people have to chose to make those changes. The goal of Marxism,

then, should be to provide people with the tools necessary to see oppression and exploitation (such as the humanist dialectic), and provide options for *praxis*. What is done with those options is the choice of the people in question--revolution and reform are but two sides of the coin. The second point is that the result of any change is not the end of the dialectic. If the dialectical model accurately reflected reality--if it were, in fact, ontological--then it might be argued that there would come a point where class antagonism at last came to an end. However, no dialectical process, as both myself and others have argued, truly ends. New divisions within society are as inevitable as it was once thought utopia would be. The point of Marxism, then, is to provide humanity with a goad--a constant demand to identify and oppose oppression in whatever form it takes. It demands that human beings continue to act in defiance of that oppression wherever it is found, but can offer no permanent solution. Instead, humanist Marxism can only provide us with a tool that can enable human beings to continue the struggle. Humanist Marxism has for its goal, not an unseen utopia of communism, but real human beings who are aware of the consequences of their actions within their societies, and who can make choices that may, in some small fashion, make the world better. It offers us no guarantee of success, only the tools to continue the struggle--something with which any Marxist might be happy.

Bibliography

- Althusser, Louis. "Elements of Self-Criticism." In *Essays in Self-Criticism* by Louis Althusser. London: New Left Books, c1976.
- , Foreword to *Lenin & Philosophy, and Other Essays*. Translated By Ben Brewster. London: New Left Books, 1971.
- , *For Marx*. Translated by Ben Brewster. London: The Penguin Press, 1969.
- , *The Humanist Controversy*. In *The Humanist Controversy and Other Writings* by Louis Althusser. Edited by Francois Matheron, Translated by G.M. Goshgarian. London: Verso, 2003.
- , "Ideology and Ideological State Apparatuses." In *Lenin and Philosophy and Other Essays* by Louis Althusser. London: New Left Books, 1971.
- , "Remark on the Category: Process without a subject or goals." In *Essays in Self-Criticism* by Louis Althusser. London: New Left Books, c1976.
- , "Reply to John Lewis." In *Essays in Self-Criticism* by Louis Althusser. London: NLB, c1976.
- Bender, Frederick L. *The Betrayal of Marx*. Toronto: Harper and Row Publishers, Inc., 1975.
- Bochenski, J.M. *Soviet Russian Dialectical Materialism (Diamat)*. Dordrecht: O. Reidel Publishing Co., 1963.
- Camus, Albert. *The Rebel: An Essay on Man in Revolt*. New York: Vintage International, 1991.
- Callinicos, Alex. *Althusser's Marxism*. London: Pluto Press, 1976.
- Engels, Friedrich. "The Origin of the Family, Private Property, and the State." In *The Marx-Engel's Reader*, 2nd Edition. Edited by Robert C. Tucker. New York: WW Norton and Company, 1972/1979.
- , "Socialism: Utopian and Scientific." In *The Marx-Engel's Reader*, 2nd Edition. Edited by Robert C. Tucker. New York: WW Norton and Company, 1972/1979.
- Gramsci, Antonio. "The Modern Prince." In *The Modern Prince* by Antonio Gramsci. Translated by Dr. Louis Marks. New York: International Publishers, 1957/1968.
- , "The Study of Philosophy and of Historical Materialism." In *The Modern Prince* by Antonio Gramsci. Translated by Dr. Louis Marks. New York: International Publishers, 1957/1968.

- , "What is Man?" In *The Modern Prince* by Antonio Gramsci. Translated by Dr. Louis Marks. New York: International Publishers, 1957/1968.
- Gunnell, John G. *Political Theory: Tradition and Interpretation*. Cambridge: Winthrop Publishers, Inc., 1979.
- Hall, Stuart. "Nicos Poulantzas: State, Power, Socialism." In *New Left Review* 119 (January-February 1980): 60-69.
- Heiss, Robert. *Hegel, Kierkegaard, and Marx*. Translated by E.B. Garside. New York: Dell Publishing Company, Ltd., 1975.
- Hirschman, Albert O. *The Passions and the Interests: Political Arguments for Capitalism Before Its Triumph*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1977.
- Hook, Sydney. Introduction to *Social Democracy vs. Communism* by Karl Kautsky. Edited and translated by David Shub and Joseph Shaplen. Westport: Hyperion Press, 1990.
- Kautsky, Karl. *The Class Struggle (Erfurt Program)*. Translated by William E. Bohn. New York: WW Norton & Company, 1971.
- , *The Economic Doctrines of Karl Marx*. Translated by H.J. Stenning. London: A&C Black, Ltd., 1925.
- , *Social Democracy vs. Communism*. Edited and translated by David Shub & Joseph Shaplen. Westport: Hyperion Press, 1990.
- Kolakowski, Leszek. *Main Currents of Marxism*, Volume III. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1978.
- Korsch, Karl. *Marxism and Philosophy*. London: New Left Books, 1970.
- Kuhn, Thomas S. *The Structure of Scientific Revolutions*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1962.
- Lenin, V.I. *Imperialism: The Highest Stage of Capitalism*. Peking: Foreign Languages Press, 1969.
- , *What is to be Done?* Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1963.
- Levine, Norma. *Dialogue within the Dialectic*. London: George Allen & Unwin Publishers, Ltd., 1984.
- Lukacs, Georg. *Lenin, the Unity of his Thought*. London: New Left Books, 1970.

- Luxemburg, Rosa. *Reform or Revolution?* New York City: Pathfinder Press, 1970/1973.
- Dr. Marks, Louis, Introduction to *The Modern Prince* by Antonio Gramsci. Translated by Dr. Louis Marks. New York: International Publishers, 1957/1968.
- Marx, Karl. *Capital*. Volumes I and III. In *Karl Marx: Selected Writings*, 2nd Edition. Edited by David McLellan. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000.
- , "Critique of Hegel's *Philosophy of Right*." In *Karl Marx: Selected Writings*, 2nd Edition. Edited by David McLellan. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000.
- , "Doctoral Thesis." In *Karl Marx: Selected Writings*, 2nd Edition. Edited by David McLellan. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000.
- , . *Economic and Philosophical Manuscripts of 1844*. In *The Marx-Engels Reader*, 2nd Edition. Edited by Robert C. Tucker. New York: WW Norton & Company, 1978.
- , *The German Ideology*. In *Karl Marx: Selected Writings*, 2nd Edition. Edited by David McLellan. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000.
- , *Grundrisse*. In *Karl Marx: Selected Writings*, 2nd Edition. Edited by David McLellan. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000.
- , "The Holy Family." In *Karl Marx: Selected Writings*, 2nd Edition. Edited by David McLellan. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000.
- , "Letter to his father." In *Karl Marx: Selected Writings*, 2nd Edition. Edited by David McLellan. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000.
- , "Preface to a Critique of Political Economy." In *Karl Marx: Selected Writings*, 2nd Edition. Edited by David McLellan. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000.
- , "Theses on Feuerbach." In *Karl Marx: Selected Writings*, 2nd Edition. Edited by David McLellan. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000.
- , "Theses on Feuerbach." In *The Marx-Engels Reader*, 2nd Edition. Edited by Robert C. Tucker. New York: WW Norton & Company, 1978.
- Marx, Karl and Friedrich Engels. *Manifesto of the Communist Party*. In *Karl Marx: Selected Writings*, 2nd Edition. Edited by David McLellan. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000.
- McLellan, David. Introduction to *Karl Marx: Selected Writings*, 2nd Edition. Edited by David McLellan. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000.
- , *Karl Marx: His Life and Thought*. London: Macmillan Press Ltd., 1972.

- Miliband, Ralph. "The Capitalist State: Reply to Nicos Poulantzas." *New Left Review* 59 (January-February 1970): 53-60.
- , *Marxism and Politics*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1977.
- , *Socialism for a Sceptical Age*. London: Verso, 1994, 1995.
- , *The State in Capitalist Society*. NY: Basic Books, 1969.
- Polanyi, Karl. *The Great Transformation*. New York: Farrar & Rinehart, c1944.
- Poulantzas, Nicos. *Classes in Contemporary Capitalism*. London: New Left Books, c1975.
- , *Political Power and Social Classes*. Translated by Timothy O'Hagan. London: Verso Editions, 1978, c1973.
- , "The Problem of the Capitalist State." in *New Left Review* 58 (November-December 1969): 67-78.
- , *State, Power, Socialism*. London: New Left Books, 1978.
- Rader, Melvin. *Marx's Interpretation of History*. New York: Oxford University Press, 1979.
- London School of Economics. "Ralph Miliband."
<http://www.lse.ac.uk/collections/miliband/ralphMiliband.htm> (accessed May 1st, 2007).
- Skinner, Quentin. "Meaning and Understanding in the History of Ideas." *History & Theory* 8/1 (1969): 3-53.
- Steinberger, Peter. *Logic and Politics: Hegel's Philosophy of Right*. New Haven: Yale University Press, 1988.
- Strauss, Leo. *What is Political Philosophy and Other Studies*. Westport: The Free Press Corporation/Greenwood Press Publishers, 1959/1973/1975.
- Taylor, Charles. *Human Agency and Language: Philosophical Papers*, Volume I. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1985.
- Tucker, Robert C. *Philosophy and Myth in Karl Marx*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1961/1972.
- Waters, Mary-Alice. Introduction to *Reform or Revolution?* by Rosa Luxemburg. New York: Pathfinder Press, 1970/1973.