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CONSCIOUSNESS AND SOCIAL EXPLANATION

A Dissertation Presented

By

JOAN ELIZABETH COCKS

Submitted to the Graduate School of the
University of Massachusetts in partial fulfillment
of the requirements for the degree of

DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

May 1980

Political Science



Joan Elizabeth Cocks

1980

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ABSTRACT

Consciousness and Social Explanation

May 1980

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In recent years, positivistic social science has come under sustained attack. Almost all of the weaknesses of which it is accused flow from the fact that positivism cannot conceptualize matters of human consciousness. Hence it has no theoretical access to intersubjective meanings and rules, individual intentions and beliefs, large-scale conceptual innovations, the transformations in practice which accompany them, and troublesome contradictions in the ways in which human actors understand their own activity.

For critics who believe this flaw to be fatal, the pressing task becomes the search for a new method of exploring and explaining social life. And in the annals of social history, there is perhaps no more radical, comprehensive and perfected candidate than Hegelian idealism. Hegel offers both a devastating critique of positive science

and a competing theory of scientific explanation, in which consciousness plays the central role. He constructs an account of the individual subject as intentional agent, who engages in a series of internal relations with the objective world; of social life as expressive of shared norms and meanings which in turn provide the content of the individual's thought; of qualitative transformations which mark conceptual and practical history; and of a fundamental distinction between the appearance of human action and its always rational reality. In his own way, Hegel anticipates (and in far more systematic form) many of the principles of two important contemporary challengers to positivism: interpretive and critical theory.

Hegel's social theory, however, rests upon the claim that an objective Reason is the inner substance of all things and the ultimate subject of all relations. To most contemporary thinkers, this claim is unacceptable. To Marx, Hegel's eminent successor, it was unacceptable also. Marx's power as a social theorist stems in part from the fact that he breaks with idealist ontology. He locates thought as an attribute of human beings alone and the content of thought as generated solely from within human practice. This done, Marx incorporates the strengths of Hegelian analysis in his own account of purposive labor,

the social totality, historical transformations, and the distinction between the appearance of human action and, for Marx, its less than rational reality. However, Marx's relation to Hegel is not one of simple theoretical progression. On the one hand, he preserves certain Hegelian principles highly problematic for any materialist: the idea of a teleological history, and the idea (this the great strength as well as the great weakness of Marx's mature method) of an abstract logic which determines concrete practice. On the other hand, he parts company with Hegel just where he should not. Hegel appreciates the irreducible complexity of social life because he sees the special reason which inheres in each particular kind of practice--from labor to politics to philosophy. Marx at his worst explains all forms of practice as disguised expressions of a single one. To do this is not only to miss the points of most human activities, but also to denigrate the self-understanding of the actors involved in them.

The search for a method of social explanation, then, cannot come to an end with either Hegel or Marx. And it is not that one simply needs to resolve the tensions in the latter's methodological relation to the former. Both theorists are committed rationalists. Their intellectual and political descendents must decide how far to follow

them in their belief that human action can and will become fully rational, and social life completely transparent to its participants.

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INTRODUCTION

Science can be said to be in some sense a search for truth. Of course, everything hinges on "in what sense." Certainly, few contemporary philosophers of science would agree with Aristotle that the most basic science of all is "theology" or metaphysics,¹ the "theory of first principles and reasons,"² of "being as being."³ Indeed, modern science became modern precisely by detaching itself from speculative metaphysics, and by restricting first the search, and then the concept of truth, to the realm of observable entities.

The fact that science no longer addresses metaphysical issues, however, does not mean that it has left first principles behind. Every empirical exploration of things in the world rests on a prior if tacit understanding of what constitutes a "thing," of what things constitute the world, and of how the world normally runs. The many explanatory theories which have come and gone in the past four centuries have taken with them different notions of natural order, basic units of analysis, dimensions of variation, and evidential support.⁴ Every explanatory theory, in turn, rests on a more fundamental vision of the relationship between reality and the mind which seeks to know it. Since the 17th century, most scientists have under-

stood this relationship in very much the same way. They have shared the assumption that the real world and the ideas people have about it are entirely separable. The world is simply what it is, and the scientist's task is to come to grips with it, without the obfuscations of mental structures, ontologies, or, curiously enough, conceptualizations. "Our concepts may be open-textured, but the world is not. If language is to be descriptive, it must indicate what there is in the world, no matter how variably we talk about it."⁵ "What there is" on its part are individual, physical units,⁶ which are either directly observable or can be inferred from observable phenomena.⁷ Hence, although the mind does not participate in the construction of reality, it has access to the latter through the process of sensory investigation. Lastly, there is a comprehensible order to the world, and this order is a function of purely external, natural relations which consistently hold between things of the same sort. The mind can explain sensible phenomena to the extent that it penetrates the universal laws which govern them--laws for which, in return, individual empirical cases provide evidence, but never proof.

If modern science can be said to be, in this sense, a search for truth, modern social science has been in the same sense a search for the truth of social life.

Mainstream social scientists have discerned a close likeness between social and natural explanation. They believe the social world to be reducible to empirically observable facts or bits of human behavior. They see sensory perception as the only legitimate foundation of scientific knowledge, and conversely, scientific concepts as replications in thought of sense-data or of that which is inferable from them. Finally, they find an order in social life which derives from regular relations between behavior and variables external to it. Their long-range goal is the discovery of general laws of human behavior,⁸ which would allow them to explain individual cases in the past and present, and predict individual cases in the future, given the occurrence of specified initial conditions. These laws purportedly do not describe generalizations which may hold true for limited periods of time, but rather describe regular, unchanging relations between infinitely repeatable phenomena.

As much recent literature in philosophy attests, there are innumerable problems with applying natural science methods to the study of society.⁹ Most fundamentally, empirical observation cannot grasp the internal meanings which make a particular piece of "behavior" what it is. These meanings include, for example, the individual actor's beliefs and purposes which make the bowing of the head an

act of prayer rather than a sign of consent; and the intersubjective rules which assure that a bowing of the head will be either an act of prayer or a sign of consent, but not a move of defiance. Because the identity of an action in part depends upon the particular rules, beliefs and purposes which inform it, the concepts which are to capture action must include a reference to ideas and not simply to sense-data. And because social life is full of conflicts in which actors differ over the meaning and identity of their own actions and the actions of others around them, the concepts with which the scientist describes a given set of actions will be neutral only in trivial cases. Most of the time, as, for example, when she must decide whether the actions she is studying count as an instance of a riot or a rebellion, the scientist enters into the same arena in which actors themselves dispute the meaning of their practices.¹⁰ The decision she makes will place her on one side of the dispute rather than the other. In sum, the social theorist must take into her account of action the self-interpretations of its participants, and must describe that action in a way which will implicate her in their political affairs. Hence no sharp line can be drawn between her conceptual activity and the world she investigates.

If action, secondly, is expressive of rules, be-

liefs and purposes, the scientist cannot look solely to external causes for its explanation. A search for universal causal laws of human behavior is also inapt. This is so not only because an explanation of action must make reference to meanings as well as causes, but also because the meanings which inform action in one social whole are unlikely to characterize action in another. The human capacity for conceptual innovation and imagination means that even physical movements which look the same in two different cultures or historical epochs, may not be instances of the same thing. If the meanings which inform action change over time and space, one cannot articulate universal laws of social life.

Finally, empirical science cannot appreciate distinctions between the appearance and reality of action to which ambiguities in intentionality give rise. The almost infinite number of ways in which social rules may be tied to bodily movements, means that movements which appear to a "foreign" observer to be an instance of one kind of action may be in reality an instance of another. The possibility of dissemblance in human affairs, means that an individual actor's behavior may conceal rather than express her real beliefs and purposes. But the most significant kind of appearance/reality split arises from a contradiction between what an actor intends and believes herself to

be doing, and what she in truth is doing. If empirical theory cannot grasp this split because it does not speak the language of intentionality in the first place, the theorist who only speaks this language cannot grasp it either.

If one looks back over the history of Western thought, one can find a second kind of search for truth, with its own conception of and claims to scientific validity. The philosophy of idealism, which places mind at the center of all explanation, has a long and tenacious tradition with its roots in ancient Greece. The classical Greek idealists believed that thought had at least as objective a reality as matter. They found the truth of every particular, sensible thing to be the idea or universal of which it was either a copy or an embodiment. According to the immanentists, this universal determined not only the identity but the development of each thing, so that causality was not an external relation of one discrete variable to another, but an internal relation of a thing at some stage in its development to the idea of it as a perfected being. Because the explanation of things lay in ideas (whether immanent in or transcendent to them), and because each species had its own unique idea which made it what it was, every level of being was thought to be self-

explanatory and its principle of explanation irreducible to the principle of any lower level. The rational hierarchy of all sensible entities gave to the universe its natural order. Greek idealism obviously could not, and did not, equate scientific knowledge with sense perception. Some theorists dismissed the evidence of the senses altogether, and purported to re-direct the gaze of the mind from the imperfections of the phenomenal world to the immutable realm of pure thought. Others believed that the scientist must observe sensible phenomena because ideas did not exist apart from them, but that the true objects of knowledge still were the ideas and not particular existents. If the scientist had to study sensible things in order to discover the ideas which informed them, he also had to have prior conceptual knowledge in order to recognize the thing as this kind of thing and not some other. The Greeks, luckily, had no misgivings about the unlimited capacities of the human mind.¹¹ They believed that reason itself was the unique end of human beings, and (with what Hegel later called the "characteristic naiveté of the ancients") assumed that this was enough to guarantee them the ability to fathom the rest of the universe. It follows from their notion of the natural end of human life, by the way, that they would explain action not in terms of external causes, but in terms of its inner rationality--

or lack of it. Such an explanation at once became an ethical assessment of the actor. To act according to one's proper place in a justly ordered community, or to act on the basis of a true knowledge of things, was to live in harmony with one's highest nature, and hence to live virtuously and well.

With the rise of Christianity in the Mediterranean world, this highly intellectualized form of idealism underwent a great change. Catholic thinkers followed Greek rationalists in attributing to the sensible world an ideal truth. But they found the difference between the world and its truth to be that not between matter and thought, but between matter and spirit. The theological reading of "Mind" as an omnipotent, omnipresent, and omniscient God made the world newly significant, and human agency and reason, newly problematic. God became the original cause of every level of being, from the purely material to the purely spiritual. His divine plan became the final telos of every particular being and of the universe as a whole, which consequently had a meaning beyond its physical appearance.¹² In God's will rested the explanation not only of every natural event, but of every human action. At the same time, humans (who experienced the mind/matter distinction as the troublesome conflict between spirit and flesh) bore responsibility for what they did, and their

works ultimately were to be judged by an absolute Being with the power to bestow eternal punishments and rewards. Consequently, the explanation of action, which for the Greeks had evoked ethical questions about the actor's ability to live a life of excellence, raised for Catholics a question with far more serious implications: did that act manifest goodness or corruption on the part of its human agent? Finally, Christian idealism undercut the ancients' belief in the innate nobility and power of the human intellect. Late medieval theorists, who were of Aristotelian temper, declared that humans enjoyed a natural reason, and the world a natural order. Through the exercise of this reason, humans could abstract from observable phenomena to a knowledge of immutable essences, and could even gain an imperfect knowledge of God, who was demonstrated through His creations. But still, like everything else, the human mind owed its powers to God, and these powers were subordinate to His powers. Most important, human reason provided no access to the ultimate reality of God and hence of life on earth. Faith and revelation alone did so.

With the birth of modern science in the 16th and 17th centuries, an elaborate synthesis of Catholic spiritualism and Aristotelian rationalism, gave way to a mechanical theory of the universe. The explanation of all

sensible things in terms of a hierarchy of natural ideas and the purpose and will of an interventionist God, was replaced by an explanation in terms of a single set of laws describing regular relations in time and space between bodies reducible to physical atoms. The new mechanistic cosmology presupposed

the ultimate fact of an irreducible brute matter, or material, spread throughout space in a flux of configurations. In itself such a material is senseless, valueless, purposeless. It just does what it does do, following a fixed routine imposed by external relations which do not spring from the nature of its being.¹³

At first, the theory of the material universe as "a perfect" piece of mechanism"¹⁴ incorporated a dualistic account of mind and matter. It made mind as Spirit or God the creator of the laws of motion, and mind as human reason the depository for sensations, ideas, and "everything refractory to exact mathematical handling."¹⁵ It was the task of God to turn on the clockwork of the material world. It was the task of human reason to accumulate knowledge of that world, calculate its pleasures and its pains, and serve the human passions instead of restraining them. The logic of mechanism, however, could and eventually did lead to a fully materialist and reductionist vision of reality, which took material regularities as given, without ascribing them to a spiritual first cause; and which explained the human mind entirely in terms of its simplest material

components.

The resurgence of idealism in late 18th and early 19th century Germany, took place against a backdrop of continuing triumphs in the positive sciences. Idealism hence assumed a newly defensive posture. As Hegel remarked (but utterly without regret), it no longer was possible simply to presume an inner reason of all things and an infinite power of the human intellect. One instead had to make two difficult theoretical moves in order to salvage the primacy of mind from the blows already dealt it by the scientific revolution, and from the threat of new blows yet to come. One had to acknowledge and account for the undeniable advances of positive science, and undermine the mechanistic premises on which these advances were predicated. The Kantian resolution of this dilemma was a relatively modest one: it granted to human thought a special dispensation from the nexus of physical causes and effects. It claimed that the mind was not a passive recipient of sense-data, but actively participated in the construction of all experience. It also reserved a unique status for actions expressive of moral reason, in a world otherwise governed by natural laws. The unfortunate by-product of this strategy was that it created two schisms in idealist theory where none had existed before. The first was between experience and reality--between the world as the

mind ordered it and the world as it "really was," to which the mind had no access. The second schism was between nature and reason--between action determined by natural desires and causes, and action determined by moral purposes and ideals. Partly in response to these problems in Kantian theory, the absolute idealists set out to make a far more ambitious case on reason's behalf. They asserted that subjective reason and objective reality were distinctions created by and internal to an abstract Ego (Fichte) or Mind (Hegel). The findings of empirical science were legitimate but partial truths, which pertained to the subject's experience of the object as alien to itself. The understanding of the world as a purely physical one governed by natural impulses and material forces, was symptomatic of a reason not yet conscious of nature and objectivity as its own "self-distinctions," ruled by its own logic.

While Hegel was not the first of the absolute idealists, he was by far the most presumptuous. His was a grand attempt to prove on strict logical grounds that nature, history, and the subject/object distinction were manifestations of a self-developing Reason. This attempt in the end was a failure. But the analytic complexity which the onslaughts of modern science forced upon him, and his remarkable breadth of vision, make Hegel provoca-

tive--not to say seductive--for contemporary social theorists. He offers, first of all, a richly textured portrait of the human subject. He sees the layers of the inner self as deposits of the various relations the subject has to the objective world. Each of these relations is inherently purposive and cannot be reduced to simple physical terms. Second, Hegel constructs an interpretive and wholistic account of social life. He explains every culture with reference to a unique rationality or "spirit," which provides the inner thread and outer coherence of its economic, religious, political and intellectual practices. Third, he develops a method which enables him at once to respect and comprehend the qualitative transformations of which history is made. Finally, Hegel penetrates beneath the particular intentions and meanings which inform human action, to a reality of which actors are unaware. This is the reality of a universal Reason. Hegel's reference to it allows him to escape the hermeneutical circle which every culture creates for itself, and the limitations adhering to every particular mode of thought and practice.

It is precisely the idea of an objective Reason which Marx rejects when he conducts his own social investigations. His repudiation of absolute idealism has immense consequences for his social theory, in the same way that the repudiation of Aristotelian metaphysics had im-

mense consequences for the post-medieval understanding of the natural world. Nevertheless, Marx draws not on positivistic science but on Hegel, in order to analyze history, social life, and capital. Does he, then, succeed in devising a non-idealist method which yet preserves the strengths of Hegelian inquiry? Certainly Marx does reconstruct in accordance with materialist premises, Hegel's notion of the subject as constituted by its purposive relations to the world; of an inner thread which binds economic, religious, political and intellectual practices into a coherent whole; of the transformative nature of society; and of the distinction between action as it appears to its human authors, and a hidden reality of action. With his new theoretical vision, Marx makes a set of discoveries denied him by either idealism or empiricism. There are, however, several curious aspects of Marx's relation to Hegel. First, he fails to make as decisive a break with absolute idealism as he believes himself to be making. In speaking of history as if it moves through a series of negations towards a final, rational climax, he unwittingly suggests that abstractions have ends of their own. And when he argues in his most powerful work, that an objective logic determines the course of the capital-wage labor relation, he comes very close to explaining concrete social life in terms of an abstract Idea. Second, Marx chooses

to part company with Hegel at an unfortunate point. Like the idealist philosopher, he attaches great significance and promise to human consciousness. Yet he gives only a truncated, ambiguous account of it, and at times he seems to deny that humans are able to have even some grasp of what they are doing. Here he would have done better to learn from Hegel, who always appreciates the rationality--however partial and contradictory--in every mode of human thought and practice.

When all is said and done, absolute idealism is spun out of the stuff of fantasy, and Marx's materialism is not. With this point in his favor, it is Marx and not Hegel who bequeaths to us the more compelling (although hardly unproblematic) explanation of social life. Still, modern theorists in search of a method will find a study of the two men more illuminating than a study of the one. This is true both because Hegel's influence on Marx is profound, and because in a critical sense it is not profound enough.

ENDNOTES

¹Aristotle, Metaphysics, Richard Hope, trans. (Ann Arbor, Mich.: Ann Arbor Paperbacks, 1968), p. 125.

²Ibid., p. 7.

³Ibid., p. 226.

⁴See Stephen Toulmin, Foresight and Understanding (New York: Harper Torchbooks, 1961), Thomas Kuhn, The Structure of Scientific Revolutions (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1962), Charles Taylor, "Neutrality in Political Science," in Philosophy, Politics and Society, third series, P. Laslett and W.G. Runciman, eds. (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1967).

⁵May Brodbeck, "Explanation, Prediction, and Imperfect Knowledge," in Minnesota Studies in the Philosophy of Science, Vol. II, Herbert Feigl and Grover Maxwell eds. (Minneapolis, Minn.: University of Minnesota Press, 1962), p. 271.

⁶Actually, empirical theory can be explicitly idealist. It also need not be so incautious as to talk about the stuff of which reality is made and may instead confine itself to discussions on what we can know about it. But a materialist ontology, however tacit, underlies most empiricist epistemology.

⁷For a discussion of the problems which quantum theory poses for scientific materialism, see Alfred North Whitehead, Science and the Modern World (New York: The Free Press, 1967), esp. pp. 34-37.

⁸Like all theoretical constructs under pressure, behavioralism comes in a strong and weak version. The strong version considers consciousness and its cognates a) mythical entities; b) reducible to physical and eventually physiological and chemical phenomena, or c) passive and insignificant midpoints between environmental stimuli and behavioral response. The weaker version admits that consciousness and its cognates may be real, ir-
reducible, or active, but discounts them as objects of scientific knowledge because they are not accessible to

sensory observation. In either case, references to consciousness must be replaced by references to behavior in order to be scientific.

Likewise, according to the strong version of behavioralism, all human behavior is law-governed. According to the weaker version, we can gain scientific knowledge of human behavior only to the extent that it is law-governed (the assumption here is that the only alternative to law-governed behavior is random behavior). Both versions have the same practical consequences for the study of social life. It is amusing that a recognition of the random behavior of electrons has led behavioralists to concede to the logical possibility of truly erratic behavior in human beings.

⁹ See, for example, Peter Winch, The Idea of a Social Science (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1970), Alasdair MacIntyre, Against the Self-Images of the Age (New York: Schocken Books, 1971), Charles Taylor, The Explanation of Behavior (New York: Humanities Press, 1964), Alfred Schutz, "Concept and Theory Formation in the Social Sciences," in Philosophy of the Social Sciences (New York: Random House, 1963), Maurice Natanson, "A Study in Philosophy and the Social Sciences," in Ibid., Hannah Pitkin, Wittgenstein and Justice (Berkeley, Calif.: University of California Press, 1972), William E. Connolly, The Terms of Political Discourse (Lexington, Mass.: D.C. Heath and Company, 1974), Richard J. Bernstein, The Restructuring of Social and Political Theory (University of Pennsylvania Press, 1978).

¹⁰ The consistent use of a non-sexist vocabulary, difficult in any case, is particularly so in philosophical work, as philosophers have used the term "man" to connote the idea of universality, which the more individualistic "person," and the more biological "human" do not quite capture. In my use of impersonal nouns, adjectives and pronouns, I have followed the following rule of thumb. I have used the masculine forms when the theorist I discuss does so, for these theorists not only might have meant the philosophical "man" to mean only men, but often explicitly developed a dual theory of human nature along sexual lines. In all other cases I have tried to substitute neutral terms like "subject" and "human being" for "man." When necessary I have used the feminine adjective and pronoun. Obviously a new, non-sexist vocabulary is required for theoretical work. I apologize for the awkwardness of my interim solution.

¹¹Although Aristotle, for one, did not believe all human beings to be fully rational. There are those who do not realize their full rational capacities, and those who do not have full rational capacities to realize. To explain the actions of the former group, Aristotle points to habit. To explain the actions of the latter group, he points to nature. See Jean Elshtain, "Moral Woman and Immoral Man," in Politics and Society, Fall, 1974.

¹²This was at least as true for the common people as it was for philosophers. As Marc Bloch describes the popular mentality of the feudal period, "In the eyes of all who were capable of reflection the material world was scarcely more than a sort of mask, behind which took place all the really important things; it seemed to them also a language, intended to express by signs a more profound reality. Since a tissue of appearances can offer but little interest in itself, the result of this view was that observation was generally neglected in favour of interpretation." Marc Bloch, Feudal Society, Vol. 1 (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul Ltd., 1975), p. 83.

¹³Alfred North Whitehead, p. 17.

¹⁴Herbert Butterfield, The Origins of Modern Science, 1300-1800 (New York: Macmillan Co., 1951), p. 84.

¹⁵Edwin Arthur Burtt, The Metaphysical Foundations of Modern Science (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul Ltd., 1972), p. 318.

PART I: HEGEL

A great distance separates Absolute Idealism from analytic philosophy, although it is a distance foreshortened by the common heritage of Hume and Kant. Positivists simply dismiss Hegel, whose metaphysic seems a strange fantasy--hard to swallow even if it could be taken as mere theology, which it cannot. Recently, however, certain ordinary language theorists have resuscitated Hegel but without his metaphysic, for in other ways they found his work highly compatible with their own. Precisely because of the real bonds they share with him, it is imperative to keep sight of where these bonds do not extend. Quite in contrast to contemporary interpretive theory, Hegel stepped through a critique of empiricism and its Kantian rejoinder, to a conception of the world in which the explanation of the meanings and beliefs which characterize a particular form of social life, lies in the activity of a Universal Reason.

Perhaps nothing symbolizes the difference between Hegel and analytic theorists in general, as nicely as their disparate use of language. Hegel brought a tradition of intellectual obscurantism to its finest if not its last hour. Is this obscurantism necessary to his argument, and must one replicate it if one wants to do that argument jus-

tice? It is fairly obvious, first of all, that Hegel could have avoided many of his forays into verbal darkness; and second that these forays tend to make a mystery of the dialectical transitions which must sustain his system as a whole. But the theory of Absolute Idealism does require a very abstract discourse, for its central point is that the truth of concrete, phenomenal things lies in the universal ideas they express, while the familiar, down-to-earth details of their transient existence, the philosopher can and must ignore.

Except with regard to his prose, reading Hegel is like visiting a hall of mirrors, where each surface reveals the entire room. The reflection of the whole in the parts is indeed one of the choicest points of the dialectical method and prohibits a merely piecemeal discussion of Hegel's work. While respecting, as one must do, the internal relations he posits between reason, the physical world, and social life, I will avoid taking another of those invaluable but essentially return journeys through the *Phenomenology*, *Logic*, *Philosophies of Nature and Spirit*. Instead, I wish to clarify a limited number of issues bearing on the question of what constitutes a science of society: specifically, Hegel's conception of the human subject, his theory of knowledge, and his method of scientific explanation.

C H A P T E R I
THE THEORY OF THE SUBJECT

Hegel is perhaps the greatest of all rationalists. He finds human reason fully adequate to the task of comprehending reality. He also believes that social relations and institutions embody the reason inherent in a particular form of life. Many other social theorists, of course, share one or the other of these beliefs with him. More singularly, he asserts that a reason ontologically prior to human consciousness and its social world, is the inner substance and determinant of all things. A universal reason constitutes those natural objects which appear to be purely material. It expresses itself in those actions of human subjects which appear to be a function of external causes, irrational passions, or solely individual intentions and purposes. Lastly, it determines the course of what appears to be an indifferent historical process, in which nations and peoples develop and decay. It is Hegel's purpose in all his theoretical labors, including his theory of society, to show how that which confronts the thinking subject as the most intractably alien object, is in truth a manifestation of thought, so that the apparently constricting, external relations in which the subject

finds itself, are internal relations in which it is really "at home."¹

However, Hegel could not, after Hume, assert with the naive assurance of the Greeks, that thought is the inner substance of things. Neither could he assume, after Kant, that the human mind can know this to be the case. He had to argue these points, and argue conclusively, which, since he could not rest his case on the evidence of the senses, meant that he had to argue deductively. Further, he had to argue consistently, deriving matter from thought instead of leaving a material substratum unexplained. Hegel's solution to the problem of post-Kantian idealism was elegant if not unmarred. By means of a peculiar kind of deduction he called the dialectic, he drew out of the necessary but most innocuous, empty, and seemingly formal category of human thought, "Being," a series of more and more elaborated or "concrete" categories, each of which encompassed but surpassed its predecessors in its richness and capacity to enfold the content of thought. Thus Hegel claimed to give logical necessity to the categories of pure reason which in Kantian philosophy had only a pragmatic rationale. But second, Hegel's deduction of the categories--or, as he saw it, their self-deduction ("These thought types must be deduced out of Thought itself . . . we have merely to let the thought-forms follow

the impulse of their own organic life"²)--carried itself beyond purely formal constructs of the subjective mind to be applied to an externally given content, to categories which progressively implied the determination of their own content. In other words, these were categories of reason the meaning of which entailed thought's giving itself its determinations rather than being dependent for its content upon non-thought. Their advent signified the conversion of reason to Reason, the transformation of mere thought-form into form-creating-content. The implications of such a transformation were as radical as the explanation and disintegration of the subject-object dichotomy which had plagued philosophy since Descartes, and as heady as the assurance of the fundamental freedom of subjectivity, which had been in peril since Newton. That self-objectifying Reason was the logical telos of the subjective categories, moreover, implied the inherent capability of the human mind to grasp the real nature of the objective world. For the categories, which led of their own accord to the self-determining Idea, "are nothing but our own thought and its familiar forms or terms: and these are the A B C . . . of everything else."³

It is vital to understand precisely what Hegel means by "Abstract Thought," because he will claim this Thought to be the inner logic of every concrete thing, in-

cluding the things of the social world, and of almost all relations between things, including social relations. Hegel describes Abstract Thought (which he also calls the "Concept," "Idea," "Notion," and "Reason") as an "immediate" or undifferentiated conceptual whole, which proceeds to create all of its distinctions or content out of itself. These distinctions are the formal categories of thought such as "Being" and "Nothing," "Identity" and "Difference," "Form" and "Content," "Cause" and "Effect," and most critically, "Subject" and "Object." Because Thought is self-determining, the process by which it creates its own content cannot be accidental, instinctual, or the effect of a material cause. It rather must be a "self-deductive" process, in which each necessary category of Thought gives way through internal contradiction to an equally necessary, but more elaborated or "concrete" category. Through this self-deduction of the categories, what was merely implicit in the nature of Reason becomes explicit. Because its development is determined by its unfolding inner nature and not by a contingent, external cause, Hegel equates the Idea with both necessity and freedom. Because the Idea never comes up against a barrier dividing it from a reality independent of it, Hegel calls it "Infinite Thought." One important consequence of the fact that Thought has no limits, is that it steps beyond the production of its own

content, to produce the thought of this content as its own creation. That is, the Idea not only "separates itself from itself" by elaborating its own distinctions, but it returns to itself as the self-conscious unity of "identity and difference," "thought and content," "subject and object." This return is implicit in the entire elaboration of the categories leading up to it. It occurs as the contradictions internal to each category force Thought to posit more and more comprehensive categories, which come closer and closer to articulating the system of Thought as a self-reflective whole. There is, however, one final distinction which Abstract Thought makes: that between Thought as a purely formal, conceptual whole (including the conceptual distinction between form and content, subject and object) and the actual objective world as its concrete content. This juncture bears the entire weight of Hegel's derivation of the concrete world from Abstract Thought. He argues that the very distinction between Thought as a conceptual whole and objectivity entails that the object become actual. His reason: if the object did not become actual, it would remain mere concept, and the distinction between Concept and objectivity would have yet to be made. It is here, then, that the Idea "breaks through its own barriers and opens out into objectivity,"⁴ and Hegel moves from an account of the Abstract Logic to an account of nature and human civilization.

By the end of his discussion of the Abstract Idea, Hegel has established certain explanatory principles which will govern his study of social life. The most obvious principle is that phenomenal reality--physical nature, human subjects, and social institutions--is a "covering under which the Notion lies concealed."⁵ The concrete world is Reason in objective form, and hence the purpose of Hegel's social investigations will be "to apprehend in the show of the temporal and transient the substance which is immanent and the eternal which is present."⁶ He will discover in the objects of both Nature and Society (which he calls "Mind" or "Spirit"), specific natural and spiritual ideas, and he will explain nature and society in terms of them. These ideas, and the actual objects in which they manifest themselves, comprise the objective content or distinctions of Abstract Thought.

. . . the Philosophy of Nature and the Philosophy of Mind, take the place, as it were, of an applied Logic, and that Logic is the soul which animates them both. Their problem in that case is only to recognize the logical forms under the shapes they assume in Nature and Mind--shapes which are only a particular mode of expression for the forms of pure thought.⁷

One must note that the relation of natural ideas to natural objects is not symmetrical with the relation of spiritual ideas to concrete social life. Ideas of nature are immanent in sensuous natural objects, but these ob-

jects do not "have" their ideas in the sense of being conscious of them. The idea of an oak, to use an old example, develops from "implicit inwardness" to explicit actuality as the acorn grows into the tree, but the oak never knows itself or, for that matter, any thing else. For this reason Hegel calls sensuous nature "Mind asleep." Ideas of spirit, on the other hand, are immanent in the thought and thought-permeated practices of conscious, self-reflective human beings. The idea of freedom, for example, becomes actual only when human beings become fully conscious of it and embody it in their practice. But although the ideas of spirit have no actuality outside human thought and practice, these ideas still are expressions of Universal Reason rather than simply the peculiar, imaginative inventions of individual persons or cultures. It follows, rather oddly, that the particular content of a spiritual idea (the distinction of the concept of Right, for example, into Abstract Right, Morality, and Ethical Life) is determined by neither the empirical content of human practice nor the analytic vagaries of the philosopher. The concept develops its distinctions out of itself and expresses itself in, rather than corresponds to or arises out of, a given empirical and interpretive social reality.

Hegel's second explanatory principle, it that the concrete world is hierarchically ordered according to the

extent to which each level of existence is able to think and reflect on itself. The realm of human civilization or Spirit is of a higher order than that of pure material nature, because human subjects have the capacity for consciousness and self-consciousness. Hegel's understanding of self-consciousness is highly complex, because he sees the self as something not separate from, but rather inclusive of, its objective relations. Thus when he asks, To what extent does the subject have a knowledge of itself? he asks it in this form: How does the subject understand itself in its relation to the object or "other," and how does the subject attempt to overcome the separation between this other and itself? Hegel will show the subject to be multi-layered, in that it is engaged with the object as raw nature, as a second subject, as a labored product, as the spiritual world, and finally as a concept in thought. He will argue that each of these engagements arises logically (not temporally) out of a lower mode, each undergoes its own development over historical time, and each embodies a greater unity of subject and object than the relations below it. These ontological relations, which determine the being of the subject, are at the same time epistemological relations, for two reasons. First, each way in which the subject interacts with the object is a means to self-consciousness, for all subject/object relations are

attempts to wrench from the other an expression and a knowledge of the self. Second, the highest subject/object relation, which enfolds the rest, is the epistemological relation itself. Here the activity of mind transmutes the external world, and all other relations with it, into a set of ideas. In the internality of philosophical thought, where the object appears as pure concept stripped of its phenomenal covering, one "meets with oneself."⁸ The complete identity of subject and object, and conversely the utter freedom of the former from the limitations of the latter which philosophical thought entails, is the telos of human subjectivity. For "It is the urge, the impulse of spiritual life in itself, to break through the hull of nature, of sensuousness, of its own self-alienation, and to attain the light of consciousness, namely, its own self."⁹ It also is the ultimate stage of the Idea, for the human subject who thinks philosophically, embodies the Idea as the self-conscious unity of subject and object.

One must not under-estimate the significance of the third principle of social explanation: that necessity governs the movement of social life. This follows from the twin claims that Abstract Thought develops its content in a thoroughly necessary way, and that the concrete world is the expression of this development. Thus, when Hegel examines the transience of nations, the confusing sequence of

artistic genres or religious movements, actions which seem to be purely impulsive or simply brutal, he will do so in order to show how they manifest the necessary workings of Reason. He makes one concession to irrationality: he admits that a small element of chance enters into human affairs. But since chance is, by definition, meaningless, it plays no part in an explanation of the reason why things occur as they do. Ironically, Hegel insists that what happens in the realm of spirit happens of necessity, in order to protect the freedom of the subject. He believes that to act according to whim, instinct, idiosyncratic intention, or in response to the stimulus of an external force, is to be determined by something other than reason and hence to be unfree. For Hegel, only rational action is self-determined action, and reason--determined by its own inner nature--cannot be other than it is. In his stress on the necessity which governs human action, Hegel shows a limited sympathy with positivistic science, which aims to reveal the explanatory laws beneath the complex texture of social practice. But Hegel believes that the positivists err profoundly when they articulate these laws as blind and contingent relations between external causes and effects, instead of as logically necessary relations grounded in the inner reason of all things. Even (or especially) the gap between the non-rational appearance of

social life and its rational reality, is not fortuitous, but is a necessary stage in the odyssey of the Idea.

"Man alone has freedom--and only because he thinks."¹⁰ At his beginnings, however--and by "beginnings" Hegel means both the earliest point in historical time and the most primitive level of subjective experience--he is only potentially free. In fact he lives at the mercy of forces beyond his control. He is hedged in by natural instinct on the one side and natural obstruction on the other. He acts out of sensual impulse and brute emotion. The fundamental task he must undertake in order to realize his freedom is this: he must transform his natural desires and the natural objects around him into aims and objects of his own making. Hegel insists against liberal theorists, that this transformation cannot occur outside of social life. He insists against conservatives, that the replacement of natural by social relations marks the demise of instinctual behavior and the eventual triumph of rational action. Through the reciprocal satisfaction of natural needs, humans develop new, specifically social needs which combine natural with "mental needs arising from ideas."¹¹ These "mental needs"--for recognition, autonomy, community, justice, knowledge, and freedom itself--bear the promise of the subject's liberation from the confines of physical nature. They will issue in the elaboration of a second

level of existence: an inter-subjective, thought-constituted or "spiritual" realm of language, custom, moral rules, laws, norms of beauty, religious practices, and modes of knowledge, which both nourish and reflect in objective form the subject's developing reason.

Free Mind consists precisely in its being no longer implicit or as concept alone, but in its transcending . . . its immediate natural existence, until the existence which it gives to itself is one which is solely its own and free.¹²

The most rudimentary engagement of the human subject with the object, however, is that between human being as desirous animal and natural world as pure, sensuous "other." Here the subject experiences the object as entirely external and alien to him. He can free himself from this object only by destroying it. Driven by instinctual desire, the subject consumes the natural object and so dissolves the self/other distinction. Such is the idealist's interpretation of natural appetite! The gratification of brute desire, however, is a poor means to a freedom of the self from the other, because it presupposes the independence of the object. It also is a poor means to a knowledge of the self in the other, because it annihilates the other altogether. Finally, it bespeaks an impoverished subject, because it does not require the mediation of reason and is the one mode of engagement with the world that the human being shares with other animals. In

sum, the relation of Desire does not express the rationality of the subject, negates the identity of subject and object, and fails to preserve the difference between subject and object within a "self-identical whole."

It is in its relation to a second subject that the subject finds its first real identity with the object and the sustenance for all subsequent identities. Another self is part of the objective world, but it too has consciousness and sees the self as its other. In its contact with a second self, the subject becomes self-conscious for the first time, for this particular object reflects its own inner life and capacity for thought.

A self-consciousness has before it a self-consciousness. Only so and only then is it self-consciousness in actual fact; for here first of all it comes to have the unity of itself in its otherness. . . . When a self-consciousness is the object, the object is just as much ego as object.¹³

The subject secures its freedom in this second relation by recognizing the object as a subject and by gaining the second subject's recognition of itself as a subject. Both subjects set free each other's capacity for thought and self-consciousness, and validate each other as self-conscious beings. Furthermore, in the meeting of two selves, "we already have before us the notion of Mind or Spirit."¹⁴ The identity of subjects becomes the basis for the intersubjective world, which henceforth will mediate

all subject/object relations, including those of Desire. Hegel stresses that Recognition must be a relation of equality. If the subject simply destroys the other self in order to obtain freedom from it, it loses its knowledge of itself in the other and the other's acknowledgement of itself as subject. If it does not destroy the second self but treats it oppressively, as less than an identical subject, it will not see its own, free self when it looks into the mirror of the other but instead a self "in the form and shape of thinghood."¹⁵ Likewise, the recognition which a less-than-full subject affords is inadequate, because it is recognition by a lower and alien being. The subject is as little confirmed in its relation to a lesser self, as the latter is. As we shall see, Hegel does view the inequality of subjects as vital to the third subject/object relation. In the relation of self to self, however, only equality assures identity and hence freedom. One should note that the necessary equality of subjects has ontological rather than socio-political significance. It does not preclude--and in fact Hegel believes that the Idea demands--status distinctions among social beings.¹⁶

We have seen that the human animal overcomes raw nature by consuming it. But Desire is not the whole truth of the relation of subject to matter; neither subject nor object remain forever in a purely natural state. We also

have seen that the subject realizes its identity with other subjects through relations of mutual recognition. The subject wins such recognition, however, only at the end of a struggle with the other self as alien object. During this struggle, one self succeeds for a time in dominating the other. This phase of "lordship and bondage"--metaphor for the emergence of psychological discipline within the self as well as of social discipline without¹⁷--initiates the third, critical relation of subject to object: that of Labor. Forced to labor on raw nature in order to satisfy his master's desires, the bondsman transforms nature from raw matter into artifact and himself from desirous animal into purposive agent. The satisfaction of brute desire through immediate consumption leaves no traces in the world, because desire "lacks objectivity." But when the subject labors, he "releases history from nature."¹⁸ For labor

is desire restrained and checked. . . . Labour shapes and fashions the thing. The negative relation to the object passes into the form of the object, into something that is permanent and remains . . .¹⁹

Through labor, the subject molds nature in accordance with his purposes and ideas, so that it comes to reflect his thought. He thus objectifies himself in the world, comes to know himself in the world, and is at home with the world as his own expression.

Nonetheless, the labored object still has an independent and external existence of its own--that recalcitrant "otherness" of all physical things. The fourth subject/object relation is a more fully internal one. This is the relation of the individual subject to the "spiritual world," which Hegel also calls "civilization," "culture," "nation," and the "system of right." The spiritual world consists of the social relations in which the individual subject is embedded, and the customs, moral norms, laws and institutions which give these relations their specific content. It provides the context for all lesser relations of Desire, Recognition, and Labor, and because it is the source of the language in which the subject thinks, it mediates the highest subject/object relation as well. This spiritual world the subject experiences first as a natural, given way of life, and he identifies himself with its social bonds intuitively and unreflectively. He secondly experiences it as a set of external relations, between autonomous individuals, which are separate from him and which are simply instrumental to his private needs and wants. Third and finally, he comes to know and identify himself with the spiritual world as both the source and objective reflection of his own rational thought and will. Hegel articulates these three moments historically as the ancient Greek city-state, the liberal order and and what

he calls "Ethical Life." He articulates them structurally as the family, the economy or Civil Society, and the State. The fully developed State provides the subject with his identity as a member of a social community, but of a community founded on reason, not sentiment or unthinking habit. Its objective norms, rules and institutions are at once the inner fabric of his ideas, desires and will, which consequently

are interwoven with the general and essential considerations of law, the good, duty, etc. For mere desire, volition in its raw and savege form, falls outside the scene and sphere of world history. These general considerations, which at the same time form norms for directing purposes and actions, have a definite content . . . what special course of action is good or not, right or wrong, is determined, for the ordinary circumstances of private life, by the laws and customs of the State.²⁰

Because the State gives his reason its particular content, what the individual subject wishes to do does not conflict with those actions which the system of right assigns to him. Thus when he acts in accordance with his own will, he acts in accordance with "a set of objective laws and institutions that are rational and universal in nature."²¹ Conversely, when he follows the laws of the State, he follows only his mature, rational volition. His identity with the State means that he is at home in his relations with his fellow citizens, for the State provides them all with a common moral substance and in turn expresses the "holy bond" between them--their common thought or spirit.

However, the State does not simply nourish and objectify the particular reason or "national spirit" of its citizens. It also objectifies Universal Reason as the latter develops itself in history. Thus the customs, rules and institutions of any particular social order have a reference and significance outside of it, and some nations will embody self-developing Reason more adequately than others. But since Reason elaborates and expresses itself exactly through concrete particulars, one can discover the standard of universal rationality only by looking within a particular mode of life. More precisely, one must look within an old and dying mode of life, as a vital culture still will be in the process of creating both the norms and institutions to be judged and the standard of judgement. Hegel is as contemptuous of the idea of a content of reason in abstraction from a particular mode of life, as he is of the idea that each particular mode of life creates its own idiosyncratic standard of rationality. He instead believes that the social theorist must be cognizant of three layers of the cultural/moral universe. He must penetrate the individual subject's ideas, values and volition. He must understand the particular social whole which nourishes these ideas and expresses them in objective form--and each social whole will have its own characteristic spirit, ideas, and institutions of justice and

right. Finally, he must uncover the immanent principles of universal Reason, which realize themselves over time in the spirit and actual practices of particular nations. In sum, while Hegel always locates right within a particular culture, and declares that the subject can know right only as it is expressed variously in concrete thought and action, he grounds the standard of right in universal principles of reason and not in subjective opinion or the moral habits of individual cultures. His ethical theory, in consequence, is anti-relativist, anti-subjectivist, and anti-intuitionist.

It is important to note that Hegel's theory of the State is entirely dependent for its support upon his metaphysic. The organic connections he posits between citizen and social whole have curious resonances with both Burkeian conservatism and Rousseauian rationalism, but Hegel roots these connections neither in the sanctity of a common tradition nor in the legitimizing power of participatory democracy. Instead, he rests the idea of a harmonious identity of subject and social whole on the twin claims that the idea of the State is reason and hence freedom, and that the actual State realizes its idea over historical time. He however offers no substantive test independent of the self-image of any particular social whole, of the rationality of its laws, mores and institutions. In fact, he cannot offer such a

test. Logically, he cannot, because he argues that the content of rationality is furnished within the particular social order itself. Tactically, he cannot, because the viability of such a test would entail the possibility of no state's passing it, of there being no state which is, in the always unique terms of its own historical epoch, the actualization of the true or ideal State. And with this possibility would re-emerge the old Kantian dichotomy between the ideal and the real world which Hegel had gone to such lengths to overcome. Hegel, or rather "the concept itself" does offer a formal test of the rational State: it must be a unity of unity and difference. But this test is unconvincing because it is thoroughly elastic. Hegel's Prussian passed, and by coming up with different versions of unity and difference, liberal and fascist states alike can boast of embodying reason and, as is the more usual claim, freedom. Consequently, to accept Hegel's vision of the State as implicitly and more and more actually rational, we either simply must take his word for it, or embrace his idealism in toto, within which system the State as concrete Reason makes as good sense as any other part.

Whether he is persuasive or not about the rationality of the State, Hegel claims that in it the subject achieves his most complete unity thus far with the objective world. He also achieves his most perfect freedom from

alien objectivity, for here his will "is related to nothing except itself and so is released from every tie of dependence on anything else."²² The relation of self to rational social whole is such an intimate one, that it almost is misleading to say that this whole is an object opposed to the subject at all. Yet there is at least a latent tension between the two. In part, the tension is a spatial one, for the customs, laws, institutions and practices of the State extend far beyond the boundaries of the individual self. But the tension is also substantive: it always is possible that the individual's beliefs, values and purposes will come into conflict with the reason of the established order. The latter contradiction between State and individual in fact is a crucial symptom of the decay of one mode of social life and the emergence of another.

C H A P T E R I I
THE THEORY OF KNOWLEDGE

The relations of subject to raw nature, a second subject, the labored product, and spirit, are progressively internal relations of the self to its own reflection. Even the spiritual world, however, still has an existence separate from and in latent opposition to the individual subject. In fact, Hegel claims, the subject achieves a perfect identity with the object only in his epistemological relation to it. By the act of thinking, the subject takes the object out of its externality and transforms it into an idea internal to mind.

In thinking an object, I make it into thought and deprive it of its sensuous aspect; I make it into something which is directly and essentially mine. Since it is in thought that I am first by myself, I do not penetrate an object until I understand it; it then ceases to stand over against me and I have taken from it the character of its own which it had in opposition to me . . .²³

In fully rational thought, the mind strips the object of all accidental and transient properties accruing to its phenomenal existence, and captures its essence or reason. The rational idea is neither a mere copy of sense data, nor a distorted image of external reality, but rather is the object's inner truth. Rational thought is not only

the highest but also the most inclusive ontological relation of subject to object, because it enfolds all other relations within itself. The thinking subject reflects on its prior experiences, discards their incidental moments, discerns and preserves their essential meanings, and thereby absorbs its objective relations as pure thoughts within its developing reason. But the subject does not engage epistemologically with the object simply when it reflects upon past experience. Experience is itself epistemological: to experience an object, whether as raw nature or as the State, is to have already taken it into one's consciousness. The various objects which the subject confronts, then, are at once distinctions within its own mind.

Hegel shows that the subject's attainment of true knowledge of the object is an extremely laborious process. Human thought undergoes a development which is logical, loosely historical, and biographical ("The particular individual . . . has also to go through the stages through which the general mind has passed, but as shapes once assumed by mind and now laid aside, as stages of a road which has been worked over and levelled out."²⁴) Each stage entails a specific construction of objectivity or mode of transforming the object into thought; it also entails a specific interpretation of the activity of knowing. Mind's theory of its own activity in part, but not in full,

infects and circumscribes that activity. The dynamic of thought arises out of the tension between the way in which mind interprets knowledge and knows the object in accordance with this interpretation, and the way in which it knows the object in contradiction to this interpretation. This tension pushes mind to elaborate increasingly more adequate theories of knowledge, which allow for and articulate an increasingly adequate construction of the object of thought. Each new mode of thought comprehends and surpasses the limitations of the last; and each has its own, limited validity as a necessary moment in the development of rational knowledge.

Hegel traces the temporal evolution of mind all the way from the Stoicism and Scepticism of antiquity, through 19th century German romanticism. The predominant logical shapes mind manifests in history, and the major claimants for the ascertainment of truth, are three: Bare Experience, Scientific Understanding, and Philosophy. The least adequate level and theory of knowledge, Bare Experience or "naive consciousness," is knowledge as the immediate and passive reception of pure, unorganized sense data; or at a slightly more sophisticated level, of unrelated objects with properties. Its self-interpreting theory is akin to an empiricism of respectively the phenomenalist and object-realist sort. The second level and

theory of knowledge is Scientific Understanding, which arises out of the inability of Bare Experience to account for knowledge which the mind in fact has of the world. Scientific Understanding reflects upon the observable object in order to discover its essential nature: its generic and species identity and its external, causal relations with other objects. Science admits that this nature is not immediately observable in the object but believes that it can be inferred or abstracted from that which is observable. The highest level and theory of knowledge is Philosophy or Speculative Science. Philosophy knows the object ultimately through the deductive process of thought alone, knows it as internally related to other objects and as a necessary expression of the rational whole, and knows Reason as the Absolute Subject which objectifies itself in the observable world. Hegel insists that the epistemological and explanatory supremacy of Philosophy does not annul the worth of Scientific Understanding, or indeed of Bare Experience. Experience has limited validity in its being rooted in the actual world; Scientific Understanding, in its rational mediation of bare sense impressions, its preparation of particular facts into classificatory universals and general laws. Philosophy then transforms empirical into logical universality and necessity. It derives the particular object from its self-particularizing

universal or concept, and its concept from the self-differentiating Idea. By warranting the contents of empirical science absolutely and logically--rather than contingently and empirically--necessary and universal, Philosophy gives them "the freedom of thought," so that they no longer depend for their truth on the evidence of the sensed fact. "The fact as experienced thus becomes an illustration and a copy of the original and completely self-supporting activity of Thought."²⁵

Hegel's analysis of Experience foreshadows contemporary critiques of both phenomenism and object realism.²⁶ According to Hegel, Experience as "sense-certainty," the view that all knowledge is the passive reciepience of unique sense impressions, dissolves of itself because non-conceptual sensation can yield no truth beyond the bare fact that knower and known simply are. Mind of course does know more than this--the very point of its concept "knowledge" is to denote going beyond registering the existence of otherwise uncharacterizeable particulars. Conversely, knowledge as this going beyond cannot be acquired through the passive reciepience of sense data. To know anything about a particular is at once to conceptualize--to organize experience by means of universals subsuming (and for Hegel the inner truth of) both knower and known, universals which by definition cannot be sensed.

Without the conceptual activity of mind, the world would be no more than an ephemeral series of the unmarked and unmarkable. With it, the truth of the object "lies in the object as my object, or lies in the meaning, in what I 'mean'."²⁷ Experience as "perception," the view that it is possible to know unrelated objects with properties rather than mere sense-data does admit to the necessary use of universals to designate the experiencing self and the object and its properties. But perception cannot account for a given conglomerate of properties' being simultaneously a single object, without subverting the independence of the object by attributing to mental activity either the unifying of diverse properties into a single entity, or the breaking down of a single entity into diverse properties. Further, perception's claim that each object is wholly related to any other is contradicted by its claim that what makes a thing itself and not another thing, is a certain set of properties. For the very properties which make a thing what it is, relate it positively with other things with similar properties, and negatively with other things with opposite properties.

Scientific Understanding contains the insights of "sense-certainty," in that it begins with the directly given sense impression. It contains the insights of "perception" in that it works with the sensed particular as a

universal, rather than as a unique and unrepeatable phenomenon. It goes beyond both in that it does not stop at describing the sensible world, but penetrates its external transient appearance to its non-sensible, permanent essence. Scientific Understanding defines this essence as the purely external relations which characterize the observable thing. These include the classificatory relations between the individual and its species (the "self-relation"); the causal relations between the individual thing and other, different things (the "other-relation"); and the relations between the individual thing and other things which express the workings of forces such as magnetism, gravity, and electricity. The observable object mediates between the scientific mind and the "supersensible world" of species, causal laws and forces. It is the task of empirical science to infer general propositions and theories from this particular object, to find "the Necessary element, or Laws, in the apparent disorder of the endless masses of the fortuitous."²⁸ The theoretical concepts of science, needless to say, are not merely conventional but must conform to the system of nature. While empirical science does not equate the true essence of things with their sensible appearance, it still purports to derive the relations between species and particular, cause and effect, force and expression, from empirical experience alone, so that these relations are only con-

tingently true. Yet, Hegel notes, the fact that empirical science assumes without the logical possibility of empirical proof that the laws it discovers are universal and permanent, bespeaks an implicit awareness that these laws are rooted in Reason and not in mere observable phenomena.

This dubious show of support for empirical science aside, Hegel argues that its self-interpretation is false, its method is weak, and its understanding of the object of inquiry, highly unsatisfactory. First, empirical Science claims that its general ideas correspond to sensible phenomena or are reducible to ideas which do so. While it begins with the observable object, however, at the moment of scientific analysis it ushers in concepts like "one," "many," "force," "cause," "contingency," which have no concrete analogues in the physical world. Even materialism, the companion to empiricism which holds that all of reality is reducible to physical matter, is a self-deceptive form of idealism. For "matter" itself is a thought or abstraction which corresponds to no sense-datum at all. Most important, the very goal of Scientific Understanding--the discovery of universal laws and necessary connections between things--cannot be attained (as Hume had noted) through sense perception alone.²⁹ Of course Hegel concludes differently than Hume: "And thus once more we see the axiom of bygone metaphysics reappear,

that the truth of things lies in thought."³⁰ Only to the extent that science in practice contradicts empiricism in theory, does it merit its title. Hegel is, however, in sympathy with empirical theory on one point.

In Empiricism lies the great principle that whatever is true must be in the actual world and present to sensation. This principle contradicts that 'ought-to-be.' . . . No less than Empiricism, philosophy recognizes only what is, and has nothing to do with what merely ought to be.³¹

Both empiricism and absolute idealism deny any methodological ground for criticizing a given order of things. Empiricism does so, because it believes only in the truth of strictly observable facts, so that it is confined within the boundaries of "what is." Absolute Idealism does so, for a quite opposite reason: it asserts that the actual, observable world is expressive of Thought, so that the actual is already rational.

Second, Hegel finds inadequate the method by which science explains the observable thing in terms of species, laws and forces. These generalizations, after all, are only repetitions in universal and permanent form of the particular, transient cases they purport to explain. To account for the fact that b does x when c does y, by the law that whenever C does Y, B does X, is to state merely the same content as before, "translated into the form of inwardness."³² In any case, the external and contingent relations science finds in the world, do not provide mind

with an ultimate knowledge of first principles and final causes.³³ Empirical science only explains the observable thing in terms of some contingent factor, which "may or may not be . . . whose being or not being . . . depends not on itself but on something else."³⁴ Hegel believes that a necessity dependent on antecedent conditions which themselves are unnecessary, is not as powerful an explanation as a necessity which simply and categorically is, "a simple self-relation, in which all dependence on something else is removed."³⁵ Lastly, the necessity exhibited in causal laws and forces is a blind one. It does not know itself, and it does not determine itself. It then is of a lesser order than the necessity which stems from a self-conscious, self-determining Reason.

Because of these methodological limitations, empirical science can comprehend nothing of Universal Reason as the inner content of the world, a good deal (but not the full truth) of physical nature, and very little of purposive, intersubjective human life.³⁶ Science begins to have difficulties, Hegel believes, when it tries to explain the behavior of simple, unconscious organic life. The simple organism is governed by a concealed purpose or "notion"--the preservation of its identity--and this purpose cannot be observed or inferred purely from observable facts, but "can only be apprehended conceptually."³⁷ Sci-

ence confronts its most serious problems, however, when it seeks to explain self-conscious human life. First, psychological science looks at mind as a passive, determined thing. It treats mind as an entity which is separate from its objective relations, and explains it in terms of external factors and causes. In truth, Hegel asserts--and this is his most critical point--, the individual mind is fused with its objective world, for in the hierarchy of ways already examined, this world reflects and gives content to the subject. Since the mind is internally related to its situation, any explanation is moot which presumes a clear distinction between cause and effect and treats mind as determined by something fully independent of it. Second, science as physiognomy and phrenology³⁸ identifies the inner self with permanent mental dispositions it infers from sensible physical traits.³⁹ Hegel first of all strongly condemns the attempt to view the body as expressive of the mind. The inner body, whether as bone structure or internal organs, is simply a physical given and has no internal connection to consciousness. Certain facets of the exterior body, the eyes or mouth, for example, may express the mind, but only insofar as the inner self can manipulate them at will. In short, the particular shape of the body has no direct relation to the particular content of the mind. The body is largely a medium through which the

mind expresses itself in speech and action, and conversely it is at speech and action that one looks in order to know the inner self of another person.⁴⁰ Hegel secondly refuses to attribute the subject's words and acts to some static psychological disposition. Rather, he believes that they reflect the subject's inner development towards reason and self-determination. This development both is natural to the human subject and, as Hegel noted earlier, is informed by the specific ideas of justice, duty, and right which the subject finds in his social world.

According to Hegel, Philosophy is the highest level and theory of knowledge. Only Philosophy is able to grasp the conscious life of the human subject, the inner meaning of its speech and actions, the intersubjective norms and rules which help constitute social relations, and the Reason which underlies all things. The content of Philosophy, which Hegel also calls "Speculative Science" and "Absolute Knowledge," is no more and no less than Hegel's own philosophical system. It includes the system's entire sweep from the self-deduction of the Abstract Idea through its externalization as nature, its development as human subjectivity in its various relations to the object, and its consciousness of itself as the unity of Thought and the phenomenal world. Because Philosophy is just this "Daylight of the Idea's development and revealed riches,"⁴¹

Hegel's climactic discussion of it is very short. Absolute Knowledge is simply if momentarily the announcement of the full fruition of all that has gone before, the whole journey of Thought travelled and recollected. Before we examine the form or method of Philosophy, we should remember that it does reserve a place for empirical science as a progressive if lesser mode of knowledge. Scientific Understanding marks the limited triumph of the independent, reflective, analytic mind, which is able to make its discoveries exactly because it assumes a stance of detachment towards the world around it. Philosophy does not entirely invalidate those discoveries when it reveals both subject and object to be expressive of Mind. Rather, it heals the wound opened by Scientific Understanding: the alienation of the human subject from the objective world, and the subject's explanation of itself as determined by external, objective causes.

C H A P T E R I I I

THE METHOD OF SPECULATIVE SCIENCE

We turn now to the method which at once governs the real development of the world, and provides the most complete knowledge of it. The dialectic is both the inner dynamic of existence and the true form of scientific analysis. It is the second because it is the first: the dialectic of the concept "is not an activity of subjective thinking applied to some matter externally, but is rather the matter's very soul putting forth its branches and fruit organically."⁴² Because the movement of the objective world determines the proper form of explanation, mind must look on at its subject-matter "without for its part adding to it any ingredient of its own."⁴³ This of course does not mean that the truth of reality is transparent to simple sensory observation. Hegel has shown that to know is at once to mediate the empirically given with thought, and that to know scientifically is to pierce through phenomenal reality to its rational essence. Furthermore, the dialectical method of explanation is a highly sophisticated one which emerges only after a long development of the human mind. Because he sees his scientific method as internal both to objective reality and

to human history, by the way, Hegel can account for his own thought with complete theoretical ease. This is an intellectual pleasure in which the empirical scientist cannot indulge.

Every actual thing involves a coexistence of opposed elements. Consequently to know, or in other words, to comprehend an object is equivalent to being conscious of it as a concrete unity of opposed determinations.⁴⁴

The central insight of dialectical thinking, and the central core of dialectical reality, is that the whole is a concrete unity of opposites. The method, however, embraces three stages or "moments" which lead to this unity. (1) The first moment of the method as existential dynamic is the existence and subsistence of finite, atomic things--whether these are particular rocks, trees and persons or particular epochs, cultures and philosophies--to which certain predicates characteristically apply and other characteristically do not. Because the world is differentiated in this way, the first moment of the method as scientific analysis is the division of its subject-matter into fixed and limited universals, each of which is distinct from and exclusive of the others. Thus, for example, one divides "philosophy" into "classical idealism," "skepticism," "realism" etc., in such a way that "idealism" includes only "its own" ideas and not those characteristic of "realism" or "skepticism." Such

analytic activity is indispensable for knowledge, which requires that "every thought shall be grasped in its full precision, and nothing allowed to remain vague and indefinite."⁴⁵ (2) However, contrary to the claims of empiricism, every existent thing only on one side is a "self-identical," fixed, and independent being. On the other side, it is fraught with internal contradictions. Later we will examine the principle of contradiction which leads every particular thing to transform itself and which subverts its independent identity. For now we need note only that a thing can contradict itself because it is expressive of an idea--or rather, of two ideas: the idea of itself as a perfected being, and the idea of itself as an independent, self-limiting whole. It will suffer contradiction if it is a less than adequate expression of either.⁴⁶ The opposition inherent in all finite things forces scientific thought beyond its own boundaries. Since "[t]here is absolutely nothing whatever in which we cannot and must not point to contradictions or opposite attributes,"⁴⁷ the conceptual distinctions science makes in its first moment, it undermines in its second. (3) Empiricism believes the world to be made of positive facts, and knowledge of true statements about them. Skepticism believes that knowledge ends in the negation of all positive statements about the world and so

in the negation of knowledge itself. Hegel insists against both that "the negation which emerges as the result of the dialectic is, because a result, at the same time positive."⁴⁸ As it is the negation of "specific propositions," it has its own, specific and positive content. The third moment of the dialectic yields not a mere denial of a given, fixed truth, but a more developed and internally harmonious existent, and a more articulated and complete thought of it.⁴⁹ The dialectic process reconciles positive and negative moments in a higher, new positive one, and then begins anew. The more developed object negates itself, and the more inclusive thought presses beyond its old boundaries. The end of existential and epistemological dialectic comes only with the Thought of the Infinite Whole: the reality which encloses every contradictory existent within itself, and the thought beyond which it is impossible to travel.

We have established that Hegel's dialectical method is both scientific analysis and real dynamic, and that as both analysis and dynamic it entails three moments or stages. We now must examine the fundamental principles of which the method is made.

Appearance is the process of arising into being and passing away again, a process that itself does not arise and does not pass away, but is per se, and constitutes reality and the life-movement of truth.⁵⁰

The most obvious and the most abstract principle of the method is that of movement. It is an obvious principle because of the dynamic quality inherent in a method which moves restlessly from unproblematic truth to its disintegration through internal contradiction to a new unproblematic truth. It is an abstract principle because to say that reality is inherently in motion and flux is not to say very much. A second, more articulated expression of the dialectic is that it is self-movement. An unproblematic truth negates itself, and both truth and negation are collected and retained in a more complete truth. Here we have the kernel of Hegel's entire metaphysic. It is unnecessary to retrace the imminent dynamic of the system of Reason as a whole, in which Reason posits itself as Abstract Thought, negates itself as Abstract Thought and posits itself as the external world, and finally returns to itself as the self-conscious unity of the two moments.⁵¹ But it is worth noting that to crack the self-movement of this Whole at any point is to find a part which is itself a smaller whole in its own process of self-movement. Crack open this second whole, and one will find yet another. The Idea; and within the Idea the spheres of Logic, Nature, and Spirit; within the sphere of Logic, the categories of Being, Essence, and Notion; and within the category of Notion, the Objective

Notion, Subjective Notion, and Idea--each undergoes an immanent development in which it both negates and retains every particular moment within itself. This self-movement becomes even more complex in the realm of Spirit. For here, not only is there a logical self-development from, for example, family to civil society to the state within the whole of Ethical Life, or from art to religion to philosophy within the whole of Absolute Knowledge; but each of these self-moving wholes and each whole within it undergoes a temporal development as well--that is, has a history.⁵² All of this movement and change except that which is pure "caprice" or "sport" manifests some aspect of the Concept's "elaborations upon itself."⁵³ Consequently, in contrast to the empirical scientist who begins with concrete particulars and abstracts from them universals which name their common characteristics, the dialectical scientist looks to the abstract universal which will produce out of itself its concrete determinations. The point of scientific analysis, admonishes Hegel, in a statement which sums up the idealist explanatory enterprise, "is to look at the way in which the concept determines itself and to restrain ourselves from adding thereto anything of our thoughts and opinions."⁵⁴

All of reality, then, is marked by self-movement, but to explain how this movement occurs one must point to

that most infamous dialectical principle, contradiction. "Contradiction is the very moving principle of the world . . . [although] contradiction is not the end of the matter, but cancels itself."⁵⁵ Every determinate thought, thing, and moment comes into conflict with itself and transforms itself into its opposite or negation. Nature's negation of the Idea, and Spirit's negation of Nature, are archetypal. In every lesser entity lurks the same "portentous power of the negative."⁵⁶ This power, however, is itself a new positive content: Nature, for example, is not simply "not-Idea," but is the positive content of the external, material world. The process of the self-movement of any whole is just this succession of positive forms. Further, each new positive retains the truth of its predecessors. Nature is the externalization as well as the negation of the Idea (it is the "Idea asleep"). Spirit is Mind which not only negates but has developed out of Nature and retains the whole of that development in thought. Thus a negation is not like an illusion that is broken upon the advent of the truth.

The concept

determines itself, posits its own determinations and in turn abolishes them (transcending itself), and by this very process of abolition and transcending gains an affirmative, ever richer and more concretely determined form.⁵⁷

The negations which become positive forms, the positive

forms which issue in their own negations, and the moment of negation itself, are expressions of the Whole and are retained within it as partial truths.

What exactly does Hegel mean when he says that a thought or thing contradicts itself? (1) Every determinate thought, because it has a specific and so a bounded content, is in contradiction with itself as an expression of the Thought of the Whole. For every determinate thought can be thought beyond. This inner contradiction leads each thought past its own boundaries to its negation--a new, more comprehensive thought inclusive of the truth of the old. (2) Every determinate thing which has not yet realized its own idea, is not what it truly is. This contradiction leads the thing beyond the limits of its present existence, to a more perfect expression of its essential self. Since every particular thing is finite, however, it eventually decays and dies; its idea is preserved through the preservation of its species or type. The relation of natural particulars to their universal is a static one: each new particular simply replicates the idea of the last, and the universal is preserved through this repetition of particulars. The relation of spiritual particulars to their universal is dynamic: the various ideas which the particulars express are progressive elaborations of their spiritual universal.

For example, each particular state has its own idea which it strives to realize, and the historical series of particular states and their qualitatively distinctive ideas reveals, over time, the developing universal Idea of the State. (3) Every finite, determinate thing is in contradiction with itself as the idea of an independent whole. For the fact that a thing is determinate and finite means that it is bounded, and this entails that it is bounded by something other than itself. This "other," then, helps determine the finite thing and is included within the thing's identity. Thus the finite thing is all that it is not and so is negated as a self-identical entity. (Hegel believes that the thing not only entails its "other" but actively seeks to become its other by going beyond its own boundaries. This occurs when a thing alters itself.⁵⁸)

In truth, however, the "other" which negates the independence of every determinate thing is, along with that thing, a companion part of a larger whole. The relations the thing has with other things are then not external and contingent but internal and necessary relations, so that the thing is not limited and determined by an alien force but is, as part of the larger whole, self-limiting and self-determining. A consequence of the principle of internal relations is that to understand

the particular thing is to understand it in its relations with all other things within a given whole. For example, a particular set of laws must be understood against the habits, mores, institutions, etc., which along with the laws express a particular national culture or "spirit." This particular whole provides the first context for the explanation of the particular thing but, in that the whole itself is an organic part of a larger whole, not the last. Thus, the terms of explanation for particular laws include not only their internal relations to other parts of a particular national spirit, but also the internal relations of that national spirit to other national spirits which are parts of the self-developing "World Spirit." Ultimately, the contradiction inherent in every finite thing is resolved only when that thing is shown to be a part of the Infinite Whole or Idea, which has no limits and hence is not in contradiction with some other thing which lies beyond itself.

The determinate thing, then, is a necessary part of a larger whole. This principle of necessity underlies the apparent contingency of things in the world. Because the world is external, material, and temporal, it is marred by true contingency: by pure "sport" or "caprice," the irrational thing, event, or action which "may as well not be as be."⁵⁹ But most of what appears to be contin-

gent is in truth the manifestation of its particular idea and the Idea of the Whole. While the historian concerns himself with the narration of appearance, whether it be truly fortuitous or not, the task of the scientist is first to fathom the rational Idea of the Whole, second to expose the inner necessity of the only apparently contingent particulars, and to treat the fortuitous not at all.

The principle of necessity accrues to the dynamic of each particular whole as well as to its composition at any one moment or stage. Given that this is so, and given that each whole is self-moving rather than moved by an external cause, the entire content of its development must be implicit in its first, most abstract and unarticulated moment. That the dynamic of reality tends of its own internal necessity toward an inherent end is a fifth principle of the Hegelian dialectic. This teleological principle applies to the method as analysis also: "the whole progress of philosophizing in every case, if it be a methodical, that is to say a necessary, progress, merely renders explicit what is implicit in a notion."⁶⁰ The dialectic is a succession of positive moments, each born out of and negating the last, but the process is not one of spontaneous self-creation. It is rather a becoming explicit through self-struggle of a series of moments each implicit in the last. The whole which develops according

to an inner necessity develops freely--that is, according to its own purpose. The Idea depends on nothing from without itself; it is

its own exclusive pre-supposition and absolutely final purpose, and itself works out this purpose from potentiality into actuality, from inward source to outward appearance . . . this Idea or Reason is the True, the Eternal, the Abs^olute Power . . . it and nothing but it . . . manifests itself in the world . . .⁶¹

Hegel's brief discussion of philosophy in his preface to the Phenomenology exemplifies the principle of teleological development through contradiction. The various philosophical systems of the past, Hegel remarks, seem independent and indeed mutually exclusive of each other. In reality, they constitute in their very antagonisms "the progressive evolution of truth."⁶² Although elsewhere Hegel distinguishes historical development through internal struggle from a naturally pacific organic teleology,⁶³ here he likens the history of philosophy to the growth of a plant. The bud is supplanted by the flower, with which it is incompatible; the flower by the fruit. Yet each is part of the same organic whole, within which they are both contradictory and mutually necessary. Philosophy likewise evolves through a progression of antagonistic systems, each incompatible with the next, yet all necessary parts of, and reconcilable within, the whole of philosophic knowledge. The different philosophical

systems are "one philosophy at different degrees of maturity. . . . In philosophy the latest birth of time is the result of all the systems that have preceded it, and must include their principles; and so . . . will be the fullest, most comprehensive and most adequate system of all"⁶⁴ (in this sense, unlike the relation of fruit to flower). A consequence for scientific analysis of the teleological principle is that one must look to the more developed self to explain the less. At the same time, the truth of the whole is not only its final stage, but is the entire process of its working out.

The historical advance of Spirit from implicit possibility to explicit actuality through "hard, infinite struggle against itself,"⁶⁵ is most dramatically illustrated in Hegel's conception of social change.⁶⁶ Here the World Spirit develops through the emergence, maturation, and disintegration of particular national spirits. As we have seen, a national spirit or state is the totality of habits, traditions, moral and legal duties and rights, a constitution, an artistic, scientific, and philosophic temperament, which have a common principle and which a given people share. "Only with such a religion can there be such a form of the State, and only with such a State such art and such philosophy."⁶⁷ The particular nation is limited and mortal, with its own cycle of de-

velopment and decline. Vital as long as it is bringing its inner principle from potentiality to concrete actuality, the state in its maturity loses its dynamism. Its citizens have completed their struggle of self-creation, and have the leisure to lean back to reflect on themselves. Such self-reflection is a corrosive act. It leads them beyond the authority of their ethical order, to question long-established rights, duties, and customs. This self-critique of a social order marks the emergence of a new spiritual principle and a more inclusive standard of rationality. The hidden secret of every social whole--that it contains within itself the seeds of a new, higher principle--"makes all existing reality unstable and disunited."⁶⁸ Within the old world, the inner spirit of the new is "already knocking . . . as against a shell, in order, finally, to burst forth and break it into pieces; but it is a kernel different from that which belongs to the shell."⁶⁹ The old order crumbles away, and a new one arises which begins its own process of development, self-reflection, and decline.

While the thought and action of the masses help build and maintain a particular spiritual order, it is the rare "world-historical individual" who brings into being a new social whole. Hegel's theory of the world-historical figure shows his perceptive grasp of the tran-

sitional historical mentality (confined, however, to the minds of a few great men) and his ultimately idealist explanation of human action. The world-historical individual acts according to private passions and purposes subversive of the established state. He understands the limitations of the old age and the truth of the new, "the next genus, so to speak, which is already formed in the womb of time."⁷⁰ But these passions and purposes are the guise through which the will of the World Spirit secretly works. Not being philosophers, the world-historical individuals know nothing of the Idea as such, but they make its immanent reality their own personal aim and goal. And so their actions have two explanations, only one of which is transparent to themselves.

The World Spirit then consists of a progression of finite national spirits: "The restless succession of individuals and peoples, who exist for a time and then disappear," but whose ruin "is at the same time the emergence of a new life."⁷¹ It is also a progression of rationality, self-consciousness, and freedom. Each new stage of Spirit entails a richer history and self-understanding, a more universal standard of reason, and hence a higher level of freedom than the last.

While the dialectical method is able to grasp this transformative process, there is one claim Hegel does

not make on its behalf. He nowhere suggests that the speculative scientist can determine the state of any later stage--whether of history or of being--on the basis of information he has at or about an earlier stage. The dialectical idealist can be certain that every positive moment will produce out of itself its necessary antithesis, and that this will be a new, necessary positive moment. But he cannot know the content of this moment in advance of it, for two reasons. First, one can predict neither the ontological nor historical new moment on the basis of regularities characteristic of an earlier one, for this new moment negates not only those regularities, but the identities involved in them. That is, the new moment negates "Whenever A, then B" as a relation, and also negates A as (the old) A, B as (the old) B. Second, given that one cannot predict the historical future on the basis of present regularities, one cannot predict it on any other basis, because the mind is always caught in its own time. It can think only within the terms of its culture, language, past and present; it cannot know any future expression of Reason because it is itself an expression of Reason only as the latter has developed itself thus far. That it is impossible to know a later moment on the basis or from the stance of an earlier one, means that dialectical idealism, which purports to be a

deductive system, can be one only of a most singular sort. The scientist cannot deduce a conclusion on the basis of a knowledge of the premises alone, but must uncover the movement from premise to conclusion only after that movement has taken place. He does not, then, deduce the facts of the world from the Concept, and the Concept from an a priori premise. Rather, he examines the experience of thinking, which leads of itself to the Concept, and with the help of the categories of the Concept, he examines the experience of the phenomenal world. Here he discloses the inner rationality which the Concept guarantees.⁷² In sum, he reconstructs the advance from Concept to Nature to Spirit "after the fact."

C H A P T E R I V

SCIENCE, PHILOSOPHY, AND THE EXPLANATION OF HUMAN ACTION

It is striking that Hegel, fully aware of the gains made by the empirical sciences in the past century, equates true science with philosophy, and philosophy with knowledge of "notions or conceptions alone."⁷³ His vision of philosophy is in part Platonic. The philosopher's task is to reveal the concept as the rational truth of the world. He can know this truth neither through intuition nor common sense, but only by means of an arduous process of mental training and intellectual discipline. A regulative principle prohibiting fanciful hypotheses, mere subjective opinions, and peculiarities of mind, governs the philosophical enterprise and makes it systematic. Hegel ascribes a dynamic quality not only to mind but also to the world it thinks about, and in this way his idealism is more Aristotelian than Platonic. Ideas are immanent in the concrete world and inform the development of all things. However, Hegel parts with both classical thinkers when he declares that ideas and the concrete world are internal distinctions of Thought, and Thought develops itself through contradiction, negation, and

struggle. Thus he conceives of the Notion as the self which brings opposition out of itself; of scientific thinking as "a self having knowledge purely of itself in the absolute antithesis of itself;⁷⁴ and of scientific proof as the account of "how the subject by and from itself makes itself what it is."⁷⁵

Empirical science retains a legitimate place within the system of Speculative Science, but it suffers there a definite if gently executed decline in status. Hegel's greatest complaint against empirical science-- that it cannot fathom the Infinite Reason of the world-- has long since lost its intellectual appeal for philosophers and social theorists, although it still is the crux of the theological position. However, Hegel makes a series of secondary arguments which foreshadows the contemporary case against positivism. He believes that positive science, with its fixed propositions and static vision of a universe governed by natural laws, cannot comprehend the internal dynamic to which all things are subject. Further, it confines itself to the study of the physically observable, which it sees as the only truth or at least the only truth amenable to scientific investigation. Hence it is blind to the full reality of social life. It cannot grasp the internal rationality of human action, which each particular mode of social life both

supports and reflects. It cannot penetrate the inner logic of social practice, of which human actors may or may not be aware. It cannot appreciate the historicity of action--the continual emergence of new forms of social life and new modes of thought and practice. Finally, because it understands neither the ideational component nor the dynamic quality of social life, it cannot understand itself--for of course empirical science is a product of mind which arises only at a specific moment in history.

Certain features of Hegel's explanatory method, in turn, anticipate contemporary non-positivist analysis. His theory of the dialectic portrays the world as made of qualitatively distinct levels of existence. It stipulates that the characteristics of each higher level are more inclusive than and not reducible to the characteristics of any lower level. The dialectic then assures both a continuity of method in the analysis of natural and social life, and a discontinuity between the terms of explanation appropriate for social life and the terms of explanation appropriate for simple physical nature. The dialectic also governs practical innovation in social life, and accommodates the fact that the identities and regularities which mark one historical epoch will not necessarily be true of the next. Finally, it informs not only practical but conceptual innovation: the dynamic of

human thought as it creates and then moves beyond its own limitations, as it reflects upon and transforms its own content.

The primary problem for non-idealist dialecticians becomes one of finding a support other than that of a self-developing Idea, for a dialectic of nature, history, and human consciousness. In the century and a half after Hegel's death, at least three possibilities have been suggested. Each is less than adequate in scope, each is closely connected to the others, and each is quite clearly intimated in the pages of Hegel's own texts. The Darwinian theory of natural evolution provides a strictly materialist basis for the self-transformation of physical nature, which at some point issues in conscious and self-conscious life. Whether or not Darwin himself was reductionist in his account of mind, emergence theorists of nature need not and indeed should not be so.⁷⁶ Marxist analysis traces the historical transformation of nature, human nature, and social life, to the central activity of purposive human labor. Finally, it is the heart of the ordinary language and phenomenological argument, that reality is socially constructed not only through practical labor but through conceptual thought. Persons think within culturally and politically specific conceptual frameworks which identify and limit, among other things, the

possibilities for human action. The promise of practical innovation rests in part in the capacity of persons to reflect on and move beyond old conceptual limits, and so beyond old limits of what actions are possible in their world.

Ironically, while Marxists have been particularly anxious to shed Hegel's metaphysic while preserving his method, they alone have shown sympathy for two of the most idealist aspects of the dialectic. The first of these aspects is that the internal contradiction within every thing is the contradiction between the thing and its necessary opposite.

Usually we regard different things as unaffected by each other. . . . Everything is thus put outside every other. But the aim of philosophy is to banish indifference, and to ascertain the necessity of things. . . . Thus, for example, inorganic nature is not to be considered merely something else than organic nature, but the necessary antithesis of it.⁷⁷

Hegel here declares that the different thing is not simply different from but a negation of the first thing. He also declares that this negation is not simply a new, antagonistic moment which issues from and yet is incompatible with the old, the way a new twist in the relationship between husband and wife might be corrosive of an established set of familial relations. Rather, the negation is the thing's necessary opposite, and therefore,

because anything in internal contradiction must give way to its negation (which is at once a new positive), its necessary outcome or conclusion. This deductive concept of negation meshes with Hegel's vision of the world as the embodiment of rational necessity.⁷⁸ However, once one drops his idealist assumptions, there is no sufficient reason for the claim that organic nature, for example, is the only possible antithesis of inorganic nature rather than simply a new level of nature, in opposition to, because incompatible with, the definitive properties of the old. This point becomes most pressing when one looks at the dialectic of social formations. Only an abstract logic of history can provide sufficient grounds for the claim that the new principles and practices which undermine an established social order from within, are not only its negation but its necessary negation. The non-idealist is constrained to make the more modest case.

The second idealist aspect of the dialectic to which Marxists are attracted is its progressive portrait of history. That history is progressive can mean two things, and Hegel takes it to mean both. First, he believes that each new positive moment of history includes the truth of its predecessors--it accumulates and surpasses their content and so is richer or more "intelli-

gent." For example, each new philosophical system not only moves beyond but also contains the knowledge of all past systems. Each new technological epoch incorporates as well as outdates the advances of its forebearers. Each new artistic genre not only reacts against but responds to a longer artistic heritage. This reading of history stands up without the assumption of an abstract historical Reason, given one important condition: that each stage of social life remembers its past, although this memory need not be a self-conscious one. Second, Hegel believes that each new positive moment of history embodies to a greater degree than its predecessors, the Idea of Reason and Freedom. While the progress of history is not linear, but occurs through Spirit's "infinite struggle" against itself, it nonetheless is governed by an immanent end. Now, just as it is contradictory for non-idealists to hold that abstractions like "history" move according to an inner logic, it is contradictory for them to hold that such abstractions seek to realize their own ends or goods. Thus they only illicitly represent the movement of history as progressive in this second sense.

In sum, there are certain pretensions of Hegel's dialectic in which the non-idealist cannot indulge. She cannot argue that a logical necessity governs natural, historical, or conceptual transformation; or deduce, even

after the fact, any one stage out of another. (Neither, if she is to use dialectical reason at all, can she predict the content of any later stage on the basis of regularities holding true at an earlier one.) Likewise, she cannot view any of these processes as teleological in and of themselves. They do not have their own, immanent purposes or strive to attain a completed, perfect state, even though they may be made in part of the purposes and ends of human actors. They are progressive only in the sense and to the extent that each new stage of nature, history, or human thought is more comprehensive, elaborate, and "intelligent" than the last.⁷⁹ Finally, the non-idealist cannot presume that the world is essentially rational. She only can assert that (1) to the extent that humans shape the world in the ways they intend, the world embodies their reason as it develops within a particular mode of life; and (2) nature and history, including the history of unintended consequences, are at least partially intelligible to the human mind. This last point is a truism. In that it creates its own standard of intelligibility, human reason will be able to understand at least some things.

His metaphysical claims aside, Hegel created a method of penetrating a world of ceaseless struggle and creative activity to which positivistic science has no

access. But he did more than this. He also constructed a dual mode of analysis which laid the groundwork for both interpretive and critical social theory. On the one hand, he argues that human actors collectively build an edifice of law and moral rules which nurtures and reflects their immanent reason. Thus socially mediated purposes, norms, and beliefs progressively replace natural instincts and external causes as the determinants of human action. On the other hand, Hegel does not explain action simply or even primarily in terms of the self-interpretations of human agents. When he looks at the most crude and brutal action as well as the most thoughtful and dutiful, he sees it as expressive of an objective Reason of which human actors are unaware.

[H]uman actions in history produce additional results, beyond their immediate purpose and attainment, beyond their immediate knowledge and desire. They gratify their own interests; but something more is thereby accomplished, which is latent in the action though not present in their consciousness and not included in their design.⁸⁰

Hegel believes that the history of human action has been a fundamentally opaque one, in which actors have not understood the full extent of what they are doing. Consequently, the speculative scientist must examine that history on two levels: the level of appearance, which includes the concrete practices of social life and the human meanings and intentions which inform it; and the level of

reality, which includes the self-development of the rational Idea. These two levels, however, are not irretrievably distinct. The same historical process by which humans free themselves from the dictates of the instincts and the pressures of external forces, takes them towards a knowledge of the principles of objective Reason. When actors articulate their desires and intentions completely in accordance with rational principles, and act in accordance with their intentions, an interpretive account of their social life will mirror an account in terms of its inner Idea.

While Hegel's emphasis on intersubjective meanings and intentionality is congenial to contemporary interpretive theorists, his distinction between appearance and reality is far more appealing to critical theorists,⁸¹ who readily concur that "in a simple act something further may be implicated than lies in the intentions and consciousness of the agent."⁸² However, because Hegel believes that a hidden Reason manifests itself in the concrete practices of human beings, he finds these practices in reality to be always more, never less, rational than they appear. Modern critical theorists make important revisions in this reading of opacity. They attribute the appearance/reality split to the fact that humans themselves author objective constraints, of which they

are unaware, which then determine their actions. These actors may believe that they autonomously determine what they are doing, or they may think that they are governed by unchangeable natural laws. They may believe that their action is governed by neither private aims nor natural laws, but by social rules, without comprehending the interests those rules protect or the objective constraints which maintain those interests. In each case, opacity bespeaks a loss of control by human actors over their actions, so that these actions in reality are less rational than they appear to be.

Like their critical counterparts, interpretive theorists reject the notion that a hidden Reason expresses itself in social life. They differ among themselves over whether practice is opaque in other ways. The most conservative among them believe opacity to be a permanent feature of social practice. They see opacity as originally a function of the primitive state of human knowledge and later a function of the extreme complexity of social organization. Slightly less conservative thinkers view actions as always at least implicitly transparent to their authors, who are aware that their action is rule-governed although they may not be able to articulate at once the rule their action expresses. Their self-understanding provides the basis for a sufficient

explanation of their action. Lastly, certain interpretive theorists argue that actions may be partially, but never can be fully, opaque to their own authors. Thus social life must be explained by reference to social rules and intersubjective meanings, structural constraints, and the intentions and beliefs of human actors. Such theorists generally believe that human action can become fully transparent, given certain changes in social life which have yet to occur. These usually are said to involve transformations in the labor process, as well as, of course, transformations in human consciousness.

One of Hegel's most cogent insights is that the content of philosophy is not a timeless body of truths. Instead, it is the self-reflection of a particular social whole, "its own time apprehended in thought."⁸³ He also believes that the philosopher's sole task is to contemplate the rational principle already actualized in his social order. That philosophy only can mirror the truth of the present conflicts with Hegel's own insight into the corrosive nature of self-reflection, which leads the self beyond customary boundaries of thought and practice. For the absolute idealist, this conflict is an inevitable one. On the one hand, he must attribute to the movement of Thought, the decay of one principle and mode of social

life and the triumph of another. On the other hand, he cannot allow for the possibility of legitimate critical thought within a given social whole, for this would imply the possibility of a disjuncture between the actual and the rational. Oddly enough, not only mainstream interpretive theorists but many Marxists as well, who are among the most staunch opponents of idealism, have accepted Hegel's conservative notion of philosophy. If Hegel is incorrect about idealism but correct about the dynamic nature of thought, however, philosophy always will do more than reproduce in thought the principles of an established order of things. As the self-reflection of an age, philosophy already will have moved beyond habitual practices and relations. If it concludes its journey by affirming the principle of these practices and relations, this affirmation still will be of a different order from one which is unthinking. But there is nothing in the nature of self-reflection which insures it will not take a radical direction instead. Lastly, while mental journeys never entail practical action, they always have implications for it. The purely contemplative function of philosophy is another erroneous notion of idealism which has found its way into the Marxist camp.

ENDNOTES

¹When Hegel refers to the individual subject, he uses the pronoun "it." Unless the context makes the reference for "it" clear, I will use the pronoun "he" instead.

²Hegel's Logic, William Wallace, trans. (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1975), p. 40.

³Ibid., p. 25.

⁴Ibid., p. 256.

⁵Ibid., p. 274.

⁶Hegel's Philosophy of Right, T.M. Knox, trans. (New York: Oxford University Press, 1975), p. 10.

⁷Logic, p. 39.

⁸Ibid., p. 222.

⁹G.W.F. Hegel, Reason in History, Robert S. Hartman, trans. (New York: Bobbs-Merrill Co., Inc., The Liberal Arts Press, Inc., 1953), p. 71.

¹⁰Ibid., p. 86.

¹¹Philosophy of Right, p. 128.

¹²Ibid., p. 48.

¹³G.W.F. Hegel, The Phenomenology of Mind, J.B. Baillie, trans. (New York: Harper Torchbooks, 1967), pp. 226-7.

¹⁴Ibid., p. 227.

¹⁵Ibid., p. 234.

¹⁶For a sympathetic discussion of Hegel's point, and the logical and social problems involved in doing away with social distinctions, see Charles Taylor, Hegel, (Cambridge, Eng.: Cambridge University Press, 1975), Chapters XVI and XX.

¹⁷George Armstrong Kelly, "Notes on Hegel's 'Lordship and Bondage'," in Alasdair MacIntyre, ed., Hegel (New York: Anchor Books, Doubleday and Co., Inc., 1972).

¹⁸Ibid., p. 193.

¹⁹The Phenomenology of Mind, p. 238.

²⁰Reason in History, pp. 36-7.

²¹Richard L. Schacht, "Hegel on Freedom," in Alasdair MacIntyre, ed. Hegel, p. 312.

²²Philosophy of Right, p. 30.

²³Ibid., p. 226.

²⁴The Phenomenology of Mind, p. 89.

²⁵Logic, p. 18.

²⁶For a detailed analysis of the dialectical progression of consciousness, see Charles Taylor, Hegel, or his "The Opening Arguments of The Phenomenology," in MacIntyre, ed., Hegel. For an explication from the philosopher himself, see Hegel's "Introduction" to the Phenomenology.

²⁷The Phenomenology of Mind, p. 153.

²⁸Logic, p. 10.

²⁹Hegel goes on to examine Kant's rejoinder to Hume: that universality, necessity, identity, and so on are a priori categories of thought. Concurring that thought transforms the positive reality of the world into reality, Hegel yet asserts that these categories are not only of our minds, but are the inner characteristics of objects. In any case, empirical science never has relied on Kant's solution to its logical problems, because that solution would undermine the independence of object from

mind. It opens the door, that is, to the claim that experience is constructed through language, mental structures, and conceptual frameworks.

³⁰Logic, p. 53.

³¹Ibid., p. 61.

³²Ibid., p. 177.

³³Ibid., p. 180. "The reflective understanding makes it its business to elicit and trace these connections running out in every direction; but the question touching an ultimate design is so far left unanswered, and therefore the craving of the reason after knowledge passes . . . beyond this position . . .

³⁴Ibid., p. 206.

³⁵Ibid., p. 219.

³⁶Ibid., p. 192.

³⁷The Phenomenology of Mind, p. 300.

³⁸For a discussion of Hegel's critique of physiognomy and phrenology which has obvious relevance to contemporary debates about the nature of social science, see Alasdair MacIntyre, "Hegel on Faces and Skulls," in his ed. Hegel.

³⁹Phenomenology of Mind, pp. 338-372.

⁴⁰Although the inner self never obtains perfect expression through these externalizations. Actions and words do not always correctly express the inner self, whether because of deception on the part of the actor, uncontrollable external factors, or mistakes. Still, over the long run, the inner self is revealed in "the work done." The deed is the outer with internal connection to the inner self; intentions which never are acted upon cannot be treated as an indication of the agent's character. "The true being of man is . . . his act." The Phenomenology of Mind, p. 319.

⁴¹Philosophy of Right, p. 6.

⁴²Ibid., pp. 34-5.

⁴³Ibid., p. 35.

⁴⁴Logic, p. 78.

⁴⁵Ibid., p. 115.

⁴⁶The self which negates the existent in the first instance is the particular idea, of which the existent is an inadequate expression. The self which negates the existent in the second instance is the Infinite Idea, of which the existent is only a partial expression.

⁴⁷Ibid., p. 133.

⁴⁸Logic, p. 119.

⁴⁹We will not look at a concrete example of the existential dialectic until we have examined the method more fully. But the dialectic of thought (which must be distinguished from the dialectic of the forms or abstract categories of thought) is so intuitive that one has only to begin thinking to create an example of it. One thinks, negates ones thought with a new thought arising out of and inclusive of the old. In everyday language we speak of this process as "qualifying a thought" or of "talking to oneself," which mirrors a dialogue between two persons. What we describe here is a process in which thought elaborates upon itself through a series of progressively inclusive of cumulative thoughts, each attached to the one before and the one after it by a "but," "except that," "on the other hand," "and then," etc. Each thought is, in Hegel's language, more detailed or "concrete" than the one preceding it, in that it at least tacitly includes the truth of all that went before it.

⁵⁰The Phenomenology of Mind, p. 105.

⁵¹In a footnote to the Logic, Hegel identifies an early articulation of the dialectic. "The triplicity of thought--its forthgoing . . . and its return . . . was first explicitly schematized by Proclus, the consumator of Neo-Platonism. In his Institutio Theologica he lays it down that the essential character of all spiritual reality . . . [is] to return upon itself, or to be a unity in and with difference--to be an original and spontaneous principle of movement. . . . Its movement, therefore, is circular . . . for everything must at the same time remain altogether in the cause, and proceed from it, and revert to it." Logic, pp. 299-300, footnote to p. 23 #17.

⁵² Although Hegel believes that the state is a necessary condition of true history as well as of a record of that history. "Only in the state with the consciousness of laws are there clear actions, and is the consciousness of them clear enough to make the keeping of records possible and desired." History, then, is the story of purposive actions, informed by norms and rules which the state provides. Reason in History, p. 76.

⁵³ Ibid., p. 89.

⁵⁴ Philosophy of Right, p. 233.

⁵⁵ Logic, p. 174.

⁵⁶ The Phenomenology of Mind, p. 93.

⁵⁷ Reason in History, p. 79.

⁵⁸ Logic, p. 137. "Alteration thus exhibits the inherent characteristics which originally attaches to determinate being, and which forces it out of its own bounds."

⁵⁹ Ibid., p. 9.

⁶⁰ Ibid., p. 129.

⁶¹ Reason in History, p. 11.

⁶² The Phenomenology of Mind, p. 68.

⁶³ See Reason in History, p. 69.

⁶⁴ Logic, p. 19.

⁶⁵ Reason in History, p. 69.

⁶⁶ Hegel describes the self-struggle of Spirit against nature through the metaphor of the biblical Fall-- or more exactly, he sees the Fall as a metaphor for this self-struggle (and for Hegel, religion speaks of the same truth as philosophy, but it does so through images rather than pure concepts). In the state of natural innocence, Adam and Eve enjoy a unity with nature and God, but it is a unity which is unreflective, based upon pure love and faith. Their rupture with nature and God on one side is their "fall," but on the other side is the necessary condition for the development of human knowledge and self-consciousness. This knowledge and self-consciousness will

become the basis for a second, higher unity of human beings and nature, based this time upon reason rather than faith. Hegel likewise interprets the "Curse" of labor as the necessary means by which humans transform an alien, external world into a reflection of themselves. Both the fall and the curse bespeak the painful nature of self-development, which proceeds through separation and self-negation.

⁶⁷ Reason in History, p. 85.

⁶⁸ Ibid., p. 38.

⁶⁹ Ibid., p. 40.

⁷⁰ Ibid., p. 40.

⁷¹ Ibid., p. 88.

⁷² I.e., the Concept of Reason as the substance and infinite power, the infinite form and content of natural and spiritual life. The philosophic mind therefore orders the subject matter of the phenomenal world with universal categories of reason, without which it could not grasp the essence of nature and history.

⁷³ The Phenomenology of Mind, p. 71.

⁷⁴ Ibid., p. 86.

⁷⁵ Logic, p. 122.

⁷⁶ For a dialectical interpretation of natural evolution, see Steven Bernow and Paul Raskin, "Ecology of Scientific Consciousness," Telos Summer 1976, #28.

⁷⁷ Logic, pp. 118-9.

⁷⁸ Most of Hegel's own dialectical transitions lack sufficient reason for the equation of negation and necessary antithesis. Let us examine one of his typical "self-deductions."

In the Logic, Hegel claims a relation of progressive entailment between the categories of (pure) Being, Nothing and Becoming; and a relation of progressive entailment between this triad of categories (which he calls Being) and the first category of the following triad, Determinate Being.

Hegel states that pure Being is the first logical category, because the thought that "everything is" is the completely indeterminate, unmediated thought. "When thinking is to begin . . . [t]he indeterminate . . . is the blank we begin with, not a featurelessness reached by abstraction, not the elimination of all definite character, but the original featurelessness which precedes all definite character and is the very first of all. And this we call Being." (Logic, p. 125.) That there is nothing else but Being is true, but is the most empty, abstract truth. And because it is empty, Being is No-thing: "if when we view the whole world we can only say that everything is, and nothing more, we are neglecting all specialty and instead of absolute plentitude, we have absolute emptiness." (Logic, p. 128.) This advance from Being to Nothing Hegel describes as a necessary movement of Thought, and it does seem to me to be the case that the thought of pure Being is at once the thought of Nothing.

Hegel next claims that the truth of Being and Nothing is their unity, and that their unity is Becoming, for Becoming involves the attribute of Being and also of Nothing. This certainly is an illegitimate move, for two reasons. (1) The transition presupposes, when it is supposed to prove, the truth of the dialectic (i.e., that a self and its opposite always are resolved in a higher unity). What prevents two categories which are both opposite and identical from remaining so, except the prior assumption that there must be a higher unity of the two? That Being is at once Nothing perhaps introduces the concept of "becoming" in the trite sense that "becomes" means "is at the same time" or "is transformed at once into." But I can find nothing in the idea that Being becomes Nothing in this sense which leads one out of an eternal "Being becomes Nothing becomes Being" to a new, higher unity and a more concrete, elaborated category. (2) The move is illegitimate because although Becoming in the non-trite sense of "becoming something" or "forming into something" does involve the concepts of Being (X becomes some being) and Nothing (X had not been the being it is becoming), this does not warrant the statement that Becoming (in this non-trite sense) is the only unity of Being and Nothing. Their unity might just as logically be Flux, for example. This second possible unity calls into question the necessity of the category of Becoming, and hence the deductive character of the categories in general. It also undermines the validity of Hegel's next dialectical transition, from Becoming to Determinate Being. For, as I have argued,

Becoming is not the only possible unity of Being and Nothing. And there is nothing in the idea of constant Flux, for example, which entails determinate things--quite the contrary.

From the fact that we do know determinate things about the world, it follows that for us, at least, the world is not only abstract Being and Nothing. Therefore Hegel must derive more and more concrete categories capable of embracing determinacy from the first two, completely abstract forms of thought. But for Hegel, the dialectic is not merely the construction by the philosopher of more and more adequate categories to handle a prior but less articulate knowledge of the determinate world. Rather, he asserts that these categories move through internal contradiction, or of themselves, to more and more concrete categories. As we have seen above, this claim is not substantiated in the transition from Being to Determinate Being. Determinate Being is a unity of Being and Nothing, but it is not their necessary unity.

Most of the other dialectical transitions (although not all: see Charles Taylor, "The Opening Arguments of the Phenomenology," in MacIntyre ed. Hegel) are equally specious. This is most obvious in the case of the "self-deduction" of the existential world from the logical categories as a whole--the lynchpin of the Hegelian metaphysic. The reader who wishes to examine other of Hegel's transitions for herself might look at the transition from "cause and effect" to "reciprocity" to "Notion" (Logic, pp. 215-222), and the transition from "mechanism" to "chemism" to "teleology" (Logic, pp. 260-274), in which Hegel does show each category to be higher than its predecessor on a continuum of categories expressive of explicit "self-identity" or freedom, but fails to prove each category as implicit in and the necessary outcome of the last.

⁷⁹ There is also the possibility that this development will create the conditions for its own arrest, regression, or destruction.

⁸⁰ Reason in History, p. 35.

⁸¹ I use the term "critical theory" in the broad sense, to refer to all contemporary theorists who distinguish between an appearance and a self-mystifying reality in social life.

⁸²Reason in History, p. 36.

⁸³Philosophy of Right, p. 11.

PART II: MARX

At the heart of Marx's explanation of social life, is a paradoxical theory of human action. On the one hand, he sees human action in highly rationalistic terms. He looks for its sources inside the web of social practice and not in external physical causes. He celebrates labor--that most significant practice of all--as the mastery of human reason over the blind forces of nature. Most striking, he anticipates an epoch in which human beings collectively and self-consciously order all aspects of their existence. On the other hand, Marx is adamant that the explanation of real action does not lie in the beliefs and purposes of human beings. To the contrary, he claims that past and present human action has been objectively determined, although not by a material or ideal cause outside itself. The contradiction between a concept of practice as determined by the rational agency of its subjects, and an analysis of real practice as authored by human beings but not determined by them, runs through all of Marx's work from the Manuscripts to Capital. This contradiction emerges at three critical junctures: in his account of the labor process, in his discussion of consciousness, and in his method of scientific explanation. In a vital sense, it provides the creative

tension for Marx's critique of capital. It also jeopardizes his entire theoretical enterprise. For he can reconcile his two antithetical notions of action only by locating the break between them as a break in historical time. Thus he is forced to read history as the progression from alienated to unalienated labor, from opaque to transparent relations, from a society determined by an objective, hidden logic to one determined by the purposes of its participants. As we shall see, this reading is incompatible with Marx's materialism, and is full of other difficulties as well.

C H A P T E R I
THE PRACTICE OF LABOR

In the Economic and Philosophical Manuscripts, Marx asserts against Hegel that human beings are fully natural creatures dependent on an equally natural external world for their physical sustenance. They must reshape that world to produce what they require to satisfy their needs, and as they are bodies living in a world of other bodies, they can do so only through actual practice. "The fact that man is an embodied, living, real, sentient objective being with natural powers, means that he has real, sensuous objects as the objects of his being, or that he can only express his being in real, sensuous objects."¹ But Marx also uses an Hegelian argument against the "old materialists" when he states that the natural world transformed by labor expresses the will and purposes of the human subject. Through labor, man "humanizes" nature by objectifying his reason in it and thus increasingly frees himself from nature as an uncontrolled external force. This ability to mold the object in accordance with self-consciously held purposes distinguished man from other animals: "The practical construction of an objective world, the manipulation of inorganic nature, is

the affirmation of man as a conscious species-being."² Through production "nature appears as his work and his reality."³ Society too is produced by man, but it also produces him, mediating his thought and action so that the objectification process is never an individually determined one. The double thrust of Marx's position--that embodied, natural being rather than immanent Spirit is the substance of the real world, and that human beings transform that world through purposive, socially constituted action--is repeated in Theses. Here he goes on to define humans as historical "ensembles" of social relations.⁴

The implications of the claim that action is socially constituted surface in The German Ideology. Here Marx reiterates the priority of real, purposive human action in the shaping of the objective world. But for the first time, he uses the concept of the mode of production to describe the set of historically specific, socially determined practices through which the human subject transforms the natural object and in conjunction with which she produces her needs, ideas and social relations. The concept entails that the production of social life occurs within limitations independent of the subject's will, for she must produce her life in the company of other subjects and upon a material and ideational founda-

tion inherited from past generations. Three important points follow. First, the inherently historical relation of subject to object means that that relation cannot be grasped adequately in philosophical, universalistic terms. Second, the social production of social life means that human beings are "the actors and authors of their own drama"⁵ in a way in which Hegel's individual subjects were not. But it also suggests that an explanation of action in terms of the actor's own reasons and purposes is an insufficient one, as neither purposes nor action can be understood apart from a web of purposes and actions which does not originate with the individual actor. Third, it is logically possible that the particular subject--because she is still a particular subject--may not experience herself in her real connection to the social world. Thus she may help author the drama of social life without understanding the larger story she is writing; and she may act intentionally without understanding the real social sources of her intentions and beliefs. From The German Ideology onwards, Marx argues that as social authors, persons are not self-conscious, in that they do not plan, understand, or see as their own creation the totality of social practice. As social actors, persons are not self-conscious, in that they are, so to speak, attached to schedules of purposes and actions. These

schedules form a larger design which ultimately explains but is not explicable in terms of the purposes helping to compose it. Marx insists, however, that while action always will be socially constituted, the fact that it is determined by objective structure outside the control of its human authors is the result of historically specific social arrangements and not part of the human condition. He therefore is forced to make the difficult argument that "bearers" of purposes and actions can become, under different conditions, self-conscious human agents.

In the writings of the 1840s, Marx attempts to resolve the tension between objectively determined action and real human agency through the motif of alienation. Although he speaks briefly of alienation in pre-capitalist societies,⁶ his basic analysis of the separation and inversion of subject and object through labor is specific to capitalism. Capital sunders the natural link between laboring subject and labored object in such a way that the object gains independence and control of the subject. The subject becomes a mere means to the production of commodities; and his objectified labor confronts him as capital, a hostile being which dominates him, controls his work and destroys its expressive quality, and in various ways separates him from his social self. This inversion of productive practice, whereby the laboring subject

does not determine his own productive activity, however, finds its "definitive resolution" beyond the boundaries of capitalism. Finally gaining a recognition of its own debasement and dehumanization, labor revolts against the entire system of capital, and destroys the relation between itself and its opposite. Under communism, the laborer will reclaim his essence as purpose agent. He appropriates the productive forces which had stood opposed to him and regulates production to fulfill his needs, exercise his skills, and objectify his purposes in nature. He knows himself as an inherently social being and is capable of explicitly communal relations with other subjects. Together these subjects control all "natural premises" of production and are the self-conscious authors of their social life.⁷ This unification of subject and object, however, is not equivalent to the "natural unity" which prevails under primitive communism, before the historical emergence of the division of labor. For the new relationship is mediated by two innovations bequeathed by capitalism: a vast accumulation of the means of labor (knowledge, technique, tools, machinery) on the one hand, and a rational rather than mystical understanding of nature on the other.⁸

It often is said that the later Marx rejects all "Hegelian" concern with human subjectivity and intention-

ality, and presents a thoroughly objectivist theory of history and capital. Nothing can be further from the truth. The mature Marx has a newly rich appreciation of history and knowledge of bourgeois productive practice. But he still holds to the same paradoxical view of action as socially constituted, purposive, and potentially rational; yet objectively determined, although not by material causes external to practice itself.

The Grundrisse meticulously shows how the productive process cannot be divorced even analytically from the social relations in which persons stand to one another. Marx peels away the physical, immediately observable qualities of human subject, object and productive activity to expose a complex social constitution of each. He repeats his description of the individual as "the sum of interrelations, the relations within which these individuals stand."⁹ He describes the object of labor as an expression of the productive relations between wage-labor and capital. These relations do not show themselves on the physical surface of the product, which looks the same, Marx notes, whether it has been made by an independent peasant or a wage-laborer. The most important discovery that he makes in his search beneath the physique of the object, is that capital itself is objectified labor in a specific relation to living labor. It is not simply a

material object, and certainly not a material object with self-multiplying capacities. In turn, the process of capitalist production is not determined by the development of material forces of production, but by the logic of the relation between capital and wage-labor, from which follow advances in technology, mechanization, and so on. In fact, according to Marx, the most significant result of the entire process of capital is the reproduction of the social relations comprising it.¹⁰

In the Grundrisse, Marx also celebrates the labor process as the means by which human reason expresses itself in the objective world. He describes the labored object as the objectification of reason even--indeed, particularly--when he is speaking of fixed capital, which appears as an independent, simply material agent in capitalist production.

Nature builds no machines, no locomotives, railways, electric telegraphs, self-acting mules, etc. These are products of human industry; natural material transformed into organs of the human will over nature, or of human participation in nature. They are organs of the human brain, created by the human hand; the power of knowledge, objectified. The development of fixed capital indicates to what degree general social knowledge has become a direct force of production, and to what degree, hence, the conditions of social life itself have come under the control of the general intellect and been transformed in accordance with it.¹¹

It is in the first volume of Capital, however, that Marx speaks most eloquently of the immanent rationality of the

labor process, through which the human subject refashions the natural world by means of her developing powers and in accordance with her needs, wants, and chosen ends. Marx's lengthy celebration of labor as purposive, rational and historical--rather than instinctual, blind, and recurrent--has been quoted too often to bear repeating here.¹² But one should note that this philosophical notion of labor as a process by which the human laborer objectifies herself, is central to Marx's economic analysis of capital. His theory of the exploitation of wage-labor is contingent upon it, for the value of the commodity, which holds the secret of exploitation, is entirely a function of the fact that the commodity is objectified labor, or "crystallized labor-time."

While the mature Marx's notion of the practical relation of subject and object is thus not a physicalist one, and entails a concept of labor as purposive and socially mediated, it is not the case that he begins with a study of intentionality and intersubjective meaning to answer the question, "What are people doing in bourgeois society?" Throughout the nine hundred pages of the Grundrisse he barely touches on issues of consciousness, and with some crucial exceptions the same is true of Capital. Instead, he probes the abstract "moments" of the concept of capital, or to put it otherwise, he uncovers the logical structure of the system of capitalist production. As he states in

Capital, he deals with individuals and their purposes "only insofar as they are the personifications of economic categories, embodiments of particular class relations and class interests."¹³ At a later point we shall examine this method of analysis, which is as little interpretive as it is empirical. For now, let us note that Marx again uses the theme of alienation and inversion to show how social practice is determined by forces other than the agency of its participants. And he again locates the break between alienated and unalienated action in the juncture between capitalist and pre-capitalist society, and between capitalism and communism.

In the Grundrisse, Marx finds an "immediate identity" of subject and object in systems of communal and small free landed property which preceded the rise of capitalism. Here the subject enjoyed a "natural unity" with the land and viewed himself and other subjects as masters of the productive process. In the "artificial" craft and guild communities the subject had direct proprietorship in and control over his instruments of labor, and exercised a single skill which nonetheless allowed him to develop both mental and bodily faculties. Even the slave and serf were united with the objective conditions of labor, if only because they were treated as part of them. The immediate subject/object unity is described in Capital as the system of private property based on the

labor of the owner, in which the independent peasant or artisan was "fused together" with the objective conditions of his labor. Primitive capital accumulation spelled the forcible expropriation of the private property of the producer, the concentration of the scattered means of production in a few hands, and the domination of the laborer by the objective conditions of labor in the form of alien capital. Through an exchange in which wage-labor yields its creative, value-multiplying capacity to capital and receives in return its value as a fixed magnitude (the "secret" of capital), living labor re-affirms itself as a mere moment of capital and the means to its enrichment. Thus does labor's own result become "objectified labour as mastery, command over living labour."¹⁴ The inversion of the laborer into the means for the increase of capital, and the inversion of the objective conditions and product of labor into an alien subject controlling the productive process, is reflected in every facet of the relation between wage-labor and capital. Their own association at the workplace, for example, appears to workers as an association external to them, dictated by capital and part of its productive power. The means of production, far from being the mere "material of his own intelligent productive activity,"¹⁵ subjugate and exploit the laborer. The system of capitalist manufacture breaks up his skill

altogether and turns him into its "conscious organ." The social growth of knowledge underlying every advance in technology, stands against the worker as an attribute of fixed capital. And as living labor creates greater and greater quantities of surplus product, "the objective conditions of labour assume an evermore colossal independence . . . social wealth confronts labour in more powerful portions as an alien and dominant power."¹⁶

Because wage-laborers are the authors of productive practice without being its controlling agents, Marx explains that practice not in terms of the intentionality of its participants, but in terms of its objective, inner logic. The crucial question remains: what precisely is the intersection between the intentionality of individual actions in capitalist society and the logic of those actions as a whole? The question is especially complicated because Marx claims that intentional action not only maintains the capital-wage labor relation but is also a necessary means to its collapse. The texts of the Grundrisse and Capital suggest three distinct intersections. First, the intentional acts of individuals may flow from and directly express the structure of the capital-wage labor relation. The worker who seeks to acquire exchange value through the sale of her labor power provides an obvious case in point. Her action is a function of a system of

production in which she is dependent upon capital for the conditions of her labor, and in which exchange value is the universal mediator between individuals and the use values they create. In this way, the intentional action by which she sells her labor-power reflects the "dull compulsion of economic relations."¹⁷ Far more striking, however, is Marx's insistence that the capitalist's constant urge to increase value is likewise structurally determined (and thus is distinguished from the "merely idiosyncratic" greed of the miser). It is not that one can predict an individual capitalist's thought and action on the basis of abstract economic categories. Intentional actions reflecting the dynamic of those categories are not exhaustive of actions in bourgeois society; an individual, for example, may choose to dissipate his capital on personal luxuries, or may shorten the work-day in his factory for the benefit of his employees. But only insofar as his aim is not the enjoyment of use-value or the well-being of his workers but rather "the appropriation of ever more and more wealth in the abstract,"¹⁸ does he act as "the personification of capital," and this fact is deducible from the structure of capitalist production.¹⁹ The individual, in sum, may have a variety of intentions extraneous or even antithetical to this structure. But he functions as a capitalist only insofar as

he acts with the sole purpose of expanding value. And insofar as he functions as a capitalist, the inner logic of the capital-wage-labor relation determines his action, whether it be the raising of labor's productivity, the extension of capital, or the investment in new technology. Such action this is purposive but not self-explanatory. Nor does it provide the final locus of explanation for capitalist practice as a whole.

The second intersection is one in which the intentional action of individual subjects flows from the logic of the capital-wage-labor relation but seems discordant with it. When the worker sells her labor-power to the capitalist for an equivalent in wages, for example, it is clear that she typically intends to do so. It is equally clear that the organization of production requires that she do so. It is not the case that she intends what Marx reveals to be the result of her action: that she will produce independent value which will confront her as capitalist, that "labour will create alien property and property will command alien labour,"²⁰ and this to an ever increasing extent. The process of obfuscation by which the purposes and beliefs of the worker do not mesh with, but equally do not comprehend, the consequences of her action,²¹ is however a product of the structure of production itself. For these purposes and beliefs are con-

gruent with the surface relations of that structure, which mystify and hence help perpetuate the depth relations in a way we shall explore later.

Marx briefly but most significantly mentions a third relation between intentional action and the structure of productive practice as a whole. Certain actions flow from the latter but break with it. In their most developed form, they are attempts to undermine the entire system of bourgeois production, and rest upon an understanding of that system which penetrates to its hidden dynamic.

The recognition of the products as its [wage-labour's] own, and the judgement that its separation from the conditions of its realization is improper--forcibly imposed--is an enormous [advance in-ed.] awareness, itself the product of the mode of production resting on capital, and as much the knell to its doom as, with the slave's awareness that he cannot be the property of another, with his consciousness of himself as a person, the existence of slavery becomes a merely artificial, vegetative existence, and ceases to be able to prevail as the basis of production.²²

The stage of alienation which capital represents, then, is a transitory one:

[The] process of inversion is a merely historical necessity . . . for the development of the forces of production solely from a specific historic departure . . . but in no way an absolute necessity of production; rather, a vanishing one . . .²³

The mature Marx explains the break-down of capitalist production primarily in terms of its objective contradic-

tions. But he claims that such contradictions also generate the conditions for revolutionary consciousness on the part of the working-class. Such revolutionary consciousness foreshadows the triumph of self-conscious, rational action over action determined by a system of production opaque to its participants. Grasping its real relation to capital, the proletariat will destroy the entire exploitative system of production and create a new social order in which living labor has full control over its own productive activity. In this communist society, Marx believes that actors will have a scientific relation to nature and transparent relationships with one another. They will determine and understand fully what they are doing, and barring the fortuitous event, the consequences of their actions always will mesh with their intentions.

There are enormous philosophical, to say nothing of political, difficulties in a theory which entails a concept of action as self-consciously determined by its authors at the same time that it describes actual human action as objectively determined and deeply mystified. We have seen that in both his early and later writings, Marx attempts to resolve these difficulties by locating in historical time the disjuncture between the two types of action. He reads history not, of course, as a

straightforward progression towards rational social action; but as the evolution of society from a stage of primitive communism or independent producer-ownership, through the separation and inversion of subject and object under capitalism, to the redemptive unity of human beings and nature in industrial communism. It is quite plain that this resolution has its philosophical support in Hegelian idealism. Marx's triadic vision of social practice is the exact analogue of the Hegelian logic, in which the immediate, unreflective unity of subject and object is shattered as the subject undergoes separation and alienation from itself, and by means of this very separation reaches a higher unity mediated by self-conscious reason. Hegel's tenet that separation is the necessary condition of self-conscious unity is echoed in Marx's belief that the historical emergence of human beings as self-determining subjects is dependent upon the economic and scientific advances made by capitalism. That the destruction of primitive communism and the eventual rise of capitalism are not contingent events, and that the capitalist mode of production is determined by the need which the fully rational communist man as implicit historical subject has for it, are but short next theoretical steps. It is never clear that Marx does not take them. His early description of communism bears the

unfortunate marks of an historical conclusion, in which laboring subjects as "united individuals" enjoy full self-retrieval, complete rational control over the objectification process, and total transparency in their social relations. The emergence of productive practice as rational, self-expressive and explicitly social, is the denouement of his mature theory of capital as well. He describes the system of wage-labor and capital as "the last form of servitude assumed by human activity."²⁴ The society which is to take its place is free of fundamental tensions, both among human beings and between humans and nature. It re-establishes the living laborer as the true subject of production, whose work becomes "self-realization, objectification of the subject, hence real freedom."²⁵ In cooperation with other subjects, she organizes the labor process "rationally," according to a "settled plan," so that all subjects share equally in labor and in the development of their "species capabilities."

One easily can understand how Marx, deeply committed to the liberation of the working-class, was tempted to read history as a plot and the realization of freedom as its ending (or "real beginning"). But for a materialist who rejects the validity of trans-historical Ideas, this is the temptation of strictly forbidden fruit. Given

his own assumptions about the nature of social practice, Marx legitimately might argue that communist society will overcome the worst problems of economic scarcity and the physical and psychological miseries inherent in class exploitation. But the surfacing of new problems and struggles is the one certainty a dialectical materialist can predict. It cannot be guaranteed in advance, furthermore, that these struggles will be "non-antagonistic." The Grundrisse and Capital no less than the Manuscripts ignore the seeds of divisiveness and brutality which lie elsewhere than in the production sphere. Certainly a bitter struggle over the content of social life itself is acutely possible once the production of society is made a public and self-conscious affair. We might speculate that antagonisms in communist society would emerge between administrative center and local communities or workplaces; party leadership and rank and file; male and female; the pressure towards universalism and ethnic identification. These oppositions and others unthinkable at present would generate new reasons for opacity in social relations. Their resolution in turn might entail new standards of self-consciousness which the given social order cannot fulfill. Ironically, Marx's optimistic rationalism (if the prospect of a fully harmonious society is cause for optimism) is founded on this

curious combination: an idealist's vision of a final "identity" of subject and object, and a materialist's faith in the limited sources of social conflict.

C H A P T E R I I

THE DETERMINATION OF CONSCIOUSNESS

The other side of Marx's vision of a future in which action is fully transparent to its authors, is a past and present in which action is fully opaque. Perhaps nowhere has Marx been more vulnerable to attack than in his account of consciousness in general and mystified consciousness in particular. However, this account is both more complex and more obscure than most of his critics acknowledge. First of all, Marx does not believe consciousness to be an invalid hypothesis, or an unimportant factor in social life. Yet he never produces a sophisticated, prolonged analysis of class consciousness to match his mature analysis of the objective logic of capitalist production. One thus is forced back to discussions of mind one suspects are as cursory and blunted in comparison to what he would have said had he explored the subject in depth, as is his early analysis of capitalist production in comparison to that in the Grundrisse and Capital. Second, these discussions are cursory enough to be congenial to many conflicting interpretations, and inconsistent enough that each interpretation is open to doubt. And third, the interpretation most persuasive for

scholars today would not be compelling for audiences in Marx's own time.

Modern readers tend to find in Marx's insistence that all ideas are determined by material life, a positivism akin to that which forms the backdrop to their own reflections. However, Marx constructed his argument with his own contemporaries in mind, and these contemporaries thought in ways grossly at odds with the beliefs that only physically observable things are real, and only physically observable facts susceptible to being known. His claims about the relation of "thought" to "being" take on a new meaning once one situates them against the fantastical intellectual landscape of 19th century German philosophy, and if one is to understand what he is saying, one must appreciate the turns and emphases of his argument as they must have been appreciated by his own peers.²⁶

Although mechanistic materialism, that primitive positivism, was by no means unheard of at the time,²⁷ the German tradition which confronted Marx was so strongly idealist that it had all but lost the connection between thought and the embodied persons doing the thinking. Hegel, the greatest of all idealists, created a vast philosophical system around the logical and ontological priority of Abstract Thought. But Marx reserved his sharpest rebukes for the Young "left" Hegelians, who purported to

abandon Hegel's metaphysic in order to study real human practice. In fact, Marx charged, they unwittingly continued to follow Hegel in treating social events as a function of logically prior ideational ones, and history as the maturation process of mind. When mulling over social change, they talked only of emergent categories and principles. When investigating economic relations, they spoke of the "bourgeoisie" as a logical form generating bourgeois particulars out of itself. They saw contradictions in society in terms of contradictions between abstract categories of "individuality" and "totality" which ought to be reconciled so that reason might prevail in social life. In short, the technique of these anti-Hegelian critics came straight from Hegel: "An abstraction is made from a fact; then it is declared that the fact is based upon the abstraction. That is how to proceed if you want to appear German, profound, and speculative."²⁸

In what today is considered one of Marx's most mechanistic works, The German Ideology, Marx and Engels maliciously quote one critical philosopher, who is praising the accomplishments of two others:

Feuerbach destroyed the religious illusion, the theoretical abstraction, the God-Man, while Hess annihilates the political illusion, the abstraction of his wealth, of his activity; that

is, annihilates wealth. It was the work of Hess which freed Man from the last of the forces external to him . . .²⁹

It was to counter such beliefs in the practical powers of criticism, such confusions of putatively ideational phenomena like God with phenomena existing apart from (although not independent of) ideas about them like wealth, and such abstractions of generic Man from human beings living in concrete social and historical circumstances, that Marx waged his theoretical battle against idealism. It is, in turn, in the context of this battle that his statements about consciousness must be set. His first and most general point--that consciousness is solely the attribute of "real, living individuals,"³⁰ that it is nothing but "conscious existence"³¹--may seem true but trite until one remembers the way in which German idealism severed the link between embodied human beings and the ideas they have. The care Marx takes here to root mind in materially existing persons, so that consciousness is always an attribute of humans "living in a real, objective world and determined by that world,"³² is an obvious first sally against the view that ideas have a life autonomous of human practice.

At the same time, the assertion that ideas are determined by and explicable only in terms of practical life raises several conceptual questions. What exactly

does Marx mean by "practical life," and what strength does he mean to give to "determine?" Marx gives no explicit answers here. But we have seen (see Chapter I) that both in his early and later writings he views human action as inherently purposive, and purposes as social and historical. If he is to be consistent with this concept of action, he cannot take "practice" here to mean patterns of human matter in motion. Human practice must be distinguishable from the mechanical movements of inanimate objects and the instinctual behavior of other animals, in that it expresses the actors' socially and historically specific purposes and beliefs, although these purposes and beliefs are not necessarily rational in Marx's sense of the term. And if practice is a complex of thought and bodily movement, the determination of ideas by practical life cannot be an instance of "determination" in the classical causal sense, where an effect is separate in time and space from its cause. Rather, it must be that ideas are determined by and explicable in terms of practical life because they are necessarily internal, and not logically prior, to it. Conversely, practice cannot be understood without reference to the beliefs and intentions which inform it. To recognize that ideas are internal to practice rather than external to a set of purely physical movements which cause them,

of course, is only a preliminary though imperative step in the explanation of ideas and the practices in which they are embodied. Why various modes of thought and practice characterize a given form of social life, and why new ideas and actions emerge out of old ones, are questions still to be answered.

To understand a point which Marx will make against critical philosophy, we must distinguish the ideas which inform "everyday" practice from ideas about modes of thought and practice (as well as about modes of instinctual and mechanical behavior), or theory. Forming, systematizing, and articulating theoretical ideas is itself a practice, distinctive in that its entire point is the construction of ideas. This is not to say, of course, that theorizing, like all thinking, is not accompanied by physical changes in the brain, or that the objectification of theory does not involve the physical movements necessary to speaking and writing. Indeed, precisely because theorizing is a practice--in that its form is governed by social rules and its content can be given a public, external reality--it is possible to theorize about it. Marx does exactly this (which is not to say that he does it persuasively) when he remarks that the demise of 17th century metaphysics can be explained by the emergence of French materialism, which represented

matter as the sole substance of the world and ideas a mechanical motions, only if French materialism is explained by

the practical nature of French life at that time. This life was turned to the immediate present, to worldly enjoyment and worldly interests, to the earthly world. Its anti-theological, anti-metaphysical, materialist practice demanded corresponding anti-theological, anti-metaphysical, materialist theories.³³ Metaphysics had in practice lost all credit.

Here it is obvious, first of all, that Marx includes in the notion of practical life, ideas, norms and purposes: specifically, worldly interests, values and wants informed that everyday actions of the French. Second, Marx believes French materialist theory to be rooted in everyday practical life, not as the set of ideas directly expressed in it, but as a second-order practice hinging on the first. Everyday practice, in other words, generates a theoretical practice which tallies with it and helps justify it.

To combat the idea that theoretical practice of itself transforms other practices, Marx draws a strict line between "occurrences" in the realm of thought, including theoretical and critical thought, and occurrences in relations between objective beings. He berates the Young Hegelians for assuming that to undermine the principle or rationale of a practice through criticism is ipso facto to destroy the actual practice. "If society

had to free itself only from the categories of having and not having, how easy would the 'overcoming' and 'abolition' of those categories be."³⁴ But "property, capital, money, wage-labour and the like are no ideal figments of the brain but very practical, very objective products . . . therefore they must be abolished in a practical, objective way . . ."³⁵ The necessary although not sufficient condition for a thought-occurrence to become an actual one, barring the fortuitous coincidence, is that the thought be expressed in a relevant action, which entails some bodily movement vis a vis other bodies in the world. Two points must be kept in mind. First, Marx is not saying that thought is irrelevant to practice, nor critical thought to revolutionary practice. But a transformation of thought can have no impact on the world outside the thinker, if everyday practice goes on exactly as before.³⁶ Second, he is not claiming that phenomena which are purely ideational (such as God, according to Marx) will not disappear when all thoughts of them do so. However, he does imply that the philosophical critique of a purely ideational or "pseudo" being (a) is not equivalent to the destruction of that idea in the minds of other people; (b) is not equivalent to the practical destruction of the web of material accoutrements and practices which may have arisen to "service" the idea (in the

case of the idea of God: priests, churches, prayerbooks, rituals, etc.); and (c) typically will not result in the destruction of that idea in the minds of other people, if the idea also is supported by everyday practices which appear to have no connection to it. The Young Hegelians believed that "illusions of consciousness" to which humans ascribe an objective existence are the "real chains of man."³⁷ Marx replies that these are only "phrases" of the "real, existing world."³⁸ He seeks the ultimate explanation of "mental phantoms" and the subsidiary practices which congeal around them, in a set of apparently separate practices. To the distinction between theoretical and everyday practice, then, we must add another: within everyday practice, a distinction between religious belief and practice on the one hand, and on the other, practices whose own objects are not pseudo-beings but which provoke the need for a belief in them. Marx finds the most significant of these latter practices to be economic ones, and it is here that he will look for "real chains."³⁹

Once upon a time an honest fellow had the idea that men were drowned in water only because they were possessed with the idea of gravity. If they were to knock this idea out of their heads . . . they would be sublimely proof against any danger from water.⁴⁰

Through this parody of the project of critical philosophy, Marx neatly underlines the distinction between

illusions of consciousness and objective constraints. He also teeters on the edge of a fundamental error which he never is quite out of danger of making. A natural object does not change when we simply change our beliefs about it, because our ideas about the natural world do not enter into its constitution. The "objects" of the social world, however, are practices and relations, which as we have seen are made partly of the norms, ideas, and purposes which human actors express in them. Of course, if a philosopher writing a paper at her desk undermines the concept of authority--the idea that there are some legitimate uses of power which some persons can wield over others--this does not mean that actors will not respect the authority of policemen or employers in their everyday practice. But if these actors themselves were to reject the idea of authority, they would be proof against submitting to it. And this is true because relations of authority are constituted in part by the inter-subjective belief among participants in those relations that some uses of power are legitimate and warrant submission. However, beliefs and purposes do not entirely constitute social practice, which necessarily entails bodily movement in the world of objects. Two points follow which correspond to Marx's complaint against the Young Hegelians. First, the destruction of the idea of authority in every-

day life does not mean that persons will not be forced to submit to orders, although it does mean that those orders will not be invested with a legitimacy which protects the position of the order-giver. Second, actual practices may serve to inhibit the destruction of the idea of authority in everyday life. Some of these practices directly express that idea (for example, relations between employer and employee), some directly support that idea (education and socialization practices), and some indirectly support that idea. To the set of practices which Marx asserts indirectly supports all the ideas and practices comprising a form of social life, and to the second stage of his argument against the idealist theory of consciousness, we now must turn.

In The German Ideology, Marx declares with new specificity that the material practice of real human beings holds the key to the explanation of their ideas and indeed of their entire form of social life. Marx uses this critical term "material" in two related but not identical ways. That something is material in the broader sense of the term means that it is situated within and belongs to the world of extended objects and their movements. This first sense of "material" overlaps the concept "practical life." Every practice is a material one in this sense, and ideas have no material reality (al-

though they have a reality as ideas) unless they can be and until they are embodied in practice. The explanatory primacy of material practice in turn means that ideas are not autonomous of or logically prior to practical life. Depending on ones reading of Marx's concept of practice, ideas either are caused by material practice which itself is not expressive of ideas; or are generated within and circumscribed by material practice which itself is expressive of ideas. Most of the time, however, Marx uses the term "material" in a second, narrower sense, to refer to the specific practices which pertain to the physical life-process of human beings as inclusively natural, bodily, historical and social creatures. These fundamental practices of human life Marx identifies as: the production of the means to satisfy the life-sustaining needs of the body; the production of new needs; the reproduction of human beings; and the form of social cooperation involved in these three activities. What is evident from even a cursory glance at these material practices is that, while they pertain directly, although not exclusively, to the physical sustenance of human life, they are not comprehensible simply as sets of physical movements. That the activity of material production is expressive of purposes, knowledge, and indeed the development of the human intellect, is a fact Marx celebrates from the Manuscripts

to Capital. The production of new needs, which marks the advent of history and culture, refers directly to transformations of consciousness, although these transformations do not occur in isolation from actual practice. One perhaps can imagine reproduction to have been at some point a simple instinctual act. But this point is outside of history, for Marx sees sexual activity as the basis of the first social relation, and he believes that social relations entail a reflexive consciousness on the part of each participant: a concept of the self, the other, and the relation between the two, and so the mediation of language, thought, and culture. "Where there exists a relationship, it exists for me; the animal has no 'relations' with anything . . ." ⁴¹ Reproductive relations in actual fact express some of the most complex ideas and emotions of all: ⁴² affection, resentment, obligation, guilt, respect, contempt--to name but a few. ⁴³

If ideas are internal to all social relations, social cooperation--the fourth aspect of material life--cannot be a mechanical or instinctual phenomenon. And indeed, when we speak of cooperation, we do not simply mean the combination of bodily movements, but also a set of beliefs and purposes which persons have toward one another: ideas of sympathy and trust, norms of authority, contract, or obligation, a knowledge of the purposes for which they are

combining, and so on. One must keep in mind the internal connection of ideas to production and cooperation in particular when Marx states that "the 'history of humanity' must always be studied and treated in relation to the history of industry and exchange."⁴⁴ It would be curious if one were to take him to mean that the "history of humanity" must be studied in relation to certain patterns of physical movements in time and space. It would not be curious (which is not to say that Marx would be correct) to take him to mean that the history of human beings and the host of practices in which they engage cannot be understood apart from the history of one of the most fundamental thought-movement complexes of all: material production.

Whether or not Marx's own intentions were curious is a more delicate question. He is as unforthright here about where or not he means to include forms of consciousness within "material practice" as he was with the earlier concept of practice per se.⁴⁵ This lack of clarity, as we shall see, complicates the question of the precise connection between material production and politics, art, morality, and all other components of what Hegel had called "ethical life." On one point Marx is quite clear: material practice in its narrow sense is the key to the explanation of the rest of any social whole. Marx's

hierarchy of significant subject-object relations is almost directly opposite to Hegel's, for whom the various levels of ethical life, climaxing in art, religion, and philosophy, not only mediate the lower levels but are their truth or end. For Marx, the most telling truth is found in the way actual individuals "are effective, produce materially, and are active under definite material limits, presuppositions and conditions independent of their will."⁴⁶ Out of this primary level of practice evolves, not as its telos but as its elaborations, politics, morality, art, law, philosophy and religion. What Marx sees as the exact relationship between production and other facets of social life is a more difficult question. He states that legal and political relations do not develop autonomously or as the result of the universal development of mind, but "have their roots" in the material conditions of social life.⁴⁷ The mode of production "conditions" social structure, politics, etc. The activities required for the physical sustenance of life are the "base" of a social whole; politics, philosophy and law its "superstructure."⁴⁸ Now, if "material practice," "material production," and "base" connote only patterns of behavior, Marx's distinction between material production and politics et al. is one between patterns of bodily movement and forms of consciousness, for he speaks

of law, morality and so on most often as "principles."

The connection between material production and law, etc., given the explanatory primacy of the former, will be mechanical: in some way, patterns of bodily movement which produce food, shelter and clothing, emit relevant sets of political, religious, and artistic ideas with which these bodies "think." If "material production" instead connotes bodily movements expressive of ideas, then the distinction between production and politics et al. should be one between different kinds of thought-movement complexes, specifically between those directly concerned with sustaining the life-process and those which are not. The connection between the two should be more intricate than a mechanical one. Political, religious, moral, and artistic principles will be embedded in practices within a form of life whose ultimate shape is determined not by the Idea of Reason but by the practices necessary for the physical sustenance of life. But because both productive and political et al. practices are intentional and expressive of beliefs and norms, these ideas not only must be explained by reference to the entire structure of practices but also must help explain it. Further, political, moral and religious principles and practices will mediate the fundamental material practices. For while a given form of life may delineate different spheres for different

practices, no society thus far in history has been able to compartmentalize completely human experience. So, for example, moral modes of thought and action (whose specific content depends upon the form of life in which they occur) may inform the relations between husband and wife, or between producer and controller of the means of production.

Although Marx never takes a clear position on the issue,⁴⁹ it is in truth as difficult to imagine at least politics, art, law and morality as pure thought, as it is to imagine material production and reproduction as pure matter. The "products" of "ethical life" are not material things capable of sustaining bodily needs. But except in the cases of philosophy and, according to Marx, religion, where the defining relation is not between human and human or human and nature, but between human and idea, they nonetheless entail bodily movement in the world. One can do theory or be religious entirely in ones head, although this is not usual. But being political, artistic, moral or lawful necessitates acting in the world. In contrast to material production, philosophy and art, however, there are no products of politics and morality beyond the practices of them.

C H A P T E R I I I
IDEOLOGY AND MYSTIFICATION

That "[t]he ruling ideas of each age have ever been the ideas of its ruling class,"⁵⁰ and that these ideas serve to mystify the social relations of production, complicates the question of the relation of ideas to material existence. Marx's earliest analysis of mystification describes it as a process whereby the material conditions of an epoch are reflected in its dominant ideas. This analysis re-appears in the Preface to A Contribution to the Critique of Political Economy and in Capital.

The ideas of the ruling class are in every epoch the ruling ideas. . . . The ruling ideas are nothing more than the ideal expression of the dominant material relations, the dominant material relations grasped as ideas.⁵¹

To Hegel, the life-process of the human brain, i.e., the process of thinking, which, under the name of "the Idea," he even transforms into an independent subject, is the demiurgos of the real world, and the real world is only the external, phenomenal form of "the Idea." With me, on the contrary, the ideal is nothing else than the material world reflected by the human mind and translated into forms of thought.⁵²

If by "ideas" and "ideal" Marx means simply "ideas" or consciousness per se, the sense of both passages is that the ideas characteristic of a form of social life simply

and mechanically reflect or picture the "raw-matter" of that life, specifically the raw-matter of its productive practice. This sense is highly unsatisfactory, and not only because, as Hegel pointed out long before, the only thing the mind can reflect from raw-sense data are raw and unspeakable sense-impressions. More to the point, a picture theory of ideas cannot capture the distinction between appearance and reality which the concept of mystification requires. If minds were mirrors of material reality, they could never mis-understand it. They would draw from the simple fact of exploitative feudal productive practice, for example, the simple idea of exploitation, and not the dense web of beliefs concerning natural hierarchy, traditional rights and obligations, sin and salvation, loyalty and chivalry, which helped to mystify as well as constitute feudal social relations. Further, if minds were mirrors of material reality, it would make no sense to speak of practices which conceal their own nature. One could not, then, make a distinction between the surface of capitalist productive relations and their hidden reality.

However, one can interpret Marx's reflection theory in a second way, if one takes him to be using the term "ideal" as his idealist contemporaries most often used it: to mean not merely subjective thoughts in the

heads of individuals or intersubjective ideas marking a shared way of life, but also objective Ideas which manifest themselves through human practice. The sense of the passage is then that the ideas of the ruling class are the characteristic ideas of every epoch, and these are nothing more than the reification of dominant material relations as universal truths or objective Ideas. Every ruling class, that is, idealizes (with degrees of complexity) its modal forms of practice. In a stable social order, all major classes will share these ideals. This second interpretation has the advantage that it entails an appearance/reality distinction. Reflection becomes a process by which consciousness transforms historically limited social relations into universal, eternal or immanent truths. This interpretation also does not presuppose a mechanical separation of consciousness from material reality, as it can accommodate the interpenetration of everyday beliefs and purposes, the productive practices they inform, and the idealization of those practices as the embodiment of abstract justice, virtue, natural law, or reason. Marx's description of the process by which a ruling class idealizes its interests confirms the interpenetration of beliefs, practices, and ideals. First, against an entrenched but increasingly impotent dominant class, the new rising class's equation

of its particular interests with the common interest is not inapt. For a new rising class is symptomatic of an emerging new world, in which the old dominant class and its norms of action no longer have a definite place and purpose. In the context of the juncture between feudalism and capitalism, when the feudal obligations of the peasantry were no longer matched by those of the lord; when the conditions of feudal social relations of production were eroded by the impact of trade, the growth of cities, the opening of new lands; and when the feudal elite had lost all but its parasitical functions, how untrue was the claim of "moveable property"

to have won political freedom for the people,
to have removed the chains which bound civil
society, to have linked together different world,
to have established commerce which promotes
friendship between peoples. . . . It has given
the people, in place of their crude wants, ci-
vilized needs and the means of satisfying them.⁵³

Second, the idealization of the interests of the dominant class typically does not falsely describe (which is not to say that it fully describes) the content of social relations. The "characteristic misconception" of the ruling class is rather that it misplaces such relations, locating them outside the confines of history in an eternal law of God, Nature, Reason, or Morality. Third, the ideals of the dominant class to a greater or lesser extent inform the beliefs and hence the actions of all ac-

tors in society. In this way ideology as idealization, far from being a simple mental distortion of social practices and relations, is affirmed therein.

If in all ideology men and their circumstances appear upside down as in a camera obscura, this phenomenon arises just as much from their historical life process as the inversion of objects in the retina does from their physical life process.⁵⁴

It commonly is believed that this camera obscura metaphor was Marx's crude attempt to improve upon the reflection theory of everyday ideological consciousness. The notion of ideology as a simple "inversion" of events and relations in the objective world so little illuminates the matter, that even Marx's most sympathetic critics have rejected it. But if one sets the passage against its proper context, it is clear that Marx refers by "ideology" not to the everyday understanding persons have of their situation, but to the theoretical understanding German philosophers (the "German ideologists") had of the relationship between ideas and the world of embodied persons and practices. His point is that if, to all idealists, embodied individuals and their practices appear as the expression of objective Ideas and categories, this inversion of the real relationship of ideas to human beings and social practices has its explanation in the historical circumstances in which idealism arose. It is significant that the much maligned metaphor appears at

the end of that passage in which Marx had to insist against the idealists, that real, existing human beings are the producers of their ideas and conceptions. His description of the method of "ideologists" is clearly a critique of the idealist method;⁵⁵ no less the method of those deriving the "relationships of men" from the essence of man, than of those deriving the relationships of men from the Absolute Spirit. Lastly, he goes on to root the inverted self-understanding of the idealists in the division between mental and manual labor, which makes it possible for consciousness to see itself as divorced from practice and as floating in a realm of pure, universal theory. Marx's explanation of German idealism obviously is an insufficient one, but his metaphor is not off the mark.

In a more general sense, the inversion of the relationship between ideas and social practice is characteristic of any class society in which not actual historical classes, but rather their interests idealized as universal truths, appear to govern social life. In this sense it is true that ideology as inversion informs everyday beliefs about the world, but, as we have seen, it is a complex inversion, in which real class interests are transformed into universal ideals, which then appear as the subjects or authors of history. Indeed, through-

out his work Marx quite explicitly argues that it is the tendency of every dominant class to idealize its interests. Each new rising class, he asserts in The German Ideology, is forced "to represent its interest as the common interest of all members of society, put in ideal form; it will give its ideas the form of universality, and represent them as the only rational, universally valid ones."⁵⁶ In The Poverty of Philosophy he describes the categories of the bourgeois economists as the theoretical expression of historically limited relations of production, represented as fixed, immutable, eternally valid categories (of labor, credit, money, etc.).⁵⁷ In The Communist Manifesto he notes that the ruling class transforms "into eternal laws of nature and of reason, the social forms springing from the present mode of production and form of property--historical relations that rise and disappear in the progress of production."⁵⁸ In Capital: "The advance of capitalist production develops a working-class, which by education, tradition, habit, looks upon the conditions of that mode of production as self-evident laws of nature."⁵⁹

The reading of "reflection" as "idealization" avoids the pitfalls of mechanism, and it allows one to look beneath the ruling self-interpretations of an age (whether they be of the sanctity of fealty or the natural

origin of private property) to the material relations of production requiring, sustaining, and expressing them. However, new conceptual dilemmas arise when Marx extends the notion of reflection to refer not just to ideals, but to politics, art, religion, etc., which he claims reflect in idealized form the reality of material production. We have seen that Marx never was clear about whether politics, et al. are only principles or also practices. We have argued that politics et al. only make sense as practices expressive of ideas, and that if ideas are internal to practice, one set of practices never can be explained solely in terms of another set rather than also in its own terms--in terms of the purposes, beliefs and norms which inform it. Nor can an entire form of life be explained without some reference to all the sets of practices characterizing it. But how can a given practice have even limited explanatory power, if the ideas it expresses are wholly a function of class relations in the sphere of material production? A theory which posits certain practices as ideological reflections of others--in this case economic ones--takes three steps of dubious validity: (1) the distinction of practice into "moral practice," "political practice," "artistic practice," etc., along with the assertion that only the practice of material production can leave its mark on the rest. This

step rules out the interpenetration of various modes of practice--most significantly, the penetration of productive by other modes of practice. Thus the religious motivation involved in a particular economic decision, the moral considerations informing or not informing an employer's relationship with his employees, and the political impulse behind a change in industrial concentration, become incomprehensible except as guises for purely economic considerations. (2) The reduction of the social elaboration of norms, ideals, and values; the beliefs and purposes they inform; and all practices other than those directly concerned with material production, to mystified forms of the relations and practices of the productive process. Thus legal, political, religious, aesthetic, and philosophic forms become incomprehensible except as forms in which human beings are conscious of and act in response to the material conditions of production.⁶⁰

(3) As an entailment of (1) and (2), the denial that other practices besides material production may be mystified on their own account.

The flaws in this theoretical procedure become evident when Marx seeks to understand religion. It is a trite fact that Feuerbach declared the idea of God to be the fantastic alienation of the human essence, and that Marx improved upon Feuerbach by looking for the

causes of this alienation in human history. Marx describes religion as an ideological practice--in fact, as the most severely ideological of all superstructural practices because its object is an imaginary one. For the young Marx, heaven is a "fantastic" reality which reflects the secular, historical world in two ways. It contains the historically specific desires, beliefs and values of that world in fantastic form. It also arises out of an actual historical situation which requires illusions of happiness and security to deflect attention from real, socially created suffering and/or from the fear inspired by an imperfect understanding of nature. The key to religious consciousness, then, lies in the secular rather than the theological world.⁶¹ To the extent that the explanation of the secular world lies in the practices of material production, the explanation of religion will be found there too. From his early writings to Capital, Marx's view of the religious world as a reflex of the real one remains basically the same, although in Capital his analysis of the real world is more intricate and precise.

Now, if gods and spirits are purely fantastical or "pseudo" beings, one certainly cannot look to them for the real explanation of religious or non-religious practice. In this sense Marx is not making an unjustifiable

point when he describes religion as having its roots in secular practices. But at the same time, and however illusory their object, the religious beliefs of human beings surely must enter into the explanation of religious practice. And it is neither logically impossible nor historically inaccurate that these beliefs also may help explain certain facets of secular life, including material productive practice. For example, given his assumption that God is an illusory being, Marx is correct in observing that the sabbath Jew cannot be understood without reference to the everyday Jew. (In a passage which reveals an additional, quite insidious danger of reductionism, Marx then defines the everyday Jew as the economic, commercial, money-making Jew.)⁶² However, it is certainly the case that while the sabbath Jew cannot be understood without reference to the everyday Jew, the sabbath Jew also cannot be understood without reference to the sabbath Jew: without reference to the religious beliefs and norms which inform her religious practice. Such beliefs enjoy a complexity far richer than that which material productive practice could sustain. Indeed, even the economic Jew cannot be understood without reference to the sabbath Jew, for the economic role played by the Jews in Europe from the feudal era onwards, was contingent upon the simple peculiarity of their religious beliefs and

practices within the larger Christian setting. By this peculiarity the Jews could be identified as a separate group and subjected to special regulations restricting rights to land and occupation.

Let us examine a second example of the interpenetration of religion and economic practice. The Catholic Church's prohibition of usury, effective until the 11th century, helped preserve a social system in which the Church had great political, social, and economic power. Thus this religious norm had roots in very secular interests. At the same time, however, one cannot account for the medieval practice of loaning money without interest unless one makes reference to the fact that most of the population of feudal Europe, including the clergy themselves, firmly believed it a sin to profit from another's misfortune. The idea of sin might be fantastical. The belief in it was not. In this way religion mediated economic relations.

Marx is more often imprecise than reductionist about the connections between various modes of human practice. But at his most strident--when he declares that politics, art, philosophy et al. are merely mystified analogues of material production--he shows a blindness to the rich and intricate texture of social life which Hegel so finely understood. He shows this blindness again when

he paints his rather flat picture of a future communist order. In the Communist Manifesto, he states that the form which class antagonism takes varies from one historical epoch to the next, while exploitation per se has remained a constant. Similarly, the social consciousness of past ages, while varying in content, "moves within certain common forms, or general ideas."⁶³ The precise content of such ideas--which Marx identifies as morality, religion, philosophy, law, freedom and justice--changes from one exploitative epoch to the next, but the ideas themselves as general forms "cannot completely vanish except with the total disappearance of class antagonisms."⁶⁴ It is important to be quite clear about Marx's meaning. He is arguing, first of all, that freedom, justice; the moral point of view; philosophical and aesthetic truths, are not elements of a natural law but are social constructs. He is arguing, secondly and emphatically, that these social constructs accrue only to exploitative societies, whose relations they mystify. Hence they will disappear altogether with the advent of a classless future. "The Communist revolution is the most radical rupture with traditional property relations; no wonder that its development involves the most radical rupture with traditional ideas."⁶⁵ With this peculiar remark, Marx discards for the future almost all the significant albeit

class-permeated modes of social experience of the past, with of course one critical exception. The logical dilemma thereby introduced is not merely whether all thought and action will be completely transparent after the communist revolution, but whether there will be any thought and action at all, beyond that concerning the production of goods. It is, in fact, unthinkable that any revolution should bring about a complete rupture with all past modes of thought, and unimaginable that it should bring about a complete rupture with all past forms of action. The concept of exploitation itself and some concept of freedom, for a start, certainly must have a place in political discourse on both sides of the divide, for else what meaning would a non-exploitative society have for those who struggled to bring it into existence? To state that a revolution marks a conceptual and practical transformation of, rather than break with, the past, is not to say that certain modes of thought and action will not disappear altogether. If one accepts Marx's analysis of God as the fantastical reflection of human beings, for example, one can imagine religion dissolving in its entirety, although at a pace far slower than the term "rupture" implies. On the other hand, one can also imagine the re-appearance of religion with the emergence of new antagonisms among human beings and between humans and

nature. It is almost but not entirely beyond the scope of the imagination that under certain, anarchistic forms of communism, formal law would disappear. But one would have a hard time identifying a socialist society as a society at all, if in addition to a transformed set of productive relations, it did not incorporate some transformed concept of freedom; some notion of the moral point of view; some experience of art and beauty; some musings on the meanings of human existence; and lastly some political intercourse between social individuals concerning their common affairs.

The idea of a rupture between a flat future and a complex if ideological past, appears again in Marx's claim that all consciousness is class consciousness. By this Marx does not mean that there cannot be a disjuncture between one's own class position and one's ideas and interests. In the Communist Manifesto, for example, he notes that historically, "a small section of the ruling class cuts itself adrift, and joins the revolutionary class;"⁶⁶ that the falling lower middle class may become revolutionary, deserting "their own standpoint" to defend "not their present, but their future interests;"⁶⁷ and that the proletariat may be joined in their revolution by "a portion of the bourgeois ideologists, who have raised themselves to the level of understanding theore-

tically the historical movement as a whole."⁶⁸ But while there can be a disjuncture between ones particular class position and ones particular class consciousness, there cannot be a disjuncture between class and consciousness per se. Given Marx's equation of consciousness with class consciousness, and his reduction of all political, religious, moral and aesthetic notions and practices to mere mystifications of exploitative productive relations, it is difficult to imagine what consciousness will look like after classes and exploitation disappear. The three logical possibilities Marx leaves open are all unpalatable. That the revolution will bring the end of all consciousness is patently ludicrous; that it will bring the end of all consciousness except that about the nuts and bolts of material production, highly distasteful; and that it will bring about the demise of the ideological mind and the creation of the unideological one, literally incomprehensible.

The idealization of the social relations of production, which infects both thought and practice, is a critical part of the dynamic of mystification. But the mystification of capitalist social relations is distinguished from its feudal predecessor by an additional turn of the screw.

The fact that the lord of a feudal manor lived

off the labor of others was evident to lord and serf alike; "every serf knows that what he expends in the service of his lord, is a definite quantity of his own personal labour-power."⁶⁹ The mystification of the exploitation of the serf consisted in its justification, not merely by a set of beliefs and values supporting the relationship of landowner to tenant (beliefs in natural hierarchy, organic social ties, differential rights and obligations; values of obedience, loyalty and honor), but by the entire layered complex of practices and relations comprising feudal society. The relationship of nobleman to king, petty lord to great, knight to lord, replicated and thereby legitimized the ties of unequal personal dependence which so explicitly marked the social relations of production on the lord's estate. As Marx put it, "personal dependence form[ed] the groundwork of society,"⁷⁰ and so concealment of exploitation was unnecessary. What the hierarchical whole of medieval life did obscure, were the purely social origin of the unequal rights and duties linking its members in relations of superiority and subordination, and the crucial economic stake which the feudal elite had in the stability of those relations.

In the Second Manuscript, Marx describes how the feudal lord conceals from himself his economic interests and represents the social relations which protect those

interests in purely moral, political, and religious terms. The capitalist, on the contrary, freely admits his economic motivations and idealizes in moral, political, and religious terms the social relations which are their result. Of the clash between the two, the landowner

emphasizes the noble lineage of his property, feudal souvenirs, reminiscences . . . his open-hearted character, his political importance, etc. . . . he portrays his opponent as a sly, bargaining, deceitful, mercenary . . . soulless individual . . . without honor, principle, poetry . . . who is alienated from the community which he freely trades away, and who breeds, nourishes and cherishes competition and along with it poverty, crime and the dissolution of all social bonds.⁷¹

The capitalist in return

pities his opponent as a simpleton, ignorant of [his] own nature (and this is entirely true) who wishes to replace moral capital and free labor by crude, immoral coercion and serfdom . . . a Don Quixote who, beneath the appearance of directness, decency, the general interest and stability, conceals his incapacity for development, greedy self-indulgence, selfishness, sectional interest, and evil intention.⁷²

That the triumph of "overt baseness" over "concealed baseness" was also the triumph of concealed exploitation over overt exploitation, Marx fully understood only years later. It is in Capital that he exposes the double nature of the mystification of capitalist social relations of production: the concealment of the real, exploitative relations, and the idealization of the apparent, non-exploitative relations of production. The my-

stification of the apparent social relations of production, like its feudal counterpart, originates as a dynamic of the self-understanding of an age. The characteristic forms of these relations are transformed into universally valid norms and truths which in turn to a greater or lesser degree inform the beliefs and practices of both capitalist and wage-laborer. The mystification of the real social relations of production by concealment, which has no feudal counterpart, originates as a dynamic of the organization of capitalist production itself. It is intrinsic to the mode of capitalist production that the social relations of production show themselves as that which they are not: as non-exploitative relations between equal, independent agents. This appearance is not an illusion of the mind. Rather, it comprises the real surface of capitalist productive relations: the sphere of circulation and exchange. Marx's imagery of an essence which puts itself forth as appearance, both sides of which are real and necessary parts of a whole, is evocative of Hegel's analysis of "essence" as the second category of the Logic. One (but not the only) crucial difference is that according to Marx the apparent relations of capitalist production do not directly express, but both express (in that they are a function of) and conceal (in that they are the "opposite" of) their

inner workings.

What exactly is the form the relations of capitalist production take in the sphere of circulation? Capitalist and wage-laborer face each other in the marketplace as independent property-owners, the capitalist the owner of capital and the laborer of labor-power, who are free to enter into contractual relations with each other. The capitalist pays the worker the full value of his labor-power in exchange for the right to use it as the capitalist sees fit. Exchange relations hence are relations of freedom, interpreted as the ability to do what one wants without interference, and equality, interpreted as the ability to receive full value for what one exchanges on the market. And just as the dependent and unequal productive relations of feudalism were idealized through a morality of traditionally sanctified, unequal rights and obligations, the apparent productive relations of capitalism are idealized through a morality of natural right, in which persons are seen and treated as independent and equal individuals with inherent rights to freedom and private property. Legal relations in the same way express in the ideal form of justice these apparent social relations. The contractual relation, in which owners of commodities "mutually recognize in each other the rights of private proprietors," is a juridical rela-

tion "between two wills, and is but the reflex of the real economic relation between the two."⁷³

It is by means of a "fetishism of commodities" that the free and equal relations of the sphere of circulation--that "very Eden of the innate rights of man"⁷⁴--obscure in two ways the reality of the productive sphere. (1) The commodity-form of goods produced for exchange conceals the social nature of labor and the social origin of value. Relations between individual producers are mediated by "relations" between their inanimate products, which appear to exchange with each other according to some inherent, objective value in each commodity. The relations between their products takes place independently of the will of the producers, and this fact is not affected by the discovery, which only "removes all appearance of mere accidentality from the determination of the magnitude of the value of products,"⁷⁵ that the real determinant of value is labor-time. For as long as production takes the form of the private production of goods for exchange, the producers will continue to be dependent for the satisfaction of their needs upon the activities of their products in the marketplace. The control which the relations between products have over the relations between producers is particularly evident in times of economic crises, when exchange relations prohibit rather than

provide the medium for the fulfillment of needs. (2) The commodity-form of labor-power and capital conceals the exploitative relationship between capitalist and wage-laborer. First, the equal exchange of value for value--specifically, of capital in the form of wages for the full value of labor-power--obscures the appropriation by the capitalist of surplus-labor from the worker, for which the latter receives nothing in exchange. This appropriation is possible because the worker creates more than his own value in a day's work. Thus while he receives in wages the equivalent of the full value of his labor-power, he receives in wages the equivalent of only a part of the total value he creates. Second, the exchange of commodities as private property masks the fact that the capital exchanged for labor-power is itself dead labor or "congealed labor time." Capital appears as an animate property of the capitalist which has the magical powers of activity and self-enlargement. Inversely, the animate power of the worker to objectify his purposes in nature appears as a thing which he can alienate from himself. The ultimate consequence of this alienation is the enhancement of capital. Third, the freedom of exchange between capitalist and wage-laborer hides the fact that "behind the factory door" the worker is forced to produce more than his own value in order to receive his value in

wages.

In the market he stood as owner of the commodity, "labour-power," face to face with the other owners of commodities, dealer against dealer. The contract by which he sold to the capitalist his labour-power proved, so to say, in black and white that he disposed of himself freely. The bargain concluded, it is discovered that he was no "free agent," that the time for which he is free to sell his labour-power is the time for which he was forced to sell it . . .⁷⁶

In sum, the sphere of circulation and exchange is the key to the mystification of capitalist productive relations. First, the social relations of production as they appear in this sphere--as relations of freedom and equality between owners of commodities--are idealized in morality, law, religion, which in turn support the organization of production. Second, the appearance of social relations of production in the sphere of circulation conceals by means of commodity fetishism the inner reality of the social nature of labor, the social determination of value, the forced appropriation of surplus-labor from the worker by the capitalist, and the activity of labor as the secret of capital.

For two distinct reasons, it cannot be said that the mystification of exploitative productive relations is simply a matter of false ideas which persons have of their real situation. First, ideology as the idealization of historically limited social relations successfully my-

stifies those relations only to the extent that it informs the beliefs and hence the actions of the participants. Persons do not move about in the world without ideas and then think about the world in idealized terms. The intention, "this is what is due by right to the lord," is internal to the action of the obedient serf who weaves her cloth. Indeed, her weaving for the lord cannot be understood apart from this intention, although the latter is not a sufficient explanation of the former. Second, and peculiar to the case of capitalism, the mystification through concealment of the inner reality of production occurs by means of a set of real practices and relations. Such practical mystification, of course, is as little divorced from beliefs and purposes as is practice in general. Not only are beliefs about their free and equal status expressed in the interactions of commodity-owners in the marketplace, but through commodity fetishism the idea of "a day's work for a day's pay" informs the activity of the laborer in the factory.

That mystification, whether as idealization or concealment, is not a simple distortion of the real, practical world but helps comprise it, complicates the study of ideology in class society and exacerbates the difficulties of transforming that society through popular revolution. Both student and revolutionary face a situa-

tion in which persons engage in an entire complex of practices expressing beliefs and purposes for which, consequently, "false" is too crude a term. It is important however not to overstate the case. While the idealization of productive relations infects the beliefs, purposes and actions of participants in those relations, and while beliefs and purposes enter into the practices concealing the inner reality of capitalist production; it would be odd to assert that consciousness in class society is never more than ideological consciousness, and practice never more than the expression of ideological ideas. This is not just because theoretical room must be left for the possibility of critical thought and revolutionary action. More fundamentally, one otherwise could not explain the prosaic doubts, resentments, suspicions and hostile actions of persons who yet do not fully understand and/or do not revolt in an overt or systematic way.

A categorical denial of agency and hence dignity to the inhabitants of past and present devalues popular activity in a way that capital itself has never done. It also removes historical support from a future in which, according to Marx, human agency and dignity are to bear their richest fruit. This is not to say, of course, that such a devaluation is thereby incorrect, or that a future

of more complete human agency in fact has historical support. But only the gravest of consequences lie in wait for a politics which attempts to wrench free and rational social relations out of relations it believes to be thoroughly coerced and mystified.

C H A P T E R I V

THE METHOD

The word most often used to describe Marx's method is, of course, "materialist." That there is no ideal reality beneath or prior to social practice, and that the most significant practices of all have to do with the production of goods for the physical maintenance of life, are the essential premises of Marx's study of bourgeois economy and his search for its explanation inside the boundaries of the social world. Nevertheless, his investigation proceeds along lines one could not call "materialist" in any simple sense of the term. For when he looks at the productive process, he does not see patterns of material behavior, but a complex of social relations which have a brute-physical dimension but also entail non-material meanings, beliefs, and purposes. And when he explains the capital-wage labor relation, he does so not in terms of external material causes, nor for that matter in terms of the beliefs and purposes of its participants, but rather by reference to an inner, abstract, objective logic. Marx's method has empirical, interpretive, and structural components. But it is the third, least "materialist" component which lends the method its greatest

power, and its gravest weakness. His analysis of an inner logic of capital allows him to lay bare the secret of capitalist development. It also brings him dangerously close to that final border dividing a materialist social theory from a theory which explains social life as determined by an objective Idea.

Marx begins his journey to the heart of bourgeois society in the way he believes every "genuine materialist" must: by examining its actual practices, and by examining its productive rather than religious, political, or artistic practices. He does not, however, conduct this examination along strictly empiricist lines. He understands the labor process to be inherently purposive, and although the particular purposes the laboring subject embodies in the object do not "show" on the physique of either, they help constitute the identity of both. As the intentions and interests which inform productive practice change over the course of history, what the intentional subject is, and what the intended object is, change as well. Marx is fond of saying (although not in these words) that the object of labor is a text in which one can read the progress of the human intellect. Empirical observation is blind to this text. It can grasp neither the meanings which help constitute the subject and object of labor, nor the dynamism which the "unceasing sensuous labour and crea-

tion"⁷⁷ lend the natural and social world. Empirical observation equally is unable to capture the relations between human beings engaged in the labor process. Relations per se, Marx reminds us, cannot be sensed, but "can be established as existing only by being thought."⁷⁸

More germane, specifically social relations are not reducible to sense-data, because they entail a shared field of meanings within which participants conceive of themselves, their relations to the natural world, and their relations to one another. These meanings can be interpreted; they cannot be observed. When Marx looks at the relations between persons in productive practice, then, he does not see simply material beings in physical relations to one another. Nor, however, does he see intentional individuals acting in accordance with the dictates of their private reasons. Rather, he sees participants whose particular beliefs, interests and ends are a function of the specific relations in which they stand towards one another as they engage in productive activity. It is symptomatic of the complexity of Marx's vision, that when he looks at the object of labor, he also sees it primarily not as a material thing with a purpose or use, but as a symbolic expression of the social relations under which it was produced: symbolic because these social relations can be neither directly observed in, nor inferred from,

the object's physical form. Thus Marx states that the object of labor under capital is both a material product, and a symbol of the labor-time necessary for its production and the relation between wage-laborer and capital which that production entails. As a symbol or value, "not an atom of matter enters into its composition."⁷⁹ Exactly because the commodity expresses another reality besides that of its physical being and use, Marx can make it the central category through which he will unpack the whole of capitalist social relations.

Marx, then, examines the real world of production as a complex of meaning-laden social relations, purposive actions, and objects expressive of both. However, he does not look for the explanation of capitalist production in the shared purposes and meanings of its human participants. To the contrary, he finds a systematic disjuncture between the appearance and the reality of the capital-wage labor relation, which challenges not merely the evidence of the senses, but more critically the way participants understand what they are doing and why they are doing it. This disjuncture also calls into question the theoretical reflections of their "scientific representatives," who, Engels remarks, "generally have been content to take, just as they were, the terms of commercial and industrial life, and to operate with them."⁸⁰ Or, to

put it as Marx does, they "are unable to separate the form of appearance from the thing that appears."⁸¹ It is telling of Marx's posture towards interpretive methodology on the one side and empiricist methodology on the other, that he does not discard the categories which capitalist society uses to understand itself "in order to look at the facts as they really are." Marx quite explicitly begins his analysis of capital on the basis of the categories of bourgeois political economy--that is, from within a language which mystifies the capital-wage labor relation. He does so because he sees this mystification as a function of the capitalist mode of production itself. To unravel the way in which each economic category obscures the capital-wage labor relation, is at once to make that relation transparent and to grasp how it "puts itself forth" in opaque form. The category at the center of Marx's attention is the commodity.⁸² We have seen that he is interested not in the commodity as a physical thing, but in its "second existence" as a value or symbol of social production relations. He argues that the commodity as value symbolizes these social relations only in opaque form. Value, a function of the labor time necessary for the commodity's production, appears in the commodity as exchange value, a quantitative relation between material objects themselves. This opaque appearance of value sup-

presses the division of the labor-time embodied in the commodity into necessary and surplus labor-time. Because the commodity as exchange value is a deceptive symbolic form which helps obscure capital's exploitation of wage-labor, Marx calls it a "hieroglyphic" of capitalist relations. Money is a yet more complex hieroglyphic, for here exchange value is detached from the particular commodity and appears as an independent metallic existence found in nature. Of course, it is money as capital which is the target of Marx's investigations. He will show how an apparently self-generative material thing, is in truth a social relation between objectified and living labor.

Marx draws out the depth meanings, hidden from bourgeois society itself, of the concepts of the commodity, money, exchange value, capital, private property, and so on. He thus works downwards from the appearance of capital as natural and just, to its reality as exploitative of wage-labor. And by describing the real dynamic of this exploitative social relation, he works outwards to the historical boundaries of what had appeared to be a fixed mode of production and an eternally valid conceptual framework. In sum, he undermines the self-image of bourgeois society from within the set of concepts with which it understands itself. One happy consequence is that he maintains a conceptual link with the participants

in capitalist social life, who are not prohibited from comprehending his theory and making critical judgement upon it.

If, in the end, Marx does not find the explanation of bourgeois social relations in the meanings and purposes of its participants, where does he find it? His explanatory method is this: he abstracts from the actual, "concrete" world of capital to its inner logical structure. Here he locates the secret of real productive practice. In the Grundrisse, when Marx speaks of the abstract structure as opposed to the actual social practice of capital, he uses the term "the concept of capital." Thus he states that limits to capitalist production are founded in "the essential character of its very concept;"⁸³ that the division of the product into parts corresponding to raw material necessary labor, and surplus labor is "inherent in the concept of capital;"⁸⁴ that "It belongs to the concept of capital that the increased productive force of labor is posited rather as the increase of a force outside itself,"⁸⁵ and so on. The concept of capital, then, includes all the internal implications of the capital-wage labor relation: it describes the internal coherence and dynamic of a set of social relations stripped of the rich but confusing texture of actual life. Remark in Capital that he will treat capital accumulation

"in the abstract," Marx explains that he will disregard "all phenomena that hide the play of its inner mechanism."⁸⁶ He thus ignores the possibility that goods will be sold above their value, or that surplus value will be divided among capitalists, landowners, and banks, or, for that matter, that capitalists will give ever larger proportions of their personal consumption fund to their psychiatrists, or . . . but one could go on and on, for these elaborations are what makes life life and not logic. It is perhaps impossible for Marx to define the precise extent to which the logic of capital determines the real life of capitalist society. That there is an extent to which it does not, he readily admits when he comments that the logic will be much modified by the play of actual circumstances. But his basic claim stands: it is in this logic that the explanation of capital lies.

With his notion of an objective abstract structure of production, Marx makes his last, irrevocable break with the empiricists. He also assumes a complex stance towards interpretive theory. He is attentive in studying the beliefs which inform capitalist social relations. However, he studies them not as an explanation of those relations, but as clues which at once point to and obscure an explanation located elsewhere. In truth, his mature method of seeking social explanation in an objec-

tive, abstract logic, is profoundly Hegelian. His most difficult task, in consequence, will be to exploit the power of Hegel's logic without succumbing to Hegel's vision of society as expressive of an abstract Idea.

To distance himself from Absolute Idealism, Marx makes three important distinctions between his method of abstraction and Hegel's own. First, he insists that theoretical abstractions always are abstractions from a socially and historically specific reality. So-called universal concepts have no real content. It is impossible, he declares, to deduce the content of a particular social division of labor from "the single word divide, from the idea, the category."⁸⁷ Likewise, "to try to give a definition of property as . . . an abstract and eternal idea, can be nothing but an illusion of metaphysics."⁸⁸ From the early writings on, Marx believes that the validity of theoretical categories is contingent upon a particular, historically limited set of social practices. Secondly, he asserts against Hegel that there is no necessary correlation between the logical priority of analytic categories and the historical sequence in which social relations arise. The logical priority of analytic categories is determined solely by the set of relations which predominate in the social whole.

In all forms of society there is one specific kind of production which predominates over the rest, whole relations thus assign rank and influence to the others. It is a general illumination which bathes all the other colours and modifies their particularity.⁸⁹

Thus, although rent and landed property appear historically before capital,

Capital is the all dominant economic power of bourgeois society. It most form the starting-point as well as the finishing-point, and must be dealt with before landed property.⁹⁰

Marx likewise carefully distinguishes the abstract concept of capital from its real historical development. The conditions under which primitive accumulation occurs are part of the historical formation, but not of the developed system, of capitalist production. When capital has supplanted the external conditions of its origin with the exploitation of wage-labor, it "proceeds from itself to create the conditions of its maintenance and growth,"⁹¹ and its internal dynamic provides its explanation. For this reason, to comprehend the capital-wage labor relation, "it is not necessary to write the real history of the relations of production."⁹²

Third and most important, Marx asserts that the movement from abstract concept to the concrete, living whole is only a method by which the scientist seeks to comprehend the concrete.

[T]he method of rising from the abstract to the concrete is only the way in which thought appro-

priates the concrete. . . . But this is by no means the process by which the concrete itself comes into being. For example, the simplest economic category, say e.g., exchange value, presupposes . . . an already given, concrete, living whole. . . . The real subject retains its autonomous existence outside the head just as before; namely as long as the head's conduct is merely speculative, merely theoretical.⁹³

The abstract concept of capital does not have ontological priority over the concrete world of capital. That concept is not the "first cause" of the living world, nor its "true reality." Both the authorship and real content of concrete social life lie in human activity bounded by a set of natural limitations. Marx still insists, however, that participants in capitalist society act according to a logic of which they are unaware, and which determines their productive practice. He thus stands on the razor's edge of a determinist theory of capital which is not, ironically, materialist but idealist. In fact, he is able to come just short of proposing that social practice has an ideal cause. How does he do so? The answer lies in his peculiar distinction between appearance and reality. Unlike Hegel, Marx does not see the actual, concrete world as the phenomenal (which is not to say "illusory") appearance of an inner, ideal reality. Instead of equating appearance with concrete social life and reality with its inner logic, he roots the appearance/reality distinction within the logical structure of capi-

tal itself. In other words, capital is characterized by a structural duplicity: it is "part of its concept" that it appears other than it is. The actual participants in bourgeois society experience the real, concrete marketplace and the real, concrete factory in terms of the apparent structure of capital, which masks the exploitation entailed by the hidden structure. The curious consequence is this: the participants are blind to the logic of the capital-wage labor relation, even though this logic is but the expression of their own actions. Humans author the dynamic of the relation without knowing that they do so, and because that dynamic is deceptive, they act without knowing why they do what they do. Their action is not the less determined for being subject to no cause beyond itself. For Hegel, on the contrary, human actors do not produce a logic of which they are unaware, but only express such a logic in their practices, for they are not in the ultimate sense authors at all.

Marx, then, articulates the abstract logic of capital alone in terms strongly reminiscent of Hegel's articulation of the relationship between the abstract Idea and its concrete, phenomenal expression. He describes capital as a totality whose abstract structure is divided into surface and depth, alienated and inverted object and subject; and which moves according to its own

internal and eventually self-destructive dynamic.

In the introduction to the Grundrisse, Marx sketches the following argument: that the apparently separate, independent spheres or "totalities" of production proper, exchange, distribution and consumption are in truth internal "moments" of a larger whole. Thus their relations are not external and contingent, but internal to and required by the whole of a productive process. This whole is internally structured. Its predominant moment is production proper: "A definite production . . . determines a definite consumption, distribution and exchange as well as definite relations between these different moments."⁹⁴ In turn, a set of internal, structured relations holds between the dominant mode of production in a given society and the remnants and beginnings of other modes. It is not, for example, as an external, separate cause that capital affects agrarian and money-lending activities inherited from a feudal past. Rather, commodity relations re-constitute these activities, so that they become fundamentally different actions from what they had been before. The one loses its paternalistic character, and other its moral stigma, as both are "bathed in capital's general illumination."

In the actual text of the Grundrisse, Marx refers to capital as "organic," a "totality," whose development

"consists precisely in subordinating all elements of society to itself, or in creating out of it the organs which it still lacks;" and in which each economic relation presupposes every other "in its bourgeois economic form."⁹⁵ The developed system of capital, then, is a totality of internally related, ordered parts which moves according to its own internal dynamic. The "laws of capital," in consequence, are not descriptions of contingent, mechanical relationships between discrete phenomena. These objective laws instead are analytic: they describe the inner relations which constitute capital and the inner movement by which capital transforms and finally suspends itself.⁹⁶

The process of capitalist production is structured along two axes. The first is the vertical axis of surface and depth. Marx uncovers this axis in the Grundrisse, but it is familiar to most readers because of its central place in Capital. The vertical structure of capital is comprised of two moments: the moment of circulation and exchange, and the moment of the actual production of commodities. While these two moments appear as separate and independent processes, exchange in truth is the surface of a larger process through which commodities created in the sphere of production are transformed into money (the first act of exchange) and money is ex-

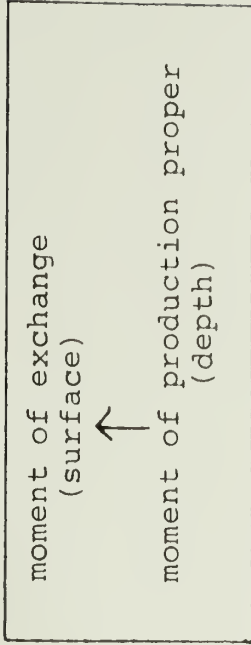
changed for the subjective and objective conditions of production (the second act). These conditions "disappear" from exchange into the sphere of production, where capital is created in the form of commodities, and appear again in the sphere of circulation, where capital is realized in the pure form of value, money. The whole of capital's productive process encompasses both moments, so that the independence of exchange from production is a "mere semblance." The second way in which capital is internally structured is into subject and object. Not surprisingly, the notion of this horizontal self-distinction of capital appears very early in Marx's writings. In The Holy Family, he describes the "world of private property" as a whole whose internal, antithetical moments are wealth and the proletariat.⁹⁷ Wealth is private property in its positive, "self-satisfied" form: it seeks to maintain its relation with its opposite. The proletariat is private property in its negative, debased form: it seeks to destroy that relation. This subject/object distinction becomes the central motif of the Grundrisse. Here Marx sees the totality of capital as the unity of alienated and inverted opposites: the subjective conditions of labor (living labor capacity) and the objective conditions of labor (raw materials, instruments of labor, means of subsistence). These opposites appear as autonomous

agents--wage-labor and capitalist--who enter into relation with one another through the capitalist's exchange of wages for the use of living labor capacity. In reality, however, there is not one atom of a distinct, autonomous thing called capital. The capital which confronts wage-labor in the sphere of exchange as the objective conditions of labor, and exchanges with wage-labor as wages, is in truth the surplus value created by labor ("the living source of value"⁹⁸) in the sphere of production and appropriated by the capitalist without exchange. The wage-form, in which the value of living labor capacity appears as the value of the labor embodied in a day's work, only serves to obscure "the division of the working-day into necessary and surplus-labour, into paid and unpaid labour."⁹⁹ The laborer creates the value which exploits him as capital, and this exploitation is magnified at the close of each productive cycle. Thus the relation between labor and capital in truth is the relation between labor-capacity in the form of subject or living laborer, and labor-capacity which already has been objectified. It is an alienated and inverted relation, because objectified labor assumes an autonomous existence vis-a-vis the living laborer, and expands through its incorporation of living labor capacity. Thus, at the same time that there is no capital which is not in truth ob-

jectified labor, there is no wage-labor which is truly autonomous of capital. Living labor becomes a mere moment of capital as a whole, the necessary means to its multiplication. This is true not only after the particular act of exchange between wage-labor and capital. The very act of exchange presupposes a prior separation of living labor and its objective conditions, and the incorporation of the former as a subordinate constituent of the latter. For otherwise, the laborer would not have to sell its labor-power to transform the objective world, and there would be no alien capital to buy it.

To sum up, the capital-wage labor distinction is one internal to capital; but the apparently opposite subjective and objective moments of capital are both in truth entirely constituted of labor, one in living and the other in dead form. Capital as a whole is comprised of the productive and exchange relations (along its vertical axis) of living to objectified labor (along its horizontal axis) (see Figure 1). Objectified labor, the inverted subject, increases itself at the expense of living labor in the production sphere, and buys new living labor capacity in the sphere of exchange. Oddly enough, the subject/object structure of capital, while dominating the text of the Grundrisse, seems almost absent from the pages of Capital. Here Marx probes in detail the division of capital

Structure 1
(vertical)



Structure 2
(horizontal)



Capital as
structured
along
two axes

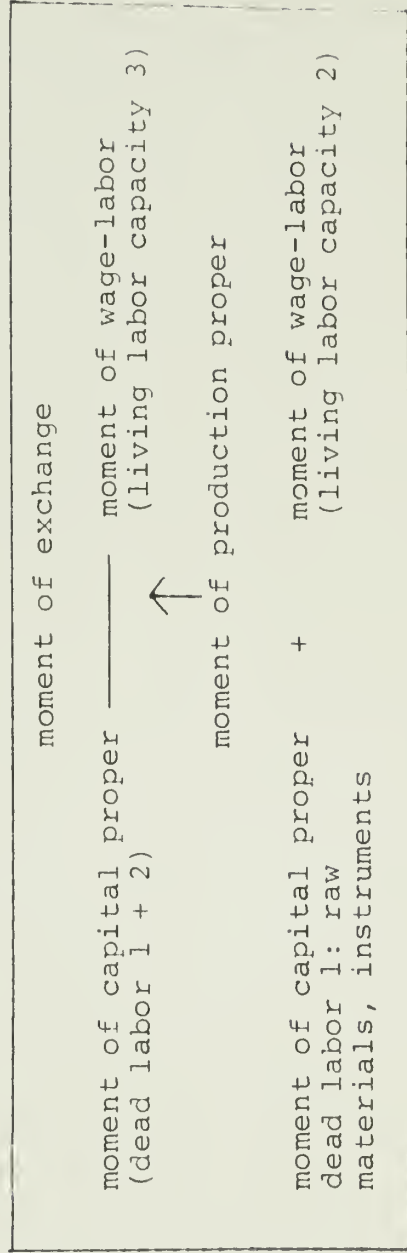


Figure 1. The structure of capital.

into surface and depth, but speaks of the alienated and inverted relation between subject and object only on isolated occasions.¹⁰⁰ This motif nonetheless is suppressed rather than missing from the later work. It underpins the theory of capital's domination of wage labor and the laws of capital accumulation. It also is the key to the dynamic of capital's development and demise.

Early in his writings, Marx praises Hegel for identifying the "dialectic of negativity" as the "moving and creating principle"¹⁰¹ of every social order. Marx too looks to an internal dynamic rather than to external causes in order to explain social transformation. But unlike Hegel, Marx cannot find this dynamic in the development of an abstract Idea and its manifestation as a series of national spirits. He must attribute to some facet of human practice alone, the tension which gives way to new forms of social life. His ambivalence in choosing the precise terms in which to explain transformation bespeaks what will become, as we have seen, a persistent dilemma: is the development and particularly the collapse of a social order to be attributed to the agency of its human authors and actors, or to an objective logic beyond their knowledge and control? In The Holy Family, Marx chooses the first path. He explains the impulse of "private property" towards its dissolution almost en-

tirely by reference to the proletariat's coming to class consciousness and becoming a revolutionary agent. Simply and precisely because it recognizes its own powerlessness and debasement, the proletariat is driven to destroy the whole world of private property. In The German Ideology, The Poverty of Philosophy, and The Communist Manifesto, Marx similarly describes the whole of bourgeois production as internally divided into antagonistic bourgeoisie and proletariat, and he again points to the emergence of a class conscious proletariat as the agent of the demise of the bourgeois order. He is newly careful, however, to stipulate the material conditions under which revolutionary consciousness occurs. These conditions, to which the objective development of capital itself gives birth, include the concentration of formerly isolated workers on one place, the increasing numbers of propertyless laborers, their mounting insecurity and impoverishment, the equalization of their interests as capital breaks down separate skills into repetitive tasks, the growth in communications, etc. The workers' struggle to protect their common interests, which begins as a struggle to maintain wages, becomes political and revolutionary when they come to understand themselves as members of an oppressed class, whose true interest is in emancipating itself from the world of capitalist relations.

In the Grundrisse and Capital, Marx continues to see capital as generating internal contradictions which finally undermine it. The conditions of capitalist production are "engaged in suspending themselves and hence in positing the historic pre-suppositions for a new state of society."¹⁰² But while he retains his dialectical view of capital as self-negating,¹⁰³ he makes a tremendous theoretical advance over his earlier work. He discovers an objective logic by which he can account for both capital's development and breakdown, so that his pronouncement of this breakdown no longer dependent upon the simple assertion that the proletariat will become a revolutionary class. While the early Marx argued that capital negates itself by creating a class-conscious proletariat as its antithesis, the mature Marx shows how capital collapses through objective contradictions which congeal around its horizontal structure but reveal themselves through its vertical structure. In an unintended consequence of its drive to reduce necessary and increase surplus labor, capital increases the proportion of fixed capital, which does not create new value, to living labor, which does. The magnification of the objective conditions of production at the expense of the subjective, results in the production of ever greater quantities of use values with ever less direct expenditure of human labor, a ris-

ing proportion of surplus to necessary labor but a falling rate of profit; deepening crises of over-production and consequently crises in circulation; and more severe interruptions in the production of necessary as well as surplus value.

Thus in his mature works, Marx looks first of all not to the intentional action of the working class, but to the objective requirements of capital, in order to explain the evolution and breakdown of the capitalist mode of production. Because he understands capital to be the inverted subject of the productive process, his concern with the way it dominates and determines that process is not surprising. But he comes up against a serious dilemma when he wants to introduce the revolutionary working-class into his mature theory--and this introduction is, after all, the point of his long intellectual and political labors. His method of explaining capital in terms of an objective logic provides no grounding for the emergence of human agency inside the bounds of bourgeois society. Nor does it follow, that because the logic of capital entails its own mystification, the collapse of capital will bring with it a rational break-through in the self-understanding of an oppressed class. In truth, Marx's explanatory method simply cannot accommodate the possibility of human agency, whether it be revolutionary

or not. This is why he is forced to push off the moment of class struggle until the final pages of Capital. And here, it is only through some strange cartesian synchrony with capital's internal crises and decline, that a proletariat emerges which understands its exploitation and acts in accordance with its own, lucid reason. At this point, Marx simply discards his structural analysis and explains the communist revolution by sole reference to the purposes of its participants.

C H A P T E R V
SCIENCE, HISTORY, AND THE EXPLANATION
OF HUMAN ACTION

One of the most vivid images in Marx's social theory, is the deep conceptual divide between action determined by objective social forces, and action determined by the agency of its human authors. This divide informs Marx's vision of an historical juncture between alienated and unalienated labor; his distinction between mystified and transparent social relations; and the break between his explanation of present social life in terms of an abstract logic, and future social life in terms of the purposes of its participants. His frankly dualistic understanding of action gives Marx a cutting edge with which to critique the system of capital. It also forces him into three theoretical contradictions. First, as a materialist, he vehemently denies that history has its own ideas, aims, or ends.¹⁰⁴ Yet he reads into the passage of time a beginning and a middle--in which an original subject-object unity is supplanted by an epoch of alienated and inverted subject-object relations--and an end, or "real beginning"--in which the laboring subject freely controls the productive process. Second, as a rationalist, he firmly be-

believes that human beings one day will determine, with complete lucidity, their own social relations. Yet he denies any locus or historical precedent for rational agency when he describes past thought as ideological and past action as mystified. Finally, as an antagonist of capital, he is deeply committed to the making of a revolutionary working class. Yet his method of explaining the capital-wage labor relation in terms of an objective dynamic undercuts not the mere factual, but the logical basis for class conscious, revolutionary action.

Ironically, Marx could resolve these contradictions if he were to make a small but vital shift in his understanding of human action: if he were to collapse what he sees as two temporally distinct forms of action into two analytically internal moments of action. On the one side of the collapse, this would mean that every action, regardless of the particular context or epoch in which it occurs, entails the possibility that it become relatively transparent to its particular author as well as to other actors. Within any given act, then, the actor can become more aware than she had been before, of the specific social roots of her purposes and the larger social drama to which her action contributes. In consequence, it is never a closed case that an action is explicable entirely in terms of an objective logic of practice. To the extent that the

actor becomes relatively self-conscious, she is not simply a bearer of purposes and beliefs determined elsewhere. Although the outer shape of her behavior may be the same, the explanatory status of her intentions is enhanced. (Typically, however, the newly self-reflective actor will be under internal pressure either to behave differently as well, or to repress or distort what she has learned about herself.) On the other side of the collapse, every action, regardless of its social and historical milieu, entails the possibility that it become relatively opaque to its own particular author and to other actors. The actor always is in danger--although conservatives would refute the fact that it is a danger--of losing sight of some aspect of what she is doing and why she is doing it. In consequence, internal to every action is the possibility that it cannot be explained entirely in terms of the socially constituted intentions and purposes of its author. To the extent that she does not comprehend the real sources and impact of her action, that action, although intentional, will be governed by a larger objective logic of social practice of which she is unaware.

If we conceptualize action itself as internally contradictory and multi-layered--as always, in shifting proportions, relatively transparent and relatively opaque, and as always, to shifting degrees, explicable in terms of

intersubjective meanings and purposes and explicable in terms of an objective logic of social practice--we can extricate Marx's theory from some of its stubborn and troublesome dilemmas. First, Marx no longer would be forced to read history as moving towards a final climax of freedom and rationality, in order to insure a place in his theory for human agency. Conversely, in dismantling what can only be described as an historical plot, he would be free to re-construct the sorely inadequate notion (which he himself discards when he discusses real historical events) of past action as fully mystified and future action as fully transparent. That past as well as future action includes the possibilities for its own relative transparency, creates an opening through which one can begin to glimpse the immensely various and subtle ways in which action can conflict or mesh with (for it is not inevitable that the self-conscious actor will be a rebellious one) a given social order. That future as well as past action includes the possibilities for its own opacity, rules out a description of consciousness under communism as statically and abstractly rational. Persons think within a conceptual framework rooted in a particular, limited mode of life, and this is as true in communism as in capitalism. The development of self-consciousness on the part of the individual actor hence always will be a relative

one, defined against and partially constrained by an inherited mode of thought and practice. Furthermore, self-consciousness will always be a precarious possession, in that the new social antagonisms which are bound to emerge in any dynamic order, will give rise to new reasons for opacity in social relations, and new standards of and barriers to rational action. There is, as well, another sense in which self-consciousness must be always partial. Even in a society which has little need to mystify its own relations, each person will act somewhat in the dark of the actions of others, for two reasons. First, the actor who pursues her own affairs is plunged at once into a complex of events authored by many others besides herself, so that she never can be certain of what the consequences of her actions will be. That immediate complex of events, in turn, is underwritten by a dense web of practices whose strands extend far beyond the limits of the actor's vision, so that she can be less certain still of what larger pattern she is helping to create. Thus, the very sociality of practice ensures that the actor can have only an imperfect knowledge of what she is doing, at least while she is doing it. Second, in her relations with others, the actor continuously must face the dilemma of how to disclose herself. This dilemma too, which she experiences in terms of her specific situation, nonethe-

less is inherent in the social nature of action. And every resolution of what to conceal and what to reveal of herself, of what to put in and leave out of her speech and her movements, entails that she appears only guardedly to others, who do not witness what was not said or done after all. Each person, then, can have only an imperfect knowledge of the reasons why others act as they do. This is true when those others are intimate friends as well as when they are strangers.

This inescapable opacity of social life is the source of much of its frustration and some of its tragedy. It is also the source of two of its greatest pleasures: the pleasure of acting in the knowledge that one cannot know exactly what will come afterwards; and the pleasure of discovering hidden layers and facets of persons already in ones acquaintance. The special horror of the idea of living a fully predictable life in the company of fully transparent human beings, is the horror of acting without the possibility of adventure, and of knowing without the possibility of surprise.

The fact that action is always internally complex and contradictory, casts a shadow on the rationality of revolution. Those who rebel may have a clear understanding of the social relations they are rebelling against, and in this respect we would want to describe their action as ra-

tional. But at the same time, and with a special vengeance, new barriers arise to their knowing fully what they are doing. First and most startling, revolution puts an end to the tacit rules, well-worn habits and routines which lend a minimal predictability to social life. Although a new set of rules and mores may begin to replace the old long before open conflict occurs, it still is the case that people no longer can rely on other people to act in familiar sorts of ways, for familiar sorts of reasons. Nor can they trust that their own desires, needs and aims will remain the same comfortable sorts that they had been, once everything else has changed. Far less than usual, then, can they be sure of the full meaning, consequences and larger implications of their own action. The profound uncertainty which thus pervades human action during great upheavals, is both the source of the real promise of revolution, and the strongest argument which proponents of conservatism have in their favor. Second, and paradoxically, revolutionaries who seek to destroy the past, still think and act in ways which are thoroughly bound up with it. This is inevitable and necessary, given the fact that neither thought nor action can occur in abstraction from an already existent mode of life. But those defining themselves against a given order of things, tend to be especially blind to how they are captive of it.

Hence they often believe that they are acting according to the dictates of an abstract reason. Lastly, in times of revolution, the problem of self-disclosure becomes especially acute. On the one hand, the pressures of conflict force actors to be explicit about their interests and allegiances, and the collapse of traditional mores allows them to express with spontaneity, new ideas, dreams and desires. But on the other hand, the very absence of familiarity and predictability in social relations, and the high stakes which every decision entails, means that actors must learn to be very cautious of how they reveal themselves through their actions to others. This lesson can be a harsh and sometimes brutal one.

The eventual emergence of new rules, conventions and stable patterns of interaction, puts an end to such severe uncertainty in social relations. However, the contradictions which must develop within any social whole, and the inescapable element of opacity in every action, always may induce a new break between the self-understanding of participants and the reality of their practice. History, in sum, is neither punctuated by triumphs of pure reason in revolution, nor concludes in an age of perfect rationality and freedom. This does not mean, of course, that history might not be progressive in the non-teleological sense of the term. Hegel saw it as

progressive in this sense (as well as in the other) when he argued that each new age inherits an increasingly rich and elaborated past. Marx does the same. While Hegel emphasized the accretions which the simple passage of time adds to art, religion and philosophy, Marx focuses on the historical development of knowledge about natural and social relations.¹⁰⁵ He argues that this development issues in, among other things, an ever more advanced productive technology and an ever more complex social organization of production, which ultimately will provide the material pre-conditions for the end of economic exploitation. In strongly anti-teleological statements which belie his own theory of history, he claims that such pre-conditions emerge not because the actions of previous generations "providentially" prepared the way for a future of freedom and equality, but because "the successive generations transformed the results acquired by the generations that preceded them."¹⁰⁶ How a generation transforms what it acquires, one must emphasize, is an open question. For, unfortunately, the historical progress of knowledge does not secure the progress of any other social good.

What, then, are the implications of an internally complex concept of action for Marx's scientific method? Certainly, his two most fundamental caveats still hold. To understand society, one must examine real social prac-

tice, including the meanings which inform it. One also must abstract from the intricate texture of real practice to the clarity of its internal structure. But the fact that any action may become for its author and other actors, relatively transparent or relatively opaque, invalidates an explanation of a form of life either solely in terms of a self-mystifying inner logic, or solely in terms of the reason of its participants (or, to put it structurally, in terms of a logic of practice they wholly determine and understand). An account of any society must proceed on both the level of intersubjective meanings and the level of inner structure. The disparity between, say, capitalism and communism, will not be reflected in the use of two disparate explanatory methods, but rather in different sets of intersubjective meanings and structures of social practice; different degrees of "fit" or contradiction between the way actors understand their practice and its objective structure; and different sources of whatever opacity obtains in social relations. It must be stressed that because actors never fully and finally comprehend, or fully and finally mis-understand, their own practice, there can never be full correspondence or complete contradiction between an interpretive and structural account of any social whole. In sum, differences in the status of intentionality from one society to the next

always will be differences of degree.

The Marxist tradition has had great faith in the powers of a materialist science. In conclusion, I would like to draw attention to a few of its limits. First, materialist science is a privileged form of knowledge vis a vis ordinary understanding, to the extent that it probes the hidden depths of social life. But it is not completely privileged. We have seen why this is so. Science must explain society partly in terms of the meanings and beliefs of its participants, and it is always possible that these participants will come to a newly acute awareness of what they are doing. Social science, then, may be uniquely rigorous and systematic, but it is not an entirely separate enterprise from everyday self-reflection. Second, while a materialist science may penetrate the reality of past and present, and may identify the pressures towards dissolution in a given mode of life, it cannot predict the course of the future. It cannot do so on the basis of a knowledge of universal laws of human behavior, because it claims that human beings are inherently innovative in their thought and practices. It cannot do so on the basis of a knowledge of an historical purpose, plot or idea, because it claims that categories of consciousness cannot be predicated of abstractions like "history." Instead, a con-

sistent materialist theory must conceive of action as, within concrete limitations, open-ended. That is, it must conceive of the consequences of action as not determined in advance of action itself. Third, in that action is open-ended, the decisions one makes about what to do in a particular political situation, the intentions with which one engages in or against a particular set of political practices, and those practices themselves, may be thoughtful or unthinking, scrupulous or devious, revolutionary or reactionary. They cannot be scientific or unscientific. We have seen that it is impossible, outside of an idealist or positivist framework, to speak intelligibly of an "inevitable" socialist future. It is a similar conceptual mistake to speak of a "scientific" communist movement or a "scientific" socialism. If one abandons first the notion that human action expresses an inherent reason in history, and second the notion that politics is a field of law-governed human behavior, one cannot use the categories of "scientific" and "unscientific" with respect to political action at all. With the obvious exception of theoretical practice itself, such categories are germane not to the taking of political action but rather to the understanding of it. Of course--and here he departs from Hegel--Marx firmly believes that scientific understanding need not come too late to enhance

the self-knowledge of political actors. But although persons may act differently once they grasp the full reality of their social life, they act no more scientifically than they did before. They also may act no more justly than they did before--not, however, because we cannot speak intelligibly of politics in this way, but because clear vision does not guarantee just practice.

ENDNOTES

¹Karl Marx, Economic and Philosophical Manuscripts, in Karl Marx: Early Writings, ed. T.B. Botto-
more (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1964), p. 207.

²Ibid., p. 128.

³Ibid.

⁴Karl Marx, "Theses on Feuerbach," in Karl Marx
and Frederick Engels, The German Ideology (New York:
International Publishers, 1969), p. 198.

⁵Karl Marx, The Poverty of Philosophy, in Karl
Marx & Frederick Engels: Collected Works (noted hence-
forth as MECW), Volume 6 (New York: International Pub-
lishers, 1926), p. 170.

⁶The feudal estate is an "alienated object" to
which both serf and lord belong; within all natural divi-
sions of labor, "man's own deed becomes an alien power
opposed to him, which enslaves him instead of being con-
trolled by him. For as soon as labour is distributed,
each man has a particular, exclusive sphere of activity,
which is forced upon him and from which he cannot escape.
. . . This crystallization of social activity, this con-
solidation of what we ourselves produce into an objective
power above us, growing out of our control . . . is one
of the chief factors in historical development up to now."
The German Ideology, pp. 22-23.

⁷Ibid., p. 70.

⁸Cf. Hegel's discussion of the Enlightenment and
its transformation of social attitudes towards nature. Of
course, Hegel's critique of the limited character of the
Enlightenment mentality would apply to Marx's mentality as
well.

⁹Karl Marx, Grundrisse (New York: Vintage Books,
1973), p. 265.

¹⁰Ibid., p. 458.

¹¹Ibid., p. 706.

¹²See Karl Marx, Capital, Volume 1 (New York: International Publishers, 1967), pp. 177-8, 180. All references to Capital refer to Volume 1.

¹³Ibid., p. 10. See also pp. 84-5.

¹⁴Grundrisse, p. 453.

¹⁵Capital, p. 310.

¹⁶Grundrisse, p. 831.

¹⁷Capital, p. 737.

¹⁸Ibid., p. 152.

¹⁹Insofar as the individual especially in the stage of early capital is "personified capital, it is not values in use and the enjoyment of them, but exchange value and its augmentation, that spin him into action. . . . So far, therefore, as his actions are a mere function of capital--endowed as capital is, in his person, with consciousness and a will--his own private consumption is a robbery perpetrated on accumulation . . ." Ibid., p. 592.

²⁰Grundrisse, p. 238.

²¹So that the capitalist "again and again appropriates without equivalent, a portion of the previously materialized labour of others, and exchanges it for a greater quantity of living labour." Capital, p. 583.

²²Grundrisse, p. 463.

²³Ibid., pp. 831-2.

²⁴Grundrisse, p. 749.

²⁵Ibid., p. 611.

²⁶I have made no special note in the text of those works on which Engels collaborated with Marx. I assume that Marx did not disagree with that to which he signed his name, and in fact the arguments he makes with Engels correspond with many of those he makes on his own.

²⁷See Karl Marx and Frederick Engels, The Holy Family, in MECW, Vol. 4, 1975, pp. 124-134; and of course, Marx's "Theses on Feuerbach."

²⁸The German Ideology, p. 115.

²⁹Ibid., pp. 95-6.

³⁰Ibid., p. 15.

³¹Ibid., p. 14.

³²The Holy Family, p. 192.

³³Ibid., p. 126.

³⁴Ibid., p. 42.

³⁵Ibid., p. 53.

³⁶Ibid., p. 119. "Ideas can never lead beyond an old world order but only beyond the ideas of the world order. Ideas cannot carry out anything at all. In order to carry out ideas men are needed who can exert a practical force."

³⁷The German Ideology, p. 6.

³⁸Ibid.

³⁹"Religious alienation as such occurs only in the sphere of consciousness, in the inner life of man, but economic alienation is that of real life and its supersession, therefore, affects both aspects." Economic and Philosophical Manuscripts, p. 156.

⁴⁰The German Ideology, p. 2.

⁴¹Ibid., p. 19. Here Marx is making the different point that consciousness and self-consciousness are social products arising from the need of human beings for social intercourse.

⁴²For a discussion of the internal connection between reason and emotion, see Alasdair MacIntyre, "Reason as the Servant of the Passions," paper prepared for Conference on Political Thought, 1972.

⁴³After noting reproduction as a basic material practice in the narrow sense of the term, Marx focuses exclusively on the material practice of production as the ultimate determinant of social life. The problems with his silence on reproductive relations are legion. How-

ever, I will follow his usage of the term "material practice" in its second, narrow sense, to refer to productive practices alone.

⁴⁴The German Ideology, p. 18.

⁴⁵Scattered throughout the texts of The German Ideology, The Poverty of Philosophy, The Communist Manifesto, and the Preface to A Contribution to the Critique of Political Economy, are a few odd phrases undeniably mechanistic. But far more characteristic are passages which are highly ambiguous about the relation between thought and material practice. His discussion of the "moments" of the life-process is a prime example: by distinguishing the moment of consciousness from those of material production, the production of new needs, reproduction and social cooperation, he seems to imply an external relation between thought and material practice; by calling consciousness the "fifth moment" of the life-process, whose development is intimately tied to the other moments, he seems to imply an internal connection. See also, for example, Karl Marx and Frederick Engels, The Communist Manifesto, in Robert C. Tucker, ed., The Marx-Engels Reader (New York: W.W. Norton & Co., Inc., 1972), p. 351.

⁴⁶The German Ideology, p. 13.

⁴⁷Karl Marx, Preface to A Contribution to the Critique of Political Economy, in Karl Marx and Frederick Engels, Selected Works (New York: International Publishers, 1969), p. 182.

⁴⁸Ibid., p. 182.

⁴⁹Certain passages in particular show how Marx gets himself into a very tight corner on the question of the base/superstructure relation. To counter the claims of German idealism, he had to be absolutely adamant that abstract ideas and principles do not have logical or ontological priority over real human practice, and further that material productive practice has an explanatory primacy over all other kinds. But in being adamant in this way, he comes close to viewing politics, art, etc., simply as sets of ideas, rather than as real practices with their own (if limited) explanatory power in accounting for a social whole. Not only does Marx here stand on the edge of a reductionist social analysis, but he comes close to subverting exactly the point he is trying to make: that

ideas are always internal to human practice, political and artistic ideas included.

His dilemma is evident in his statement that: "Morality, religion, metaphysics . . . have no history, no development; but men, developing their material intercourse, alter, along with this their real existence, their thinking and the products of their thinking. Life is not determined by consciousness, but consciousness by life." The German Ideology, p. 14-15. It is evident in his critique of Proudhon, who explained historical epochs in terms of emergent principles like equality and property, as though "it was the principle that made history, and not history that made the principle." For "When we ask ourselves why a particular principle was manifested in the 11th or in the 18th century rather than in any other, we are necessarily forced to examine minutely what men were like in the 11th century, what they were like in the 19th, what were their respective needs, their productive forces, their mode of production, the raw materials of production—in short, what were the relations between man and man which resulted from all these conditions of existence. To get to the bottom of all these questions—what is this but to draw up the real, profane history of men in every century and to present these men as both the authors and actors of their own drama?" The Poverty of Philosophy, MECW, p. 170. Finally, it is evident in his description of the materialist method, where he states that from the material production of life and form of social intercourse connected with it, one is to explain "the whole mass of different theoretical products and forms of consciousness, religion, philosophy, ethics, etc., etc., and trace their origins and growth, by which means, of course, the whole thing can be shown in its totality (and therefore, too, the reciprocal action of these various sides on one another.) It has not, like the idealist view of history, in every period to look for a category, but remains constantly on the real ground of history; it does not explain practice from the idea but explains the formation of ideas from material practice . . . and concludes that all forms and products of consciousness cannot be dissolved by mental criticism . . . but only by the practical overthrow of the actual social relations . . ." The German Ideology, pp. 28-9.

⁵⁰ The Communist Manifesto, p. 351.

⁵¹ The German Ideology, p. 39.

⁵² Karl Marx, Capital, Vol. 1, Afterword to the Second Edition, p. 19.

⁵³Economic and Philosophical Manuscripts, p. 142.

⁵⁴The German Ideology, p. 14.

⁵⁵Marx's ironic description of the "method of ideology:" 1) Ruling ideas are separated from ruling relationships founded in a given mode of production; 2) abstract ideas appear to rule history; 3) "the Idea" is abstracted from these various ideas as the dominant force in history, and all separate ideas are seen as "'forms of self-determination' on the part of the concept developing itself in history;" a) lastly, "To remove the mystical appearance of this 'self-determining concept' it is changed into a person--'self-consciousness'--or, to appear thoroughly materialistic, into a series of persons, who represent the 'concept' in history . . . the 'philosophers,' the ideologists, who again are understood as the manufacturers of history . . ." The German Ideology, pp. 42-43.

⁵⁶Ibid., p. 41.

⁵⁷The Poverty of Philosophy, p. 165.

⁵⁸The Communist Manifesto, p. 349.

⁵⁹Capital, Vol. 1, p. 737.

⁶⁰For example, see Marx's Preface to A Contribution to the Critique of Political Economy.

⁶¹The Holy Family, pp. 109-110.

⁶²Ibid.

⁶³The Communist Manifesto, p. 351.

⁶⁴Ibid.

⁶⁵Ibid., p. 351-2.

⁶⁶Ibid., p. 343.

⁶⁷Ibid., p. 344.

⁶⁸Ibid., p. 343.

⁶⁹Capital, p. 77.

⁷⁰Ibid.

⁷¹Economic and Philosophical Manuscripts, p. 141.

⁷²Ibid., p. 142.

⁷³Capital, p. 84.

⁷⁴Ibid., p. 176.

⁷⁵Ibid., p. 75.

⁷⁶Ibid., pp. 301-2.

⁷⁷The German Ideology, p. 36.

⁷⁸Grundrisse, p. 143.

⁷⁹Capital, p. 47.

⁸⁰Preface to English Edition of Capital, p. 4.

⁸¹Capital, p. 569.

⁸²The concept of the commodity functions differently in the Grundrisse and Capital. The Grundrisse charts the journey during which Marx discovers the full significance of the commodity form. He then uses the commodity as the central organizing concept of Capital, through which he exposes to his reader the complex reality of the capital-wage labor relation.

⁸³Grundrisse, p. 415.

⁸⁴Ibid., p. 443.

⁸⁵Ibid., p. 702.

⁸⁶Capital, p. 565.

⁸⁷The Poverty of Philosophy, p. 180.

⁸⁸Ibid., p. 197.

⁸⁹Grundrisse, pp. 106-7.

⁹⁰Ibid., p. 107.

⁹¹Ibid., p. 460.

⁹²Ibid.

⁹³Grundrisse, pp. 101-2.

⁹⁴Ibid., p. 99.

⁹⁵Ibid., p. 278.

⁹⁶Marx's prefaces and afterwords to Capital can be very misleading. In them, he tends to represent his method in naturalistic terms and, correspondingly, social development in biologicistic terms. These meta-theoretical statements, however, bear no resemblance to his actual analyses of capital, social life, and history. One must not, in this instance, take his beliefs about what he was doing as a correct account of what he in fact did. See, for example, his Preface to the First German Edition of Capital, Vol. 1, and his curious Afterword to the Second German Edition of Capital, Vol. 1, where he equates the dialectical method (in its "non-mystified" form) with the mode of analysis of natural evolution. It is not that some parallels cannot be drawn between a biological and social dialectic. But the differences between them are critical, especially for a theorist who emphasizes the significance in social life of mystification, class-consciousness, self-expression, and rationality.

⁹⁷The Holy Family, p. 36.

⁹⁸Grundrisse, p. 296.

⁹⁹Capital, p. 539.

¹⁰⁰See his chapters on simple reproduction, the conversion of surplus value to capital, capitalist manufacture and industry.

¹⁰¹Economic and Philosophical Manuscripts, p. 202.

¹⁰²Grundrisse, p. 461.

¹⁰³Although, Marx reminds us, new modes of social productive practice always develop out of and in antithesis to existing modes and not "from the womb of the self-positing Idea." Grundrisse, p. 278.

¹⁰⁴The German Ideology, p. 38; The Holy Family, p. 167; The Poverty of Philosophy, p. 173.

¹⁰⁵The German Ideology, pp. 71-2.

¹⁰⁶The Poverty of Philosophy, p. 173.

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