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THE POVERTY OF A THEOLOGY OF THE POOR:
AN ALTHUSSERIAN EXPOSURE OF THE PHILOSOPHICAL BASIS OF
LATIN AMERICAN THEOLOGY OF LIBERATION

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1991



I certify that the material contained within this dissertation is my own composition, and that the contents reflect the results of my own research, except where explicitly stated otherwise.

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to Lerato and Duduetsang

ABSTRACT

The emergence of Latin American theology of liberation was inspired by vistas exposed by a Marxian analysis of society and international power relations. This fact is attested to not only by critical analysts of liberation theology but by liberation theologians themselves. For the latter, the attestation of this fact is backed by deliberate attempts at applying a selection of fundamental aspects of Marxist theory to theological discourse. The resultant methodological orientation this imposes on liberation theology, namely, a practical-materialist accent, is highlighted as a feature which distinguishes liberation theology from its antecedent traditional Christian theology, and which expressly establishes its socio-political utility as a theology for the liberation of the poor from historical forms of oppression.

This study is a critical historico-philosophical evaluation of this relationship between Latin American theology of liberation and Marxist Theory. Drawing from Louis Althusser's perspective on Marxism, it reveals that the former is formulated upon a systematic failure to recognise the methodological-epistemological implications of Karl Marx's rejection of the humanist materialism of the philosophy of Ludwig Feuerbach during and after 1845.

In this way, liberation theology is exposed as being trapped into a pre-Marxian Feuerbachian epistemological framework, which in some major respects, incorporates precritical elements of the philosophy of G.W.F. Hegel as expressed in the pre-1845 writings of Karl Marx. In corroboration of this, similarities between the fundamental Feuerbachian epistemological presuppositions and liberation theology are identified. The conclusion defended is that, instead of being Marxist in its underlying philosophical orientation, as its proponents claim it to be, liberation theology is essentially Feuerbachian. As such, its usefulness in the struggle for the liberation of the poor and oppressed from capitalist domination is found as being extremely limited.

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INTRODUCTION

In his, The Militant Gospel: An Analysis of Contemporary Political Theologies¹, Alfredo Fierro established that the emergence of Christian Political theology is a response to a specific cultural situation which is chiefly influenced by "the incorporation of dialectical reasoning and historical materialism into Western thought."² In corroboration of this observation, in his seminal formulation of the systematic account of a theology of liberation Gustavo Gutierrez affirmed that,

It is to a large extent due to Marxism's influence that theological thought, searching for its own sources, has begun to reflect on the meaning of the transformation of this world and the action of man in history.³

Beyond this affirmation of the fact of the service of Marxism as a significant catalyst in the development of a scientific framework which would best exhaust the socio-historical relevance of the Christian

1. Alfredo Fierro, El evangelio beligerante (Estella, Spain: Editorial Verbo Divino, 1975) English transl. by, John Drury, The Militant Gospel, an analysis of contemporary political theologies (London: SCM Press 1977).

2. Ibid., p.78

3. Gustavo Gutierrez, A Theology of Liberation (Lima: CEP, 1971; Maryknoll, N.Y: Orbis Books, 1973; London:SCM, 1974) p. 9

faith in the contemporary world, we find that within liberation theology Marxism is upheld as a theoretical tool whose conscientious application is posited as the conditio sine qua non for the realisation of the liberation which this theology envisions. This conviction is declared, among others, by Jose Miguez Bonino who in his Revolutionary Theology Comes of Age, declared that Marxist theory,

has proved, and still proves to be, the best instrument available for an effective and rational realization of human possibilities in historical life

. . . it is the unavoidable historical mediation of Christian obedience⁴.

This issued out of his analysis that:

As christians confronted by the inhuman conditions of existence [christians in Latin America] have tried to make their Christian Faith historically relevant, they have been increasingly compelled to seek an analysis and historical programme for their Christian obedience. At this point, the dynamics of the historical process, both in its objective conditions and its theoretical development, have led them, through the failure of several remedial reformist alternatives, to discover the unsubstitutable relevance of Marxism⁵.

Bonino's analysis tallies with Gutierrez's original concurrence with Jean-Paul Sartre that, "Marxism, as the formal framework of all contemporary philosophical

4. Jose Miguez Bonino, Revolutionary Theology Comes of Age (London: SPCK, 1975), pp. 97, 98.

5. Jose Miguez Bonino, Christians and Marxists: The Mutual Challenge to Revolution, (London: Hodder & Stoughton 1976), p.19.

thought, cannot be superseded"⁶

Against this, this study is an investigative demonstration that even though liberation theology has emerged as a methodological revolution within traditional Christian theology in response to the cultural influence of Marxism, and its proponents venerate the hermeneutic value of Marxist theory to the extent of making claims on its indispensability to a liberation process, there is a significant discontinuity between the epistemology of Marxism and the one liberation theology has thus far chosen to operate with. This demonstration is conducted from a critical historico-philosophical vantage point which resolutely takes account of the historical development of the thought of Karl Marx which begins from the point of the philosophy of Georg Wilhelm Frederick Hegel, through that of Ludwig Feuerbach and including Marx's own intellectual biography.

From this perspective we draw attention to the fact that liberation theology is formulated upon a systematic refusal to take note of the radical epistemological orientation Marx's thinking undergoes around 1845. We further highlight the fact that this epistemological orientation of Marx is constituted by the fact of his rejection of the epistemological

6. Quoted in, A Theology of Liberation, p. 9

framework of the philosophy of Ludwig Feuerbach, which in his youth he adhered to and employed in his earlier writings, namely a humanist materialism (or humanism as an epistemologic-methodological principle). Our thesis is that consequent to a failure to note this epistemological variation from a Feuerbachian to a Marxist philosophical framework in the body of Marx's writings, liberation theology is found as being formulated upon a Feuerbachian philosophical basis. This failure to base itself fully upon the critical framework of Marxist theory, we contend, calls into question its usefulness in a struggle for the liberation of the victims of the capitalist system. Our contention is in part esoterically based on the view of liberation theologians (e.g. J. Miquez Bonino) that it is only with the incorporation of Marxism that any liberational efforts can ultimately be effective.

II

The refusal to note Marx's rejection of Feuerbachian epistemology, a fact which may serve as an preemptive retort against the import of our thesis, is defended, among liberation theologians, by Jose Porfirio Miranda, and Juan Luis Segundo, the latter only with a limited devotion. In a work entitled, Marx__Against_the_Marxist:

The Christian humanism of Karl Marx⁷, Miranda devotes himself to defending the argument that the fact that Marx criticised Feuerbach in 1845 bears no effect on his original conception of materialism as being essentially an advocacy for philosophical humanism. This work of Miranda's constitutes the main platform of our evaluation of the compatibility of the philosophical presuppositions of liberation theology with Marxist Theory.

Our exposure of the fallaciousness and errors of Miranda's position and postulates is presented as a first step towards refuting suggestions as to liberation theology's genitive basis in Marxism. We specifically engage in this confrontation with Miranda in Chapters 4 and 6. This is located between our polemical reconstruction of historical materialism which seeks to highlight the uniqueness of Marx's theory against the backdrop of Marx's critique of Left-Hegelianism, in Chapters 3 and 5. Upon this, we proceed to state our thesis that liberation theology is but a version of left-Hegelianism, more specifically, a Feuerbachianism. This is backed-up with a demonstration of similarities between the materialism of Feuerbach and that of liberation theology, in Chapters 7 and 9. Our focus in Chapter 7 is on the conceptual theme of praxis,

7. El Cristianismo de Marx (Mexico City: Published by author 1978) English transl. by , John Drury (Maryknol N.Y: Orbis; London: SCM Press 1980).

which, we note, is the operational concept of the "materialism" of liberation theology. Our observation of an overt kinship between the humanist materialism of liberation theology and that of Feuerbach's philosophy, compelled us to enquire into the structure of a post-Feuerbachian Marxist view of the human person, so as to crystallise the fundamental non-Marxian features of the former. This is the subject of Chapter 8. In Chapter 10 we extend the argument by focusing on liberation theology's epistemology as it reveals itself in its conception of history and the__poor as historical agents.

III

Our declaration of the philosophical identity of liberation theology is based on the leitmotif of an affirmation of the fact of an incidence of an "epistemological break" between Marx's philosophy of his youth and that of his later years. This motif of ours is formulated along the lines suggested by Louis Althusser. This we present in Chapter 2 as a preparation for our use of this view as a paradigm for exhausting our critique of liberation theology. Our intention is neither to present an evaluation nor a defence of Althusser's interpretation of Marxism per__se. Althusser's position is taken a__prior as a critical framework for exposing the philosophical foundation of

liberation_theology.

To obviate the well-noted criticism of the unsystematic nature of Althusser's periodization of the occurrence of the "mature Marx", for purposes of our argument we declare that: We see Karl Marx as a Left Hegelian (much influenced by Bruno Bauer) from 1837 to 1842; as a Feuerbachian from his Critique_of_Hegel's_Philosophy_of_Right (1843) to The_Holy_Family (1845); and we regard these periods together as constituting the young Marx. Admittedly, the Marx of 1844 perceived himself as a communist, but this was only a political attitude which philosophically was built upon Feuerbachianism. The_Theses_on_Feuerbach and The_German_Ideology are more regarded as transitional works which, principally, are important as declarations of a rejection of the philosophy of the "young Marx". The first part of The_German_Ideology, though, reveals the editorial problems encountered in the reconstruction of Marx's original manuscript in that it more poignantly resonates the more material-scientific methodology which is found in The_Poverty_of_Philosophy (1847) and the project on "The Critique of Political Economy" (1859-1867). It is in this later corpus, we argue, that the epistemological novelty of Marxism is pronounced.

In addition, unlike Mark Cowling⁸, and Alvin Gouldner⁹, who merely highlight the problem of the incidence of a discontinuity between the thought of the young and the older Marx, our argument goes further and emphasises that, there are no two Marxisms, but only one Marxism. All that Marx opined before 1845 cannot be called Marxism, in the rigorous historico-philosophical sense of the description. It was a Feuerbachianism. Marxism starts at the point of the rejection of humanism as a theoretical basis of philosophy, and the adoption in substitution of this, of the social productive process as a key to philosophical analysis (which method in the process subverts the very "philosophical" nature of such an analysis).

Against what is presented by Jose Miranda as a liberation theologian, and thinkers such as Roger Garaudy¹⁰, David MacLellan¹¹, Robert Tucker¹², Erich

8. "The Case for Two Marxes Restated", in, Mark Cowling, Lawrence Wilde, eds., Approaches to Marx (Milton Keynes: Open Univ. Press, 1989), pp. 14-32

9. Alvin Gouldner, The Two Marxisms: Contradictions and Anomalies in the Development of Theory (London: Macmillan, 1980)

10. R. Garaudy, Karl Marx, The Evolution of His Thought (London: Lawrence & Wishart, 1967)

11. See, D. MacLellan, Marx's "Grundrisse" (London: Macmillan, 1971)

12. See, Robert Tucker, Philosophy and Myth in Karl Marx. 2nd edition (Cambridge: Cambridge Univ. Press, 1972), and his editorial of The Marx-Engels Reader (New York: W.W Norton, 1978), p.68

Fromm¹³, Leszek Kolakowski¹⁴ Norman Geras¹⁵, and to a lesser extent Eugene Kamenka¹⁶, that despite his critique of Feuerbach, Marx's philosophy perennially retained a humanist emphasis, we want to show that at the stage his thought attained a maturity, Marx had methodically eschewed a humanistic epistemology, which is what Feuerbach was all about.

The import of our contention on the non-congeniality of Marx's thought from that of Feuerbach, it is important to note, is not necessarily based on the question of whether Marx's philosophy shared the same language as that of Feuerbach or not, or on the new content he gave to a Hegelian-Feuerbachian notions such as "alienation". Our proposition is that there is a definite and conscious epistemological reorientation which marks out the young Feuerbachian Karl Marx, from Karl Marx the founder of dialectico-historical materialism, otherwise known as Marxism. The Feuerbachian philosophical point__de__depart of "Man", and a philosophical concentration on the vicissitudes of

13. See, Erich Fromm, Marx's Concept of Man (New York: Ungar Publishers, 1961)

14. See, L. Kolakowski, "Althusser's Marx" in, R. Miliband and J. Saville, eds, ---Socialist Register (London: Merlin Press, 1971)

15. See, Norman Geras, Marx__and__Human__Nature: The Refutation of a Legend (London: Verso, 1983)

16. E. Kamenka, ---The Ethical Foundations of Marxism. London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1972

the consciousness of this "Man" is methodically abandoned. This is replaced by a method which, to begin with, notes the weaknesses and inadequacy of the latter, and proceeds on a radically new epistemological basis—that of an adumbration of the principle that social being, productive life-process, conditions consciousness, and not vice versa.

IV

Our disquisition, therefore, is a questioning of the claim of a genitive affinity between liberation theology and Marxism. This is based on the observation that the nexus of Marxist philosophy lies in its rejection and negation of transcendentalism as an epistemological tendency. The deliberate and obstinate theologic framework of liberation theology, which by definition is based on transcendentalism, occasions this contestability.

The background to this is the observation that the nature of the history of Western philosophical thought from the philosophy of G.W.F. Hegel to Marxism, via Feuerbach, is essentially an epistemological development. This is characterised by a radical break between Idealist and Materialist modus cogens and modus rationis. In addition, we note that, the definitive

differentiation between these two epistemological¹⁷ tendencies is designated by a historical movement of an emancipation of philosophy from idealist-theological epistemology. Feuerbach's work is a major indicator of this development. In this context it is plausible to argue that the Marxist epistemological system, dialectico-historical materialism, represents the consummation of this process; that it is an attainment of a manner of thinking which eschews or marginalises all supernaturalist and transcendentalist hermeneutical constructs.

On the other hand, our declaration of a verdict as to the "materialism" or otherwise of liberation theology, registers ramifications as to its utility as a self-purporting theory for the liberation of the "the poor" of the so-called Third World. According to Frederick Engels in Ludwig Feuerbach and the End of German Classical Philosophy¹⁸, idealism, beginning from its vintage form of Platonic rationalism, and as re-

17. Frederick Copleston, A History of Philosophy. Vol. 4 (Garden City, N.Y: Image Books, 1963), p. 18. "It is undoubtedly true that we can trace a progressive emancipation of philosophy from theology from the beginning of philosophical reflection in the early Middle Ages up to the modern era".

18. In, K. Marx, F. Engels, Selected Works, (One Volume) (Moscow: Progress Publishers, 1968), p. 595. hereafter referred to as Feuerbach and the End.

established by Rene' Descartes¹⁹, and defended by German philosophers - from Kant to Hegel - is a deliberate false consciousness which the ruling classes have used to distract attention away from practical critique of the material conditions of the toiling masses. Consequently, a move away from this abstract and speculative epistemology which predicates, a priori, an absolute transcendent reality, towards a materialist predication as pioneered by Feuerbach and culminates in the formulation of Marx's materialistic epistemology, is a definite contribution towards freedom from ideological opiation by the ruling classes. Our concern is the implications of this observation for liberation theology - particularly, its claim of being a tool for social emancipation and transformation - if a chasm is established between its epistemology and that of Marxism.

19. See, Rene Descartes, Philosophical Writings, edited and transl by G.E.M. Anscombe and P. Geach (London: Thomas Nelson, 1971).

CHAPTER 2

THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN THE PHILOSOPHIES OF FEUERBACH AND MARX: LOUIS ALTHUSSER'S PROPOSITION

2.1. BACKGROUND: LUDWIG FEUERBACH IN KARL MARX?

The philosophy of Ludwig Feuerbach (1804-72) represents a historical watershed which marks a distinction between two major systems of Western philosophical thought. These are, the absolute idealism of post-Kantian German philosophy as finally reformulated into a dialectical__idealism by Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel (1770-1831), and the latent dialectical__materialism of Karl Marx (1818-1883) and Frederick Engels (1820-1895). Feuerbach distinguished himself as a philosopher in that he preeminently made a systematic identification of the christian theological assumptions of the epistemological framework of western post-Cartesian philosophy¹. The significance of his work, however, lies not only in that he was the pioneering proponent of the Left Hegelian² quest for the reformation of philosophy from

1. Ludwig Feuerbach Gesammelte Werke, 18 Volumes (Berlin: Akademie Verlag, 1988).

2. Left- Hegelianism: a movement of young German thinkers who in the period from 1835 worked at interpreting Hegel's philosophy into a mould which

Hegelian idealism to materialism, but essentially in that he principally introduced the issue of the role of the material human person, as a subject of philosophical discourse, as a fundamental criterion for drawing the line between idealism and materialism. It is this Feuerbachian philosophy which mediated Karl Marx's move to his more novel and radical reformulations of Hegelian philosophy and development of other fundamental philosophical contentions.

From the time of his doctoral studies in Bonn in 1839-41 until his sojourn to Paris and soon thereafter to Brussels, that is during 1843-45, Marx was by admission, a follower of Feuerbach³. With his work (together with Engels) on The German Ideology during 1845, in which he gives a criticism of Feuerbach and Left Hegelianism in general, a visible move to his new personal philosophical position which consciously sought to set a fundamental departure from the

cast it into an anti-establishment ideology. See, Lawrence S. Stepelevich, The Young Hegelians (Cambridge; Cambridge Univ Press, 1983); David MacLellan, The Young Hegelians and Karl Marx (London: Macmillan, 1969).

3. For example Marx's letter from Paris to Feuerbach concerning a contribution to the Deutsch-Franzossische Jahrbucher in 1843, in: K. Marx, F. Engels, Selected Correspondence (Moscow: Progress Publishers, p. 356) And Engels' testimony that after the publication of Feuerbach's The Essence of Christianity, he and Marx "became Feuerbachians" in, F. Engels Ludwig Feuerbach And the End of German Classical Philosophy, in Selected Works, One Volume.

Feuerbachian version of the critique of Hegel is apparent. This new move from Feuerbach became such an original and fundamental philosophical contribution that it set itself as a distinguishably new philosophical tradition within the history of Western thought.

However, this declaration of a critical departure from Feuerbach was never published in Marx's own lifetime and came to be revealed only in the course of controversial disquisitions on the nature of the relationship of his thought to that of Feuerbach. The first concrete and systematic evidence of Marx's disenchantment with Feuerbach was published by Frederick Engels in 1888, five years after Marx's death, in his book Ludwig Feuerbach and the End of German Classical Philosophy⁴. Appended to this was an edited version of Marx's Theses on Feuerbach, which Engels introduced in his foreword with the declaration that these Theses were, "notes hurriedly scribbled down for later elaboration, absolutely not intended for publication, but invaluable as the first document in which is deposited the brilliant germ of the new world outlook"⁵. Indicating their dating, he further explained that he found these as scribbled notes in Marx's old

4. F. Engels, Ludwig Feuerbach und der Ausgang der klassischen deutschen Philosophie (Stuttgart, 1888).

5. Selected Works, One Volume, p. 585.

notebook as he ferreted through their unpublished 1845-46 manuscript of The_German_Ideology. It is noteworthy that this publication by Engels was produced as a kind of an authoritative intervention on the then already raging controversy as to the import of Feuerbach's thought on Marxism. In 1885, K.N Stacke had published a book on Feuerbach⁶ in which he had made comparative references to Marx's materialism, and Engels was approached by the editors of the journal Neue_Zeit to write a critical review of this. Engels' contribution was published as a series of two articles in the two 1886 numbers of the journal. In 1888 he revised these articles and published them as a book.

The second factor which occasioned this controversy is that the The_German_Ideology, in which a direct and elaborate criticism of Feuerbachian philosophical assumptions is developed, and a post-Feuerbachian historical materialism is initially enunciated, had its incomplete manuscript published for the first time only in 1932⁷. Besides, this problem is further aggravated by a lack of adequate direct references by Marx to Feuerbach after 1845, in comparison to his treatment of Hegel, which could have helped in clarifying the extent

6. K.N Stacke, Ludwig_Feuerbach (Stuttgart: Ferd. Encke, 1885).

7. For the history of the text of The_German_Ideology, see, K. Marx, F. Engels, Collected_Works, Vol. 5 (London: Lawrence & Wishart, 1976) pp. 5-8

of his rejection of the relevant aspects of Feuerbach's thinking. In this regard, Engels clarified in 1888:

Since [work on The German Ideology] more than forty years have lapsed, and Marx died without either of us having had an opportunity of returning to the subject [of a critique of Left-Hegelian philosophy]. We have expressed ourselves in various places regarding our relationship to Hegel . . . To Feuerbach, who after all, in many respects forms an intermediate link between Hegelian philosophy and our conceptions, we never returned⁸

This controversy, the extent of the rejection by Marx of his earlier Feuerbachianism, and the relevance of his earlier works which were produced during his discipleship to Feuerbach in giving a composite theoretical structure to Marxism, is still with us today. Mark Cowling, in the introduction to Approaches to Marx, observes that this controversy has raged all the more since the first publication of the English translation of Marx's Economic and Philosophical Manuscripts (the Paris manuscripts of 1844) in 1959⁹. This raised and centered the debate on how the philosophical account of the humanistic concept of "alienation" found in the Manuscripts, could be reconciled with the apparent scientific determinism of Capital.

8. Op. cit. p. 584.

9. Mark Cowling, Lawrence Wilde, (eds.), Approaches to Marx (Milton Keynes, England: Open University Press, 1989) p. 1

For our purposes, what is noteworthy, and what we seek to draw attention to is that this debate is only correctly perceived and conducted as a methodological-hermeneutical dispute¹⁰. In these terms, the dispute is constituted by the fact that the approach that affirms the significance of Marx's earlier writings in giving meaning to all his later work seems to operate with a conviction that the incidence of Marx's disillusionment with Feuerbachian humanistic materialism has no paradigmatic value in contemporary interpretations of Marx and uses of Marxist theory as a hermeneutical tradition, whereas the opposite view maintains that this does have a paradigmatic significance. Generally, the proponents of the former view propose that the rupture in Marx's thinking during 1845-46 was a necessary and natural process which according to the esoteric of the intellectual milieu within which it occurred (Hegelianism) would have no significance. That is, Marx's critique of Feuerbach was an operation of Marx's subscription to Hegel's theory of the dialectic, whereby, in order to facilitate progress into a higher stage of historical consciousness, he had to negate his contemporary philosophy through a progressive criticism which results in the formation of a new and higher system¹¹. This line of interpretation is well

10. Alvin Gouldner's The Two Marxisms, is an instructive introduction of this approach.

11. See, M. Wartofsky, Feuerbach (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1977.) pp. 49ff.

developed, inter__alia by Marx W. Wartofsky. Proponents of the "two-Marxes" view, preeminently represented by Louis Althusser, dispute this. In particular, Althusser would contend that Marx's view of Hegel's philosophy was not as uncritical as to this extent¹².

Furthermore - which in fact is what constitutes the causa_bellum - an approach to Marxist theory which discounts the relevance of Marx's earlier writings, which have Feuerbachian humanism as their hallmark, has been accused of casting Marxism into an anti-humanistic and deterministic materialism, whereas in contrast, an approach which incorporates this earlier literary corpus demonstrates the essentiality of humanism to Marxism and thus dilutes the assertion of over-determinism of the former view.

In relation to this, we, as matter of argument, find together with Louis Althusser that, when viewed from an analytical perspective which focuses on their basic epistemologies, a definite and radical epistemological discontinuity is identifiable between Marx's philosophical position up to the writing of The_German_Ideology, and the one of the period thereafter. The point of rupture between the two is the manner in which humanism as a theoretical point of departure is

12. See, L. Althusser, "Hegel and Marx", in, Politics_and_History (Surrey: Unwin Brothers, 1972) pp.165f.

abandoned in favour of the mode of production. This epistemological perspective which exposes this discontinuity, we maintain, is the most legitimate heuristic paradigm for understanding the relationship between these two phases of the primal development of Marxist philosophy. Secondly, this perspective reveals the seriousness of the need to evaluate a variety of hermeneutic tendencies which seek to apply the epistemological methodology of Marxist philosophy without making an adequate recognition of the point at which Marxist philosophy assumes its own independent post-Feuerbachian character. We apply this perspective in evaluating the use of Marxist philosophy in liberation theology.

2.2. LOUIS ALTHUSSER'S PROPOSITION.

2.2.a. Political Context.

Louis Althusser (1918-1990) began to catch the attention of the world of Marxist scholarship when in 1962 he published an essay, "Contradiction and Over-determination", in which he broke with the orthodoxy of his Communist Party of France, by arguing that an overevaluation of the concept of "contradiction", which is derived from the Marxist-Hegelian concept of "the negation of the negation" in the mechanisms of the

theory of the dialectic, has been the source of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union (CPSU)'s toleration and theoretical silence at the dictatorship and crimes of Josef Stalin. In 1964, he followed this up, with another essay, "Marxism and Humanism", in which he presented a lucid philosophical denunciation of "humanistic interpretations" of the philosophy of Marx as attempts to salvage Marxism from the scandal of Stalinism¹³.

Althusser perceived his philosophical activity as a necessary intervention against what he called a "theoretical-ideological conjuncture"¹⁴ within the International Communist Movement in the aftermath of the Twentieth Congress of the CPSU in 1956, where criticism of the Stalinist regime had been unleashed by Nikita Kruschchev's famous address on "the cult of personality"¹⁵. Althusser found that there was an undue over-reaction within and without Communist intellectual circles to this public denunciation of the "deviations" of Stalinism, which he felt was perilously lacking a

13. Both essays are republished in the collection, For Marx (Middlesex: Penguin Books Ltd, 1969. Originally published as, Pour Marx, 1966), pp 87-128; 219-247.

14. Essays In Self-Criticism (London:NLB, 1976) p.38.

15. For a highly critical account of developments surrounding this, see, Lezsek Kolakowski, Main Currents of Marxism. Vol 3 (Oxford: Oxford Univ. Press, 1978) pp. 451f.

cogent underlying framework for a theoretical analysis of the causes of these Stalinist "errors and distortions".

Writing in 1967, in the Introduction to the English translation of a collection of his essays¹⁶, which included the two mentioned above, he reflectingly characterises this reaction -in its desperate poverty of any critical theory - as having "given birth to profound reaction, 'liberal' and 'ethical' in character, which spontaneously rediscovered the old philosophical themes of 'freedom', 'man', the 'human person' and 'alienation', and which looked for theoretical justification to Marx's Early Works"¹⁷. Althusser begrudged the political as well the philosophic credibility of this new phenomenon, or new "ideological tendency"¹⁸. In a later work he dubbed it, "a rightist critique of dogmatism"¹⁹.

His reading and understanding of the evolution of Marx's thought, and that of the international workers' movement, led him to a view which found this a

16. For Marx

17. Ibid., p.10.

18. Loc. cit.

19. "Is it Simple to be a Marxist in Philosophy", written in 1975, published in, L. Althusser, Philosophy and the Spontaneous Philosophy of the Scientists, and Other Essays, ed. G. Elliot. (London; New York: Verso, 1990) p. 208

fundamental corruption of Marxist philosophy, and a betrayal of the struggle for the attainment of Communism. He pointed out that,

Marx, Engels and Lenin . . . ceaselessly struggled against ideological interpretations of an idealist, humanist__type that threatened Marxist theory . . . it will suffice to mention Marx's rupture with Feuerbach's humanism, Engels's struggle against Duhring, Lenin's long battle with Russian populists, and so on²⁰.

For Althusser, therefore, the most crucial conjuncture besetting Marxism, or rather its theoretical appropriation, in the post-Krushchev era, is the struggle between the "humanist interpretations" of Marx on the one hand, and the "non-humanist" interpretations on the other. This conjecture, he argued in his 1960's "On the Young Marx"²¹, is as much of a political problem as it is a theoretical one, he argued:

First of all, any discussion [or debate] of Marx's Early Works is a political discussion [or debate]. Need we be reminded that Marx's Early Works . . . were exhumed by Social-Democrats and exploited by them to the detriment of Marxism-Leninism? . . .²²

Furthermore, he reflectingly dramatised,

Philosophers, ideologues, theologians, have all launched into a gigantic enterprise of criticism and conversion: let Marx be restored to his source, [they say], and let him admit at last that in him, the mature man is merely the young man in disguise. Or if he stubbornly insists on his age, let him admit the sins of his maturity, let him recognize that he sacrificed philosophy to economics, ethics to science, man to history. Let him consent to this

20. Ibid., p. 11

21. For Marx, pp.51-86.

22. Ibid., p. 51.

or refuse it, his truth, everything that will survive him, everything which helps the men that we are, to live and think, is contained in these his few Early Works.²³

Within this politico-theoretical context, Althusser saw his own philosophical mission as being a necessary attempt to,

draw a line of demarcation between the true theoretical bases of the Marxist science of history and Marxist philosophy on the one hand, and on the other, the pre-Marxist idealist notions on which depend contemporary interpretations of Marxism as a 'philosophy of man' or a 'Humanism'²⁴.

2.2.b. On the "Epistemological Break"

This line of demarcation between "Marxist science of history and Marxist philosophy" and humanistic "pre-Marxist idealist notions" Althusser found as already drawn in a fundamental way, and with a profound significance for the whole of intellectual history after Marx, within the history of the intellectual development of the Marx himself. "In 1845", he contended, "Marx broke radically with every theory that based history on the essence of man"²⁵.

This radical break - Althusser was at pains to explain - was not merely an incidental dropping of the

23. *ibid.*, p. 52.

24. *Ibid.*, p.13

25. *Ibid.*, 227

theme of "Man" by Marx; it was a substitution in Marx's way_of_thinking, of a whole theory of knowledge for a qualitatively and quantitatively new one. To signify the profound implications of this, Althusser called it an "epistemological break". As originally used by Gaston Bachelard and re-used by Althusser²⁶, this concept describes a radical departure from an adherence to one frame of reference to the other. In Marx's case, Althusser maintained, this was specifically a rupture between the pre-scientific world of ideas to which Marx held before 1845, to the scientific one which is visible in his works after this period. As a true "epistemological break", this involved Marx's radical break with the whole pattern and frame of reference of the pre-scientific notions of the philosophy of his youth, and in negation of these, constructed a wholly new frame of reference: a dialectical materialist understanding of nature and history.

As far as Althusser is concerned, beginning from 1845, with work on The_German_Ideology, Marx's mode of discourse and the underlying theoretical framework of his philosophy, underwent a radical change from being "ideological", to being "scientific". This change, he argues, is concretely manifested in the evident incidence of "a basic difference between the

26. See, For_Marx, p. 248, and Althusser's "A Letter to the Translator", in, loc._cit., p. 257

ideological 'problematic' of the Early Works, and the scientific 'problematic' of Capital" 27.

Essentially, Marx's "epistemological break" with Feuerbachian philosophy, involved an adoption of a new 'problematic' and the rejection of that of earlier philosophy. "The earlier idealist philosophy depended in all its domains and arguments - its 'theory of knowledge', its conception of history, its political economy, its ethics, its aesthetics, etc - on a problematic of human nature (or the essence of man)"28. It is this "problematic" which Marx ditches and in the process develops an alternative to.

In the "Reply to John Lewis"29, which is an extensive polemic against John Lewis, a leading theoretician of the Communist Party of Great Britain, who in 1972 published a refutation of Althusser's contention of the existence and significance of an "epistemological break" in the history of Marx's thought30, Althusser called upon all those who found his thesis defenseless to compare two judgements made by

27. Ibid., p.13. emphasis added.

28. Ibid., 227

29. In, Essays On Self-Criticism, p. 62 ff.

30. J. Lewis, "The Althusser Case", in, Marxism Today, Feb, 1972. Althusser's "Reply" appears in the October 1972 and November 1972 issues of the same journal.

Marx on Feuerbach and Proudhon. He submitted,

Feuerbach is described in the 1844 Manuscripts as the philosopher who has made extraordinary discoveries, who has discovered both the basis and the principle of the critique of political economy! but a year later, in the Theses on Feuerbach, and in The German Ideology, he is an object of an all out attack. After that he simply disappears³¹

Similarly,

Proudhon is described in the Holy Family (end of 1844) as someone who 'does not simply write in the interests of the proletariat, but is himself a proletariat, a worker. His work is a scientific manifesto of the French proletariat', but in 1847, in the Poverty of Philosophy, he gets a hiding from which he will never recover.³²

It was not only from this historico-textual review and comparisons of Marx's life and works that Althusser based his argument. His theory or argument went beyond this, and isolated an underlying epistemological shift which occurs in Marx's thought, and which shows itself in his writings, leading to a formation of two distinct historico-philosophical bodies of his work. A conflative and haphazard appropriation of these bodies of Marx's writings which did not recognize this essential difference between them, was for Althusser, not only an arbitrary attempt to create a "whole Marx", but was in essence a conflation of two epistemological traditions which are critically distinct from each other. In order to

31. Essays In self-Criticism, p.66

32. Loc. cit.

register this, Althusser added one other fundamental example to his argument by pointing out that there is a gradual disappearance, starting from 1845, of the philosophical categories of "alienation" and the "negation_of_the_negation" in the progression of Marx's writing and intellectual development.

This second claim he posited in the 1964 "Marxism and Humanism" essay where he was demonstrating how these two concepts were foreign to Marx's "theoretical anti-humanism"³³. In the 1972 "Reply to John Lewis", he granted Lewis's rebutting evidence of the presence of "alienation" in The_German_Ideology and the Grundrisse (1857-58), by retreating into the defensive elucidation that Marxist philosophy, "the Dialectical materialism of the mature Marx", which Althusser insists on calling a "science", does not emerge at once and ready made from Marx in 1845. It is therefore not astonishing that in the process, even some time after 1845 one may find "ideological notions and philosophical categories which it will later get rid of"³⁴. Alienation and, the negation_of_the_negation, which, to Althusser, are "ideological" concepts which belong to Marx's "pre-scientific", idealist Feuerbachian epistemology, suffer this fate. "You certainly do find these concepts-directly or indirectly - in The_German_Ideology, and in -----

33. For Marx, p. 239.

34. Essays in Self-Criticism, p.67.

the Grundrisse - two text which Marx never published- and also, though more rarely (alienation) or much more rarely (negation of the negation: only one explicit appearance) in Capital"35, Althusser recapitulated, and charged on: "John Lewis, however, would have a hard job finding these concepts in The Communist Manifesto, in the Poverty of Philosophy, in Wage Labour and Capital, in, Contribution to the Critique of Political Economy, in the Critique of the Gotha Programme, or in the Notes on Wagner's Notebooks"36. In the Glossary to the English translation of Lire Capitale, it is alleged that where the term "alienation" appears in Marx's later works, "it is either used ironically, or with a different conceptual content."37

As we show below, Althusser's basic point is that through an experience of the epistemological "rupture", Marx made a scientific discovery, a discovery of "a science of history of social formations" which had not existed before he came along38. Of necessity, in the process of this, "he set out a number of new concepts

35. Ibid., p.65

36. Loc. cit

37. L. Althusser, Reading Capital, trnsl by, A Brewster (London: NLB, 1970) p.309.

38. "Marx's discovery is a scientific discovery without historical precedent, in it's nature and effects". For Marx, p.13.

which cannot be found anywhere in his humanist works of youth: mode_of_production, productive_forces, relations_of_production, infrastructure-superstructure, ideology, etc."39

As a qualitative scientific discovery, an "epistemological break", is "something irreversible . . . a point of no return"40. Therefore, as Althusser further adds, Marx could not have gone back to a pre-scientific, ahistorical and universalist mode of philosophical discourse, and the use of "ideological concepts" when he had made an epochal discovery of a new science himself. For Althusser, in discovering "historical materialism" after 1845, Marx had discovered and created a "canon of interpretation"41, which it would have been sacriligious for him, the creator, to violate by continuing to use pre-historical-materialist epistemological categories after

39. Essays on Self-Criticism, p. 66

40. Loc. cit

41. Bendetto Creco, Historical Materialism and the Economics of Karl Marx (New York: Russell & Russell, 1966, org. 1913) p.2. He writes: "Historical materialism . . . can neither be a new a_prior notion of the philosophy of history . . . it must simply be a canon of historical interpretation. The concept canon . . . implies no anticipation of results but only an aid in seeking them."

In "Marxism and Humanism" Althusser submitted that: "Marx established a new problematic, a new systematic way of asking questions of the world, new principles and a new method. This discovery is immediately contained in the theory of historical materialism." For Marx, p.229

c). Transition from Ideology to Science.

According to Althusser, "the history of science reveals the existence of great scientific continents [metaphorically] of knowledge"⁴². The major of these being, the "continent" of Mathematics which was opened by the Greeks (Thales), and the "continent" of Physics which was opened by Galileo. "Marx . . ." claims Althusser, "opened up the third great continent: the continent of History . . . [he] founded a new science: the science of history of social formations"⁴³. And since "the opening up of a new continent of scientific knowledge presupposes a change of terrain or an epistemological rupture"⁴⁴, the foundation of Marxism as a critical departure from the philosophy of Feuerbach is essentially an epistemological event. An event of the successful opposition of the "scientific" mould of thought over the "ideological" one. As according to Althusser, this was an epochal event in the history of Western intellectual history, this is a historic epistemological revolution which should affect the conduct of all disciplines of human knowledge after

42. Louis Althusser, Politics and History (Surrey, England: Unwin Brothers Ltd, 1972), p.116.

43. Loc. cit.

44. Loc. cit.

But primarily, and Althusser insisted on the clarity of this: Marx's discovery is a "scientific" and not a "philosophical" discovery. Its philosophical deposit, is only consequential and secondary. He argued that, on reflection on the history of philosophy, it would be observed that all major revolutions in philosophy have been preceded by scientific discoveries. An example is given of how Platonism was preceded by discoveries in Mathematics, and how Cartesian Philosophy was preceded by discoveries in Physics⁴⁵. This, according to Althusser, reveals a pattern that "every great scientific discovery induces a great transformation in philosophy". What then is the philosophical consequences of Marx's scientific discovery of a "science of history"? "The 11th Thesis on Feuerbach", is Althusser's answer, the "End of classical philosophy, no longer an interpretation of the world, but a transformation of the world"⁴⁶.

Earlier on, in the political context of the writing of the introduction to For__Marx, Althusser had elaborated this point more succinctly. He explained,

The foundation of the science of history by Marx has 'induced' the birth of a new , theoretically and practically revolutionary

45. Politics_and_History, p. 167

46. Loc. cit.

philosophy, Marxist philosophy or dialectical materialism . . .47.

Proceeding, he applies this theoretical framework, to the theoretical perplexity besetting Marxists in the post-denunciation-of-Stalinism era, he further explains,

The fact that from the standpoint of its theoretical elaboration, this unprecedented philosophy still lags behind the Marxist science of history (historical materialism) is explained by historico-political reasons and also simultaneously by theoretical reasons: great philosophical revolutions are always preceded and 'borne along' by the great scientific revolutions 'active' in them, but long theoretical labour and long historical maturing are required before they can acquire an explicit form.48

In Althusser's terms, the identification of the XIth of the Theses_on_Feuerbach, as the nexus of Marx's philosophical revolution is as significant as loaded. Its meaning is located within the perimeters of his position that, at the point of criticising Feuerbach, Marx eschewed ideological speculation49. He moved away from an epistemological tendency which concentrated on a mere interpretation of the world, i.e, from the methodological perspective which imposes the ideal condition of the human person on such an interpretation, and he moved on to the scientific

47. For Marx, p.14

48. Loc. cit.

49. In the sense that the concept "Ideology" is used in The German Ideology.

method, which has action inculcated into it, whereby, the conditions of the world are not only critically reflected upon, but are analysed and prognosed in the process of active engagement, summarily resulting in transformation. A such, Marxist philosophy, dialectico-historical materialism, in contrast to the philosophy of the younger Marx, is essentially a Theory for the transformation of Capitalist society, and this it only becomes later after 1845. In this explicitly utilisable form it is then that it is called a "science". Marx's thought has undergone an epistemological transition from being an "ideology", to being a "science", and this is what the notion of "the epistemological break" seeks to communicate.

In, "Elements of Self-Criticism" (1972)⁵⁰, Althusser makes an elaborate self-criticism of how in the For Marx essays he had used a theoreticist (emphasising the primacy of theory over practice) and Rationalist distinction between "ideology" and "science", where the former is simply made to refer to error or illusion, and the latter to empirical verity. He blames for his error, Marx's conflative conceptualisation of "ideology" in The German Ideology, where he treats the concept as being at the same time a philosophical category, meaning "error", and a scientific category, meaning, a formation of the superstructure.

50. In, Essays In Self-Criticism, pp. 119-125

Althusser's corrective redefinition of "ideology" vis_a_vis "science" is that, the falsehood of ideology, which is here reaffirmed, has its autonomous verity since it is determined and originates from real class interests and experience. And "science" on the other hand, differentiates itself from ideology by the fact that it is an independent field of human knowledge which is governed by laws which are not necessarily susceptible to class manipulation. The same observation is made by Leszek Kolakowski in his critical review of Althusser's conception of "science". "In true Marxism", he claims, "science does not belong to the 'superstructure; it has its own rules and its own evolution, it constructs objective conceptual wholes and is not an 'expression' of class-consciousness"51.

The sum of this position, was a partial revision of the original enunciation of the epistemological movement from "ideology" to "science" of the 1960-66 essays, where this was evidently conceived of in terms which were not exposing the incidence of this in terms of the social reality which defines the "ideological" nature (class-partisanship and manipulability) of ideology. In terms of this revision, Althusser could then justify how, in a socio-political struggle, an ideology may be "overthrown" without there being an

51. Main Currents of Marxism, Vol.3, p.484

epistemological movement to "science" (to new Theory), but an inauguration of a new concrete reality, which in turn produces its own ideological configurations. Althusser could even go further and claim that ideology does survive alongside science, "as an essential element of every social formation, including a socialist and even a communist society"⁵². This could not augur well for some Communist definitions of ideology, which maintain that at the attainment of the communist social formation, the accompanying process of the establishment of a classless society, of necessity, entails the abolition of conditions that produce ideology, and consequently the disappearance of the phenomenon of ideology itself.

Despite these self-critical reformulations, Althusser remained insistent on his identification of an epistemological break in the thought of Karl Marx, and on how this "break" is visible in the corpus of Marx's writings. The visibility, of this "break", he contended, is essentially constituted by the apparent distinction between the "ideological" nature of the Earlier Works, and the "scientific" nature of the later ones, where when viewed from a perspective of a chronological review of Marx's works, this resembles an unfolding tension or a struggle between the "ideological" and the "scientific" in Marx's work. This

52. For Marx, Glossary, vid. "Ideology"

"struggle", Althusser maintained, is most apparent in Marx's writings at least until Capital. With the writing of Capital the "scientific" clearly comes out, finally overcoming the "ideological" mode of analysis and discourse. On the basis of this, and a presupposed evaluation of "science" as being superior to "ideology", Althusser insisted that,

Capital is the work by which Marx has to be judged. By it alone, and not by his still idealist Early Works (1841-1844); not by the still very ambiguous works like The German Ideology, or even the Grundrisse⁵³.

The main purpose of this introduction of a differentiation between "science" and "ideology" which, according to Althusser, constitutes the locus of an "epistemological break" in Marx's thought, is best understood when placed within his politico-theoretical campaign against "humanist" interpretations of Marx. In this regard, Grahame Locke correctly observes that, Althusser's "first purpose" is "to distinguish between science and ideologies, to show that while Marxism is a science, all forms of humanism must be classed among ideologies"⁵⁴. As an ideological category, "humanism", would therefore have no place in a consciously "scientific" theory, which Marxism reveals itself as being.

53. Lenin and Philosophy and Other Essays (London: New Left, 1971), p. 71.

54. *Ibid.*, p. 1.

d). Karl Marx and Humanism.

For Althusser, a move from Feuerbachian to Marxist "philosophy" is primarily "a break" between a philosophy of humanism of the younger Marx which is superseded by a philosophy that moves away from reflection on the condition of the individual person, as a person, to concentrating on the socio-economic material factors that shape this person's humanity. He maintained that the essence of Marx's intellectual and theoretical maturity lies in his discovery that "the only way to talk about the human person in the concrete is to regard him as a complex of social relationships"⁵⁵, and accordingly, the contrast of this is what Feuerbach's philosophy, to which Marx in his youth had subscribed, was trapped into.

Consequently, Althusser maintained that, it is only when placed within the context of a critical review of the philosophy of Feuerbach that the relationship between Marxism and humanism can legitimately be understood.

He explained that Marx "discovered" Feuerbach, like all Left Hegelians, under conditions of an agonising philosophical perplexity at their experience, during

55. For Marx, p. 234

1841-42, of a contradiction between the conception of the Hegelian philosophy of State, where the state is said to be the highest self-actualisation of Absolute Reason, and the blatant and persistent "irrationality" of the totalitarian Prussian regime of Frederick IV. In Althusser's words,

Feuerbach saved the Young Hegelian radicals theoretically from the insoluble contradiction induced in their liberal-rationalist 'philosophical conscience' by the obstinancy of the damned Prussian state, which being in itself Reason and freedom, persisted in misrecognising its own 'essence', pervading all propriety in the Unreason of Despotism. Feuerbach 'saved' them theoretically by providing them with the reason for the Reason-unreason contradiction: by a theory of the alienation of man⁵⁶.

With his Humanism of the alienation of man and of how this alienated man is essentially the alienation of the very essence of his human being, which in the process (as per the Hegelian postulate of the dialectic, of the "negation of the negation") this essence__could__be reappropriated. Feuerbach provided the young Marx, and his colleagues, with a theoretical framework which elucidated how the "unreason" of the State is, in fact, the alienation of the very essence of the State, of Reason itself, which in the course of the process can be reappropriated. Feuerbach provided the theoretical concepts that enabled them to think that just as the alienation of the human essence is an indispensable

56. Ibid., p.176

moment in the realization of the human essence, so is the "irrationality" of the State a necessary moment in the realization of Reason (the ideal State)⁵⁷.

Althusser observed that, in building his theory of the primacy of Man as a philosophical concept, Feuerbach makes a primary employment of the Kantian problematic of the distinction between Pure Reason and Practical Reason, and between Nature and Freedom. Out of a contradiction inherent into these two sets of concepts, Feuerbach develops the solution of "a unique principle of Man and his attributes"⁵⁸ as a materialistic conceptual unity of the Subject and Object. Upon this, Feuerbach developed a theoretical argument of "Man" as being an epistemological and primary hermeneutic concept that should replace all former primary concepts of German Idealist Philosophy. Feuerbach explicitly declared his adoption of this new conceptual framework in the Preface to the 1843 edition of The Essence of Christianity where he says,

[My] philosophy has for its principle, not the Substance of Spinoza, not the ego of Kant and Fichte, not the Absolute Identity of Schelling, not the Absolute Mind of Hegel, in short, no abstract, merely conceptual being, but a real being, the true Ens Realissimum - man; its principle, therefore, is in the highest degree

57. For Marx, pp. 223-227

58. Ibdi., p.178

This manner of methodological conceptualisation of "Man" by Feuerbach, led Althusser to the conclusion that unlike other forms of Humanism that had occurred elsewhere in the history of Western thought, Feuerbach's is a Theoretical Humanism:

Man is not just for Feuerbach an idea in the Kantian sense, but the theoretical foundation for all his philosophy, just as the Cogito was for Descartes, the Transcendental Subject for Kant and the Idea for Hegel⁶⁰.

It is this theoretical humanism, according to Althusser, that one finds in Marx's early works: "For the young Marx, 'Man' was not just a cry denouncing poverty and slavery. It was the theoretical principle of his world outlook"⁶¹. "Man", was the theoretical basis that governed Marx's whole philosophy, and, Althusser contends, he only arrived at a "scientific theory of history at the price of a radical critique of the philosophy of man that had served as his theoretical basis during the years of his youth (1840-45)"⁶². In The German Ideology he begins to criticise this approach, and it is only in his later work that

59. L. Feuerbach, The Essence of Christianity, Transl. George Eliot (New York: Harper & Row, 1957), p. xxxv.

60. Politics and History, p. 183

61. For Marx, p. 223.

62. Loc. cit.

this theoretical foundation is finally dropped. Althusser insists that the discarding of this Feuerbachian approach is supremely attained and epitomised in Capital (I). In this regard, he draws attention to Marx's statement in the Foreword to the German edition of Capital (I), where Marx declared, in equivalence to Feuerbach's declaration in the Preface to The Essence of Christianity:

My analytical method does not start off from man, but from the social period that is economically given.⁶³

The new theoretical principle was the economically determined social order in which the human person lives, which was more interested in pointing out the place and role of this person as part of the collective within this particular order. In this regard, pointing out the "Scientificism" and uniqueness of this departure from philosophical anthropology, Althusser argumentatively explains that,

Marx replaced the old postulates of which were the basis not only for Idealism, but also for pre-Marxist materialism, by a historico-dialectical materialism of praxis: that is, by a theory of the different specific levels of human practice (economic practice, political practice, ideological practice) in their characteristic articulations, based on the specific articulations of the unity of human society . . . In a word, he substituted for the 'ideological' and universal concept of Feuerbachian 'practice' a concrete conception of the specific differences that enables us to situate each particular practice in the

63. Cited in, For Marx, p. 225

specific differences of the social structure.64

In the "Reply to John Lewis"65, Althusser rebuts Lewis's explication of the Marxian theory of determinism, where Lewis argued that according to Marx, "it is man who makes history". He counter-asserted that such an interpretation belongs to the "pre-Marxian", non-scientific phase of Marx's intellectual development. Contradicting Lewis's claim, Althusser argued that "it is the masses which make history"66. In Althusser's opinion Lewis's proposition is a legacy of Feuerbachian anti-religious argumentation which had sought to negate the religious thesis that, "it is God who makes history". According to Althusser, the post-Feuerbachian, Dialectical-materialist position goes beyond this focus on individual "man", and focusses on the masses as a social class, and as a collective element of the relations of production. "The Masses can be defined", charged Althusser,

in Capitalism the masses does not mean the 'mass' of aristocrats or the intelligentsia or the ideologists of fascism; it means the set of exploited classes, strata and categories grouped under the class which is exploited in large scale production, the only class which is capable of uniting them and directing their action against the bourgeois State: the proletariat.67

64. Ibid. p.229

65. Essays on Self-Criticism, pp. 46ff

66. Ibid., p. 46

67. Ibid., p. 47

However, this "proletariat", is not here conceived in terms of, or being used "in the sense adopted in Marx's early works, where the proletariat in its 'alienation' represents the human essence itself whose 'realization' is to assured by the revolution"68. This sense of the proletariat, which Marx introduces in the essay, "Towards a Critique of Hegel's Philosophy of Right: Introduction"69, Althusser calls, "the religious conception of the proletariat"70, which conception Marx later ditches.

The individual person, or the human condition per se, as a fundamental focus of Philosophy, where Philosophy

68. For Marx, p. 221 n.1

69. In, D. McLellan, Karl Marx: Selected Writings (Oxford: Oxford Univ. Press) pp. 72-73, where Karl Marx writes:

"So where is the real possibility of a German emancipation? . . . in the formation of a class with radical chains, a class in civil society that is not a class of civil society, of a social group that is the dissolution of all social groups, of a sphere that has a universal character because of its universal sufferings and lays claim to no particular right, because it is the object of no particular injustice but of injustice in general. This class can no longer lay claim to a historical status, but only to a human one. It is not a one-sided opposition to the consequences of the German political regime, it is in its total opposition to its propositions. It is, finally, a sphere that cannot emancipate itself without emancipating itself from all other spheres of society and thereby emancipating these other spheres themselves. In a word, it is the complete redemption of humanity. The dissolution of society, as a particular class, is the proletariat".

70. For Marx, p. 221

is now conceived as "the class struggle at the level of theory"⁷¹ is not important. And any negation of this approach, insists Althusser was opposed by Marx. He concludes that: "Strictly in respect of theory, therefore, one can and must speak of Marx's theoretical anti-humanism".⁷²

Putting this conceptual claim within the epistemological context of his understanding of Marx's "philosophical" innovation, he continues to assert that in this theoretical__anti-Humanism one must see "the absolute precondition of knowledge of the human world itself, and of its practical transformation"⁷³, which leads to his personal conclusion that,

it is impossible to know anything about men except on the absolute precondition that the philosophical (theoretical) myth of man is reduced to ashes. So any thought that appeals to Marx for any kind of a restoration of a theoretical anthropology or humanism is no more than ashes, theoretically ⁷⁴.

71. Philosophy And the Spontaneous Philosophy of the Scientists, p. 210

72. Ibid. p. 230

73. Loc. cit.

74. Loc. cit.

I

Two propositions emerge out of Althusser's philosophical review of Marxism. The first is an adamant affirmation of an emergence of a new epistemological consciousness and method in Marx, beginning from 1845. The second is that the gist of this new "theory" of knowledge, was a rejection of the "theoretical humanism" of the earlier method, whereby the later one becomes, by definition, a "theoretical anti-humanism". The manner in which these two postulates are inter-related leaves no room for a separate acceptance of one while the other is rejected. An agreement with Althusser that Marx underwent an intellectual transformation and bequeathed to later organised human knowledge a new "science of history" which at the same time is essentially a theoretical dogma on a new interpretation of socio-historical reality (praxis), cannot be divorced from Althusser's definition of the very locus of this transformation and discovery, namely a rejection of Feuerbachian humanism.

This raises the question of whether is it essential to a Marxian methodological approach which posits an argument for a recognition of a historical epistemological duality in the course of a development

of Marx's thought, to cast Marxist philosophy into an anti-humanistic mould as Althusser does. A response to this question, makes an absolute demand for an understanding of Althusser's use of the term "humanism", and this is where many of his critics have faltered⁷⁵.

As our above reconstruction of Althusser's theory revealed, Althusser derives his position from his evaluation of the epistemological nature of the development of Marx's thought and this leads him to a fundamentally methodological view of Marx's approach to humanism. One novelty about Althusser's approach to the study and presentation of Marx, which has been missed by some of his critics, is that he deliberately set out to treat Marxism as a Philosophy. Unlike other reviews of Marx's thought, which in the main are from Economic and Sociological perspectives, Althusser's is decidedly a philosophical treatment of Marx. The implication of this is that a concept such as "theoretical anti-humanism" which is philosophically arrived at, may not necessarily mean an anti-humanism as it can be understood in Politics, for instance. Althusser did not mean that a promotion of dialectico-historical materialism, should mean a promotion of a devaluation

75. See for example, Leszek Kolakowski, Main Currents of Marxism Vol. 3, pp. 483-486, and our discussion of J.P. Miranda's reaction to Althusser in Chapters 4 and 8.

of human worth. What he sought to highlight is that the approach to promoting human worth in "authentic Marxism" is broader since it focusses on class (which in an ensemble of a productive relations which in a class-society is a constant state of struggle between the capitalist class and the working class). The resolution of this class struggle leads to a more fundamental and comprehensive promotion of the good of the human person.

II

Althusser's definition of the rupture between the postulated two philosophical positions of Marx's developing thought, as "epistemological" presents itself as a credible (on the basis of the systematic manner in which Althusser had developed it, and the consistency with each he has dealt with criticisms against it) and a useful theoretical tool for assessing the extent to which Christian theology can be identified with Marxist philosophy.

From a theological perspective, Althusser's theory raises at least two fundamental issues for Christian theology, both of these are located at the scientific-methodological level of theological enquiry. The first, is the issue of the definitional relationship between "ideology" and "science". The second one, is the implication of Althusser's theoretical conception of

"humanism" in Marxist terms on latent theological appeals to the "humanism" of the philosophy of Karl Marx.

We merely raise these issues at this stage, they shall all be treated in some detail in later stages of our work.

Ideology, Science and Theology

According to Althusser, the difference between "science" and "ideology" is not only epistemological, but the epistemological definition of this difference lies in the fact of the determination of the equation of the utility of either of the two, in relation to each other in serving as theoretical means of social revolution. In Althusserian terms, and other⁷⁶ interpretations of Karl Marx which highlight the epistemological turning-point of 1845-46, the equation of the place of whatever discipline between these two epistemological tendencies is made to determine the social utility of the discipline in question. At one end is "ideological speculation" which is a superstructural entity, and at other is "scientific analysis" which is not tainted by the contaminations of superstructural

76. See, A. W. Gouldner, The Two Marxisms: Contradictions and Anomalies in the Development of Theory, pp. 38.

formation⁷⁷. According to this perspective, all "fields of human knowledge" can be placed at certain points of a spectrum which ranges from "ideology" at the one end, and "science" at the other, where the measure of their distance away from the former towards the latter is taken as an indication of the sum of the potential of their revolutionary utility.

On the basis of this, therefore, an examination of the epistemological status of theology, in particular where it is claimed that it serves the cause of political liberation, is rendered pertinent. Of necessity such an examination should be able to produce a declaration of the rate of the potential utility of theology (or theological mode of thought) in contributing to the kind of revolutionary activity and social order which Karl Marx in his philosophy (at the stage it had moved away from "ideology" to "science") promotes and envisages. Since almost all theologians who appeal to Marxist theory in their theology are, like Althusser, writing from a context and background of an anguish for social change, and operate with a measure of conviction that Christian theology is useful in bringing about this change, the implications of the verdict of this assessment have very serious consequences. This is worse for a theology, such as

77. See, L. Althusser, Essays on Ideology (London: Verso, 1984), pp.13f.

Latin American theology of liberation, which has defined its "revolutionary" credentials on the fact that it is based on elements of the thought of Marx or - to grant the predominant affirmation of faith in God as the basis of inspiration - that, had it not been for the theoretical tools provided by Marxism, it would not have assumed the image and relevance it now possesses.

Theoretical Anti-humanism and Christian Humanism

The question of the place of Humanism within this Althusserian methodological configuration, as well as its implications for the use of dialectical materialism in Christian theology has been pre-empted by Jose Miranda, with his aptly entitled work, Marx Against the Marxists: The Christian Humanism of Karl Marx,⁷⁸ as we noted in our previous chapter. Miranda's work is an attempt at addressing the theological conjuncture of the controversy on the usability and the legitimacy of the challenge of Marxism to Christianity. However, in the final analysis it turns out to be a bold plunge into this debate on the sources and place of "humanism", as one of the possible themes that could facilitate the "atonement" and "redemption" of Marxism after the theoretical ravages of its post-Stalinist experience. Miranda, then, ends up writing "for Marx" against the

78. Maryknoll, N.Y: Orbis Books; London: SCM Press, 1980 (El Cristianismo de Marx, Mexico City: Publ. by author, 1978)



Marxists such as Althusser who seem to be making it difficult for Christians to accept Marxism. As far as his arguments apply to Althusser, Miranda's theme is very simple: " Althusser takes a fatal leap in concluding that Marx is an anti-humanist. Just the opposite is true. Marx is so much the humanist that he is interested only in real-life human beings, not in abstractions"79

Miranda makes pointed and systematic critical reference to two aspects of Althusser's work. These are: 1) An interpretation of Althusser's position on the role of "Subject" in Marx's theory of historical development80, and: 2) The consequences of Althusser's theory to the question of the place of ethics in Marxist philosophy81. The former is the subject of our Chapter 4, and the latter is addressed in Chapter 8 below.

79. Ibid. p. 45

80. Ibid. pp. 29-51

81. Ibid., pp. 182-184.

S E C T I O N I I

In this Section we develop the premiss that there is a qualitative difference between the philosophies of the "young Marx" and the "older Marx". The gist of our submission is that the philosophy of the "young Marx" is in its epistemological essence, the philosophy of Ludwig Feuerbach; that was only at a rejection of the latter that Marx developed his independent philosophical position, namely, dialetico-historical materialism. We believe that the uniqueness of the latter against the former needs to be emphasised and upheld as a paradigm for appraising views on Marx which refuse to appreciate the discontinuity between the methodological framework of Marx's early work from the later one.

The discussion in the following four chapters distills this fact from the intellectual biography of Marx himself, and by way of appraising Jose Miranda's contentions on Marxist theory, all of which are based on a failure to note the radical difference between Feuerbachianism and Marxism. The subject of this Section is a premiss which we develop with the intention of employing in our verdict on the relation of liberation theology to Marxist philosophy, which is the subject of Section III.

CHAPTER 3

ON THE ESTABLISHMENT OF A MARXIST THEORY OF HISTORY: KARL MARX'S DISCOVERY OF DIALECTICAL MATERIALISM

3.1 INTRODUCTION

In the previous section we noted Althusser's view that the specificity of Marxist philosophy lies in the epistemological variation Marx introduces between his materialism and that of Ludwig Feuerbach. The cantus firmus of this variation, it was highlighted, is a critical adoption of theoretical anti-humanism, and "science" as a new and uniquely Marxist methodological framework. These claims of Althusser's form the basis of our paradigm on establishing the philosophical orientation and social utility of liberation theology as expressed by its Latin American exponents.

In this chapter we distill the actual import of this position vis__a__vis an understanding of historical materialism. This import is encapsulated in the two compound and inter-related claims that: historical materialism, the "Philosophy" of Karl Marx, was established_in Marx's rejection of the Feurbachian-humanist Weltanschauung of his youth, and that

according to this post-Feuerbachian Marxism, history is not a project of conscious human self-emancipation, but an autonomous system whose laws of motion do not readily disclose themselves to the consciousness of the human historical actors. Besides presenting Marx's intellectual itinerary in order to corroborate these claims, the goal of our discussion is to introduce a philosophic substantiation of the latter claim. We point out that Marx's act of reworking Hegel's doctrine of the dialectic, presents itself as the foundation on which his entire theory is constructed.

The conclusion we develop is that up to 1845, Karl Marx did not have a distinct philosophy of his own, even though he did write prolifically. In the basic and traditional philosophic sense of having a Philosophy as an independent and original systematic body of postulates which in structure and content differs from what has gone before, Marx had no such philosophy. He was a Feuerbachian. He started to construct a philosophical system with marks of originality, a new content, as well as a new field of problematics, a unique structure, and critical relation to other philosophies that had gone before, only during and after 1845. Therefore, we would argue and demonstrate that the problem of "the two marxisms"¹ or two philosophies of the differentiated Early or Young Marx,

1. See, in particular, Alvin W. Gouldner, The Two Marxisms: Contradictions and Anomalies in the Development of Theory.

and the Old or Matured Marx, is a pseudo-problem. We will also seek to emphasise that, besides this being merely a pseudo-problem, it presents a contestable situation where any dealing with Marx has to be alerted of the challenge that it is confronted with only one philosophy, the "philosophy" Karl Marx woven together during 1845-6, which is, dialectico-historical materialism. There was no "Marxist philosophy" before 1845.

This goes a step further, at least in emphasis, from Althusser's position, in that the latter was, of necessity, pre-occupied with arguing and establishing the fact of the occurrence of an epistemological rupture in Marx. What remained to be emphasised, is what he attempts in his essay "Marx's Relation to Hegel"², namely, that in inverting Hegel's philosophy, Marx arrived at conclusions which marked themselves as nothing but a new philosophy - and even more: a "post-philosophy" which can only be called a Theory.

2. In, Louis Althusser, Politics And History, pp. 166-186

3.2 MARXISM: A PRODUCT OF THE DECOMPOSITION OF LEFT-HEGELIANISM

We maintain that the objective and motif of the Theses on Feuerbach is a declaration of a fundamental epistemology, whose basis is a realisation of "The chief defect of all previous materialism (that of Feuerbach included)"³. It is an announcement by Marx, or rather, since the Theses on Feuerbach were never meant for publication, and never fully developed, it is a rapturous declaration of a personal discovery by him of the fundamental epistemological inadequacy of Feuerbach's philosophy. This was a "Copernican revolution" which came at the end of a period of a personal intellectual self-assessment, since, during up to that time, he was a Feuerbachian (who was a Hegelian to the extend that, and in the sense that Feuerbach's philosophy was primarily Hegelian). A number of practical factors facilitated this personal revolution. The prime catalyst though, was the theoretical struggle he plunged himself into as he sought to apply this Hegelian-Feurbachian intellectual disposition of his to the task of accounting for the material injustices suffered by workers at the hands of the owners of the means of production.

As he explains in the Preface to "A Contribution to

3. Thesis I. Opening sentence.

the Critique of Political Economy", he was propelled into this task of a critical intellectual self-examination by the crisis and "embarrassment" he experienced as the editor of the Rheinische Zeitung in the year 1842-3 that his philosophical disposition did not equip him to deal with "discussions on so-called material interests"⁴. For the first time, he realised the conceptual restrictiveness of the "problematic" of his Feuerbachian philosophy.

The importance of the fact that Marx scribbled the Theses on Feuerbach at the height of his undertaking of an independent reassessment of Hegelian philosophy, which he undertook in the period around his departure from Prussia for Paris in November 1843, and while there, need to be noted. It is from this process and during this period that the emergence of a distinctly Marxist "philosophy" first sprouted.

This independent critical review of Hegel's philosophy - independent from the approach and findings of Feuerbach on Hegel⁵ - is codified in the "Critique of Hegel's Philosophy of Right" which Marx undertook in

4. In, D. McLellan, Karl Marx: Selected Writings (Oxford: Oxford Univ Press, 1977) p. 388

5. Cf. L. Feuerbach, "Towards a Critique of Hegelian Philosophy", 1839, in Lawrence S. Stepelevich, ed. The Young Hegelians: An Anthology, pp.95-128

late 1843 and never completed nor published⁶, and part of which he published in Paris in 1844 as "Contribution to the Critique of Hegel's Philosophy of Right: Introduction"⁷.

Of this, he was to reflect later, giving a summary of his findings:

The first work which I undertook for a solution of the doubts which assailed me was a critical review of the Hegelian philosophy of right, a work the introduction of which appeared in 1844 in the Deutsch-Französische Jahrbucher, published in Paris. My investigations led to the result that legal relations as well as forms of state are to be grasped neither in themselves nor from the so-called general development of the human mind, but rather have their roots in the material conditions of life, the sum total of which Hegel . . . combines under the name "civil society", that however, the anatomy of civil society is to be sought in political economy⁸

With the reflection that went into the manuscripts on Economic And Philosophical Manuscripts (Paris Manuscripts) (March -August 1844), and the book, The Holy Family or Critique of Critical Criticism Against Bruno Bauer And Company⁹ (September-November 1844), elements of a disenchantment with his Feuerbachian-Hegelian past began to take concrete shape. In essence,

6. The complete text of this work is published in English as: Critique of Hegel's Philosophy of Right, translated and edited by Joseph J. O'Malley (Cambridge: Cambridge Univ. Press, 1970)

7. See, Robert Tucker, ed., The Marx-Engels Reader. (New York: W.W. Norton & Company, 1978), pp. 53-65

8. Preface to A "Contribution to the Critique of Political Economy, in D. McLellan, ed. p.389_

9. K. Marx, F. Engels. Collected Works Vol. 4

the Paris Manuscripts¹⁰ were infantile attempts at applying the realisation that the "anatomy of civil society is to be sought in political economy". Their basic analytical perspective - being only drafts of an autodidacticism in political economy - remained that of Feuerbach's philosophy, namely, the adoption of an inverted version of Hegel's concept of alienation (a move from Consciousness to Man), and its use as the basis of a critical analysis of civil society¹¹.

Significantly, in the opening section of the Manuscripts, Marx admiringly writes of Feuerbach that, "It was only with Feuerbach that positive, humanistic and naturalistic criticism begins"¹², and that Feuerbach's writings are "the only writings since Hegel's Phenomenologie and Logik to contain a real theoretical revolution"¹³, yet in the sentence which follows, he makes a point that "a critical discussion of Hegelian dialectics and philosophy as a whole . . . is a task not yet performed"¹⁴. This task he then attempted in one of the sections of the Manuscripts

10. K. Marx, F. Engels, Collected Works, Vol. 3. (London: Lawrence and Wishart, 1975), pp. 249-346

11. See, Mark Cowling. "The Case of the Two Marxes Restated", in, Mark Cowling, Lawrence Wilde, eds. Approaches to Marx, pp.14-32

12. In, Robert Tucker ed., The Marx-Engels Reader, p.68

13. Loc. cit.

14. Loc. cit.

entitled: "Critique of the Hegelian Dialectic and Philosophy as a Whole"¹⁵. We would contend, as we discuss below, that it is this particular engagement in a critique of Hegel's philosophy which was to lead to Marx's discovery of dialectical materialism.

In The Holy Family, which unlike the Manuscripts was expeditiously published after writing, together with his newly found collaborator¹⁶, Frederick Engels, he decisively declared his disavowal of the methodology which he, together with his Left Hegelian colleagues in Berlin, so defensively used against Hegel and his Rightist proponents¹⁷. Armed with his new perspective on the dialectic, Marx criticised the veneration of Critique, as an activity which is believed to actualise in the realm of practical reason the Hegelian principle of the "negation of the negation" as a means of producing higher qualities of historical consciousness.

He perceived that his erstwhile Left-Hegelian colleagues were giving their theoretical activity a

15. Ibid., pp. 106-125

16. Marx and Engels first met in November in 1842. In January 1844 Engels sent from Manchester his article, "Outlines of Political Economy" to Marx in Paris for publication in the Deutsch-Franzosische Jahrbucher. From August 1844 they began to maintain a constant exchange of ideas.

17. See, David MacLellan, The Young Hegelians and Karl Marx (London: Macmillan, 1969), p. 39f.

status of a substantive entity, as if by achieving a critical extension of a particular intellectual position they had thereby effected a progressive movement of history. He critically observed that in Bruno Bauer - their mentor on the technique of "critical critique" (including himself) - "criticism is transformed into a transcendental being.¹⁸ He declared (with Engels):

What we oppose in the criticism of Bauer is the speculation which produces itself as a caricature. We see in the completest expression of the Christian-Germanic principle which is attempting to retain its supremacy by transforming "criticism" itself into a transcendent power.¹⁹

His gradual realisation of the meaning of materialism, and the importance of basing this on a socio-historical premise, led him to a revealing discovery that Bauer's thinking in relation to the question of history inadequately comes to the following:

On the one side is the mass as the passive, spiritless, unhistorical material element in history. On the other is the Spirit, Criticism - Herr Bauer and Co. as the active element from which all historical action proceeds. The act of transforming society is reduced to the cerebral activity of Critical Criticism.²⁰

Elsewhere he concluded:

The Berliners do not regard themselves as men who criticise, but as critics who,

18. Karl Marx, F. Engels, Selected Correspondence, p.356

19. Op cit. p.7

20. The Holy Family, Collected Works, Vol 4, p.86

incidentally, have the misfortune of being men. They therefore recognise only one real need, the need of criticism . . . this criticism thus regards itself as the only active element in history. It is confronted with the whole of humanity as a mass, an inert mass, which has value only as an antithesis of the intellect.²¹

It is noteworthy that the foregoing disdainful conclusion on the "Berliners" was written in a letter he wrote to Feuerbach, dated, August 11, 1844. Marx's admiration of Feuerbach was so complete that by the time he settled in Paris he sharply turned against his comrades of the "Doctors Club", and used Feuerbachian formulations as a basis of his criticism. Note the last sentence of the above quotation: The Left-Hegelians are accused of failing to assert the dynamism and value of humanity - in other words, humanism - and of placing against this the primacy of critical thought. As a matter of fact, during this period Marx was working on his study of the relationship between philosophy, as he then knew it, and economics - the Paris Manuscripts. In the Manuscripts, as noted above, he applies this alternative Feuerbachian humanistic epistemology as a theoretical foundation of a study of political economy; in The Holy Family, he uses this as a framework undergirding his newly discovered critique of Hegel which he finds to be exposing the fallacy of the method by which Left Hegelianism has distinguished itself. At this stage though, what is important for him is a self-

21. Selected Correspondence, p. 356

exorcism and an indication of his critical departure from his employment of the speculative Critique of Bruno Bauer in favour of Feuerbach's materialism.

Engels' advice in Feuerbach and the End, that as an indication of how "enthusiastically" Marx had embraced Feuerbach's teachings "and how much - in spite of all critical reservations - he was influenced by it, one may read in The Holy Family"²², is opportune. Also, in the same letter referred to above, which in a gist serves the historical significance of dating Marx's conscious option for Feuerbachian epistemology in substitution of his Bauerian Left-Hegelianism²³, we find him intimating to Feuerbach:

I am glad to find an opportunity of being able to assure you of the exceptional respect and - allow me the word - love that I have for you. Your Philosophy of the Future and Essence of Faith are, in spite of their limited scope, of more weight than the whole of contemporary German literature put together. In these writings you have - whether intentionally I do not know - given a philosophical basis to socialism, and communists, too, similarly understood these works in that sense. The unity of man with man based on the real differences between men, the concept of human species transferred from the heaven of abstraction to the real earth, what is this other than the concept of society!²⁴

A year later, this admiration of Feuerbach's

22. Selected Works (One Volume), p.592

23. See, Zui Rosen, Bruno Bauer and Karl Marx: The Influence of Bruno Bauer on Marx's Thought (The Hague: Martinus Nijhoff, 1977), et passim

24. Selected Correspondence, p.357

theoretical humanism, was to turn into the minute denunciation of the Theses on Feuerbach; and Feuerbach is lumped together with the rest of the Left Hegelians - from David Strauss to Max Stirner - in the castigation which is presented in The German Ideology.

Through a continuing reflection on what was to become the Economic and Philosophical Manuscripts, especially the last chapter on a critique of Hegel, incorporating also the results of the newly found contact with Frederick Engels, Marx sought to reduce Hegelian philosophical concepts and structure as reinterpreted by Feuerbach to theoretical tools for analysing socio-economic realities. He came out dissatisfied. However, this essentially marked a disappointment with Feuerbach, more than with Hegel. While in Brussels in 1845, he confronted the results of his disillusionment with Hegelian idealism as reformed in Feuerbach. With the ground work he had done on the Manuscripts, he began to see the theoretical framework of a materialist conception of history. When this realisation was written down, it had to be entitled The German Ideology: A Criticism of Recent German Philosophy as Represented by Feuerbach, Bauer, Stirner, and of German Socialism in the Works of its Various Prophets²⁵. It was thus entitled for, indeed, it was basically a critique of the manner in which all Left-Hegelian philosophy had

25. Collected Works, Vol.5.

suffered from the flaw of being uncritical of the relationship between intellection and its material context - consciousness and social being - and how in sum, it not only remained "ideological", but by being bound to the idealist conception of the Hegelian dialectic, remained within a religious epistemology which reduced the entirety of material reality to a mysticism²⁶.

The Theses on Feuerbach²⁷ were written at the summit of this realisation, as a reflective account of why it had been difficult to apply the Hegelian dialectic, as conceived in Feurbach's philosophy, in material-social reality. Marx went back to Hegel, leaving the route

26. The German Ideology, in Collected Works, Vol 5, p. 29 :

"The entire body of German philosophical criticism from Strauss to Stirner is confined to criticism of religious conceptions. The critics started from real religion and theology proper . . . the advance consisted in including the allegedly dominant metaphysical, political, juridicial, moral and other conceptions under the category of religious or theological conceptions; and similarly in declaring that political, juridicial, moral consciousness was religious or theological consciousness, and that political, juridical, moral man - 'Man' in the last resort - was religious. The dominant role of religion was presupposed. Gradually every dominant relationship was declared to be a religious relationship and transformed into a cult, a cult of law, a cult of state, etc. It was thought merely a question of dogmas and belief in dogmas. The world was sanctified to an ever-increasing extent . . . The Young Hegelians are in agreement with the Old Hegelians in their belief in the rule of religion, of concepts, of a universal principle in the existing world."

27. For an exposition of the Theses on Feuerbach, see, Nathan Rothenstreich. Basic Problems of Marx's Philosophy. (Indiana: The Bobbs-Marrill Co., 1965)

Bruno Bauer and Ludwig Feuerbach²⁸ had already mapped out, and from there, with the cumulative experience of his own reflections, discovered that there was a rational structure within Hegel's system, which if stripped of its theosophic form can present a progressive and materially critical conception of social reality. As he was to testify in 1873, in the Preface to the second German edition of Das Kapital:

The mystifying side of Hegelian dialectic I criticised nearly thirty years ago . . . With him it is standing on its head. It must be turned right side up again, if you would discover the rational kernel within the mystical shell.

In its mystical form, dialectic became the fashion in Germany, because it seemed to transfigure and to glorify the existing state of things. In its rational form it is a scandal and abomination to bourgeoisdom and its doctrinaire professors, because it includes in its comprehension an affirmative recognition of the existing state of things, at the same time also, the recognition of the negation of that state, of its inevitable breaking up; because it regards every historically developed social form as in fluid movement, and therefore takes into account its transient nature not less than its momentary existence; because it lets nothing impose upon it, and is in its essence critical and revolutionary²⁹.

It is out of this critique of Hegel, the inversion of Hegel's doctrine of the dialectic, that a new

28. See, K. L. Clarkson, D. J. Hawkin, "Marx On Religion: The Influence of Bruno Bauer and Ludwig Feuerbach on his thought and its implications for the Christian-Marxist Dialogue", Scottish Journal of Theology, Vol. 36, No. 6, 1978, and also,

Sidney Hook, From Hegel To Marx: Studies in the Intellectual Development of Karl Marx (London: Gollancz Ltd., 1936), pp. 98f.

29. K. Marx, Capital, Vol I (London: Lawrence & Wishart, 1974), p.29

Philosophy, descriptively called, dialectical materialism (a materialised dialectic), emerged. Accordingly, our view is that, strictly speaking, Marxism did not emerge as a critique of Feuerbach pari passu, as a chronological sequence may suggest; but, on the contrary, as a critique of Feuerbach's inadequate critique of Hegel, and as such as a fresh critique of Hegel's philosophy itself.

3.3. MARXISM: A PRODUCT OF MARX'S INVERSION OF THE HEGELIAN DIALECTIC

The identification of the centrality of Marx's critique of Hegel as being at the core of a development of a Marxist "philosophy", is one of the major findings of Althusser's recharacterisation of the thought of Marx. It is upon this observation that the postulation of the fact that Marx's new epistemological point of departure is a theoretical anti-humanism, is grounded. Also, this offers an explanation to the philosophical background of this "theoretical anti-humanism" as applied to the summum bonum of Marx theory - an account of history. It buttresses the argument that, resulting from his inversion of Hegel's dialectic (doctrine of the unity of opposites)³⁰, he developed a theory of history

30. For an exposition of the meaning of the dialectic, see, Sidney Hook, From Hegel to Marx, pp.98f., and, G.E Muller, "The Hegel Legend of Thesis-antithesis- Synthesis", Journal of the History of Ideas, No.19, June 1985, pp.83f.

wherein the human subject is perceived as not being a decisive player³¹. Althusser addresses this in his essays "On the Materialist Dialectic" (1963)³², and "Marx's Relation to Hegel" (1968)³³. According to this reading, Marx's conversion of the Hegelian dialectic from dialectical idealism to dialectical materialism is what is definitional of Marxism³⁴.

We concur with Althusser that, first of all, what Marx perceived as open to criticism in Hegel's theory of the dialectic was the pervasive nature of the teleological property of the activity of the dialectic, that is, its visualisation of the self-realisation of the "Absolute Idea" (Geist) through a spiral of a series of self-negations, into a higher unity of the contradictions of being and thought which could not be expressed in concrete reality. In this Hegelian system, the motive force of the process of the dialectical self-realisation of the Absolute Idea as its self-objectifications (as Idea at the moment of conscious conception) returns to itself, is the autonomous and

31. See, L. Althusser, "Reply to John Lewis", in, Essays In Self-Criticism, pp. 62f, and our Chapter 4

32. L. Althusser, For Marx, pp. 161-217

33. in, Louis Althusser, Politics And History, pp. 166-186

34. T. I Oizerman. The Making of Marxist Philosophy: From Idealism and Revolutionary Democracy to Dialectical Materialism and Scientific Communism. (Moscow: Progress Publishers, 1977) is also instructive in this regard.

autogeneric process of the Absolute Idea's own self-supersession; Aufhebung (which Althusser defines as "transcendence-preserving-the-transcended-as-the-internalised-transcended"³⁵). This self-contradiction and self-supersession of the Absolute Idea is, insofar as it is the motive force of the entire process, the Subject. Even the very self-manifestations of the Absolute Idea, its self-alienation as it becomes Objects, is immediately subsumed and returned into being a subject - it negates itself from being an Object, back to being a Subject.

Marx perceived that this Subject of the Hegelian system is so pervasive of the entire system that, in fact, it is awkwardly the very teleology of the process itself; that is, the being of the Objective is there for the unrecognised moment of its being negated back into being the Subject³⁶. The Absolute Idea is in unity with the motive force (process of dialectic - Aufhebung), and together conspire against any considerable existence of the Objective. Both Subject and Object are undistinguishably dissolved into a teleological Subject. It is a fine unity of the Absolute Idea producing itself, being concrete Object, while it is, at the same time, essentially, the abstract Subject of its self-

35. Politics And History, p. 181

36. In, Paris Manuscripts, in R. Tucker, ed., Marx-Engels Reader, p. 110

production. This, as Althusser aptly noted, "is the speculative sin par excellence: the sin of abstraction which inverts the order of things and puts the process of the auto-genesis of the concept (the abstract) in the place of the auto-genesis of the concrete (the real)"³⁷.

Marx rejected this abstract (Subjective : based on the unity of the Absolute Idea with its purpose) conception of the Objective moments during which the Absolute Idea is in a state of self-alienation. He called for a concrete recognition of these moments of the self-objectification of the Absolute Idea (which self-objectifications he identified as being socio-economic phenomena). He thereby put emphasis on the Objective, in place of Hegel's Subjective. He wrote:

When, for instance, wealth, state power, etc., are understood by Hegel as entities estranged from human being, this only happens in their form as thoughts . . . they are thought-entities, and therefore merely an engagement of pure, i.e., abstract, philosophical thinking.³⁸

In rejecting Hegel's abstraction of the Objective into the speculative Subjective, Marx also had to do away with an idea of the veneration of simple unity, as being the goal of a dialectical process. Hegel's objective of establishing unity between Subject and Object, led him to shy away from the idea of the self-alienation, or

37. For Marx , p. 189

38. Loc. cit.

self-estrangement of the Absolute as it is its Objective states, between itself and its object (as concepts of the Absolute Idea)³⁹. Marx put import on this disunity, alienation, which characterises Objective existence. The dialectic, was now expected to be visualised as operating more clearly within this objective, concrete reality which is riddled with contradictions and antagonisms. And, also the resolution of these disunities (contradictions) in reality was to be seen as happening as an Objective phenomenon, a creation of higher forms of socio-historical being, instead of some abstraction which exists only in the individual human's consciousness.

Hegel had failed to point out the series of these Objective moments, wherein the Idea is in a state of dialectical unity of its opposites just before a new separation (self-estrangement) occurs. Instead the personal motivation, preoccupation, and gist of his dialectic was to emphasise the unity of Subject and Object, wherein, even then, the Subject, as Absolute Idea or Spirit, remained predominant. For instance, he asserted in his Introduction to the History of Philosophy⁴⁰:

39. Charles Taylor. Hegel (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1975, pp.22-29

40. Text in, Quentin Lauer. Hegel's Idea of Philosophy. (New York: Fordham Univ. Press, 1971). pp. 79ff.

Spirit must know itself, externalize itself, have itself as its object, must know itself in such a way as to exhaust its own possibilities in becoming totally to itself. It must reveal itself completely, going down into its uttermost depths and revealing those depths . . . The goal of spirit is to comprehend itself, to remain no longer hidden to itself. The road to this is its development, and the series of developments form the levels of its development⁴¹

Inferring from Marx's contradiction of this monistic self-knowledge of Spirit through its object of its own consciousness, Althusser elucidates that,

Marxism rejects the theoretical presuppositions of the Hegelian model: the presupposition of an original simple unity . . . whatever its form (the concept of the beginning that for example, Hegel sees as being immediately identical with nothingness; the simplicity that, for Hegel once again, is the starting-point - and restarting-point, indefinitely - for every process); it rejects, therefore, the Hegelian pretension which accepts this original simple unity (reproduced at each moment of the process) which will produce the whole complexity of the process later in its auto-development, but without ever getting lost in this complexity itself, without ever losing in it either its simplicity or its unity - since the plurality and the complexity will never be more than its own 'phenomenon', entrusted with the manifestation of its own essence⁴².

The failure to give an empirical account for the operation of the dialectic and to leave it shrouded in explanations of mystical self-outworking of the self-realisation of the Absolute Idea, or the fact of the logical necessity of the tendency of the dialectic to

41. Ibid. p.80

42. For Marx, p. 198

obliterate the Objective, was, in Marx' opinion, to leave a defective description of the very motor of the whole process, leaving an impression that:

The whole history of the alienation__process and the whole of the retraction of the alienation is nothing but the history of the production of the abstract (i.e. absolute) thought - of logical, speculative thought⁴³

Enlightened by Feuerbach's exposure of the religious presuppositions, and thus, the mysticism of Hegel's philosophy⁴⁴, Marx could not be impressed by the absence of a "rational" account of the actual operation of this Subject of the Hegelian system. He rejected it.

A rejection of this speculative presupposition of the Hegelian Idea, meant a rejection of both the abstractly conceived Absolute Idea/ Geist, the Subject, as a catalytical concept which is being identified with the dialectic as conceived in Hegel as being in unity with the Absolute Idea (as its activity, Subject of the process). In its first dimension, Marx's position is a counter-assertion which rejects the ground of the thesis

43. Paris Manuscripts, in, R. Tucker ed., The Marx-Engels Reader, p. 110

44. Inter__alia, in "Provisional Theses for the Reformation of Philosophy" Ludwig Feuerbach wrote: "The secret of theology is anthropology, but the secret of philosophy is theology; whoever fails to give up Hegelian philosophy fails to give up theology. The Hegelian doctrine, that the nature of reality is posited by the idea, is merely the rational expression of the theological doctrine that nature is created by God, that the material essence is created by the immaterial, i.e, abstract essence." in, L.S Stepelevich ed. The Young__Hegelians: An Anthology, p.156

of Hegel's Phenomenology of the Spirit, namely, the theosophic presentation of the relationship between object and subject to the deliberate extent that, the Absolute Idea, which this is presented as being its phenomenology, reveals itself as being the mysterium of the Christian deity⁴⁵. By removing this mystical element out of the dialectic, and by focussing on the material, Marx was left with a process which was nothing but the effects of the material world, as Subject, on the labouring human being as Object. In the labour process, the rubric of the production of material life, the labourer, as creator of his material life which in turn creates him, is both Subject and Object⁴⁶ (within the context of the contradictions of Objective reality, of which the labourer, as a representative of productive relations, is ultimately a part).

In its second dimension, the rejection of the preponderance of the mystical Subject (Absolute Idea),

45. See, Charles Taylor, Hegel, pp. 43-44, 100f.

46. For evidence of the derivation of this from Hegel's "expressivist theory", see Charles Taylor, *ibid.*, pp. 23-29, 44.

Taylor maintains that it is this expressivist view of Hegel which explains the schema of his philosophy: that man is a self-expressing being, whereby this self-expression is essentially the self-expression of the cosmic Spirit, reducing man in his self-awareness to being a vehicle of this Spirit. Marx transformed this from being a self-expression which happens at the level of abstract self-consciousness, to being self-expression in the concrete of the activity of the production of subsistence.

owing to the inextricable unity to the meaning of the dialectic in its whole on this Subject (Absolute Idea's own self-supersession), meant a reworking and transformation of the Hegelian dialectic itself, in toto: the reformulation of the Subjective_dialectic into an Objective_dialectic. The total nature of this "critical rejection" is communicated by the concept of "inversion"⁴⁷.

This "rejection" of the Subject of the Hegelian dialectic - the teleolisation_(Subjectivisation)_of_the Objective - is what constitutes Marx's demystification of the Hegelian system, and its materialisation.

However, it is important to note one important aspect of the restrictiveness of Marx's critique of Hegel's philosophy. In criticising Hegel's conceptualisation of the dialectic, Marx only inverted its form - exchanging the places between the abstract and the concrete. The very modus_vivendi of the dialectic, as a process which operates autonomously and with a semblance of necessity, he found no problem with. He affirmed Hegel's proposition that: "The negative in general contains the

47. Althusser: "To invert the Hegelian dialectic [means] to demystify it, to separate the rational kernel from the irrational shell. This separation is not mere sorting out: to take some and leave some. It can only be a transformation. Marx's dialectic can only be the Hegelian dialectic worked-transformed". Politics_And_History, p. 173

ground of Becoming, the unrest of self-movement"48. He used this as a principle of developing the theory of the imminent self-decomposition of capitalism which is proclaimed in The Communist Manifesto, and elaborated in Capital Vol.I.

Dialectical materialism, therefore, is an affirmative identification of the self-contradictions which objective socio-economic reality generates, of necessity, as well as an explication of how the resultant self-resolution of this contradiction, in a manner which marginalises the role of human consciousness and volition, becomes a motive force of historical development. This, explicitly, is the reversal of the process whereby the auto-genesis of the concept, the abstract, is put in the place of the auto-genesis of the concrete. Now the auto-genesis of the concrete is on the head49: concrete historical development is a process demunitive of the Subject which initiates, as an external player, a movement of the dialectic. It takes place autogenerically. It is the complexity of social contradictions, manifesting themselves as the class struggle which cause the movement of history. As Althusser would assert:

Instead of the ideological myth of a philosophy of origins and its organic concepts Marxism

48. G.W.F. Hegel. Science of Logic, trnsl. by, W.H. Johnston and L.G. Struthers (London, 1929), p.180

49. K. Marx, Capital Vol 1, p.20

establishes the principle of the recognition of the givenness of the complex structure of any concrete 'object', a structure which governs the development of the object . . . there is no longer any original essence, only ever-pre-givenness . . . there is no longer any original simple unity (in any form whatsoever), but instead, the_ever-pre-givenness_of_a_structured_complex_unity⁵⁰.

This presents a version of reality, according to which history is determined and not predetermined. "Determination" lies implicitly within the very shape of the contradictions which obtain within a given social formation. This version is a negation of the view of history as a process with active actors and a predetermined telos towards which, and according to which historical actors behave. It is an explicit rejection of the Christian eschatological premiss of God as having gradually self-revealing purpose in history, which purpose is manifested in beneficent human actions⁵¹. At the same time it is a rejection of the view of the socialist revolution as having a historically distant telos, to which all must be

50. For_Marx, p. 198

51. In tandem to this, F. Engels wrote in Feuerbach and the End (Selected Works, p. 613):
"The history of philosophy as represented by Hegel recognises that the ostensible and also the really operating motives of men who act in history are by no means the ultimate causes of historical event; that behind these motives are other motive powers, which have to be discovered. But it does not seek these powers in history itself, it imports them rather from outside, from philosophical ideology, into history".

actively conditioned and engineered⁵². All this is an idealism which is borne of a Hegelian view of history as being the self revelation of a particular pre-given goal or subject. In treading away from this idealist tendency, dialectical materialism focuses on "scientificism", as the opposite of the "ideological" nature of the former tendency, as a way of analysing a given historical moment. It is on the basis of this scientific analysis that predictions which are based on the observation of the previous operation of the phenomenon of history that Marx made a postulation of the eventual advent of a communist social formation.

To conclude we cite the following two statements of Alex Callinicos:

Once freed from the teleology of the negation of the negation, which suppresses the specificity of the instances of the social totality into the spirituality of a simple whole, the notion of 'the process without a subject', of history motored by the peculiar articulations of the contradictions internal to it, can serve as the foundation of the materialist dialectic. Here lay Marx's novelty⁵³

What does this conception of the dialectic leave us with? Centrally, with the idea of the class struggle. History is not the working out of some plan implanted in the nature of man. It is the result of the struggle between different and opposed classes⁵⁴.

52. See, L. Althusser, "Contradiction and Over-determination", For Marx, p. 87

53. Alex Callinicos, Althusser's Marxism (London: Pluto Press, 1976), p.68

54. *Ibid.*, p.71

CHAPTER 4

HISTORY AS A PROCESS INDEPENDENT OF THE HUMAN SUBJECT: A CRITICAL EXAMINATION OF MIRANDA'S CRITICISM OF ALTHUSSER

4.1. INTRODUCTION

In our previous discussion we noted that Louis Althusser distinguished himself as a notable twentieth century thinker through his interventionist submissions that Marxism, as a dialectico-historical materialism, is essentially a "theoretical anti-humanism"¹. He sought to develop an interpretation of Marx's writings which would highlight the fact that as from 1845 Karl Marx discovered a new epistemological foundation for his work which was formulated on a radical and deliberate rejection of his earlier Feuerbachian humanism. Central to his exposition of this epistemological-methodological anti-humanism of the later Marx, is his construction of a view that according to Marx, the movement of history from one socio-historical epoch other, is not dependent on the role of the human individual as an agent or subject of history. In this chapter we lay our focus on this latter aspect of his

1. For Marx, p. 230

interpretation of Marx.

One of those who have found Althusser's view particularly questionable is Jose Porfirio Miranda, a Mexican proponent of liberation theology. Writing as a theologian who is convinced of the epistemological consanguinity of Marxist philosophy and Christian theology as radicalised in the form such as that of Latin American theology of liberation², Miranda found Althusser's postulates as being not only what he thought to be a malicious misrepresentation of Marx, but also as a disservice to the enterprise of seeking to make Marxism useful to a theological mobilisation of the poor and oppressed for social revolution.

We shall first outline the main points of Miranda's criticism of Althusser's proposition that progression of history, in terms which are definitional of dialectical historical materialism, is a process autonomous of the human subject. In the process of this examination, which is based on Miranda's work Marx Against The Marxist: The Christian Marxism of Karl Marx³, we trace the actual meaning of this view of Althusser's by referring to primary references of his introduction and use of this proposition. This process

2. See Miranda's other works: Marx and the Bible. Maryknoll, N.Y.: Orbis Books, 1974; Communism in the Bible. Maryknoll, N.Y.: Orbis Books, 1982

3. Maryknoll, N.Y.: Orbis Books; London: SCM, 1980

leads to a formulation of a judgement on Miranda's reading of Althusser, the basis of his dismissal of a theory of Marxism which emphasises the "materialism" of Karl Marx, as well as, the very philosophical roots of his method. We expose Miranda's philosophical presuppositions - which in essence are shared by all liberation theologians, and are here being used as a critique of dialectical materialism - as being a Hegelianism of Ludwig Feuerbach as expressed in the writings of the young Karl Marx.

4.2. ALTHUSSER IN THE PARADIGM OF MIRANDA'S THESIS

Miranda's work (Marx Against the Marxist: The Christian Humanism of Karl Marx) is built around a critical paradigm which identifies three major kinds of traditional "distortions" of the philosophy of Karl Marx. What binds these three "distortions" together, according to him, is that they all cast Marx's thought into a theoretical mould which fails to display and demonstrate the fundamental element of his philosophy, namely, its humanism. Miranda, however, does not only stop here: he goes further, and seeks to prove that this humanism of Karl Marx, which some Marxist theoreticians are maliciously suppressing, is not even "humanism" in the secular philosophical sense of the

concept, but is specifically a "Christian Humanism"⁴. In his observation, the opposite of this humanism, or this humanistic interpretation of Marx, is materialism, which is at the core of what he identifies as distorted representations of Marx. Of these, as we mentioned above, he identifies three types. The first he calls, "Motivational Materialism"⁵, the second "Materialism as the be-all and the end-all"⁶, and the third, "Economic determinism"⁷. The stated purpose of his work is to negate all these by "showing in gradual steps what Marx himself did not mean by materialism"⁸.

Miranda opens with an introduction and criticism of "motivational materialism". He defines this as a theory that interpretes Marx as if he taught that, "the decisive moving force in history is self-preservation, the acquisition of material goods, utilitarianism"⁹, and that, consequently, the socialist revolution can only be motivated by the abject poverty and hunger, as well as other threats to the instinctive urge for physical self-preservation of members of the oppressed class. Alfred

4. See in Ibid. pp. 197ff Miranda's claim of "the Gospel roots" Marx's thought, and his argument in pp. 224f, that Marx's philosophy is a "conscious continuation of early Christianity"

5. Ibid. pp. 2 - 28

6. Ibid., p. 9

7. Ibid. p. 69

8. Ibid., p.1

9. Ibid., p.1

Schmidt with his The Concept of Nature in Marx¹⁰ is singled as the proponet of this type of materialism.

Having offered a criticism of this view that holds that "the primordial motive of the proletarian revolution is the satisfaction of material needs"¹¹, he proceeds to the second type of a "materialist distortion" of Marx, namely, "Materialism as the be-all and end-all". This is where Louis Althusser is encountered. Beginning with a declaratory rejection of the former type of materialism for being an (un)ethical reduction of the struggle of the working class to the base motive of a mere gratification of physical needs, he opens his address of the second type of materialism with a comparative assessment that, notwithstanding the grave distortion of this type of materialism, "the neo-orthodoxy of Stalin and Althusser is much worse"¹². In characterising this, Miranda remonstrated:

Althusser's thought is not just another Parisian fashion; it is symptomatic of a whole group of thinkers. For them, materialism comes first. Only then comes the communist revolution, if it is feasible. If the latter is not feasible, so much the worse for it because the real aim and goal is materialism for its own sake [own emphasis]. They seek to take hold of the proletarian revolution in order to use it as a way of spreading materialism. They have no real regard for the thought of Marx himself. Instead they seek to use Marxism in order to

10. A. Schmidt, The Concept of Nature in Marx (Atlantic Highlands, N.J: Humanities Press, 1972) (vid. p.34)

11. Ibid., p.6

12. Ibid. p.29

4.3. IS HISTORY A PROCESS WITHOUT A SUBJECT?

Under a chapter procliamationally entitled, "A History with a Subject", Miranda proceeds to introduce this "neo-orthodoxy of Stalin [!] and Althusser". This Stalinist neo-orthodoxy, according to Miranda, is the position of Althusser's theory which "denies that the proletariat is the active subject or agent of the revolution", which theory, in addition, "denies that there is any subject at all"14 that is responsible for the movement of history from one epoch of a social formation to the other.

As a primary source of his understanding of Althusser's proposition of a history as process without a subject, which he uses as a principal charge for Althusser's denial of the existence of subject at all, Miranda quotes from Althusser's essay, "Reply to John Lewis", where Althusser asserts that:

The category of subject . . . is meaningless for dialectical materialism. The latter rejects that category purely and simply, even as it rejects such problems as the existence of God15

Miranda insists that this is a serious

13. Ibid. p.32

14. Loc cit..

15. Essays in Self-Criticism, p.32.

misrepresentation of the philosophy of Karl Marx, and insofar as "this distortion constitutes the absolute core of [Althusser's] philosophy and his whole interpretation of Marx"16, so is "Althusser's thesis nothing more than hogwash"17. (On the other hand if Althusser, were to respond to Miranda, he would say: "any thought that appeals to Marx for any kind of a restoration of a theoretical anthropology or humanism is no more than ashes . . ."18)

Miranda then proceeds to rebut and invalidate citations from Marx' writings which Althusser uses as the basis of what he presents as the Marxist theory of history in relation to the participation of the human subject. He concentrates on one, namely, Althusser's use of a passage from Marx's Notes on A. Wagner, which he had used as an epitaph to his essay, "Marxism and Humanism"19. This is Marx's declaration that: "My method does not start from the human being, but from the economically given social period"20.

Miranda simply dismisses Althusser's evidence by

16. Marx Against the Marxists, p. 31

17. Ibid., p.43

18. Philosophy and the Spontaneous Philosophy of the Scientists, and Other Essays, p.230

19. For Marx. p. 235f.

20. In the Foreword to the second edition of the German edition of Capital (I)

counterposing that Althusser "mutilates the passage" from Notes on Wagner, and that "his use of the passage is fraudulent"²¹. In proving Althusser's "fraud", he explains in only one paragraph that Althusser has omitted to leave as italicised the article the in the phrase "the human being", and has thus (conveniently) failed to recognise the significance of Marx's italicisation of this article.

He argues that the context of Marx's debate with Wagner, from which this passage is taken, was Marx's critical reaction against Wagner's treatment of the human subject in his philosophy. Marx's phraseology of "the human being" was to indicate his reverse interpretation of Wagner's method. He is making a negating emphasis against Wagner's abstract and speculative treatment of the human being (as if he is a mere concept). Thus Miranda argues that the emphasis of Marx's statement is not on that he is starting "from the economically given social period", but rather that he starts from the concrete human being who exists historically (humanist materialism). This for Miranda, in contrast and contradiction of Althusser's interpretation, is an indication that Marx took human beings seriously in his analysis and recognised their value in the structure of the system of his

21. Marx Against the Marxists, p.44

philosophy²². "Althusser", on the basis of what he deduces from Marx's statement to Wagner, says Miranda, "takes a fatal leap and concludes Marx is an anti-humanist, and according to him, "just the opposite is true. Marx is so much the humanist that he is interested only in real-life human beings, not in abstractions."²³.

Miranda then claims that Althusser uses the same tactics as Lenin²⁴: "They seek to use use philosophy for political ends"²⁵. In doing this they attribute to thinkers "theses that are contrary to the views of those people"²⁶. That is not all: "Althusser, however, goes even further, and uses Stalin's approach . . . the basic idea is to cite phrases, allegedly from Marx, that are not his at all."²⁷

As further proof of Althusser's "misrepresentation" of Karl Marx, Miranda then proceeds to quote a number of passages from Marx's writings as "main pieces of Marx's testimony" as to his disapproval of the notion of history as being without a "subject" and to show

22. Ibid., p. 44

23. Ibid., p.45

24. Ibid., p.46

25. Loc. cit.

26. Loc. cit.

27. Loc cit.

that Marx used the category of subject in history positively. He explains why he calls these "main pieces of Marx's testimony." 28

Because . . . of the fact that the human being as the subject of economics and history is one of the main criteria that Marx uses to pass judgement on Capitalism and condemn it.29

In constructing this "testimony" Miranda deliberately quotes from Marx's writings after his Theses_on Feuerbach (1845) so as to pre-empt and undermine Althusser's contention of the change that has occurred in Marx's epistemology after 1845. Most of the quotations are from the Theories_of__Surplus_Value and the Grundrisse, all which are aimed at demonstrating that what spurred Marx into criticising capitalism was his ethical protest against the fundamental tendency of capitalism to treat workers as objects and not as subjects. For instance, he quotes Marx's statement from Theories_of_Surplus_Value, that,

In [capitalist] conception, the workers themselves appear as that which they are in capitalist production - mere means of production, not the ends in themselves and not the aim of production.30

He concludes that there are basically two reasons why Althusser "expressly denies the existence of subjects".

28. Marx_Against_the_Marxists, p.38

29. Loc. cit.

30. Karl Marx, Theories_of_Surplus_Value. Vol 2. (Moscow: Progress Publishers, 1963), p. 548, Cited in, Marx_Against_the_Marxists, p. 39

The first one is that, "for Althusser, who is a good positivist, science as such recognizes no subjects"³¹. Miranda does not explain what he means by Althusser's positivism, and how would this relate to a differentiation of positivist materialism and historical materialism which Althusser would evidently be aware of.

The second reason for Althusser's rejection of "subjects" in history, is, according to Miranda, because Althusser wants to create a logic for the denial of the existence of God. Miranda points out that according to Hegel's demonstration, "if subjects exist, then God exists"³², and this is what Althusser is afraid of falling into. To back up his point he quotes from Althusser's essay, "Ideology and the Ideological Apparatus of the State", where Althusser says that, "multitude of religious subjects can exist only on the absolute condition that there is another unique, absolute Subject: i.e, God"³³.

Miranda bases his connection of Althusser's remarks on the existence of God and his discussion of the "Subject" from the latter's saying that dialectical materialism rejects the category of subject "even as

31. Marx Against the Marxists, p.35

32. Ibid. p.33

33. Loc. cit.

it rejects such problems as the existence of God". He does not discern a philosophic difference between the propositions: "the rejection of the existence of God" and, "the rejection of such problems as the existence of God". Althusser uses the latter proposition, which is aimed at pointing out the methodological concerns and parameters of dialectico-historical materialism, i.e. the agenda of its problematics (which is normally determined by the nature of the subject) . Is Althusser not saying that, according to its philosophic agenda and methodology, dialectico-historical materialism has no conceptual structures that relate to, nor induce the problematic of the existence of God? Is he also not saying that, unlike, for instance, with the philosophy of Descartes³⁴, whether God exists makes no difference to the systematic postulates of dialectico-historical materialism?

4.4. THE MEANING OF ALTHUSSER'S NOTION OF "HISTORY WITHOUT A SUBJECT"

In his "Reply to John Lewis"³⁵, Althusser made an assertion, which was to be the most profound of all features of his theory. He submitted that,

To be dialectical materialist, Marxist

34. Rene Descartes, Discourse on Method

35. Essays In Self-Criticism, pp. 62 ff.

Philosophy must break with the idealist category of the 'Subject' as Origin, Essence and Cause, responsible in its interiority for all the determinations for the external 'Object', whose internal 'Subject' it is called.³⁶

At any initial consideration, this communicates an express denial of the place and role of the subject in the praxis of the transformation of objective reality. In the following discussion, which in a way, is a response to Miranda's conceptualisation of this view of Althusser's, we shall seek to go beyond this "initial consideration" and attempt to place this within the context and intention of Althusser's theory, and distill what the import of what he actually meant yields for our understanding of Miranda and liberation theology's perception of Marx.

To begin with, Althusser's call for Marxist philosophy to break away from the "idealist category of Subject" as being the main and sole motor for the determination of any extended object, has to be understood as one of the themes of his theory of the "theoretical anti-humanism" of Karl Marx. An assertion that "history is a process without a subject" is thus primarily aimed at arguing for a conception of the role of the human individual, as subject in history (and where history is the object), which does not posit the historical practice of this individual as being the

36. Ibid., p.73

major determining force of the historical process. As Alex Callinicos, explains, this is where "the burden of Althusser's theoretical anti-humanism", lies, namely: "the denial that the human essence is the subject of history and that it determines its direction according to a predestined drama of alienation and reconciliation"³⁷.

Within this perspective, Althusser's proposition that, to be dialectical materialist, Marxist Philosophy must reject the notion of Subject_as_being_the_supreme_determinant_of_all_objective_reality, is simply a theoretical foundation for the rejection of the idea that history develops in accordance with an immanent_and_predetermined_necessity, which in the case of "humanistic" interpretations of Marx, would be the necessary dynamic of the dialectic of the alienation and self-realization of human nature - the creation of the "new man". As we show below, it is a suggestion that history develops out of its own internal dynamic in accordance with the particular overdetermined configuration that the social contradictions constituting it at any one time takes. There is no drama of the historical exigencies of human nature here; this is corollary from the stance which rejects any notion of a predetermined goal which conditions the subject as being an Idealism.

37. Althusser's Marxism, p.70.

4.4.4. The Nature of Althusser's Denial of the "Subject".

In the light of Miranda's observations, the questions we need to ask are: What did Althusser mean and understand by the category of "subject"; did he actually deny the existence of "subject"? If so, in what sense did he deny it, and if he did not deny it, in what sense also did he do this? Also, what were the philosophic intentions of his construction of the position he finally maintained?

Alex Callinicos³⁸'s review of Althusser, being one of the major works on Althusser, is unhelpful in this regard. He is merely offering an apologia to "Althusser's denial of the subject". Our review, however, will point out that the issue is not whether Althusser recognised the subject in history or not, but: What is his intention in introducing this theme in his theory of Marxism, and how it falls in line with this, did he conceive of the role of "the human subject" in history, where history is admittedly a struggle for the attainment of higher, and thus more Just social formations.

The context of Althusser's discourse on "history

38. Loc. cit.

without a subject". in the essay "Reply to John Lewis", was his intention to negate Lewis's³⁹ proposition that "it is man who makes history". We note with interest that Althusser does not rebut this proposition of Lewis's, as we would expect after reading Miranda, with a counter-assertion which, in Miranda's words, "denies that there is any subject at all"⁴⁰. Instead of saying to Lewis, "there is nothing like a subject at all in history", Althusser rebuts: "it is the masses which make history . . ."41. Lest this be taken as a confused contradiction of his above mentioned position which comes from the same reply to Lewis, he added in the same sentence, " . . . the class struggle is the motor of history".

Besides its addition of a shift in emphasis, this is an explicit recognition of the existence of "subject" in history. This, therefore exposes the baselessness of Miranda's claim that Althusser's theory "denies that the proletariat is the active subject or agent of the revolution"⁴², and that "it denies that there is any

39. John Lewis then, a leading theoretician of the Communist Party of Great Britain (CPGB), published under the title "The Althusser Case" his refutation of Althusser in, Marxism Today, (Feb., 1972). Althusser's "Reply" appeared in the October 1972, and November 1972 issues on the same journal

40. Marx Against the Marxists, p.29

41. Essays in Self-Criticism, p.46

42. Op cit., p.29

subject at all"43.

In his recognition of "subject" in Marx's thought, Althusser's main aim was to point out the radical difference of Marx's conception of this, from that employed by Hegel. And it is here that the cutting edge of his argument is located. A failure to discern this may give an impression that Althusser is contradicting himself. The placing of this in the context of a search for the post-Hegelian specificity of Marx's formulation of a philosophy of history, helps us to remember that Althusser uses the term "subject", specifically and exclusively as a philosophic concept which has its roots in the philosophical tradition of post-Kantian German Idealism (as Subject). Thus, when Althusser argues for a denudation of the "category of subject" from the theory of the historical process, he does this within the background of a conception of "Subject" as an element of the dialectical process, as introduced by Hegel. It is not subject as in the grammatic subject-object relation of, "the dog bites the boy", or as used in the scientific sense of the mechanical relationship between Cause and Effect. The latter case being how Miranda seems to have understood Althusser. Being on a crusade to argue for the primacy of the human being as being primarily the Cause, the sine qua non, and not Effect of historical change, Miranda accused Althusser

43. *Loc. cit.*

of promoting a version of Marxism which "treats people as an object rather than as a subject"⁴⁴.

Explaining this philosophical use of the concept of "subject", and how this falls into place in support of his thesis, Althusser elaborated to John Lewis:

In my opinion: men (plural), in the concrete sense, are necessarily subjects (plural) in history, because they act in history as subject (plural). But there is no Subject (singular) of history. And I will even go further: 'men' are not 'the subjects of history'.⁴⁵

Accordingly, he continues by adding an important methodological key to unravelling this:

To understand these distinctions one must define the nature of the questions at issue. The question of the constitution of individuals as historical subjects, active in history, has nothing in principle to do with the question of the 'Subject of history', or even that of the 'subjects of history'. The first question is of a scientific kind: it concerns historical materialism. The second is of a philosophical kind: it concerns dialectical materialism.⁴⁶

The important distinction lies in the meaning communicated by the prepositions "in" and "of", and in the philosophic difference between "subject(s)" and "Subject". As we show below, Althusser does not deny that human beings are subjects in history; what he finds as being out of step with Marx's philosophy, is the opinion that human beings, as a collective and as

44. Marx Against the Marxists, p.30

45. Essays In Self-Criticism, p. 95

46. Loc. cit.

individuals, are a Subject of history.

4.4.2 The Human Individual and Historical Development

Althusser conceded that human individuals do play a role in history. The advance he added was that they play this role not as individuals whose activity is the motor of history, but only as embodiments of the historical process, never as its subjects nor Subject. As a historical being, an individual is a social being; the societal processes in which he lives and works define his being. He is never as such, a bare individual. He is either a serf or landowner, a slave or master, a worker or a capitalist - an embodiment of productive relations that obtain in a given form of social formation. In corroboration of his subscription and defence of this view, Althusser quotes from Capital,

The principal agents of this mode of production itself, the capitalist and the wage-labourer, are as such merely embodiments, personifications of capital and of wage-labour: definite social characteristics stamped upon individuals by the process of social production, the products of this definite social production relations.⁴⁷

Althusser based his contention of the irrelevance of the theoretical consideration of the human condition as the motive force of history on this understanding of "men" as being principal agents of a given mode of production in the sense of representations rather than

47. Loc. cit.

of catalysts. It is only in their status as representations of an "ever-pre-givenness of a structured complex unity"⁴⁸ that they are subjects in history. This means that, only in his pre-given (by the social structure) status of being a representation of a certain social class category within a social system or mode of production which necessitates class divisions, which social system dialectically produces its own self-contradictions of class antagonism and struggle, that the individual is a factor in history. He is this factor only to the extent that he is an ensemble of the relations of production obtaining within the social formation in which he lives.

In the philosophical sense of the context from which this emerges, the implication of this is a suggestion that, in fact, instead of being "subject in history", the human being is actually part of the objective reality. Marx inverted Hegel's notion of the dialectic, whereby he reversed Hegel's abstract conceptualisation of the Subjective (the teleology of the Geist or Absolute Idea), as being the preeminent aspect of the process of the Absolute Idea's self-realisation, as well as the embodiment of the objective. He emphasised that the objective realisations of this "Absolute Idea", thereby giving prominence to objective reality, which he was to

48. For Marx. p. 198

perceive as essentially being socio-economic productive process⁴⁹. The human being, therefore, as an ensemble of the shape of productive relations within a given system of production, is part of the Objective. The fact that this objective reality is historically developed by self-contradictions which it necessarily generates means that the human being in history, as such, plays no initiatory nor dominant role.

On the basis of this understanding, Althusser could then charge that :

If we take seriously what Marx tells us about the real dialectic of history, it is not 'men' who make history, although its dialectic is realized in them and in their practice, but the masses in their relations of the class struggle.⁵⁰

The weight this had on the construction of his theory of the "anti-humanism of Marx", may well prove Miranda right in his claim that "the denial of the subject . . . constitutes the absolute core of [Althusser's] philosophy and his whole interpretation of Marx"⁵¹.

With this entire view of Althusser now in full sight, Callinicos propitiatively hastens to defend Althusser against his vulnerability to criticisms like the one of

49. See, Althusser, "On The Materialistic Dialectic", in, For Marx, pp. 161-217

50. L. Althusser, "Marx's Relation to Hegel", in, Politics and History, p.168

51. Marx Against the Marxists, p.31

Miranda 2. He cautions that this "structuralist" view of human historical existence,

Should not be seen, as it had been, as a denial of the role of political organisation or activity in bringing about the proletarian revolution, or as a juxtaposition of the naked powerless individual and the omnipotent historical process. Rather, it is the argument that there is no such thing as the individual as such, but that each mode of production produces its own mode of individuality in accordance with its specific character.⁵²

4.5. CONCLUSION

IV.1. Miranda__Confuses_Althusser's_Conception_of_the_Human_Subject_in_History

There is a striking agreement between Miranda and Althusser on the conception of the human individual as being a factor in history. They both agree that there is a subject in history. The point of disagreement is on the nature of this subject's being in history. For Miranda this subject is there as "individual human beings", who are the motor of history; they are therefore a Subject of history. For Althusser, history according to Marx, where its process is seen as a dialectical one, cannot have a Subject. "Men" in it

52. Althusser's_Marxism, p.70

(history) are social categories who form the social configuration which through its own internal contradictions develops itself into higher social formations.

Miranda failed to notice this faint convergence of his view with Althusser's. Consequently, he blindly proceeded to claim that Althusser "denies the existence of subject", and he went on to construct his entire counter-argument on this false accusation. Since his argument is built on the production of quotations which are deployed to prove that Marx did use the category of subject in his writings, against what he claims Althusser maintained, his entire altercation and theory against Althusser, reduces itself into a pseudo-argument when it is revealed that Althusser did not argue that Marx never used the category of subject. Althusser conceded that according to historical materialism "man" is (objectively) a subject in history; however, philosophically, in terms negative of Hegel's conception of the dialectic, history has no subject. "man" is only an ensemble of its necessary dialectical social processes.

Characteristic of a structure of a pseudo-argument, we find Miranda quoting passages from Marx's writings which Althusser, in turn, could use to support his own view (of the social representativity of human

individuality). For instance, Miranda quotes from the Grundrisse:

In the slave relation the worker is nothing but a living labour machine, which therefore has a value for others, or rather is a value. The totality of the free worker's labour capacity appears to him [slave-owner] as his property, as one of his moments, over which he, as subject [Miranda's emphasis], exercises domination, and which he maintains by expending it.⁵³

Althusser would find this as a radical affirmation of his own view that human individuals are merely forms of being in the historical reality of the class-antagonisms which through the resultant struggle propel history forward. In the "Reply to John Lewis", Althusser said:

Every human, that is to say social individual, cannot be the agent of practice unless he takes the form of subject. The 'subject form' is in fact the form that the historical existence of every individual, every agent of social practices, takes: for the relations of production and reproduction necessarily involves, as the integrating element ideological-social relations, which, in order to function, impose on every individual-agent the form of subject.⁵⁴

Also, in his argument with Althusser on the latter's use of Marx's debate with A. Wagner, Miranda quoted a passage which, as we show by quoting it in this context, Althusser could in turn have used to corroborate his view of Marx's conception of the role

53. K. Marx, Grundrisse: Foundations of the Critique of Political Economy (New York: Vintage Books, 1973), p.476. Cited in Marx Against the Marxists, p.35

54. Essays In Self-Criticism, p.95

of the human individual in history. The passage reads:

'The' human being? If we are talking about the category 'human being', the latter has no needs whatsoever. If we are talking about a human being confronting nature as an individual, then we must view him as a non-gregarious animal. If we are talking about a human being already living in some form of society . . . then our point of departure must be to spell out the specific character of this social human being, i.e., the specific character of the society in which he lives; for in that case production, the process of making a living, already possesses some specific character.⁵⁵

Instead of demonstrating Miranda's allegation that Althusser gives the phrase attached to this⁵⁶, a meaning which is outside of its textual context, this serves the opposite purpose. It strengthens Althusser's argument for the superfluouness of the individual, as a Subject of history, in the structure of Marx's philosophy. Shooting himself further on the foot, as it were, Miranda quotes against Althusser from the Grundrisse:

Rather, it is always a certain social body, a social__subject, [and not the individual, MJL] which is active in a greater or sparser totality of branches of production.(emphasis Miranda's)⁵⁷

Either Miranda had not read Althusser adequately, or his interpretation of Marx is qualitatively a step behind that offered by Althusser. The latter is the

55. Cited in, Marx Against the Marxists, p.44

56. Marx's declaration which Althusser used as an epitaph to his essay, "Marxism and Humanism" : "My analytical method does not start from man but from the economically given social period".

57. Cited in, Miranda, Marx Against the Marxists, p.43

more safe and useful judgment to make. What this debate with Althusser on this question of the "subject" in/of history has revealed, is the centrality of the impact of Marx's critique of Hegel in the shaping of his mature philosophy. The implications of Althusser's theory leads us to the view that the conversion of Marx from Feuerbach lies in the unique manner in which he inverted Hegel's dialectic. Here lies the locus of the self-definition of dialectical materialism from dialectical idealism. This view is also shared by Sidney Hook, who states that in a sharp redefinition of Hegel's notion, in Marx, "the dialectic is the principle of social activity, its medium is the class struggle, its spearhead, in class society, the social revolution"⁵⁸ (emphasis added).

If therefore, Miranda argues for a form of a Marxist philosophy which does not grant the radical significance of this post-Feuerbachian conversion of Marx, which "conversion" lies in Marx's reformulation of Hegel's theory of the dialectic, it means that his is a "Marxism" which is far from the Marxism of Karl Marx as this is still based on the Hegelian conception of the dialectic - a Dialectical Idealism.

4.5.b. Miranda Equates Materialism with Anti-Humanism

58. Sidney Hook, From Hegel to Marx: Studies in the Intellectual Development of Karl Marx, p. 76

It is important to note that Miranda's supreme intention in all that he isolates for criticism in Althusser, and any other promotion of a "materialist" interpretation of Marx, is to demolish the type of Marxism emerging from this interpretation with the express purpose of creating out of this a foundation for his construction and defence of a Karl Marx who is a Christian humanist. In the process, Miranda operates with two presumptions, which in his particular treatment of Althusser are the primary sources of his misunderstanding and misrepresentation of Althusser's views.

The first of these presumptions, is his apparent belief that the antonym of "Humanism" is "Materialism"; or rather, that it is not possible for a materialist philosophy to be humanist, and vice versa. This kind of perception is a consequence of his failure to explicitly differentiate Marxist materialism from a variety of "materialisms" which the history Western philosophy has experienced over the centuries. This mistake pervades his entire work. For instance he accuses Althusser, in his conception of history without a human subject, of being a "good positivist"⁵⁹. Miranda makes this charge in an inverse argument that because Althusser is an "anti-humanist", and an "absolute

59. Marx Against the Marxists, p.35

materialist", he is therefore a Positivist. To round up on the fallaciousness of an equation of materialism with anti-humanism, and to bring this up because of Miranda's accusation of Althusser of Positivism, one wonders what would be Miranda's reaction to the note that Auguste Comte, the "father" of Positivism, developed a quasi-religion of the worship of humanity in replacement to that of the deity of the monotheistic faiths. The materialism he accuses Althusser's "anti-humanism" of, had a very strong history of the affirmation of value of the human person, even to an extent of sacralising it.

The second of Miranda's presumptions is that materialism, undefined as he treats it, necessarily involves a negation of a belief in God. This on the other hand, is derived from his explicit view that the basis of Humanism is faith in God. At an extended critical treatment what this would reveal is that the gist of his argument, as a liberation theologian, is not that, ultimately, it is not human beings who are the motor of history; it is God who is executing this role. History is the self-revelation of God⁶⁰. Like Hegel's Geist God objectifies himself through Creation and the resultant activities of the human race.

Miranda accused Althusser of fearing to recognise the "existence of subject" because in doing this he

60. See, Gustavo Gutierrez, A Theology of Liberation, pp.154, 158, and The Power of the Poor in History (London: SCM Press, 1983), p.32

would have to follow through Hegel's conclusion that, "If subjects exist, then God exists"⁶¹. He agrees with Hegel against Althusser. In his own definition of humanism, where this is exclusively understood in the utilitarian terms of the normative enquiry of the human person as being either an end or a means, in a chapter entitled, "The Gospel roots of Marx's Thought" Miranda states:

Christ was formulating the same value judgement that constitutes the essence of Marx's humanism. . . . It was from Jesus Christ that the West learned that a human being is an end in itself, and the rest of the world learned it from the West [!].⁶²

The humanism which Miranda accuses Althusser of failing to display has as its source, according to him, the Christian Gospel. It is from Jesus of Nazareth that Karl Marx learned Humanism, and the failure of Marxist theoreticians to point this out, is a conspiracy to subvert the fact of the religiosity of Karl Marx⁶³. Miranda's contention is built by the syllogism that: Humanism is universally derived from the teachings of Jesus of Nazareth; the roots of Karl Marx's thought is the teachings of Jesus of Nazareth; therefore, Karl Marx was a Christian Humanist⁶⁴.

61. Marx Against the Marxists. p. 33

62. *Ibid.*, p. 197

63. *Ibid.*, 224f.

64. Miranda writes in an exposition of Marx's letter of 26 March 1870 to Kugelmann: "I would suggest that Marx felt an affinity to authentic Christianity: to the radical personality

On the other hand, if for Miranda, materialism means atheism, and atheism means anti-humanism, it will be interesting to see how he would deal with Ludwig Feuerbach: a materialist, perpetual theist and foremost champion of Humanism⁶⁵. The fact that Miranda does not confront this anywhere in his work reveals his omission of looking into Feuerbach's philosophy and the extent to which it permeates the Early Marx.

In his engagement with Althusser, Miranda does not adequately crystallise the problematic of his work and theology (which is poorly presented in his entire argument): namely, the question of the exclusivity or otherwise of christian humanism and materialism—specifically as dialectical___materialism. The materialism presented in Marx's writings is a unique form of philosophical materialism, which demands a framework of enquiry and set of questions, which would be different from those traditionally posed by christian theology against materialism generally. Althusser's work goes a step further than the traditional emphases of the uniqueness of Marx's materialism as being a historical__materialism. He makes a specific assertion on dialectical__materialism

and message of Jesus Christ and the career of the early Church in particular." Ibid., p. 225

65. Ludwig Feuerbach, The Essence of Christianity, pp. xxxviii f.

as differentiated from historical materialism, for theoretical purposes of isolating the Hegelian connection of Marx's theory. Unfortunately, Miranda does not confront this. He treats Althusser's conception of materialism as if he had implied a metaphysical, and a mechanical, non-historical (socially real) materialism.

4.5.c. Miranda__Misunderstands_Althusser's_Use_of_the_Term_“Humanism”

Miranda seems to have completely missed the point of the context in which Althusser is discussing the anti-humanism of Marx, how he reaches this conclusion and what he understood and meant by this. In reading Althusser it is crucial to note that the issue of humanism enters the debate essentially as a theoretical and methodological issue and concept. Althusser is not claiming that Karl Marx was an anti-humanist. His claim is that Marx's new and matured philosophical methodology is a "theoretical anti-humanism". This he derives from, and bases in is his drawing of a contradistinction between Marx's earlier philosophical background which admittedly had Feuerbachian leanings and his later more original one. Althusser's intended contribution has been to isolate the methodological cantus_firmus and specific intention of Feuerbach's philosophy. This he found as its "theoretical humanism". He sought to draw

the uniqueness of Marx's philosophy against this. It is against this Feuerbachian epistemological humanism that the emergence of Marxism is contrasted. Hence Althusser was careful to state, in addition to his painstaking explication of the theoretical nature of Marx's anti-humanism: "I would say that Marx's theoretical anti-humanism is above all a philosophical anti-humanism"⁶⁶

Miranda missed the philosophical context of Althusser's debate. Consequently, he understands Althusser's use of "anti-humanism", as anti-humanism in the popular and political sense of the word, which means - in the words - "treating people as an object rather than as subjects"⁶⁷. This, on the other hand, demonstrates one of the basic systematic flaws of Miranda's work on Marx: without compromising his theological presuppositions, he approaches Karl Marx with a method and critical tools which treat Marx more as a social scientist than as a philosopher. It was in awareness of the grave consequences this flaw can lead to, that Leszek Kolakowski had to open his major study on Marx with the apparently insignificant but loaded phrase, that, "Karl Marx was a German philosopher."⁶⁸

66. "Is it Simple to be a Marxist in Philosophy", in, Philosophy and the Spontaneous Philosophy of the Scientists, p. 234

67. Marx Against the Marxists, p. 30

68. Leszek Kolakowski, Main Currents of Marxism Vol I, p.1

HISTORICAL MATERIALISM: A POLEMICAL EXPOSITION

In this chapter we test and demonstrate the validity of the claim that history, according to Marx, is a process without a Subject, through a systematic and critical reconstruction of Marx's theory of history. This reconstruction of Marx's theory of history is being done with the view to critically comparing it against the theory of history which Latin American theology of liberation posits. This should lead to an excavation of the epistemological presuppositions and conceptual determinants of a work like Miranda's and, at the same time set a conceptual contrast between historical materialism and a philosophy of history which is proclaimed by Gustavo Gutierrez and liberation theology in general, after him (See Chapter 10 below).

Our supreme aim and concern is to crystallise the epistemological uniqueness of Marx's thought for purposes of contrasting it against that emerging from liberation theology. The eventual intention, therefore, is to compare and contrast Marx's theory of the vicissitudes of socio-historical change and development

with that of liberation theology in general, and in specific aspects with that of Miranda's. The rate of the compatibility or otherwise of the two should substantiate our view that the employment of Marxist philosophy presents epistemological complications, which Miranda and other liberation theologians have taken for granted.

In line with our subscription to the view that from 1845, signified by the scribblings of the Theses on Feuerbach, Marx's thought assumed a radically new epistemological framework, which negates that held until then, and which distinguishes itself as being a composite result of his materialisation of Hegel's dialectic, we shall draw our construction of his theory from works dating from after the Theses. In justification of this, we refer to our earlier account of the dynamic transformation Marx progressively underwent in his thinking between 1842 and 1846.

5.1 The Epistemological Primacy of Marx's Theory of History.

Historical-materialism, Karl Marx's theoretical system, is essentially an account of history, wherein "history" is conceived of in a broadened meaning which seeks to encapsulate a deliberate emphasis on the material primacy of existence. It is primarily a

demonstrative polemic of the epistemological framework which Marx worked out in the course of his intellectual development. As such, a Marxist theory of history is essentially a demonstration of the philosophic rubric of a dialectical materialism. As a theory of history it is preceded by a radical discovery of a critical epistemology. This critical epistemology is crytically announced in the Theses__on_Feuerbach; and a theory of history which eventuates out of this, is summarised in the Preface_to_The_Critique_of_Political_Economy.

The Theses__on_Feuerbach, are an epistemological introduction of this new philosophy¹ discovered by Marx, wherein in criticising Feuerbach Marx is criticising the optics, as it were, he had been using in trying to make Hegel's philosophy sensitive to socio-historical reality. They are a prolegomena to a systematic process which culminates with Marx's self-devotion in early 1850 to work out a critique of political economy as the raison_d'etre and basic content of this "philosophy". This "philosophy", it is important to note - if at all it is to be conceived of as a Philosophy - is a historico-philosophical theory. This we assert in line with Louis Althusser's interpretation of Marx's identification of ideology

1. A philosophy which, as Thesis__XI declares, was not intending to remain a philosophy in the traditional sense of the word : "The philosophers have only interpreted the world in various ways; the point is to change it." K. Marx, F. Engels, Collected_Works. Vol. 5, p. 4

with a form of cognition which is overly vulnerable to class manipulation, and the fact of "science" or Theory as being a correlative of this². (Note that, in working on a critique of Political Economy, before he published what became the first volume of Capital, Marx had since 1862 researched and written a mass of data on purely technical economic observations. This was published after his death as the second and third volumes of Capital). As a theory, historical materialism is not merely a Philosophy of history where the process of history is reflected upon, but the very concept of "history" itself undergoes a metamorphosis. In the crucible of Marxist analysis it is transformed from meaning a reflection on events, time and actors, to a clinical analysis (not reflection) on the process of the totality of social reality. It is an establishment of the "first principle" or laws of the processes of being, and an adoption of this as a basis for explaining whatever is sensually observed. Here economics, politics, morality, and the past as well as the present of human communities, are all subsumed into a singular theoretical analysis which weaves a common connection and meaning amongst all of these.

This analysis as well as a search and establishment of meaning leaves a deposit of what, excusably, may be

2. See, L. Althusser. Essays_in_Ideology, (London: New Left, 1984), ad_passim

called a Marxist philosophy - a dialectico-historical materialism . In this way, as we have already hinted, it is at the same time a reworking of the notion of Philosophy itself. It is now no longer an interpretation of the world in various ways, but a theory on how the world (Nature in its totality) is changing and is to be changed. The form and system of this new "philosophy" is epitomised by the quality and nature of the work, Capital. This is what led Althusser into spotting the development of a transition from philosophy which is identified with ideology to science as being what principally characterises Marxism, and what substantiates his contention that it is only in Capital that the anti-Feuerbachian epistemological break finally becomes apparent³.

Writing in 1914, Lenin perceptively provided the following model of the problematic which formed the schema of Marx's development of a historical-materialism:

People make their own history; but what determines their motives, that is, the motives of people in the mass; what gives rise to the clash of conflicting ideas and endeavours; what is the sum total of all these clashes among the whole mass of human societies; what are the objective conditions of the production of the material means of life that form the basis of all the historical activity of man; what is the law of the development of these conditions? - to all these questions Marx directed attention, pointing out the way to a scientific study of

3. L. Althusser. Lenin and Philosophy, and Other Essays. (London: New Left, 1971), p.71

history as a unified and true-to-law process despite its being extremely variegated and contradictory."4

5.2. ON HISTORICAL MATERIALISM

5.2.1. Introduction

Marx's theory of history, which ipso facto, is an outline of what can exclusively be labelled a Marxist philosophy is incidentally encapsulated in the summary Marx gives in "Preface to the Critique of Political Economy" (1859)5. This was written as a write-up6 for the publication of the results of a project which Marx had started on "The Critique of Political Economy"7.

4. "The Teachings of Karl Marx", in, Handbook of Marxism (London: Victor Gollancz, 1935), p.545

5. David McLellan, ed., Karl Marx: Selected Writings, pp. 388-390

6. See, Arthur A. Prinz, "Background and Ulterior Motive of Marx's 'Preface' of 1859", Journal of the History of Ideas, Vol. XXX, 1969, p. 437-450.

7. Marx wrote the Critique of Political Economy in 1859 with the intention of having it as a summary and aide de memoire for the project on his studies on Political Economy which he had been attempting to concentrate on since the early 1850's. The fruits of this appeared in 1857/59 with his writing of the post-humously published Outlines of Political Economy (Grundrisse), which followed by work in 1862-3 which also was posthumously published as Theories of Surplus Value (Capital Vol IV); After this was research during 1863-4 on the technicalities of circulation of capital and the roots of economic crises, which was also edited and published after his death by Frederick Engels in 1885 as Capital Vol. II, and on some work on price fixation and profit in Capitalism which was edited with the latter but appeared in 1887 as Capital Vol. III. The pinnacle of the entire project became the

For reasons of the logical expediency of our presentation, we shall use this as the basic text on which we shall base our critical reconstruction of historical materialism. This decision is legitimized by a unanimity, articulated by John Plamenatz, that the propositions in the Preface, have "always, since that time, been treated as the classic formulation of historical materialism"⁸. All other writings of Marx shall be cited as elucidations to this text. For this reason we shall take the license of making the following extensive reproduction of the pertinent part of this Preface (for easy reference we have added verse indications between propositions that can be cited and expounded as independent propositions):

[1] In the social production of life, men enter into definite relations that are indispensable and independent of their will, relations of production which correspond to a definite stage of development of their material productive forces. [2] The sum total of these relations of production constitutes the economic structure of society, the real basis on which rises a legal and political superstructure, and to which correspond definite forms of social consciousness. [3] The mode of production of material life conditions the social, political and intellectual life process in general. [4] It

publication, by Marx himself, in 1867 of Das Kapital: Kritik der Politischen Oekonomie (Capital I). First English translation, based on Marx's 3rd German edition of the latter (1883), by, Samuel Moore and Edward Aveling, under the editorship of Engels published in 1887, as Capital:--A--Critical--Analysis--of--Capitalist Production.

8. Quoted in, Arthur M. Prinz, Op_cit., p.437. See also, V.I Lenin, "The Teachings of Karl Marx", in Handbook of Marxism, 1935, p. 543; G.A Cohen, Karl Marx's Theory of History:--A Defence (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1978)

is not the consciousness of men that determines their being, but, on the contrary, their social being that determines their consciousness. [5] At a certain stage of their development, the material productive forces of society come into conflict with the existing relations of production, or - what is but a legal expression for the same thing - with the property relations within which they have been at work hitherto. [6] From forms of development of the productive forces these relations turn into fetters. Then begins an epoch of social revolution. [7] With the change of the economic foundation the entire immense superstructure is more or less rapidly transformed. [8] In considering such transformations, a distinction should always be made between the material transformation of the economic conditions of production, which can be determined with the precision of natural science, and the legal, political, religious, aesthetic or philosophic - in short, ideological forms in which men become conscious of this conflict and fight it out. [9] Just as our opinion of an individual is not based on what he thinks of himself, so can we not judge of such a period of transformation by its own consciousness; on the contrary, this consciousness must be explained rather from the contradictions of material life, from the existing conflict between the social productive forces and the relations of production. [10] No social formation ever perishes before all the productive forces for which there is room in it have developed; and new, higher relations of production never appear before the material conditions of their existence have matured in the womb of the old society itself. [11] Therefore mankind always sets itself only such tasks as it can solve; since, looking at the matter more closely, it will always be found that the task itself arises only when the material conditions for its solution already exists or are at least in the process of formation. [12] In broad outlines, Asiatic, ancient, feudal, and modern bourgeois modes of production can be designated as progressive epochs in the economic formation of society. [13] The bourgeois relations of production are the last antagonistic form of the social process of production - antagonistic not in the sense of individual antagonism, but of one arising from the social conditions of life of the individuals; [14] at the same time, the productive forces developing in the womb of bourgeois society create the material conditions for the solution of the antagonism.

[15] This social formation brings, therefore, the prehistory of human society to a close."9

An outstanding feature of historical materialism as presented above, is that history, in which human individuals certainly are a factor, moves on out of its own, and forms successive concrete patterns of social relationships, without any primary dependence on the contribution or volition of a human community (Verse 1, above). This movement is facilitated by changes in productive__forces10 which in the process of their occurrence assume their own independent dynamic which in the process enhances and leads to the growth of the human beings capacity to produce their subsistence. This growth in the capacity to produce creates a conflict with existing relations of production, thereby inducing an inauguration of a new mode of production, a new socio-historical epoch. This new mode of production, then appears with its own corresponding pattern of

9. K, Marx, F. Engels, Selected__Works. Vol. I (Moscow: Progress Publishers, 1935), pp. 361-2.

10. By productive_forces which we will use interchangeably with, forces___of___production, we understand: quantifiable techniques that emerge in the invention of tools, machines as well as the development productive skills and systems (e.g communications) which have an impact on industry. In The Communist Manifesto, Marx and Engels, explicitly refers to this, and add historical events of scientific advance, such as, "the discovery of America, [and] the rounding of the Cape" as dynamics which resulted in the transition from the Feudal mode of production to the Capitalist one. Cf. Emile Burns, ed., Handbook of Marxism, p.24

social relations¹¹ and state of productive forces, which are derived from the past stage or mode of production, and which in turn will be developed and eventually induce a further stage of development, a new mode of production. Upon this mode of production, then emerges a corresponding infrastructure of political, juridical, and religious institutions. History, thus, is a successive movement from one mode of production to the other, wherein in each mode of production there is a determinant of the nature of a society that emerges. In other words, history is a progressive series of forms of collective social being, which being is determined by the circumstances of the material production of life.

The crucial and only motor of this movement of history is the inexorable emergence of the clash between the development of productive forces and the given societal status quo (relations of production) within a given mode of production. For Marx, it is this conflict - where the productive relations are no longer forms of the development of productive forces but their inhibition - which constitutes the locus of a "social

11. Social relations is here used as synonymous to "relations of production" or production relations. According to this perspective, society is perceived as primarily organised according to the antagonistic classes which emerge from their position in the process of social economic production. It has always been a series of dialectic correlates of, "Freeman and slave, patrician and plebeian, lord and serf, guild-master and journeyman, [capitalist and worker], in a word, oppressor and oppressed." Communist Manifesto, in Emile Burns ed., Handbook of Marxism, p.23

revolution" (Verses 5-8, above). This conflict eventuates into the inauguration of a new stage of development of mode of production, as, demonstrably, it had happened with the movement from the Asiatic, up to the present capitalist stage. This is illustrated in The Communist Manifesto (1848) in relation to the development of Capitalism from its precedent epoch:

The means of production and of exchange, on whose foundation the bourgeoisie built itself up, were generated in feudal society. At a certain stage in the development of these means of production and of exchange, the conditions under which feudal society produced and exchanged, the feudal organisation of agriculture and manufacturing industry, in one word, the feudal relations of property became no longer compatible with the already developed productive forces; they became so many fetters. They had to be burst asunder; they were burst asunder. Into their place stepped free competition, accompanied by a social and political constitution adapted to it, and by the economical and political sway of the bourgeois class.¹²

Where does this leave the human factor? What about the role of the "class struggle" and the proletariat as a collective class of human beings? This is the crucial question in our polemics against humanistic Marxism.

5.2.2. The Mode of the Participation of the Human Being in History

Clearly, Marx's philosophy of history is not merely a view that "history is fundamentally, the growth of

12. Handbook of Marxism, p. 28

human productive power, and [that] forms of society rise and fall as they enable or impede that growth", as G.A Cohen remarks¹³. It is this, and more: the fundamental view is that the growth of human productive power - which Cohen perceives as the motive force of history without, defectively, emphasising the fact of the conflict this has to engage in with relations of production - is taking place autonomously, independent of human conscious control. The human being has no direct or agitational role towards the creation of a conflict between productive forces and relations of production.

The definition of the relationship between the human person and the development of productive forces or means of production, is what constitutes the central thesis of The German Ideology. It is due to this reason that The German Ideology stands as the very foundational stage of the structure of the theory of a materialist conception of history . There, inter alia, Marx with Frederick Engels, seminally introduced the materialistic doctrine that, "by producing their means of subsistence men are directly producing their material life"¹⁴, and that, "the language of politics, law, morality, religion, metaphysics, etc, of a people . . . is conditioned by a definite development of their productive forces and of the intercourse

13. Karl Marx's Theory of history: A Defence, p.x

14. The German Ideology, Collected Works, Vol.5, p.31

corresponding to these, up to its furtherest forms"15.

Even the activity of a production of the means of subsistence, which is definitional of the human person's social being, as we show below, is not initiated on his own terms nor is it entirely controlled by him. For "the way in which [people] produce their means of subsistence depends first of all on the nature of the means of subsistence they actually find in existence"16. To the human being, the mode of production (the socio-historical epoch into which he or she is born), and a complex of productive relations that issue out of it, including the ideological superstructure, is historically pre-given. Further, it is not pre-given in the passive sense, rather, it continues to determine his entire being:

In the social production of life, men enter into definite relations that are indispensable and independent of their will, relations of production which correspond to a definite stage of development of their material productive forces . . . the mode of production of material life conditions the social, political and intellectual life process in general. It is not the consciousness of men that determines their being, but, on the contrary, their social being that determines their consciousness" (Preface, Verses, 1,3,4 above) (own emphasis)

The only role of the human person in this process is that of a producer who is conditioned by the mode of production he finds. And insofar as we are here

15. Ibid., p.36

16. Loc cit..

dealing with history - the only arena of human existence - this means that what is definitional of the human being, according to Marx, in The German Ideology, is that he produces his means of subsistence, and towards this goal he develop tools and means which subject and model nature to the satisfaction of his own needs. "Men" Marx conceded, "can be distinguished from animals by consciousness, by religion or anything else", but continued to make his point that, ". . . they themselves begin to distinguish themselves from animals as soon as they begin to produce their means of subsistence, a step which is conditioned by their physical [social?] organisation. By producing their means of subsistence men are indirectly producing their material life"¹⁷.

As a perpetual "new-comer", onto to the stage of history, the human being continues to built on and within the given mode of production, further producing his material life and in the process producing himself insofar as what he is, is conditioned by the material base to which he is contributing. This is a cyclic movement in which man enters conditioned, and drops out when he has produced his means of subsistence, thus contributing to the development of forces of production, leading to the need of a new social formation, of which his progeny will be part, again

17. Collected Works, Vol 5, p.31

only as a preconditioned ensemble of the antagonistic production relations of this spiral of history.

In a letter to Pavel V. Annenkov, dated 28 December 1846, in which Marx discusses his view of Pierre Proudhon's work, Philosophie de la Misere, Marx presented the following apt summary of what we present above:

. . . Is man free to choose this or that form of society? By no means. If you assume a given stage of development in production, commerce or consumption, you will have a corresponding form of social constitution, a corresponding organisation, whether of the family, of the estates or of the classes - in a word, a corresponding civil society. . . Needless to say, man is not free to choose his productive forces - upon which his whole history is based - for every productive force is an acquired force, the product of previous activity. Thus the productive forces are the result of man's practical energy, but that energy is in turn circumscribed by the conditions in which man is placed by the productive forces already acquired, by the form of society which exists before him, which he does not create, which is the product of the preceding generation . . . his material relations form the basis of all his relations. These material relations are but the necessary forms in which his material and individual activity is realised.¹⁸

Here Marx makes a clear emphasis on the determining force of economic relations on the social history of the human race, and a statement on how the individual human person is unconsciously participating in this process which in effect is a process of his self-creation. In The German Ideology, the same was stated,

18. Collected Works, Vol. 38, p.96

in a critical differentiation from the view of the Left Hegelians, in particular Bruno Bauer:

History does not end by being resolved into 'self-consciousness', but that each stage contains a material result, a sum of productive forces, a historically created relation to nature and of individuals to one another, which is handed down to each generation from its predecessor: a mass of productive forces, capital funds and circumstances, which on the one hand is indeed modified by the new generation, but on the other also prescribes for it its conditions of life and gives it a definite development, a special character. It shows that circumstances make men just as much as men make circumstances.¹⁹

For Marx, what Feuerbach and others had identified as the "essence of man", and searched for in nebulous and idealistic abstractions, is for him the sum of these productive forces²⁰. The "essence" of human being is the human person's productive activity - labour, whereby, unconsciously, he in turn is producing his ultimate nature. This aspect, originally mooted in 1846 in The German Ideology is what forms the foundational motif of Capital. There, in a trenchant exposure of how the capitalist mode of production misappropriates what is in fact definitonal of being human, it is explained that,

Labour is, in the first place, a process in which man and Nature participate, and in which man of his own accord starts, regulates, and controls [NB, within the constraints provided by the mode of production he finds in existence] the material re-actions between

19. Collected Works, Vol 5, p.54

20. Loc. cit..

himself and Nature . . . in order to appropriate Nature's productions in a form adapted to his own wants. By thus acting on the external world and changing it, he at the same time changes his own nature. He develops his slumbering powers and compels them to act in obedience to his sway.²¹

However - which is what introduces the element of the primacy of the process of a development of productive forces insofar as this is the locus of the conditioned self-production of human nature - Marx hastens to add .

No sooner does labour undergo the least development, than it requires specially prepared instruments . . . The use and fabrication of instruments of labour, although existing in a germ among certain species of animals, is especially characteristic of the human labour-process, and Franklin, therefore, correctly defines man as a tool-making animal . . . It is not the article made, but how they are made, and by what instruments, that enables us to distinguish different economic epochs. Instruments of labour not only supply a standard of the degree of development to which human labour has attained, but they are also indicators of the social conditions under which labour is carried on."²²

This view drastically challenges the speculative principle of Rene Descartes' cogito, ergo sum, and replaces it with laboro, ergo sum, wherein in labour human persons reproduces themselves; and where this self-reproduction is predetermined by the tools they already find in existence. The human being does not have much say in his self-production. History, is a process of the self-development of the human person, a

21. K. Marx, Capital, Vol. 1, pp. 173

22. Ibid., pp. 175,176

process in which he has no authority.

5.2.3. On the Class Struggle and Revolution

In the system of Marx's theory, the issue of class, in emphasis, and the reality of the "class struggle" is uniquely, and in some sense exclusively, concentrated on the analysis of the capitalist stage of history. Hence the factor of the working class or proletarians, and its role, is specially introduced in ---The Communist Manifesto, where a programmatic analysis of the movement from capitalism to the succeeding epoch of communism is made. Marx and Engels viewed capitalism as being unique from the preceding historical epochs in that, in it the estrangement in production relations, between the owners of the means of production and the worker is coagulated in an unprecedented manner into two sharply rival classes:

The history of all hitherto existing society is the history of class struggles . . . Our epoch, the epoch of the bourgeoisie, possesses, however, this distinctive feature: it has simplified the class antagonisms. Society as a whole is more and more splitting up into two great hostile camps, into two great classes directly facing each other - bourgeoisie and proletariat.²³

Unlike other past stages, here, the further movement, to the next and "final stage", the communist one, can only take place through a visible struggle between the

23. The Communist Manifesto, in, Emile Burns ed. Handbook on Marxism, p.23

working class and the capitalist²⁴. But this last statement does not appear in Marx's definitional summary of historical materialism in the "Preface".

Arthur Prinz explains that Marx was forced to write the Preface, as a pre-announcement of a book on "the critique of political economy", so that German publishers who were notoriously intimidated by Prussian obnoxious press laws should have the 'feel' of what he was working on with the hope that one of them might offer to publish the work. In doing this he had to omit any mention of the specifically "subversive" terms such as "class" and the "class struggle". Prinz, therefore, argues that the Preface should be read with the suspicion that Marx was writing it under the strain of not wanting to arouse the suspicion of the Prussian censor and that the "class struggle" should be taken as implied in his outline. We do not agree with this as being the reason for the omission of "class struggle" in the Preface.

In contradiction of Prinz's claim, we find that in the Preface, Marx is intentionally giving a general theoretical outline of his conception of history without

24. In his, "The Teachings of Karl Marx" Lenin offers this emphasis with an amplification that the original proposition of Marx and Engels in The Communist Manifesto that, "the history of all hitherto existing society is the history of class struggle", is not entirely correct since the same cannot be said of the Asiatic mode of production. In, Emile Burns. Handbook of Marxism, p. 545-6)

seeking to be bogged down on the details of the specific features of each epoch or stage of the mode of production. "Class struggle" is poignantly and specifically relevant to the dynamics of change from the capitalist to the communist mode of production. The Preface is not an analysis of a particular mode of production; it is presentation of a singular postulate on the material primacy of history. This is what marks the difference between this piece of writing and the The___Communist___Manifesto. The latter concentrates specifically on capitalism as the immediate target of the programme of action of the Communist League, for whom the Manifesto was written²⁵. Hence a paucity of any direct introduction of the place of the class struggle, in the former.

As we stated above, the emphasis on the class struggle, and thus the only theoretical possibility of human activity in history as conceived in materialistic terms, is uniquely located in the analysis of Capitalism, as the Manifesto itself states that it is within this epoch that class conflicts are most acute. We thus observe that class struggle as understood as workers actively acting to bring about the downfall of Capitalism, is, strictly speaking, not sui__generis, to historical materialism when the latter is taken as a

25. For further background to the production of The Communist__Manifesto, see, David MacLellan, ed., Karl_Marx: Selected_Works, p.221

theory of the entire process of history which begins with the Asiatic mode of production, which mode of production, admittedly²⁶, had no class differentiations. Only "class struggle" in the sense of the functional note of the existence of differences and tensions of group interests - objective contradictions - is perennial in this theory. And in its presence as such, it is there as category which does not denote a preponderance of the actors within this struggle: Thus concludes the Communist Manifesto its discussion of the emergence and role of the industrial workers, the proletariat:

The advance of industry, whose involuntary promoter is the bourgeoisie, replaces the isolation of the labourers, due to competition, by their revolutionary combination, due to association. The development of modern industry, therefore, cuts from under its feet the very foundation on which the bourgeoisie produces and appropriates products. What the bourgeoisie, therefore, produces, above all, is its own grave diggers. Its fall and the victory of the proletariat are equally inevitable.²⁷

This does not mean that the activity of "class struggle", is excluded or condemned, it is just not put forward as the absolute motive force of history. Furthermore, it leads us to the question of the traditional linkage of the class struggle to revolutionary activity, where theoretical-humanism

26. See Frederick Engels' reference to the first sentence of the The Communist Manifesto, in the 1888 English edition of same. In, Selected Works (One Vol), p.35

27. In, Selected Works (One Vol). p. 46

would seek to point to this as evidence of the place of human activity in the analysis of offered in historical materialism.

In The German Ideology, Marx made the very important point that the determination of all superstructural reality by the material basis of society extends even to the determination of the possibilities of a revolutionary removal of one epoch in favour of the other. Even this - a case where a revolutionary overthrowing must occur - is not open to determination by the human actors involved:

Conditions of life, which different generations find in existence, determine also whether or not the revolutionary convulsion periodically recurring in history will be strong enough to overthrow the basis of everything that exists. And if these material conditions of a complete revolution are not present - namely, on the one hand the existing productive forces, on the other the formation of a revolutionary mass, which revolts not only against separate conditions of the existing society, but against the existing 'production of life' itself, the 'total activity' on which it was based - then it is absolutely immaterial for practical development whether the idea of this revolution has been expressed a hundred times already, as the history of communism proves.²⁸

In 1859, the same view was repeated :

No social formation ever perishes before all the productive forces for which there is room in it have developed; and new, higher relations of production never appear before the material conditions of their existence have matured in the womb of the old society itself. Therefore mankind always sets itself only such tasks as it can solve; since, looking at the matter more closely, it will always be found that the task

28. Collected Works. Vol 5, p. 54

itself arises only when the material conditions for its solution already exists or are at least in the process of formation. (Preface, Verses, 10, 11, above)

In the same vein, in addressing the issue of the manner of the supersession of the present epoch, The Communist Manifesto, remarkably ex silentio on conscious revolutionary activity, states that,

Modern bourgeois society with its relations of production, of exchange and property, a society that has conjured up such gigantic means of production and of exchange, is like a sorcerer who is no longer able to control the powers of the nether world whom he has called up by his spells . . . the weapons with which the bourgeoisie felled feudalism to the ground are now turned against the bourgeoisie itself. But not only has the bourgeoisie forged weapons that bring death to itself; it has also called into existence the men who are to wield those weapons - the modern working class -the proletarians.²⁹

A number of vital points stand out of this last passage. The first to note, is that this is the paragraph where the proletariat are introduced for the first time into the analysis and programme of the Manifesto. And this, only about one-fourth into the entire Manifesto - after the description of the essentially autonomous nature of historical development. Even here they are introduced as a linkage to the fact that the capitalist system is busy bringing "death to itself". It is not the working class that is to kill Capitalism. On the contrary, they are brought into being by Capitalism itself, as one of the "weapons" which Capitalism has generated against itself. In

29. In, Handbook of Marxism, p.30

addition, "In proportion as the bourgeoisie, i.e., capital, is developed, in the same proportion is the proletariat, the modern working class, developed"³⁰. They are part of the automatic machinery of a self-supersession of an epoch. They are constituents of the category of "productive relations" which gets into conflict with productive forces and thereby inducing a social revolution. In a strictly theoretical sense their conscious self-constitution as a revolutionary mass is dispensable to the process of history. The following statement from the Manifesto, communicates this impression better:

If the proletariat during its contest with the bourgeoisie is compelled, by the force of circumstances, to organise itself into a class; if, by means of a revolution it makes itself the ruling class, and as such sweeps away by force the old conditions, then it will, along with these conditions, have swept away the conditions for the existence of class antagonisms and of classes generally, and will thereby have abolished its own supremacy as a class.³¹(own emphasis)

Again, as to the class-consciousness that makes the class struggle possible, Marx maintained that this "consciousness, must be explained . . . from the contradictions of material life, from the existing conflict between the social productive forces and the relations of production" (V.8, above). And quickly adds

30. Loc. cit.

31. Op. cit., p.46

that " . . . new higher relations of production never appear before the material conditions of their existence have matured in the womb of the old society itself" (v.9). In other words, even in Capitalism, the struggle of the proletariat against bourgeois exploitation and oppression can never succeed until such time that the capitalist system has developed up to a certain level which radicalises the conflict between productive forces and the existing relations of production (v.5,6). All this is largely outside the will and initiative of the individual. The entire process takes place of itself under the governance of laws akin to those operative in Natural history. This Marx reiterated in the 1867 preface to Capital,

. . . here individuals are dealt with only insofar as they are personifications of economic categories, embodiments of particular class-relations and class-interests. My standpoint, from which the evolution of the economic formation of society is viewed as a process of natural history, can less than any other make the individual responsible for relations whose creature he socially remains, however much he may subjectively raise himself above them.³²

In the Afterword to the Second German edition of Capital (1873), Marx quotes approvingly, and at length, from a review article of the Russian edition of Capital which was published in the European Messenger (May 1872). Concentrating on the method of Marx's work, the writer observed:

32. Capital Vol. I, p. 19

Marx treats the social movement as a process of natural history, governed by laws not only independent of human will, consciousness and intelligence, but rather, on the contrary, determining that will, consciousness and intelligence . . . in his opinion every historical period has laws of its own . . . as soon as society has outlived a given period of development, and is passing over from one given stage to the another, it begins to be subject also to other laws. In a word, economic life offers us a phenomenon analogous to the history of evolution in other branches of biology . . .

.33

5.3. CONCLUSION

In the foregoing we have provided a systematic reconstruction of the structure of Marx's "philosophy", concentrating on pointing out the fact of the epistemological shift that Marx undergoes since after 1845, and as this is primarily demonstrated in his theory of history. According to our finding, the role of the human person, as an individual and as a member of a social collective, which in the capitalist stage, crystalises itself as a class in antagonism to some other class, is theoretically dispensable to the process of history as Marx viewed it. However, on the other hand, history is seen as, fundamentally, being a process of human self-development through the unavoidable participation in the labour process. Even as a process, of human self-development, it is a process which is governed by laws which the human person has no control over, but can only learn to understand and harmonise his

33. Ibid., p. 27,

life accordingly³⁴.

It is also significant to note that the element of the autonomy and "auto-generation" which emerges in the foregoing is a theoretical by-product of Marx's counter-emphasis against Hegel's view of the dialectic, where in Hegel, the generation by a "thesis" of its negative is explained in terms of a logical necessity which refuses to name the actual resolution of this self-actualisation of the Idea in time and space, which we discussed in our previous chapter.

We proceed in the following chapter to expose this interpretation of historical-materialism to Miranda's criticism. A comparison with liberation theology in general, is reserved for chapter 10.

34. Frederick Engels. Introduction to "Dialectics of Nature", in, Selected Works (One Vol.), p. 359, 350

CHAPTER 6

THE DIALECTICAL MATERIALISM OF MARX'S THEORY OF HISTORY: AN APPRAISAL OF MIRANDA'S REFUTATIONS

6.1. INTRODUCTION.

According to Karl Marx, historical development occurs independent of the role of the human being as Subject. it is an autonomous process of the resolution of the dynamics of the interaction of elements of economic production as a social process. This attests the preconditioning power of the mechanism of the process of the acquisition of subsistence by the human person on his social self-determination. These assertions which we established in our disquisition thus far, constitute what J. P. Miranda dismissively calls "economic determinism"¹. As his work reveals, his critical consideration of this is what forms the basis and motivation of his overall disputation against what he perceives as being malicious anti-humanist formulations of the thought of Karl Marx.

The pivotal point of his dispute with this "economic

1. Marx Against the Marxists., p. 69

determinism", which he understands as a theory holding that, "the laws governing economic reality impose determinism on the actions of human beings"², is the implications this has for human freedom. This stems from his belief that "any good materialist is logically obliged to deny human freedom"³. To justify his suspicion, he quotes Lenin's statement that, "the idea of determinism maintains the obligatory nature of human actions and rejects the fictitiousness of free will"⁴.

In summary, the counter-thesis in Miranda's argument, stated in his own words is that, when faithfully interpreted, Marxism should be understood as teaching that:

It is we human beings who make history for ourselves. Incontrovertible laws exist only for nature, for plants and animals; and even here they exist only insofar as human beings do not intervene to alter them and thus turn them into history⁵

Proceeding to refute this "materialism", with the prime intention of establishing the paramountcy of the notion of human freedom in Marx's system, he embarks on a reinterpretation of Marxism which seeks to recast the materialist centrality of Marx's theory into a form

2. Ibid., p.52

3. Loc. cit.

4. From, Lenin, Sochinenia, 4th ed., I:456, Cited in, *ibid.*

5. Op. cit., p. 55

which is accomodative of humanism⁶. In this chapter we evaluate this reformulation, and go further to consider some of the theoretical problems which an "anti-humanist" interpretation of historical materialism presents to revolutionary praxis. Our discussion in Chapter 4 of Miranda's assertion that history is a process which has its motive force the will of the human individual, who ipso facto is its Subject, in a certain sense, introduced his systematic criticism of the presentation and interpretation of Marx's theory of history, which we presented in the foregoing chapter. Here we respond to his reactions against the philosophic "thread" which weaves this anti-humanistic import of dialectico-historical materialism.

The bulk of our discussion focuses on the way in which Miranda has failed to note and recognise Marx's tendency of subjecting the theoretical tools and objects of his analysis to a conceptual mutation which suits the conclusions he reaches, and how this results in his misinterpretation of the materialism which Marxist theory propounds. Examples of this are the new meaning Marx gave to "ideology" in The German Ideology; the redefinition of Philosophy, announced in Theses On Feuerbach; the broadened and deepened meaning given to

6. Besides Miranda, Juan Luis Segundo also engages in the same task in his Faith and Ideologies (pp. 200-219). Segundo, however, concentrates on developing the proposition of the autonomy of ideology from determination by the material mode of production.

"history" in the formulation of historical materialism; and, the unique meaning which the concept "materialism" itself assumes in this context.

What is pertinent at this stage of our discussion, is how Miranda has failed to recognise this trend in respect to Marx's transformation of the meaning of the category "the economic", or the discipline of Economics itself, as well as, "determinism".

In Marx's thought system, the concept "determinism", when used in relation to the dynamics of social production is used with the specific philosophical consciousness which adumbrates the change in meaning like the one "materialism" undergoes when used in relation to the new meaning of the "historical" in historical materialism. As we show below, this is not a proposition of "determinism" as conceived in the empiricist context of a reflection on the relationship between "cause and effect"; instead, it is "determinism" as emanating from the context of Hegelian philosophy, where the epistemological quest for unity has introduced the idea of the mutual effect between opposites, as well as, between Subject and Object, i.e., dialectics.

We begin our appraisal of Miranda's refutation of "economic determinism" at this point.

6.2. THE UNIQUENESS ON THE MEANING OF THE MODAL CONCEPTS OF MARX'S THEORY

6.2.1. DETERMINISM IN POLITICAL ECONOMY

Miranda argues that "Marx ascribed determinism to bourgeois theoreticians, and that he himself regarded human beings as free no matter what mode of production may be in"⁷. This is the meaning he attaches to Marx's demonstration of how traditionally, economists such as Adam Smith have tended to explain the workings of the (capitalist) economic system in a manner which gives an impression that a given economic system has a sovereign inner-law of its own which uncontrollably governs the functionings of the economic process.

Here we agree with Miranda that there is as part of Marx's philosophical project this critique of a claim of the existence and activity of a law in economics. However, what we will point out is the extent to which Miranda has misunderstood the actual object of Marx's criticism, and the defective implication this has for the construction of his critique of what he calls "economic determinism".

Contrary to Miranda's understanding of this critique by Marx as being a critique of any notion of a law which

7. Op. cit., p. 60

conscripts and marginalises human volition in history, we maintain, that this is exclusively a fundamental criticism of the methodology of the classical Political Economy of the economists of capitalism who Marx had devoted himself to studying during 1844 and during his work on Contribution to the Critique of Political Economy (1859). Marx's objective was to expose the tendency of the owners of capital to ascribe what they are actually responsible for, to some assumedly uncontrollable laws of economics, thereby expecting to be absolved of responsibility for the crises which are generated by the capitalist system itself.

For instance, in Capital (I) he systematically argues in contradiction to the analyses of David Ricardo and Adam Smith that even apparently "complex" phenomena such as the occurrence of unemployment⁸ and over-production⁹ are not the results of some supra-human and omnipotent

8. Capital, I, p. 594:
" After Political Economy has demonstrated the constant production of a relative surplus-population of labourers to be a necessity of capitalistic accumulation, she very aptly, in the guise of an old maid, puts in the mouth her 'beau ideal' of a capitalist the following words addressed to those supernumeraries thrown on the streets by their own creation of additional capital: 'We manufacturers do what we can for you, whilst we are increasing that capital on which you must subsist, and you must do the rest by accomodating your numbers to the means of subsistence".

9. Ibid. p. 543

law, but results of a socio-economic system which is consciously manipulated by those who benefit from it by inducing these crises

In The Civil War in France, written in April 1871 during the period of the difficult experiences of the Paris Commune, Marx wrote,

A great lot of shops and factories have been closed in Paris, their owners having run away. This is the old method of the industrial capitalists, who consider themselves entitled 'by the spontaneous action of the laws of political economy' not only to make a profit out of labour, as the condition of labour, but to stop it altogether and throw the workmen on the pavement - to produce an artificial crisis whenever a victorious revolution threatens the 'order' of their 'system'.¹⁰ (own emphasis)

Miranda cites the same passage and uses to buttress his argument while failing to note that, in fact, Marx is derisively quoting (the sentence we have underlined) from a rival source. He mistakes this critique of bourgeois Political Economy as being references to the general self-working of the process of the inauguration of the various modes of production, and as being proof of Marx's rejection of a notion of humanly uncontrollable laws operating in history¹².

Marx, however, is very clear in this regard. He makes

10. Collected Works Vol. 17, p. 528

11. Op. cit., p. 54

12. Miranda, op_cit, pp. 52-56

a clear distinction between laws operative within a particular mode of production and the general law of historical development. In this instance, he is critiquing the particular laws of capitalist production; nay, he is exposing how capitalist industrialists armed by their theoreticians, construct and use the fact of the existence of these laws as an externalised sovereign phenomenon and an absolute necessity which they can arbitrarily refer to as an excuse and instrument for their exploitation and miserisation of the working class.

As a matter of fact, while analysing the relationship between population increase and the employment of labour in capitalism, Marx explicatively added:

In fact, every special historic mode of production has its own special laws, historically valid within its limits alone.¹³

The problem for Marx, or rather his dispute with bourgeois economists, to be precise, is not a recognition of an existence of these laws or inner-law; instead, it is how the identification of the existence of this law, by virtue of the fact that it is a theoretic product of capitalistic economics, is essentially serving a negative social value because of the manner that it is used in bourgeois political economy. Furthermore, he is exposing the fact that

13. Capital, I, p. 592

since this identification emanates within a specific socio-historical epoch - the capitalist mode of production in this case - it is a partisan and ideological construct. It is a product of capitalist theoreticians who are in the task of rationalising and legitimating capitalism.

In the Inaugural Address of the International Working Men's Association (1864), making reference to the British workers' campaign for a Ten Hour working day, he presented the following note of the class partisanship of Political Economy as a discipline in practice:

This struggle about the legal restriction of the hours of labour raged the more fiercely since, apart from frightened avarice, it told indeed upon the great contest between the blind rule of the supply and demand laws which form the political economy of the middle class, and social production controlled by social foresight, which forms the political economy of the working class. Hence the Ten hours Bill was not only a great practical success; it was the victory of a principle; it was the first time that in broad daylight the political economy of the middle class succumbed to the political economy of the working class.¹⁴ (emphasis ours)

In the same speech he makes a comparative statement about the "victory of the political economy of labour over the political economy of property"¹⁵.

What is it that differentiates the political economy

14. In, David McLellan, Karl Marx Selected Writings, p. 535

15. Ibid., p. 536

of the bourgeoisie from that of the working class, and what is the defining character of each of the two? From the point we made above on the historical restrictiveness of the analytical structure of classical Political Economy, it is evident that the political economy of the middle class, essentially, distinguishes itself by its restricted subjectivism; by the fact of its being part of "the ruling ideas of the ruling class"¹⁶. The fact that it is unique to a particular epoch, and consequently, operates exclusively within that epoch, wherein as an intellectual system in a society which is built on class antagonisms it becomes a creation of the dominant, renders it an ideology. An ideology of exploitation. It is therefore epistemologically inferior (underdeveloped), as much as it is having a negative ethical value.

In contrast, the political economy of the working class is historical-materialism. Since this is imbued with a vision which transcends the epoch of capitalism, it is definitionally supra-epochal, and is as such superior to that of the middle class. The former is concerned with the laws of an economy within a given mode of production, where the nature of the historically restrictive scope of these laws renders them inexorably manipulable by class interests. The latter is concerned with the broader and general law of social formations.

16. The Communist Manifesto

It envisions the transcendence of the ills of capitalism and the attainment of a freedom which a classless society promises. Marx's critical references to the involuntary laws in economics refers to the former: an ideological use of economic analysis.

Therefore, we conclude that Miranda is wrong in inferring that Marx's criticism of the notion of the "spontaneous action of the laws of political economy" as used within the context of a critique of capitalism, applies universally to any view of the existence of "a law" of historical development. This error leads him to the fallacious claim that Marx "is mocking those who maintain that determinism is imposed on us by the mode of production, and he is saying that it is the capitalists who maintain this point of view"¹⁷.

6.2.2. ON THE ECONOMIC

What we also note is Miranda's apparent ignorance of the transformation which the term "economy" undergoes in Marx's philosophy. Like the change Marx effected on the traditional definition of History, so he also did with "economics". He broadened the meaning of the term and gave it a meaning which goes beyond the traditional precincts of the science Economics. He transformed the meaning and object of economics from being a theoretical

17. Op. cit., p. 56

investigation of the techniques of supply and demand, as its bourgeois history dictated (Adam Smith), to being a focus on an investigation of the primary processes of the development of collective social being of the human kind which takes place as they engage in the task of producing their means of subsistence.

For him, this was more than a technical redefinition of the discipline of economics, it was a purposeful philosophically-motivated reconceptualisation of what actually the discipline was all about and ought to be about. The restricted definition of economics, as far as he could see, derived from what he identified as bourgeois political economy and was borne out of an undisclosed objective which such a self-imposed restriction as to the scope of the discipline served. This polemic on the critique of the methodology of traditional economics is specifically undertaken in his critical response to Pierre Proudhon's work, The System of Economic Contradiction: The Poverty of Philosophy, in his correspondence with P.V Annenkov, and in, The Poverty of Philosophy (1847/18). Proudhon was criticised for a failure to grasp the material basis of the historical development of humanity, and consequently for taking recourse to externalising concepts without relating them to their genetic basis. Marx

18. for both see, K. Marx, The Poverty of Philosophy (New York: International Publishers, 1975)

observed:

Economists express the relations of bourgeois production, the division of labour, credit, money, etc., as fixed, immutable, eternal categories . . . [they] explain how production takes place in the above-mentioned relations, but what they do not explain is how these relations themselves are produced, that is, the historical movement which gives them birth.¹⁹

Proudhon was accused of still operating with the bourgeois concept of economics, and this is what according to Marx, accounted for the defects of his work and analysis in general. He obfuscated the relationship between social relations, on the one hand, and abstract categories and expressions of classical economics, on the other, putting the latter as causes of the former, thereby reducing social relations into "thoughts, which are to be found alphabetically arranged at the end of every treatise on political economy"²⁰. Against this, Marx counterposed that, "economic categories are only the theoretical expressions, the abstractions of the social relations of production"²¹. So-called traditional economic categories, he contended, cannot be sensible and valid unless they are explained in relation to the material social relations, of which they are but intellectual constructions and expression. He declared:

P. J. Proudhon the economist, understands very

19. In, D. MacLellan, Karl Marx: Selected Writings, p.199

20. Loc. cit.

21. Ibid., p.202

well that men make cloth, linen, or silk materials in definite relations of production. But what he has not understood is that these definitive social relations are just as much produced by men as linen, flax, etc.²²

The import of Marx's reconceptualisation of economics, which became the foundation of his philosophy referred, primarily, to the vicissitudes of the system of human self-realisation through the process of his acquisition of means of his subsistence, and how this in turn, is only expressed in social relations which are modelled according to the obtaining system of production. This, we explain elsewhere (Chapter 8), merged the subjects of the sciences of Economics and Anthropology.

Before accusing Marx of "economic determinism", as Miranda does, it is important to take cognisance of this unique meaning of economics in Marx. Because of his failure to recognise this, Miranda (and Segundo²³) fell into the serious error of reading into references to the word "economic" in Marx, "economics" as narrowly understood and experienced in their contemporary dominant capitalist intellectual culture. Within this distorted perspective Miranda could then easily proceed, as he does, to deny that the economic_factor is decisive in determinig history, and more specifically,

22. K. Marx, The Poverty of Philosophy, p. 109.

23. Faith and Ideologies, p. 179

intellectual life²⁴ and human actions.

In the following section of this chapter we will review the meaning of determinism as applied in historical-materialism, and how this is also related to Marx's specific understanding of the process of production (economics). We shall then see how it specifically differs from the use of the concept as often deployed in criticisms of Marx's theory of history as being "deterministic". We shall carry out this discussion as an investigation of Miranda's interpretation of the philosophic structure of historical materialism as flowing from a distorted conceptualisation of the use of the term "economic", as we saw above.

6.3 THE MODE OF PRODUCTION AS A DETERMINING ELEMENT

Based on a conceptual framework which has failed to grasp the novelty of Marx's conception of the "economic" factor as an element which determines social being, Miranda proceeds to offer an interpretation of Marxism whose thesis is encapsulated in his assertion that:

It is the personal conduct of human beings that determines socio-economic circumstances, not vice versa.²⁵

24. Op. cit., p. 60

25. Op. cit., p. 57

In appraisal of this, we observe that according to Marx, historical development prosecutes itself through an interaction of three theoretically identifiable factors. These are: the mode_of_production (the system of production as a socio-historical entity), productive_forces_or_powers (means of production) and relations_of_production (social relations). Miranda goes beyond this triad, and over and above it posits the element of the dynamics of the "personal conduct of human beings".

According to him, the fact of the relationship between the human labourer and his interaction with productive forces, his improvement of tools of production, reveals itself, primarily as the indication that the first actor here is the human being who acts upon his environment. The "mode of production" for him is a functional concept, it refers to the activity of the labouring human being within a society. He claims that "the mode of production . . . includes production forces and relations of production"²⁶. It is not a distinguishable entity and thus not the determining structure. There is no determining substructure in history, according to him. Human beings are free and self-determinant. He emphasises the fact that the development in productive forces which is the results of voluntary human activity, is what constitutes the motive force of history. In addition, he emphasises that the complementary part of

26. Op cit., p. 100

this triad - production relations (social relations), are also a product of human conduct. To this effect he quotes as evidence, from The Poverty of Philosophy, drawing attention to the fact that Marx stated that social relations are by men,

P J Proudhon the economist understands very well that men make cloth, linen, or silk materials in definite production. But what he has not understood is that these definite social relations are just as much produced by men as linen, flax, etc.²⁷ (emphasis ours).

Miranda commits the serious error of failing to note the triadic nature of the elements constitutive of Marx's theory of history, the importance of each of this to the whole, and the explicative significance this has on the logical structure of historical-materialism. His analysis of the constitutive elements of Marx's conception of history, starts off with productive forces - the arena of human activity. His entire interpretation is locked around this element. It deliberately refuses to take account of the mode of production: Of the fact that the human actor, as labourer, even though working as the initiator onto Nature and thus being forced to contribute to the development in productive forces, is working within the limits of the preconditions of the mode of production that he found in existence.

27. Quoted in, Marx Against the Marxists, p. 58

in contradiction to Miranda, we find that according to Marx, the mode of production provides the designated scope of human self-expression through production (labour) and the development of his means for this production (productive forces), and as such it is the basis, the foundation upon which the entire activity of social production takes place. Productive forces and social relations are closely related and in the course of the operation of this structure, are theoretically distinct from the mode of production.

This point, which Marx reiterated in numerous instances, also appears in The Poverty of Philosophy, in a sentence immediately after the end of the above quoted citation which Miranda has provided as evidence for his interpretation. The continuation of this reads:

. . . social relations are just as much produced by men as linen, flax, etc. Social relations are closely bound up with productive forces. In acquiring new productive forces men change their mode of production; and in changing their mode of production, in changing the way of earning their living, they change all their social relations. The hand-mill gives you society with the feudal lord; the steam-mill, society with the industrial capitalist . . . There is a continual movement of growth in productive forces, of destruction in social relations, of formation in ideas; the only immutable thing is the abstraction of movement-mors immortalis.²⁸

This explains both the unity as well as the

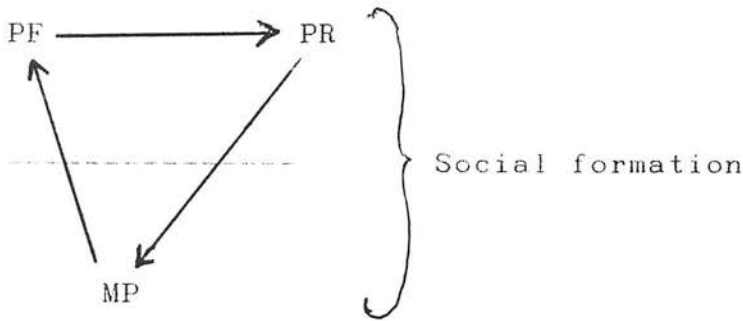
²⁸. In, D McLellan, Karl Marx: Selected Writings, p.202

independence of each of the factors at play here. But still, the productive forces are explained in relation to the relations of production as a set of factors whose dynamism is independent of what is signified by "the mode of production". The mode of production is accorded a special emphasis, and is correctly seen as belonging, theoretically, to a class of its own in that it is the framework and context within which the interaction between the means of production and consequent pattern of social relations occurs.

Note that the signification of the "mode of production" does not imply an accent of an empirical vision of an identifiable entity called, "mode of production". Perhaps Miranda is reacting against such an inference. The mode of production, we maintain, is both the context as well as the result of historical activity. It is the context with which the result is realised. By virtue of this, it determines its result (this what Miranda fears in giving a categorical distinction to "mode of production"), and, in turn, the result determines it. The conglomeration of the process of relations of production and forces of production manifests itself as a social reality within history. This process is actually what the mode of production is (system_of_production !). Hence Marx

referred to it as a social_formation²⁹. A Social formation, therefore, refers to the concrete dynamism of the interaction of all the factors involved in social production. For Marx, history is social reality in process. A progressive generation of social formations.

This triadic dynamism of a "social formation", of the interaction between productive forces (PF), relations of production or social relations (PR) and mode of production (MP), can graphically be illustrated as follows:



The significance of the positioning of each of these factors is crucial. Firstly, let us note that this is not graphically represented as, MP - PF - PR, nor as, PF - PR - PF = MP as Miranda's interpretation does. For Miranda, "mode of production", is a category meaning the relationship between the PF and the PR, where emphasis for the sake of extracting a humanistic point, is laid on productive forces (PF). Communicating this

 29. In, Preface to the Contribution to a Critique of Political Economy

view, he said: "the first step in trying to understand Marx's thought is to understand this equation: the mode of production is the mode of production"³⁰. A deeper understanding of this, as he further develops it, comes to a blatant claim that the "mode of production" is the activity of a development of productive forces, primarily and exclusively³¹.

Our appraisal of this, depicted through the diagram we supply above, and the one below, is a statement of the fact that the continuous movement of history, as Marx puts it, is an occurrence of the dialectic between productive forces (PF), and social-productive relations (PR). It is the interaction of these two factors, within an arena prescribed by the mode of production - which is what these two resolve themselves into that create a revolutionary event³². A revolutionary event, ad definitum, is a change in the mode of production, a socio-economic transformation with cultural consequences, the emergence of a new "social formation". Until there is a change in the mode of production, the real revolution, the one Marx is supremely and

30. Marx Against the Marxists, p. 57.

31. *Ibid.*, p.58

32. "No social formation ever perishes before all the productive forces for which there is room in it have developed; and new, higher relations of production never appear before the material conditions of their existence have matured in the womb of the old society."
K. Marx, Preface to a Critique of Political Economy.

exclusively concerned about, has not yet taken place. This revolutionary event, or rather its results (progressively new social formation) in its total effect then serves as the underlying structure upon which, and within whose constraints the further interplay between the development in productive forces (wherein human actors have by nature of their being homo fecundus, producing animals, are playing a main role) and the social-productive relations, takes place.

The quotation on Proudhon which Miranda advances above (p.156), is specifically addressed at pointing out the limitation of Proudhon's conception of economics. It is not an intentional exposition of the theoretical structure of historical materialism. Even within the ambit of Miranda's use, the message of this passage is that definite social relations are produced by men, but how? And this where the crux is located: They are produced by "men", because "men" develop productive forces within limitations and preconditions set by the mode of production. As such, the actual pattern of social relations they produce is not depended, in an absolute sense, on their designs and will:

Is man free to choose a form of this or that society? By no means. If you assume a given stage of development of production, commerce, or consumption, you will have a corresponding form of social constitution, a corresponding organisation, whether of the family, or the

estates or the classes - a word, a corresponding civil society.³³

Social relations, like the intellectual and cultural institutions of a society, are admittedly, on a prima facie consideration creations of humanity: What Marx added was that all these are but a superstructure which is resultant from the "economic" substructure of a given epoch.

There isn't a denial of the fact that individuals create "existing circumstances", what is at issue is that this act of their creation is pre-determined and pre-conditioned by the process of their meeting of their necessities for life, that is, is conditioned by the conditions of production they find in a given epoch.

Our point of departure from Miranda and other emphases that over-state the role of the development of productive forces to the marginalisation of the role of the mode of production, is our emphasis that the incidence of the mode of production has a substantive value to the theory of historical-materialism. That, this value is borne out of an insistence that recognition of the influential role of the mode of production is a factor which introduces the notion of determinism in the

33. K. Marx, letter to A. Annenkov, 28 Dec. 1846, in. Collected Works, Vol. 38, p.96. See also, F. Engels, Feuerbach and the End, in, Selected Works (One Vol.), p. 612.

entire system of historical-materialism. Without this notion of determinism, we think, historical-materialism would be mere philosophical theory, signifying no notable advance from Feuerbach.

There is a determining and conditioning base; it is called the mode of production. And the process of the development of productive forces as well as the attendant social relations, is a superstructural phenomenon. The two factors themselves, as such, are superstructural entities or activities. Marx adds this equation of social relations, the correspondent of Productive forces, with ideas (which are indisputably admitted to be superstructural phenomena):

These same men who establish their social relations in conformity with their material productivity, produce also principles, ideas, and categories in conformity with their social relation.

Thus these ideas, these categories, are as little eternal as the relations they express. They are historical and transitory products.³⁴

To argue that PF - RP = MP, that is, that the mode of production simply means the combined interaction of the the development of productive forces and social relations, is to say that all reality is superstructural, is an epiphenomenon. It is to claim that history is a baseless cycle of uncaused causations. The establishment of the theoretical place

34. The Poverty of Philosophy, in, D. McLellan, op. cit, p. 202

of mode of production secures the notion of causation (inductive effect of the rupture of the tension between the PF and PR), and determination (the fact that this tension between the latter occurs within a pregiven context) in the theory.

Miranda is wide of the mark from the Marx he is purporting to be defending from misrepresentations in his assertion that:

Production relations [PR], forms of ownership constitute the basis because when the group in question materially produces its nourishment and other means of subsistence, it also reproduces the same forms of property and ownership that it already has. . . The mode of production of the means of subsistence is the mode of reproduction of the individuals themselves. And in reproducing themselves through the process of reproduction, the individuals reproduce the same social relationships in which they found themselves before.³⁵ (emphasis ours)

The first mistake committed here is the statement that production relations (social relations) form the material base of historical development. The second, which is more serious, is the claim that in the cycle of self-production, human beings produce the same social formations, without improving on them.

To summarise: The overall relationship between MP, PF and PR, as presented in our argument, communicates and explains a specific kind of a contention on the mutual

35. Op cit., p. 100

interaction between the base and the superstructure. Even though we argue below that that the two factors are not mechanistically isolated from each other, that there is a cyclic movement from the base to the superstructure, and vice versa, we seek to register the fact that, the general form of Marx's theory does not leave us with a sense of an equality in preponderance between PF and PR as set, and MP. There is a clear sense in which the mode of production distinguishes itself, through the power it exercises on the interplay between the PF and the PR³⁶.

6.4. MEDIATION OF DIALECTICAL LOGIC

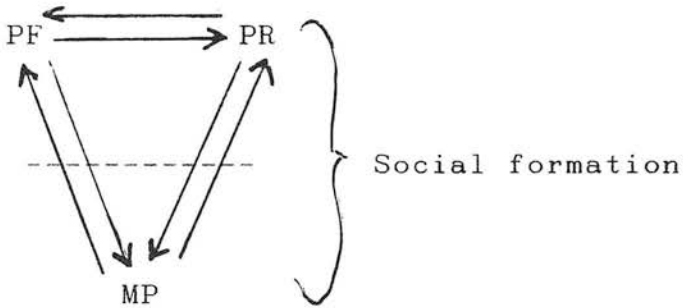
A vital point which awaits highlighting on the issues of the reciprocity between the base and the superstructure, is the specific philosophical nature of the conception of the movement that takes place between these elements, which according to Marx, causes and explains the movement of history. This movement between productive forces and productive relations, and mode of production, is a dialectical one. Each of these elements inter-act on each other in a cross-contributory fashion.

The development of productive forces produces a

36. Our conclusion is graphically representable as:

(PF \rightleftarrows PR) \rightleftarrows (MP)

conflict with the relations of production within a given system of production. This means that a given nature of productive relations interacts with productive forces seeking to contain them. This tension, insofar as it is triggered by development in productive forces or the means of production, is primarily prescribed by the obtaining mode of production. On the other hand, the development in productive forces, reflects the level of development at which a particular mode of production is in. Therefore, a correct and complete graphic illustration of Marx's theory of "history" will be the following:



The most remarkable thing about the visualisation of the factors involved in this explanation of history is the fact that this dialectic interaction of this triad, does not necessarily and exclusively explain the overall general movement within a single epoch or social formation. In addition, it explains that within an epoch, every moment is a historical moment within which this dialectical activity is taking place. That there is a myriad of incidences of historical development within a moment just as there is a microscopic activity of the

development of new cells within a tissue. As with atomic activity in a piece of matter, this takes place with such speed that what meets the eye and brain is an image of singular and whole entity. When we cast our eyes on society, we have an immediate perception of simultaneous interactions of social production and the social system operative in tandem with this, and what we see is capitalism. whereas a series of minute cyclic dialectical interactions between the process of the acquisition of the means of livelihood and environment are taking place. Besides being a perceptual complication, this does explain why in Marxist language, the term history, means principally, concrete reality, for indeed, it is in reality as we see it, that we see the interaction between our acquisition of means of livelihood within particular tailored social relations and in conformity with the larger socioeconomic system.

We contend that even though it is posited that the primary motive of Marx's theory is an explication of the process of the self-realisation of human being in a context where his self-definiton as a labouring being is freed from its commodification by a system such as capitalism³⁷, and this suggests the initiatory significance of a process of productive forces, it is the factor of the mode of production which is cardinal since it prescribes the context of this activity. This

37. Capital, I, p. 173 ff.

is what leaves Marx's thought as being materialistic. That is, it notes the initiatory and regulative role of a given socio-economic status quo_in__determining_human_behaviour. But this materialistic affirmation emerges from and is grounded onto a doctrine of dialectics. Therefore, there is a dialectical relationship between this initiatory material base and its epiphenomena.

This is corroborated by the following summary of historical-materialism which Marx and Engels give in The German Ideology:

This conception of history thus relies on expounding the real process of production-starting from the material production of life itself - and comprehending the form of intercourse connected with and created by this mode___of_production, i.e civil society in its various stages, as__the__basis__of__all__history; describing it in its action as the state, and also explaining how all the different theoretical products and forms of consciousness, religion, philosophy, morality, etc., arise from it, and tracing the process of their formation from that basis; thus the whole thing can, of course, be depicted in its totality (and therefore, too, the reciprocal action of these various sides on one another).³⁸

A recognition of the import of the influence of Hegel in Marx's philosophy, particularly as showing itself in this respect, plus a rigorous understanding of the meaning of the dialectic, should dispell fears and accusations about how Marx's theory of history is deterministic, and logically detrimental to the

38. Collected Works, Vol. 5, p. 53

promotion of human freedom. Miranda's work is a case in point of an attempt to present an interpretation of Marx without taking Marx's dependence on the form of Hegel's thought seriously. Hence his theory of a strict opposition between productive forces (which he confuses with social relations), which he sees as the area of human self-determination, on the one hand, and the mode of production on the other. Even if these were distinct from each other, as to their temporospatial occurrence in the historical process, within the context of the meaning of the dialectic__ this should be no cause for controversy since in a dialectic, as Sidney Hook reminds us:

A genuine synthesis [results of the contact between the elements in a dialectical process] is more than a simple destructive process which removes the possibility of further development and conflict (as when a community goes down to common doom as a result of class-struggle). But neither is it a simple additive process which by fusing and compromising opposing elements produces a new situation - one in which the original elements can still be discerned and, by some inverse operation, precipitated out again (as when we mix a white sand heap with a black sand heap to get a grey sand heap). Nor is it a simple transformative process in which the qualities of the different elements are no longer discernible in the new quality created (as when water emerges from the union of oxygen and hydrogen). Nor is it finally, a simple repetitive process in which the elements remain unchanged. A DIALECTIC synthesis is all these and more. Thesis and antithesis are resolved in such a way that the pretensions of each to constitute the whole of a relationship are denied; yet aspects of each are retained or conserved in every new whole or situation; and are reinterpreted or elevated (aufgehoben) as subordinate moments in a more inclusive whole³⁸.

38. From hegel to Marx, p. 68

in this respect. G.A. Cohen falls into the same error as Miranda in his Karl Marx's Theory of History: A Defence. He bases his work on an argument that seeks to show that productive forces are not an "economic relation" since they do not denote any particular relation like relations of production (social relations), and that they are therefore merely explanatory of Marx's theory³⁹. Like Miranda's extreme view of over-valuing productive forces because of the fact of the role of the human person in them, Cohen's is the an extreme which is borne out of a failure to appreciate the dialectical tension between the mode of production and productive forces.

This debate would be rendered unnecessary by the awareness of the fact that, the element of the productive forces establishes one essential aspect of the dialectical triad in that it isolates the role of the human individual whose development is dialectically connected with the purely material economic structure. It ensures the establishment and recognition of the role of the human being within its proper context - as a determined being who is part of a process.

Gottfried Stiehier explains, in his Dialectical Opposition - Forms and Functions, that in dialectical

39. Cohen, pp. 28-29.

thinking.

. . . negation and affirmation are inseparably combined. The phenomenon of negation and affirmation are mutually combined solidly together by the instrumentality of a given objective systematized relationship - (for example, a close tie between the proletariat and the bourgeoisie through the instrumentality of the means of capitalist production). Therefore, as far as these particular phenomena of affirmation and negation constitute essential factors to build up a systematic relationship such as the means of capitalistic production, they are essentially in accord with each other.⁴⁰

According to this submission of Stiehler, we would infer that since all of three individual factors constitutive of the Marxian theory of history as an observation emanating from experience, are all bound together by the "objective systematized relationship" of being an explanation of a one whole "philosophical" system. The questioning of the prerogative of any one of the three elements above others should not be considered as of any significant explicative value so long as this does not compromise the theoretical objective of this very system. It should be possible to concede that the human labourer as acting with productive forces is indispensable to history, without recanting the fact that this human being, together with the process of the growth of productive forces, is a

40. Cited in, Y. Deguchi, "Logiccal Relationships Between Productive Powers and the Relations of Production", in John Cunningham Wood ed., Karl Marx's Economics: Critical Assesments, Vol IV. (London: Croom Helm, 1988) p. 105

product of history himself.

At the risk of submitting evidence which would contradict his argument, due largely to a lack of the exercise of the level of a philosophic rigour which a reading of Marx requires, Miranda cites the following passage, taken from the Theories of Surplus Value:

Man himself is the basis of his material production, as of any other production that he carries on. All circumstances, therefore, which affect man, the subject of production, more or less modify all his functions and activities, and therefore too his functions and activities as the creator of material wealth, of commodities. In this respect it can in fact be shown that all human relations and functions, however and in whatever form they may appear, influence material production and have a more or less decisive influence on it.⁴¹

The key to understanding a passage like this lies in understanding the mode of reasoning that Marx so capably employs. This leads to a recognition of the apparently self-contradictory dialectical model of the interaction between the mode of production as well as productive forces and the relations of production. Hence a fully rounded interpretation of this is found in the following passage from the The German Ideology which we submit as a resume' of our discussion in this section:

History does not end by being resolved into 'self consciousness', but that each stage contains a material result, a sum of productive forces, a historically created relation to nature and of human individuals to one another, which is handed down to each generation from its

41. Cited in, Miranda, p. 104

predecessor; a mass of productive forces, capital funds and circumstances, which on the one hand is indeed modified by the new generation, but on the other also prescribes for it its conditions of life and gives it a definite development, and a special character. It shows that circumstances make men as much as men make circumstances.⁴²

6.5. ECONOMIC DETERMINISM AND POLITICAL ACTIVISM.

It is necessary to be fair to Miranda and point out that besides a number of theoretical presuppositions which we have isolated as determinant of his conceptualisation of Marxist philosophy, the primary factor which directs his interpretation of the latter, is his concern as a liberation theologian who is committed to social change and is engaged in the mobilisation of the Church in Mexico towards this. When it reveals itself to be a system of the nature we discovered above, Marxism appears as a theory which is not helpful to the immediate aspirations of the victims of the capitalist system. This Miranda aptly articulated in his statement that:

The revolutionary import of Marx's thesis . . . lies in its anti-reformism. All efforts and philanthropic reforms are able to be absorbed by the system until and unless they change the mode of production. And to change the latter is to change the socio-economic system itself and to replace it with another. . . However, this message could not possibly be revolutionary if extra-economic factors, the ones directly within our grasp, could not alter

42. Collected Works, Vol 5, p.54

the mode of production or direct the revolution against the prevailing mode of production. To maintain that those factors cannot alter the mode of production is to preach a message that is as anti-revolutionary as any message could be. It is to succumb to fatalism. We would then have to sit and wait, hoping that the mode of production will change on its own - or not change at all. In either case it would not depend on us at all.⁴³

This is the issue we shall confront in this section. We will do this by way of commenting on the often cited letter Engels wrote to Joseph Bloch, dated September, 21 1990. In that letter Engels makes the startling statement that Marx and himself are "partly to blame for the fact that the younger people sometimes lay more stress on the economic side than it is due"⁴⁴. Miranda makes use of this passage, and presents it with the interpretation that Engels disclaimed the fact of the determining power of the economic basis⁴⁵. The overall context of Engels intimations in this letter, however, we find, contradicts this opinion. We start by quoting from a paragraph preceding the passage we referred to above:

According to the materialist conception of history, the ultimately determining element in history is the production and reproduction of real life. More than this neither Marx nor I have ever asserted. Hence if somebody twists this into saying that the economic is the only determining one, he transforms that proposition

43. Marx Against the Marxists, p. 105

44. K. Marx, F. Engels, Selected Works, One Vol., p. 683

45. Op. cit, p. 72

into a meaningless, abstract, senseless phrase. The economic situation is the basis, but the various elements of the superstructure-political forms of the class struggle, . . . juridical forms, and even the reflexes of all these actual struggles in the brains of the participants, political, philosophical theories, religious views and their further development into systems of dogmas - also exercise their influence upon the course of historical struggles and in many cases preponderate in determining their form⁴⁶

This is a summary of the view we have presented above in appraising the view held by Miranda. It is first and foremost an affirmation of the fundamental preconditioning effect of the pre-existent system of production, and at the same time an admission, based on the dialectical reasoning that the superstructure also does have an effect on determining the shaping of the new mode of production, the formation of a higher social formation. In qualifying this and bringing it to the gist of our discussion, namely, the extent to which human volition is involved in the process, Engels proceeds,

We make history ourselves, but, in the first place, under very definite assumptions and conditions. Among these the economic ones are ultimately decisive.⁴⁷

However, this does not lend itself to an interpretation and fear that this means that people have no contribution whatsoever to make to social change, and

46. Op. cit., p. 682

47. *ibid.*

all their efforts have no bearing on the progress of social development and freedom as conceived in Marx's conception of history. The point being made is that even when so engaged, the human person is never certain of the results of his actions as he is unconscious of a power or law that is operative within history, namely that of the self-productive process that occurs in the human community's development of systems of acquiring its means of subsistence. Again, Engels explains this:

In the second place [read with 'in the first place' used in the quotation above], however, history is made in such a way that the final result always arises from conflicts between many individual wills, of which each in turn has been made what it is by a host of particular conditions of life. . . This may again itself be viewed as the product of a power which works as a whole unconsciously and without volition. For what each individual wills is obstructed by everyone else, and what emerges is something that no one willed. Thus history has proceeded hitherto in the manner of a natural process and is essentially subject to the same laws of motion. But from the fact that the wills of the individuals - each of whom desires what he is impelled to by his physical constitution and external, in the last resort economic circumstances - do not attain what they want, but are merged into an aggregate mean, a common resultant, it not be concluded that they are equal to zero. On the contrary, each contributes to the resultant and is to this extent included in it.⁴⁸

In his conclusion of this grappling with the problem of reconciling the reality of the ever-felt need by human beings to actively engage political struggles that transform their social environment, on the one hand, and

48. *ibid.*, p. 683

the self-revelation of the logic of the materialist conception of history as tending to discount this human self-motivation, Engels refers Bloch to Marx's The Eighteenth Brumaire of Louis Bonaparte, the "most excellent application" of historical materialism.

In the Eighteenth Brumaire - a series of articles Marx wrote during early 1852 - Marx offered a declaration which conjures the dialectical roots of the logic of historical-materialism vis a vis the role of the human person, he wrote:

Men make their own history, but not of their own free will; not under circumstances they themselves have chosen but under the given and inherited circumstances with which they are confronted. The tradition of the dead generations weighs like a nightmare on the minds of the living . . . 49

Throughout the Eighteenth Brumaire Marx highlights the role of past political events in influencing social change. This bears out Engel's emphasis that besides the economic circumstances, the role of other factors has to be recognised. Even in the above quotation, the "circumstances" Marx refers to, as the body of the text indicates, are political circumstances. For example he offers the following uneconomic account of the emergence of the capitalist mode of production,

But unheroic as bourgeois society is, it still

49. David Fernbach, ed, Karl Marx: Surveys From Exile, Political Writings Vol 2 (Hammondsworth: Penguin Books, 1973), p. 147

required heroism, self-sacrifice, terror, civil wars, and battles in which whole nations were engaged, to bring it into the world.⁵⁰

The mistake would be to read this in isolation of the entire body of Marx theory, and to take this emphasis, as a negation of some other emphasis he makes at some occasion. The point we establish out of this is the resolution of the question we raised in our introduction through Miranda's articulation of the fear that, in accepting the preponderance of the economic process, the oppressed would succumb into fatalism, in the hope that an autonomous change in the mode of production, if it can ever happen in their life time, will change their lot.

Having said that Marx emphasised past political history in playing a part in effecting current developments, it is important to note the following statement from the same text:

The social revolution of the nineteenth century can only create poetry from the future, not from the past. it cannot begin its own work until it has sloughed off all its superstitious regard for the past. Earlier revolutions have needed world-historical reminiscences to deaden their awareness of their own content. In order to arrive at its own content the revolution of the nineteenth century must let the dead bury their dead. . .⁵¹

50. Ibid., p. 148

51. Ibid., p. 149

S E C T I O N I I I

In this Section we bring to a conclusion our historico-philosophical evaluation and location of liberation theology. As stated before, our intention has been to test the authenticity of liberation theology's claimed genitive relationship with Marxism, as well as the extent to which the philosophy of Marx serves as its culturo-philosophical source and inspiration. We demonstratively declare our findings on the compatibility of liberation theology's formative conceptual presuppositions, as well as thought categories constitutive of its method and content, with Marxism.

The conclusion we develop is that, insofar as it relates itself to the thought of Marx, in the historical sense, as well as in its deliberate attempts at employing the Marxist analysis of society and way of thinking, liberation theology is firmly operating with the philosophy of the young Marx. As we proved in our preceding discussion, the Marx of 1842-1844 (22-24 years old) did not have an independent and original philosophical position; that as a young Left-Hegelian, he was a Feuerbachian. His philosophy, particularly in its fundamental epistemology, was essentially a philosophy of Ludwig Feuerbach precisely because of the preponderance of a humanist framework in serving as a

point of departure of all his formulations. The clear evidence of this philosophy is the Economic_and Philosophical Manuscripts_of_1844 which serves as both the apex of its development as well as Marx's own self-clarification which marked the disintegration of his dependence on the methodological framework which this philosophy necessitated.

We therefore argue that to this extent, liberation theology is in its philosophical presumptions and structure more related to Feuerbach's philosophy than to that of Marx, so-called Marxism or dialectico-historical materialism. But, even when this is granted, our polemic further reveals that most of the themes and conceptual presuppositions of liberation theology places it on a pre-Feuerbachian side of the historico-philosophical spectrum of the post-Hegelian reformulation of materialism. This becomes most explicit in liberation theology's "philosophy" of history. We drew attention to this in our conclusion on Miranda's reaction to Althusser's assertion of Marx's notion of history as being a process without a Subject. This point is further developed in Chapter 10. As such, to any extent that liberation theology has tried to move into theoretical problematics which are distinctly identified as of Marx, and where this could be posited as its post-Feuerbachian shift, we remain holding that this leaves it as being at least a

neo-Feuerbachianism since the humanist epistemology is retained in its basic system. However, in order to substantiate this, we need to engage in a reconstructive reflection on the philosophy of Feuerbach. This is the subject of our following chapter.

CHAPTER 7

THE HUMANIST MATERIALISM OF LUDWIG FEUERBACH'S PHILOSOPHY

7.1. INTRODUCTION

Earlier, (in Chapter 3) we pointed out how the post-Feuerbachian specificity of Marxism is located in Marx's reconceptualisation of Hegel's notion of the relationship between Subject and Object - a theme which has dominated German philosophy since Johann Gottlieb Fichte (1762-1814). In this chapter we propose to delve deeper into this, demonstrating how the differences in the nature of the conception of the relationship between human Subject and the Object of Nature as the Subject's environment and immediate object of his cognitive faculties is what lies at the root of a differentiation between the materialism of the young humanistic Marx and the older "theoretically anti-humanist" one. For us, this forms a paradigm for an evaluation and judgement on the consanguinity, or otherwise, of the humanist preponderance of liberation theology with Marxist theory.

7.2. FEUERBACH'S EPISTEMOLOGY: INTRODUCTION

7.2.1. Introduction

At its matured stage, Feuerbach's philosophy, is singularly an instigation for the reform of classical Western philosophy as it had developed up to the Hegelian system. Feuerbach's thesis, or rather, mission he undertook, was to expose that Hegelian philosophy, the then undisputed zenith of all Western thought, is in its epistemological structure nothing but an abstraction of speculative theology, and that speculative theology, "which is the reflection of religion upon itself"¹, on the other hand, is actually the alienated product of the self-projection of the human subject's consciousness. By so basing itself on theology, Feuerbach maintained, philosophy can only repeat, inexorably, the dehumanising effects that religious epistemology with its concentration on the idealistic suprahuman notions, has on humankind.

Further to our crystallisation of the self-distinguishing character of Marx's epistemology, and towards the location of the historico-philosophical relationship of liberation theology to this, we shall give an outline of the salient and relevant aspects of Feuerbach's philosophy. This shall be on the nature of

1. L. Feuerbach, The Essence of Religion, p. xxv

the materialism that is being proposed and enacted in his philosophy. A tracing of this, as we show below, reveals the extent to which Marxism critically supersedes Feuerbachianism. This serves as a backdrop, as well as a major premiss, to our argument that there is an essential epistemological affinity, as well as other systematic similarities, between Feuerbachianism and liberation theology which render the latter pre-Marxian.

7.3. FEUERBACH'S CRITIQUE OF HEGEL'S CONCEPTION OF SUBJECT-OBJECT RELATIONSHIP

7.3.1 Subject and Object in Hegel's Philosophy

In his Lectures on the Philosophy of Religion (1831), one of his very last philosophical works, G.W.F Hegel had taught - basing this on the Christian conception of God - that,

the Object exists solely through itself and for its own sake. It is something that is absolutely self-sufficient, unconditioned, independent, as well as being the supreme end unto itself²

By Object, what is assumed, and in fact, is directly referred to here, is Concept, or the externalised forms of the thinking process, the Idea or Spirit (Geist)

2. Hegel G.W.F., Lecture in the Philosophy of Religion (Vol. 1), ed., P. C. Hodgson (Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1984), p.84

which is in the process of self-realisation, paradoxically (dialectically) through the Subject (human consciousness) whence it originated. The point we need to note at this stage is Hegel's radical assertion of the independence of this Object. This, as his lectures on the philosophy of religion reveal, he had derived and based on the peculiar view that :

Since God is the principle and goal, the truth of each and every deed, initiative and effort, all persons have therefore a consciousness of God, or of the absolute substance as the truth of everything and also of themselves, of everything that they are and do.³

And that, God was "not an infinite phantom far removed from our consciousness".⁴ The Geist (Absolute Reason/Spirit), and the dynamics of its phenomenology, as a reality immanent as well as creative of all Nature, as conceived by Hegel, was in no way different from what he conceived of God⁵. Therefore, in reading the foregoing, one just needs to substitute for the words "God", Absolute Reason.

Out of this emerged a complex series of intricately linked assertions which form the core Hegel's philosophy, namely, his conception of the dialectical unity between Subject, as the thinker, and Object, the product (active product) of the thinking process. The

3. Ibid. p. 88

4. Op. cit.

5. See, Q. Lauer, Hegel's Concept (New York: State University of New York Press, 1982)

first of these assertions, as we note above, is a postulation of the absolute independence of the Object of human thought from the human subject himself. At the same time, on the basis of a formula on the rational conception of the Christian God, there is a claim of a unity between the Subject and this Object. However, since in Hegel's system God, as Geist, is not merely a concept which is exclusively restricted to the religious sphere, but subsists in and through the whole of historical reality, it meant that in all situations the Subject and Object were one. Geist or Absolute Reason, is Subject and at the same time is Object. It is Subject because the thinking being, the Subject, is part of the reality, of which the Geist is the summum_bonum. On the other hand the products of this thinking being, are Object, which is Reality, Nature - the self-manifestation of the very Geist.

The gist of this postulation appears at the point of explaining that, in this state of being one, or in unity, Subject and Object are such only as an externalisation - the self-objectification of the Geist - therefore, as Object. Absolute Reason, manifests itself out of itself, that is it becomes reality, as Object. All reality, the self-objectification of Absolute Reason, is an alienated form of the existence of the former. This means that, since this self-realisation of the Absolute Reason or

Geist, is what all Nature is about, Nature is nothing but an alienated form of the existence of Absolute Reason.

Absolute Reason though, could not remain forever in this state of self-estrangement (alienation). It, in an esoteric of Hegel's thought, has to negate itself; and the locus of this self-negation of the alienated Absolute Reason, which in its alienated form is only Reason or Idea (Concept), happens in the process whereby the human subject gets to know (becomes conscious) of Nature (object of thought). In this way the self-realisation of the Idea (Object) happens through the Subject. In this way, nature, reality, is left in the form of being only a rational abstraction of the inter-action between the thinking process of the Subject and its self-realisation thereby.

In the way that thinking as a process active on the object remains the predominant aspect, the objective, or rather the Object assumed primacy over the Subject. It needs to be noted though that this was not the objective as the concrete historical reality as such, but the objective as thought, as an activity of the thinking subject, as Reason struggling to become Absolute Reason.

7.3.2. Feuerbach's Intervention: The Distinctiveness of Subject

Feuerbach found this monistic, objectivistic and idealist, view of the contradiction between Subject and Object flawed and "harmful" to the value and self-perception of the human being. In 1839, in his "Towards a Critique of Hegel's Philosophy", he declared his two premisses of his contention against this. In the first place, he declared a rejection of the unity of subject and Object as found in Hegel:

The unity of the subjective and objective as enunciated and placed at the summit of philosophy by Schelling, a unity that is still basic to Hegel . . . is both a fruitless and a harmful principle because it eliminates the distinction between "subjective" and "objective" even in the case of particulars, and renders futile the genetical⁶ thought, indeed, negates the very question about truth⁷

In further development of this, he noted that this unity has as its accent the perpetuity of the self-externalising Reason, and that as such it puts much emphasis on the Objective - the thinking process. Against, this he alerted that . . .

from the extremes of hyper-critical

6. "A genetical-critical philosophy", defined Feuerbach, "is one that does not dogmatically demonstrate or apprehend an object given through perception, but examines its origin; which questions whether an object is a real object, only an idea, or just a psychological phenomenon; which, finally, distinguishes with utmost rigour between what is subjective and what is objective." In, L. Stepelevich, The Young Hegelians: An Anthology (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1983), p. 120.

7. Ibid., p.121

subjectivism [of post-Kantian German philosophy], we are, in Hegel's philosophy, hurled into the extremes of uncritical objectivism⁸.

In contradiction of Hegel, he argued for a recognition of a distinction between Object and Subject as per the genetical-critical method, which method, he maintained, reveals that it is the Subject which is primary, and not the Object as Hegel taught. This contention arose from Feuerbach's concern that, the fact that the Subject in this context is the human being, and that the Object remains merely the ideas of the human person, and that to affirm the latter to the neglect of the human person will not only be to relegate what human being is all about, but to leave the human person in the state of perpetual alienation. Alienation was for Feuerbach an absolutely negative experience and state which had to be combatted (For Hegel and Marx, it was viewed as "positive", or necessary, on the basis of the "law" of dialectics). In the process, he had developed a view that, anyway, "the object to which a subject essentially, necessarily relates, is nothing else than the subject's own, but objective nature"⁹, which means a concentration on the alienated object, will mean an entrenchment the self-alienation of the human being.

8. Ibid., p.127

9. L. Feuerbach, The Essence of Christianity, p. 4

We therefore note that whilst Hegel's philosophy consisted in an affirmation of the primacy of thought over that of Being, or Nature as the products of thought, which even his doctrine of the dialectic could not efface, Feuerbach's aimed at reversing this order: of affirming Being over thought. The fact that the thinking activity cannot happen without the thinking human being, he felt, provided a validation for his view for the need of a cognitive, as well as theoretic distinction between subject and object so that the primacy of the subject can adequately be accounted for¹⁰.

Developing this in "Towards a Critique of Hegel's Philosophy", he took up for analytic criticism Hegel's view of empirical existence where inter__alia, in the Logic, Hegel asserts that: "Being merges into Nothingness; it disappears immediately into its opposite: its truth is the movement of its disappearing . . . Becoming is restlessness, the restless unity of being and nothingness; existence is this unity come to rest"¹¹. He contradicted this with a proposition that since the essential categorical relationship between "being" and "nothingness" is one between determinateness and indeterminateness, as the opposite of Nothingness, Being, can only be a determinate category. That is, that

10. See, Ibid., p.110

11. Cited in, op cit, p. 108

it can only be conceived of in terms of its sensuous perceptibility within time and space. Therefore, Feuerbach insisted that, when talking about being, particularly in "human being" whose consciousness Hegel had identified as the locus of the self-realisation of Absolute Reason, one ought only do this in terms of an empirical epistemology. And for this reason, the epistemological point_de_depart and summum_bonum of philosophy ought to be the human being, and not the phenomenology of Absolute Reason, as in Hegel. In consequence of this reflections, Feuerbach concluded:

All speculation that would go beyond nature and man is therefore futile - as futile as the kind of art that would like to give us something higher than human form, but gives only distortions. . .12

7.3.3 The Bane of Religious Epistemology

Feuerbach was resolute that the culprit for this feature of Hegel's thought, was Christian religious epistemology which is distinct by its peculiar and complete assimilation of the human subject and the religious object, and Hegel's failure to be sensitive to developing a philosophy that is not grounded on this religious epistemology. Even though the demonstration of this fact constituted the differentia_specifica of Feuerbach's thought, it is important to realise that its development was entirely at the service of building a

12. Ibid. p. 127

philosophy of "Man".

Through The Essence of Christianity (1841/43), he devoted himself to explicating the nature of human consciousness, the Hegelian Objective, via one of its objects which most reveal where the human subject stands vis_a_vis the objects of his thought - the Christian religion. He wanted to prove that insofar as religion can be regarded as an object of the thinking human subject, and he can demonstrate that "consciousness of God is self-consciousness", so is the fact established that, "the object of any subject is nothing else than the Subject's own nature"¹³. That,

In the object he contemplates, man becomes acquainted with himself since consciousness of the objective is the self-consciousness of man, consciousness of God is self-consciousness, knowledge of God is self-knowledge . . . whatever is God to a man, that is his heart-soul; and conversely, God is the manifested inward nature, the expressed self of a man¹⁴

Thus the conclusion was that, theology - the self-reflection of religion - is essentially a theoretical objectivism: The resolution of the human species-being (Wesensgattung) into the realm of thought (a self-objectification), which, to make matters worse, is an estranged thought, which in fact is the abstraction of the predicates of the concrete human subject, which are

13. Feuerbach L., The Essence of Christianity, p. 12

14. *ibid.* p. 5, 13

mistaken as attributes of a divinity which, as conceived, returns to act back in an authoritative manner on the human subject. Theology, Feuerbach found, according to Wartofsky¹⁵, is esoteric psychology.

The point to note here, nevertheless, is the criticism that theology, like all theoretical objectivism, takes the concrete, empirical reality, and explains it away into abstractions, and then proceeds to accord these abstractions with an authority which in the process obliterates the independent existential value of the concrete. Against this "objectivism", Feuerbach proposed a "subjectivism", which would be a concentration on the human person: a philosophical anthropology. For as his reflection revealed to him, "Theology", anyway, "is Anthropology . . . there is no distinction between the predicates of the divine and human nature, and consequently, no distinction between the divine and human subject"¹⁶. The perverted nature of theology, like all abstract objectivism, had to be reversed.

"Speculative theology", he wrote in 1839, "has its ghosts . . . in non-sensory abstraction."¹⁷. "To

15. Max W. Wartofsky, Feuerbach (Cambridge: Cambridge Univ. Press, 1977), p. 139

16. The Essence of Christianity, Preface, p. xxxvii

17. "Towards a Critique of Hegel's Philosophy", in, Lawrence Stepelvich (ed.) The Young Hegelians: Anthology, p. 159

abstract" he explained, "means to suppose the essence of nature outside_nature, the essence of the human being outside_the_human_being, the essence of thinking outside the thinking act"18.

In the "Provisional Theses for the Reformation of Philosophy", written as an article for a journal in 1843 while he was revising The_Essence_of_Christianity for its second edition, Feuerbach turned to Hegel again and summarily pointed out:

The secret of theology is anthropology, but the secret of philosophy is theology. . . . Whoever fails to give up the Hegelian philosophy, fails to give up theology. The Hegelian doctrine, that nature or reality is posited by the idea, is merely the rational expression of the theological doctrine that nature is created by God, that the material essence is created by an immaterial, i.e., abstract essence. . . . The Hegelian philosophy is the last place of refuge and the last rational support of theology. As once Catholic theologians became de_facto Aristotelians in order to be able to combat Protestantism, so must Protestant theologians now become de_jure Hegelians in order to combat atheism."19

We can therefore see that Feuerbach's primary intention in his criticism of Hegel as well as the attendant exposure of the true nature of theology, was to contend that "the summum_bonum of philosophy [ought to be] human being"20 by pointing out that, in basing

18. Loc. cit.

19. in, Lawrence S. Stepelevich ed., The_Young_Hegelians: An Anthology, pp. 156, 167

20. L. Feuerbach, "Towards a Critique of Hegel's Philosophy" (1839), in, Ibid., p.127

itself on theological thought-forms, philosophy was incipiently adulterated by theology's essential tendency to diminish the importance of sense consciousness which is what is important about being human²¹. "The essence of theology", he argued, "is the transcendent essence of the human being, placed outside human beings", just as, "the essence of Hegel's Logic, is transcendent thinking, the thinking of the human being supposed outside human beings"²². On the basis of this, he could conclude that, "In that its entire system rests upon these acts of abstraction Hegelian philosophy has estranged the human being from its very self".²³

7.4. THE NEW MATERIALISM

7.4.1. A Humanist Materialism

Beyond merely decrying this intellectual tradition which fosters the tendency for the human person to locate his essence, his self-consciousness outside of himself, Feuerbach systematically attempted to work out a "reformation of philosophy" which would introduce an epistemological perspective which is based on an

21. For a more detailed development of this theme see, Wartofsky, op. Cit., pp. 110-134, 196f.

22. "Towards a Critique of Hegel's Philosophy", in, op. cit., p. 159

23. Loc. cit.

affirmation of the human Subject. To the extent that this reversal of Hegel's Idealist objectivism, concentrated on an emphasis of the Subjective, the materially primal, which for Feuerbach is specifically, the human person, this new epistemological perspective proposed by Feuerbach was to be a materialism with a humanist content; a humanist materialism. It is materialist in the sense of its emphasis on the primacy and relevance of the empirical subject; and because this subject is essentially and by emphasis the human person, it is humanist.

What is important for our overall discussion is that Feuerbach did not only advocate this humanist materialism, that he went further and claimed that his work, in particular, the second revision of The Essence of Christianity, was a demonstration and genus of this new materialism, "a specimen of this philosophy"²⁴. Stating its characteristics, he wrote in the preface:

This philosophy is essentially distinguished from the systems hitherto prevalent, in that it corresponds to the real, complete man; but for that very reason it is antagonistic to minds perverted and crippled by a superhuman, i.e., anti-human, anti-natural religion and speculation . . . it does not identify the idea of the fact with the fact itself, so as to reduce real existence to an existence on paper, but it separates the two, and precisely by this separation attains to the fact--itself; it recognises as the true thing, not the thing as it is an object of the abstract reason, but as it is an object of the real, complete man, and hence as it is itself a real, complete thing. .

24. The Essence of Christianity, p. xxxv

This philosophy does not rest on an understanding per se, on an absolute nameless understanding, belonging one knows not to whom, but on the understanding of man . . . it declares that alone to be true philosophy which is converted in succum et sanguinem, which is incarnate in Man . . .

This philosophy has for its principle, not the Substance of Spinoza, not the ego of Kant and Fichte, not the Absolute Identity of Schelling, not the Absolute Mind of Hegel, in short, no abstract, merely conceptual being, but a real being, the true Ens__realissimum - man; its principle therefore, is in the highest degree positive and real²⁵

This New philosophy though, continued to base itself on using religion, or rather, its critique, as the paradigm of its theoretical structure. According to this new stage, religion was portrayed (exposed) as essentially being feeling. This was based on the observation that when God is rejected rationally, as a result of the exposure's made on the critique of Hegel, what remains is the justification of religion on the basis of feeling²⁶. Because people feel it, religion cannot just be dismissed.

"In feeling", wrote Feuerbach, "God's existence is thought to be secure. And doubtless this is the safest refuge; for to make feeling the essence of religion is

25. Ibid., pp. xxxiv, xxxv

26. The Essence of Christianity, p.283

to make feeling the essence of God"27. In a deliberate inversion of the elaboration of Rene Descartes' rationalist principle of, "I think, therefore I am", he counterposed: "And as certainly as I exist, so certainly does my feeling exist; and as certainly as my feeling exists, so certainly does God exist"28. However, Feuerbach quickly adds an interpretative notion he had developed earlier on: "The certainty of God is here nothing else than the self-certainty of human feeling, the yearning after God is the yearning after unlimited, uninterrupted, pure feeling."29

He developed this concentration on feeling so as to buttress his theory of the paramountcy of the human subject by showing that, since it is the human being, as a sensuous being, who feels, religious consciousness, as objective feeling, is secondarily derived. It is an attribute of the human subject and this confirms the primacy of the material Subject which has feeling (Sensuous materialism).

However, there is another important element to his conception of feeling and his employment of it as a category constitutive of his new materialism. This is the fact that this feeling expresses itself supremely in

27. Loc. cit.

28. Loc. cit.

29. Loc. cit..

interpersonal relations. It is the locus of an "I" and "Thou" reality, which reality is definitional to human existence. This was an improvement in the assertion made in "Towards a Critique of Hegel's Philosophy" about the dialectical interaction between two persons, the thinker-philosopher and his audience, as being imperative for a discovery of truth³⁰. In 1843 an addition of the theme of love was made to this. Love as a feeling expressed between persons, was introduced as a substitution of Faith:

Love identifies man with God and God with man, consequently it identifies man with man . . .
Faith separates God from man, consequently it separates man from man . . . God is the human being; but - in Faith - he presents himself to the religious consciousness as a distinct being . . .
Faith produces in man an inward disunion, a disunion with himself, and by consequence an outward disunion also; but love heals the wounds which are made by faith in the heart of man."³¹

In this way a humanist element was again successfully tucked underneath a crude materialistic, sensuous conception of feeling. In addition, as we show below in reference to the critique of this by Karl Marx, this mediated another dimension of Feuerbach's epistemology, which is, the tendency of reducing social reality or the ethic of social relations (Sittlichkeit) into a theologico-religious riddle. The only extent to which

30. in. op cit., p. 104, 113
31. The Essence of Christinaity, p. 247

Feuerbach ventured into a sociology, was to the point of lamenting the depletion of love in society by religious faith and how this, according to him is the result of social tensions and disintegration. And, as Frederick Engels was to critically observe:

With Feuerbach love is everywhere and at all times the wonder-working god who should help to surmount all difficulties of practical life - and at that in a society which is split into classes with diametrically opposite interests. At this point the last relic of its revolutionary character disappears from his philosophy, leaving only the old cant: Love one another - fall into each other's arms regardless of distinctions of sex or estate - a universal orgy of reconciliation!³²

The fact of the conditioning of ethical systems and the nature of human relations by Nature - the non-human empiria, was not an issue for Feuerbach.

Therefore, instead of what can simply be called "empiricism", an affirmation of the primacy of the empiria, Feuerbach affirmed and called attention to a recognition of human_sensuality as a methodological factor as well as a matter of content in philosophical-epistemological activity. Sensuality, as used here, means the human being's sense of himself and of others-species-consciousness, rather than merely an operation of the five biological senses. His prime concern, which dictated the structure and content of his philosophy, was the manner in which this human_sense_of_being was

32. F. Engels, Feuerbach And End, in, Selected Works (one Vol.), p. 606-7

turned into an abstract negligibility by Hegelianism (a transient and passive arena of the Idea returning to itself after it had alienated itself in Nature), and the manner in which it was distorted and even obliterated by religious consciousness (in that, in conceiving of God as matter of Faith, man is taking what is actually his own sense of himself, turns it into a phantasy of his most basic wishes, and bestows upon it a superiority which is infinitely beyond himself, thereby making it to stand as a lording alien above him: robbing him of his self which is the faculty of sense of others).

7.4.2. A Transcendentalist Materialism

Furthermore, we observe that Feuerbach's materialist philosophy is not only unique with its humanism: it is at the same time a kind of materialism and empiricism which refuses to completely do way with the dimension of transcendence. It retains a notion of a dualistic or bi-dimensional view of Nature. While claiming to be materialism, it decidedly retains an Idealist image. Spirituality, or an idealist relation with nature is viewed as being perfectly harmonious with being_human.

In this "Neueren Philosophie", the nexus of idealist materialism is located in its refusal to challenge the

spirituality that religion facilitates and its retention of religion as a framework of analysis. This Feuerbach explicitly declares in the Preface to The Essence of Christianity in the statement:

Certainly, my work is negative, destructive; but let it be observed, only in relation to the unhuman, not to the human elements of religion . . . I by no means say (that were an easy task!): God is nothing, the Trinity is nothing, the Word of God is nothing, etc. I only show that they are not that which the illusions of theology make them, - not foreign, but native mysteries, the mysteries of human nature; I show that religion takes the apparent, the superficial in Nature and humanity for the essential, and hence conceives their true essence as a separate, special existence: that consequently, religion, in the definitions which it gives of God . . . only defines or makes objective the true nature of the human word. . . Hence I do nothing more to religion - and to speculative philosophy and theology - than to open its eyes, or rather to turn its gaze from the internal towards the external, i.e. I change the object as it is in its imagination into the object as it is in reality³³

He then declares that even in his criticism of the anti-human service of theology, he is doing more than merely turning it into a materialist "science": "I . . . while reducing theology to anthropology, exalt anthropology to theology."³⁴ In other words, an idealist element or dimension is added to anthropology. Anthropology is apotheosised. The same could be said about what he does to sociology with his doctrine of love. This attempt at the combination of

33. The Essence of Christianity, pp. xxxviii, xxxix

34. Ibid p. xxxviii

idealism with naturalism or materialism is not incidental. Already in 1839, in, "Towards a Critique of Hegel's Philosophy", he had declared the problematic of his thought through the following analytic question:

For the philosophy of nature it is nature alone that exists, just as for idealism it is only spirit. For idealism, nature is only object and accident, but for the philosophy of nature it is substance, i.e., both subject and object, something which only intelligence within the context of idealism claims to be. However, two truths, two 'absolutes', is a contradiction. How do we find a way out of this conflict between a philosophy of nature that negates idealism and an idealism that negates the philosophy of nature?³⁵

The answer, which Feuerbach found himself impelled to work out, was a way of seeking a synthesis of the two opposite postulates. This he maintained is found . . . "Only by turning the predicate wherein both concur into a subject and the subject into the predicate."³⁶ Therefore, his subjectivism, the core of his philosophy, is deliberately not a materialism or a naturalism as such, but a deliberate synthesis of the two whereby the idealist format is inverted into a Materialist one while the perceived importance of the former is preserved.

However, it is important to note that, in making this accent away from absolute materialism, Feuerbach was specifically seeking to steer away from the mechanical

35. In, Stepelevich, op. cit., p. 118

36. Loc. cit.

materialism of eighteenth century European philosophy (Ludwig Buchner, Karl Vogt, Jakob Moleschott) which was singularly informed by French materialism, emanating from Cartesian metaphysics, and Humean empiricism³⁷. Against this, Feuerbach had crusaded, in defence of Hegelian idealism in the mid-1830s. Through his writings - Critique of the Anti-Hegel (the 1835 review article of Bachman's criticism of Hegel), the Critique of Empiricism (1837 review of F. Dorguth's Critique of Idealism) and Philosophy and Christianity (1839 - a defence of Hegel against the charge by Heinrich Leo that Hegelian philosophy is un-Christian) - he mounted spirited arguments for Hegel against the criticisms of scientific-naturalist materialism, particularly its denial of the Spirit³⁸.

In his Exposition, Development and Critique of Leibnizian Philosophy, published in 1836, he declared concerning empiricism:

Woe to the philosopher who hasn't appropriated empiricism as an instrument, who bypasses the realm of mediate powers and causes; who comes with so-called philosophical deductions, which are presented as if they had divine necessity, to the place where rational empiricism alone would suffice . . . But empiricism fails to recognize its limits when it presents itself as

37. See, F. Engels, Feuerbach and the End, in, op. cit., p. 597; and, Z.A. Jordan, The Evolution of Dialectical Materialism (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1967), p. 22f.

38. Vid. Marx Wartofsky, op. cit., pp. 145-167, and John E. Toews, Hegelianism: The Path Toward Dialectical Humanism, 1805-1841 (Cambridge: Cambridge Univ. Press, 1980), pp. 336-344

self-sufficient, and claims validity as a philosophy . . . Empiricism remains at the apparent, at the individual. The concept of unity, totality, essence, substance escapes it.39

When declaring in "Towards a Critique of Hegel's Philosophy" that, "All speculation that would rather go beyond nature and man is futile", he did not leave the matter there, he hastened to add:

. . . futile, too, is the speculation of a speculative philosophy that has risen against Hegel and is in vogue now - the speculative philosophy of the positivists. For instead of going beyond Hegel, it has actually retrogressed far behind Hegel insofar as it has failed to grasp precisely the most significant directions suggested by Hegel and his predecessors - Kant and Fichte in their own characteristic ways. Philosophy is the science of reality in its truth and totality. However, the all-inclusive and all-encompassing reality is nature (taken in the most universal sense of the Word)40 . . . It is wrong to look upon nature as contradicting ethical freedom. Nature has built not only the mean workshop of the stomach, but also the temple of the brain. . . Nature opposes only fantastic, not rational, freedom.41

Nature - as it exists in the external, sensuous form of existing "appearances" - is rational in the sense that it is the objectification of the Geist, a mere philosophically comprehended form, an Idea. Its own essence or "being" is not adequately expressed. In this form of concept it remains alienated from itself, until

39. Cited from, Marx Wartofsky, Feuerbach. p. 107

40. Brackets Feuerbach's

41. In, Stepelevich, op. cit., p. 127

it dialectically returns to its original true self as a concept that human mind is conscious of - Absolute Reason. This is how Hegel leaves it. The empiricists, on the other hand, by regarding Nature, the objectified reality as being all that is there about it as far as the sense have provided, leave nature for ever estranged from the human mind - the locus of its conceptualisation even if it be as an "appearance" - thus in a state of self-estrangement. This is how Feuerbach saw the weakness of empiricism vis__a__vis that of Hegelian idealism. It is, however noteworthy that he is using Hegel's framework of reference in analysing empiricism.

Feuerbach held that an empiricist epistemology was to be used merely as an instrument to apply an Hegelian idealist philosophy. It was with the the form, it appears, and not necessarily the content of Hegel's philosophy that he quarrelled with. Hence his philosophy, remained a philosophy. Its empiricist-materialist dimension only reached as far as adopting "Man" as an epistemological principle. It was a replacement of Hegel's Phenomenology__of__Reason, with a Phenomenology_____of_____Human_____Self-consciousness. (Interestingly, John Toews indicates that the original title in which Feuerbach submitted the original manuscript of __The__Essence__of__Christianity to the

publishers with, was, "Know Thyself"42).

In retaining the other part of the synthesis (Hegelian Idealism), Feuerbach in the end, as Toews ably explains43, maintained Hegel's doctrine of the Identity of Thought and Being, Reason and Reality. In a further elucidation on how Feuerbach retained the import of Hegelian Idealism, we note the following explanation of Frederick Engels:

. . . during the long period from Descartes to Hegel and from Hobbes to Feuerbach . . . the idealist systems filled themselves more and more with a materialist content and attempted pantheistically to reconcile the antithesis between mind and matter. Thus ultimately, the Hegelian system represents merely a materialism idealistically turned upside-down in method and context.44

Richard J. Bernstein makes a similar observation in his Praxis and Action:

Hegel's philosophy might just as well be called a form of 'materialism', for it is just as true and basic to his view of the world to realize that our access to Geist and its dynamics is in and through its concrete manifestations in the world. We do not want to deny that Hegel's Aufhebung of the materialist/idealist dichotomy is heavily weighted in the direction of seeing matter as the self-alienation of Geist. Hegel means or intends to be an idealist. But we do want to insist that to think of Hegel as a traditional idealist is drastically to misconceive his position.45

42. John E. Toews, Hegelianism: The Path Toward Dialectical Humanism, 1805-1841, p. 347

43. *Ibid.*, p. 348

44. *In, op cit.*, p. 596

45. R. J. Bernstein, Praxis And Action (Philadelphia: Univ of Pennsylvania Press, 1971), p.35

Accordingly, therefore, Feuerbach with his supposed materialism which refuses to disavow idealism, is merely extending a tradition which is implicit in Hegel's system. Hegel's system is "materialist" in the sense of its recognition of the self-externalisation of the Idea, but this materialism immediately cancels itself (supersedes itself, Aufhebung) in that, this Idea quickly negates itself and realises itself in human thought. Thus remaining merely an Idea.

7.5. CONCLUSION: IN REFERENCE TO MARX

Feuerbach wanted the purveyor of the Idea, the human subject to be clearly delineated and recognised as the primal actor. Marx went further and locked the self-externalised Idea into its state of material self-objectification, substituted the alienation of the Idea for concrete social alienation, and saw the process of Aufhebung as taking place in time and space, and not in the mind. Out of this wrestling with Hegel's conception of the dialectical self-realisation of this alienated objective, he created a theory of the history of societies. As we elaborate in the following chapter, unlike Feuerbach's over-assertion of the division between Object and Subject and a grudging concession of the unity of these two taking place only at the level of the Subject, Marx appreciated Hegel's notion of the

unity of the two, but took over Feuerbach's methodology of genetical-analysis whereby he delineated the relationship between subject and object. But, in direct contradiction of Feuerbach, he placed an accent on the unity of the two (in a radical dialectical relationship) at the level of the Object. At the objective level, like in Hegel, is where alienation, the self-estrangement of the Subject, is located, and the vicissitude of the resolution of this alienation he conceived as being the actual movement of human history which is motored by the interaction between the subject-human labourer and the objective-produce of labour.

Marx's own critical intellectual self-clarification after 1843 was grounded on Feuerbach's premise that only the concrete and sensuous was real; he however, went further and defined this concrete as being the activity of social production of means of subsistence, rather than as the human individual's feelings and desires. Feuerbach, in the words of M. Wartofsky, stopped at, "the psychology and phenomenology of conscious experience"⁴⁶, and, as Engels adds, "the science of society, sociology was terra__incognita to him"⁴⁷. The correction of this was to be the foundation of dialectico-historical materialism.

46. Marx Wartofsky, Feuerbach, p. 255

47. Feuerbach and the End, in, op. cit., p. 603

CHAPTER 8

HUMANISM IN THE PHILOSOPHY OF KARL MARX: A DIALECTICAL-MATERIALIST ANTHROPOLOGY

I. MIRANDA AND SEGUNDO'S PROPOSITION OF MARX'S HUMANISM

Humanism is traditionally defined and variously taken as meaning a disposition of thought and life (a philosophical attitude) which takes as its central concern the assertive affirmation of the significance and capabilities of human earthly existence. It is an instigation for the realization of the optimum potential that human beings are capable of in their earthly life. It is a protest against any mode of thought or system of belief or form of authority which is perceived not to be serving the liberation of the latent potentialities of human nature. It is a philosophy of the human being. According to Max C. Ottol, humanism may be traced at least to the fifth century B.C.E, in the saying of Protagoras, "Man is the measure of all things, of those that are, that they are, of those that are not, that they are not".

1. In, Collier's Encyclopedia, Vol. 12, Crowell Collier & Macmillan, Inc., 1967, V. Humanism, p. 348

Against this, Miranda imputes onto his reading of Marx, a definition of humanism which is primarily established by his tracings of conceptual and semantic coincidences between aspects of Marx's thinking and those communicated in the Bible. In Marx Against the Marxists: The Christian Humanism of Karl Marx he mainly builds his argument on the fact of the incidence of references to words such as "humanity" and "human nature" in Marx's writings without taking sufficient critical consideration of the epistemological framework within which this words are expressed and the immediate message that is being communicated². It is true, however that he also includes in his identification of Marx's Humanism, the latter's criticism of the manner in which the capitalist system unjustly exploits the labour power of the workers by treating them as only a means to the self-enrichment of the owners of capital. The problem is the ontological status he accords to this criticism within the epistemological structure of the self-definition of Marxist theory, whereby he draws a conclusion that Marx's is a humanist philosophy without showing the sensitivity of the imperative need to distinguish such a characterisation of Marxism from Feuerbachian philosophy.

Even though his work is based on arguing for the

2. See, e.g., op cit., p. 112

humanism of Karl Marx, in no place does Miranda offer a systematic definition of humanism, as he, at least, understands it. All that he means by the "Christian humanism of Karl Marx" is only deducible from his polemics which in summary, is a syllogistic polemic expressed in the following premisses:

"Any good materialist is logically obliged to reject human freedom."³

and

"If materialism is to be logically consistent it must reject all humanism"⁴

Thus for Miranda, humanism is essentially synonymous with human freedom; and all forms of philosophical materialism, including that inferred from Marx's thought, is an antonym of both human liberty and humanism. Hence his rejection of Louis Althusser's concept of the "theoretical anti-humanism" of Marx's methodology, which as we demonstrated in our earlier discussion, he had erroneously taken to mean literal "anti-humanism". This view also accounts for his rejection of historical-materialism where this is presented with an accent on the deterministic power of the economic mode of production. He sees the thesis of his work as being an excavation of the centrality of the theme of human freedom in Marx's philosophy against what

3. Marx Against the Marxists, p. 53

4. Ibid., p. 106

he perceives as a concealment and distortion of this by materialistic interpretations of the former.

In this way, we note that Miranda, lands into a confusion whereby he loses the import of the meaning of materialism as used in the doctrine of historical-materialism, and the way in which this operates as a singular structure of the entire philosophy of Marx, wherein the theme of human freedom is fundamentally implied, and consciously introduced with a radically unique meaning.

Together with the misappropriation of the term "economics" as used by Marx which we noted earlier, as well as on the concept of "materialism" as used in Marx's philosophy, the confusion Miranda enters on Marx's theory of the human person (anthropology) as conceived within the epistemological context of dialectical-materialism⁵ (namely, the fact of the centrality of the meaning of labour as an activity in

5. Our use of "dialectical-materialism" is here used in the context of our view that the fully developed theory of Marxism consists of a system of general epistemological assumptions, rationalisations as well as procedures which can be applied to an analysis of whatever phenomenon. This is an aspect we identify as "dialectical materialism". Historical-materialism is an application of this epistemological procedures - of dialectical materialism - to the study of society and history, hence we had referred to it as dialectico-historical materialism in preceding sections of our work. In Anti-Duhring, for instance, Frederick Engels applies dialectical-materialism to the study of Natural Science.

forcing the development of productive forces and the extent to which this in turn creates a structure which conditions the formation of human nature and forms of society) is the most crucial in accounting for what we maintain as being his misrepresentation and misunderstanding of Marxism.

Miranda is not the only theologian of liberation to confront these entanglements of the subject of Marxist materialism and humanism. From a slightly different angle, Juan Luis Segundo well betrayed the concern which drives liberation theology to emphasise the humanism of Marx's thought when he wrote:

There is a real advantage in dealing explicitly with the theme of Marx's humanism . . . it will enable us to frame more clearly the whole issue of values and faith in Marx's thought⁶

Segundo's prime intention is to corroborate a thesis that there is, generally, an affinity between faith and ideology which enables the two to complement each other. Marxism for him is an ideology. As an ideology, "a system of efficacy", it shares a necessary complementarity with the "realm of meaning and values", i.e. faith⁷.

6. Faith and Ideologies, p. 238

7. *Ibid.* pp. 241, 87f.

Taking on Erich Fromm's interpretation of Marx as his paradigm and framework, he asserts that there is no discontinuity between the "philosophy of the human being" of the younger Marx and that of the older Marx. In this persistent humanism of Marx, Segundo finds a basis for a claim that Marx's epistemology retained a transcendent core throughout the whole of Marx's intellectual development:

Marx brought to all his writings the ideal concept of the human being . . . [He] talks about the 'real human needs' as opposed to 'imaginary' ones, about 'self-estrangement' of human beings who are deprived of the direct fruit of their labour as opposed to the 'appropriation of the human essence' by human beings who are 'complete', 'independent', and 'free' . . .

The essence of the human being, as a criterion for ideal human fulfillment and satisfaction, is a transcendent datum par excellence. It is far removed from empirical verification as is the existence of God.⁹

What Segundo fails to address is the question of the relationship between this "transcendental" nature of Marx's epistemology, and the transcendental epistemology of Feuerbach and Left-Hegelianism which Marx criticised and disavowed in 1845.

The first mistake of Miranda and Segundo, in this regard, is to perceive the need for extrapolating from Marx's system the theme of freedom as arising as a norm

8. Reference is made to Erich Fromm, Marx's Concept of Man, pp. 1-83, especially the section entitled "The Continuity in Marx's Thought", in, pp. 69-79

9. Op. cit., p. 240

towards being human, as if this is extraneous from Marx's theory of materialism itself. In Miranda's case this leads to the second mistake whereby in a desperation for sustaining such a desputation, he takes the controversial step of constructing a systematic argument to the effect that Marx's extra-ordinary instigation for human freedom was borne out of his Christianity, or more precisely, "the Gospel roots"¹⁰ of his thought. Marxism, he is led to argue, is a "conscious continuation of early Christianity"¹¹.

Before we enter into a detailed discussion of what we will identify as a Marxist anthropology vis_a_vis the issue of human freedom, we shall engage in a preliminary investigation of Miranda's claim about the Christian roots of Marx thought, which he claims is a basis for his argument that the latter was a humanist. For Miranda, humanism as a normative advocacy for human freedom, has only one source, namely, the teachings of Jesus of Nazareth. "It was from Jesus Christ that the West learned that a human being is an end in itself, and the rest of the world learned it from the West"¹², he wrote.

In the end this enquiry should also be an assessment

10. See, *ibid.*, p. 197 ff

11. *ibid.* p. 224ff.

12. Marx Against the Marxist, p. 197

of the substantiatory value of this paradigm to a claim such as that Capital "is one of the most deliberately and explicitly humanist works ever written"¹³, in contra-position to Althusser's claim that Capital is the apex of Marx's attainment of a scientific theory and a classic demonstration of his "theoretical-antihumanist" methodology. In addition it should illuminate Segundo's anxiety, namely, the statement that:

Quite apart, then, from the fact that the mature Marx of Capital continues to talk about 'human nature' in normative terms, we must also note here that in renouncing any ideal of the human being as such, one also renounces any and every value-judgement that might orient the practice and theory of Marxist scientific thought, not to mention concrete politics.¹⁴

8.2. MARX'S THOUGHT AND THE CHRISTIAN GOSPEL

One of Miranda's fundamental submissions is made at the stage of his argument where he attempts to substantiate his claim of the "Christian humanism" of Marx. The submission he makes is a polemic - against the claims "of those who think that the origin of capitalism lies in some mode of production"¹⁵ - that according to Marx, "the cause of the historic birth of capitalism is the god money"¹⁶.

13. Ibid., p. 113

14. Faith and Ideologies, p. 241

15. Ibid. p. 201

16. Loc. cit.

Miranda notes that Marx's work is principally a critical analysis of capitalism, as a social system and an historic epoch. Having identified this as being the material point de depart of Marx's system, he goes a step deeper and isolates the fact that what spurred Marx into his critique of capitalism was his initial observance of the role of money in a capitalist system. Marx's perception of the role of money, maintains Miranda, was not only used by him as an argument that the capitalist mode of production as an historic epoch was inaugurated by the introduction of money as a means of circulation, but this perception in so far as it originated as being a critique, was raised as a conscious advance of what Jesus had said about money, as recorded in the Bible. To this effect Miranda draws attention to the historical connection between Marx's frequent use of the word Mammon in his writings, and Jesus's saying, "You cannot serve God and Mammon" (Matt. 6:24 and Luke 16:13).

Further on, in an explanation that Mammon is an idol, a false god, Miranda points out how Marx's statement that, "as in religion man is governed by the products of his own brain, so in capitalist production he is governed by the products of his own hand"¹⁷, centrally refers to the "cultic" power that money exercises in a

17. Capital (I) p. 621, quoted in, *ibid.* p. 197

capitalist system.

Jesus, says Miranda, "is the first human being in history to denounce money as the real object that is the true rival of the one and only God"18; and, on the other hand, "Marx offers a genetic analysis of the phenomenon that Christ was the first to formulate in such striking terms"19. Also, Miranda continues, snipingly,

Reading Capital and Grundrisse, a materialist would scarcely imagine that Marx is dealing with the history of the god of Mammon, that his work is a commentary on Jesus Christ's denunciation of the worship of money20

The point we wanted to highlight here, is that according to Miranda, the cantus__firmus of the whole of the philosophy of Karl Marx is derived from an ethical passion for the denunciation of money which the latter directly received from the teaching of Jesus. As such, therefore, Marx's entire thought is rooted in Christian philosophy, where the main feature of this "philosophy" is humanism - the notion that a human being is an end in itself. Futhermore, on this same point, we read from Miranda:

In another context [Jesus] voiced this subversive statement: 'The sabbath was made for man, not man for the sabbath' (Mark 2:27). In

18. Ibid. p. 198

19. ibid. p.205

20. Ibid. p.201

making these remarks Christ was formulating the very same value judgement that constitutes the essence of Marx's humanism . . . It was in the name of this humanism and its attendant value judgement that Marx's whole economic message revolted against capitalism.²¹

8.2.i. Conclusion

__Miranda's claim that Marx derived the basis of the construction of his theory from Jesus' denunciation of money wherein he points out that capitalism originates from monetary circulation, leaves very pertinent questions unanswered. The answers to these questions, or the incapacity to address them, bears serious implications on the affinity of Miranda's theology to the doctrine of historical-materialism.

If capitalism started off primarily because of money, as Miranda asserts that Marx maintained, how could Jesus have preached against money in the year 32 C.E (circa)? Did Jesus live in a capitalistic society, since, according to Miranda's view the being of money as means of exchange necessitates a capitalist system of production? Was first century Palestine a capitalist society, since evidently it had a money economy against which Jesus was preaching?

Even if Miranda's argument would stand, it still has

21. Loc. cit.

to confront the second challenge: Namely, how an anthropology which emerges throughout the thread of Marx's theory - dialectical materialism - can be reconciled to a Christian anthropology which has emerged from the religious teachings of Jesus of Nazareth himself. Prima_facie, it is evident that the former is a product of a "post-Christian" protest against idealistic epistemology, while the latter is decidedly transcendentalist and mythological in its conceptions of the Christian view of human life. It is this last question which Segundo attempted to confront (We readdress it in our following two chapters).

What is most noteworthy for our purposes, however, is that the humanism which is derived from a denunciation of a worship of money, as Miranda posits, is a humanism which is a protest only to the extent it it rejects man's "worship of false_gods". Worship itself is seen as not hostile to human freedom and self-consciousness. Only the nebulous objectivisation of the power of money is what is perceived as negative. The corrective is the worship of the "only true god" - the God of Christianity. The fact that even the worship of this God is an alienating self-objectivisation of the human self, as Feuerbach has proved, is not an issues for Miranda: If capitalism is rooted in the worship of the "god" of money, and Marx was spurred into criticising this so as to instigate the advent of communism the

opposite of capitalism, does it mean that with communism being the correlative of capitalism, in communism there shall be no worship of money, but of the only true god, the god of Christianity?

8.3 HUMAN FREEDOM IN MARX

8.3.1. A Paradigm Shift from "Money" to "Labour"

Miranda's interpretation, as well as polemic reconstruction of Marx's philosophy is conceptually predetermined by his obsession with emphasising the incidence of the theme of human liberty in Marx's works. He over-emphasises this to the extent that it creates an impression that this theme appears as an exceptional element at isolated points of Marx's thought.

This emphasis on freedom, in part, comes as corollary to his view, explained above, that Marxism originates from Marx's Jesus-like denunciation of money. Accordingly, the only angle from which Miranda can see the oppressive element of capitalism, is capitalism as a system underwhich the human being is mysteriously held under the sway of money - the product of his hands turned a god. This nebulous regard for money, and thus its domination is what dehumanises the human person. Therefore, freedom, in this context, consist in ridding

human society of capitalism as a system which causes this form of dehumanisation where society lives under the sway of the phantasm of money, and the preservation of the injunction of the Judeo-Christian god: "Thou shalt have no other gods but me".²²

He laments that this aspect is not generally highlighted by materialist interpretations of Marx.

We, on the other hand will argue that the fact of human liberty is expressed throughout and through the actual structure of the entire of Marx's philosophy. It is not a theme external to historical-materialism, nor is it denied by an interpretation of the latter which emphasises the deterministic power of extra human (economic-material) forces. We will instead draw attention to the fact that contrary to Miranda's concentration on Marx's discussion of the "cult of money", the cantus firmus of Marxist anthropology and humanism is located on Marx's discussion of the labour-process, and not on money as such. Money enters the picture as a symbolisation of the commodification of labour. It is "abstract labour".

In the first section of Capital__(I)__ Marx summarises his discussion of money and commodity, which he seminally introduced earlier in Contribution__of__to__the

22. Exodus 20:2

Critique of Political Economy, with an explanation that:
The body of the commodity serves . . . as the
materialisation of human labour in the abstract
. . . In tailoring, as well as in weaving, human
labour-power is expended. Both therefore,
possess the general property of being human
labour, and may therefore, in certain cases,
such as the production of value, have to be
considered under this aspect alone. There is
nothing mysterious in this.²³ (emphasis ours)

A static emphasis of the mysterious subjective power of
the products of the human mind and hands, is
Feuerbachian, and is not part of the thinking of the
matured Marx. It is the commodification of labour-
the division of the value of the products of labour
(which is labour itself in a converted form) into use
value and an exchange value with a surplus value - that
Marx found most horrendous about capitalism as a system
of a private ownership of the means of production.

Like religion which was demystified by an exposure
that it is an epiphenomenon and reflection of
historico-material conditions of the worshipper, and
the State which was demystified in the demonstration
that is an organ of class antagonisms, so money was
demystified. It was shown to be an abstraction of human
labour. Money, Marx explained in Capital_I, is a
derivation, a value of a commodity in a system where
commodities are produced for their exchange value. This
led to the conclusion - which focuses on commodities

23. Capital_I, p. 64

(products of labour) rather than money (indication of value, an abstraction) - that: "As value, all commodities are only definite masses of coagelated labour time".²⁴

The admission of the primacy of the theme of human liberty in Marx's thought does not contradict our rejection of an interpretation of Marxism which fails to realise that there is a significant and discernible epistemological-methodological variation in the course of Marx's assertion of this fact of human liberty in the process of his own intellectual development. This epistemological variation, we maintain, is expressed in his shift from the identification of human freedom in terms of the Feuerbachian notion of the emancipation of the human being's species-being (self-consciousness) from misappropriation in man's objectivisation of divinity, the State and money (the latter two are Marx's addition), to a latter recognition of this freedom as fundamentally being the attainment of the free self-expression that has its domain in the field of the labour process.

The study of the vicissitudes of the labour process, which Marx had then identified as the locus and definitional axis of human freedom, is what formed the gist of his labors after work on The German Ideology.

24. Capital I, p. 66

Writing to Engels on the publication of the the first volume of Capital, in a letter of 23 August 1867, he confided that,

The best points in my book are: (1) the two-fold character of labour, according to whether it is expressed as use-value or exchange-value. (All understanding of the facts depends on this.) It is emphasized immediately in the first chapter; (2) the treatment of surplus-value will come out especially in the second volume. The treatment of classical economy, which always mixes them up with the general form, is a regular harsh".²⁵

8.3.2. The Material Condition of Freedom

The struggle for human freedom and self-realisation has a necessary relation to a theory of history where the latter is presented as a process and locus of self-conditioned human self-development. Frederick Engels encapsulated this in the Anti-Duhring, as follows:

Freedom . . . is necessarily a product of historical development. The first men who separated themselves from the animal kingdom were in all essentials as unfree as the animals themselves, but each step forward in civilisation was a step towards freedom²⁶.

As the goal of the evolution of socio-historical formations, which Marx theorised, the issue of human liberty is intrinsically at the core of historical-

25. Collected Works, Vol 38., p. 257

26. F. Engels, Anti-Duhring: Herr Eugen Duhring's Revolution in Science (New York, International Publishers, 1939), p. 125

materialism. Marx never thought of it as even warranting an explicit theoretic treatment. As Eugene Kamenka well observes,

For the social conditions that would produce the free man Marx was to struggle for the next forty years. In the intensity of the struggle he never again turned to ask what the 'realm of freedom' means. That problem, he thought, he had solved before the struggle began. From 1844 onward, Marx's primary interests was not on the nature of freedom, but in the developments by which it would come about²⁷.

In the corpus of his writings we only find this done with an apparent self-clarifying finality in the article On the Jewish Question of October 1843. The theme is again incidentally taken up in 1875 in The Critique of the Gotha Programme (Marginal Notes to the Programme of the German Workers Party).

In On the Jewish Question, which was a series of review articles of Bruno Bauer's The Jewish Question, where he was discussing the issue of religious freedom in relation to religion-State relations in Prussia as affecting the Jewish people, Marx fundamentally established two contrasting kinds of liberty. The first he identified as "civil liberty" which is short-term political freedom which is securable through constitutional rights and legal enactments, and the second, as "universal human emancipation"²⁸. He drew attention to the fact that while the former referred to

27. The Ethical Foundations of Marxism, p. 30

28. K. Marx, "On The Jewish Question", in D. McLellan, Karl Marx: Selected Writings, p. 42

a securing of civil liberties within a given social system, the latter denotes a radical (from the roots) transformation of human reality which has the impact of changing humanity's very mode of being, as well as self-consciousness.

His proposition was that although political emancipation - the enjoyment of certain human rights - is a sign of progress in itself, it had to be seen as only an embryonic and incomplete form of freedom. "It is not the final form of human emancipation in general" 29, he maintained. It is essentially only "the final form of human emancipation inside the present world order [epoch]"30.

After the experiences of 1844-45 - the discovery of a historical-materialist analysis - plus a further self-clarification during work on "The Critique of Political Economy", Marx went further and added to this fundamental observation the dimension of the restrictiveness of human freedom by a given mode of production within which this freedom is attained and exercised. Human freedom was now perceived as only realisable in its most authentic and enduring form when realised as a result of a transformation from one system of production to the other (from capitalism to

29. Ibid., p.47

30. Loc. cit.

communism, to be precise).

Given the considered nature of capitalism (class-antagonism), true human freedom could not be seen as realisable within this system. Based on this, a principle was mooted that the mode of production of a given epoch preponderately conditions the possibilities and quality of human freedom achievable therein. The relative quality of freedom is dependent on the event of the change in a mode of production. Contextually, only a transformation that alters the class basis of capitalism to a system of production of a common ownership of the means of production and consequent classless society, can usher authentic human unconditioned self-expression. It is class distinctions, as well as the tendency at the institutionalisation of partisan interests, which is inherent in capitalism that generates political and social oppression. This principle, developed in 1848 in The Communist Manifesto was a quantum leap from what was opined on on human freedom by even Left-Hegelianism³¹.

31. As corroboration of the fact of the transformation that Marx's conception of "political freedom" underwent between the pre 1845-46 period and thereafter, we submit as evidence the following two comparative statements which are respectively taken from the two periods: In On The Jewish Question, Marx makes the following cardinal Feuerbachian submission regarding the State:

"When man liberates himself politically, he liberates himself by means of a detour, through the medium of something else . . . the State is

In a textual criticism of the Gotha Programme's allusion to the establishment of an "equal right" to the proceeds of labour, Marx wrote - adding a new dimension to the isolation of civil liberties which he made in On the Jewish Question,

Equal right here is still in principle, bourgeois right . . . equal right is still constantly stigmatised by a bourgeois limitation . . . Right can never be higher than the economic structure of society and its cultural development conditioned thereby³² (emphasis ours)

In a further criticism of the Gotha Programme's demand for "freedom of conscience" from the Prussian state, he added,

If one desired . . . to remind liberalism of its old catchwords, it surely could have been

the intermediary between man and his freedom. As Christ is the intermediary on to whom man unburdens all his divinity, all his religious bonds, so the state is the mediator onto which he transfers all his Godlessness and all his human liberty". (In, D. MacLellan, Karl Marx: Selected Writings, p. 44)

In Critique of the Gotha Programme, this is not only improved upon, but the whole perspective is different:

"Freedom consists in converting the State from an organ super-imposed upon society into one completely subordinate to it . . . Between capitalist and communist society lies the period of revolutionary transformation of the one into the other. Corresponding to this is also a political transition period in which the State can be nothing but the revolutionary dictatorship of the proletariat." (Selected Works, Vol. 3, pp. 25, 26)

32. Critique of the Gotha Programme, in, Marx K., Engels F., Selected Works (in three Vols.), Vol. 3, Moscow, Progress Publishers, 1970, pp. 18, 19

done only in the following terms: Every one should be able to attend to his religious as well as his bodily needs without the police sticking their noses in. But the workers' party ought at any rate in this connection to have expressed its awareness of the fact that bourgeois "freedom of conscience" is nothing but the toleration of all possible kinds of religious freedom of conscience, and that for its part it endeavours rather to liberate the conscience from the witchery of religion. But they choose not to transgress the 'bourgeois level'.³³

Also, in repetition of the proclamation made in The Communist Manifesto, namely that the realisation of complete freedom is only possible in the trans-epochal attainment of a classless communist society, Marx corrected the authors of the Gotha Programme:

Instead of . . . 'the elimination of all social and political inequality', it ought to have been said that, with the abolition of class distinctions all social and political inequality arising from them would disappear of itself.³⁴

In terms of this theory, it is impermissible for one to discuss and analyse an incidence of a repression of human liberty or liberties without taking cognisance of the particular historical epoch or system of productions within which this takes place. All forms of political repression and suppression of human self-expression are machineries of a historically particular political infrastructure. Marx has abundantly drawn

33. Ibid. p. 29

34. Ibid. p.24

attention (mainly in The__Poverty_of_Philosophy) to the fact that the political and juridical structure of a given society arises as epiphenomena of the material basis of the system of production obtaining in that particular society.

Also, each form of repression, being a superstructural occurrence, is conditioned by the related system of production within which it emerges. For example, the political repression of intellectual freedom of the combined institutions of the Church and State in the feudal European Middle Ages, is in practice and motive different from the solitary oppression of the eighteenth century slave-owner of his slave; and these two forms of a denial of freedom are different from the repression of a contemporary capitalist State which is in the service of defending the material interests of its ruling class.

Since the suppression of human freedom takes forms which are historically transient in their practical nature and immediate purpose, and are modelled on the nature of the relations of production in vogue, in dealing with this repression within an epoch without changing the very mode of production, one has left the roots which will continue to produce the same sort of repression. Besides, such a concession of "liberties" within an intrinsically exploitative and dehumanising

social system does not achieve the progressive change in society and human nature which is normally accompanied by the change in productive forces et_cetera. Hence Marx's marginalisation of political emancipation, putting it below that of the more fundamental change that comes with an alteration in productive relations which occurs in tandem with a development in the means of production:

Slavery cannot be abolished without the steam-engine and mule-jenny, serfdom cannot be abolished without improved agriculture, and that in general, people cannot be liberated as long as they are unable to obtain food and drink, housing and clothing in adequate quality and quantity. 'Liberation' is a historical and not mental act, and it is brought about by historical conditions, the level of industry, commerce, and agriculture . . . 35

8.3.3 Labour and Freedom

This identification of human freedom with the development of productive forces is more systematically pronounced in Frederick Engels' article, The Part Played by labour in the Transition from Ape to Man (1876). There Engels provides an account of the emergence of the human species on the basis of the theory of Charles Darwin (1809-82) by grounding this in the view that the development of homo_sapiens beyond other species of the animal kingdom, is definitional of

35. From, The German Ideology, in Collected Works, Vol. 5,

human emancipation³⁶. According to this view, the human being's transition from a "four-legged" primate to an homo erectus - a development to walking erect on two legs and having hands freed to fashion tools, and from there, to the development of speech and the change from an exclusively vegetarian diet to a more varied one, is all a series of stages within a single act of freedom. The attainment of humanhood is an act of freedom. Being human is being free. However, the point being made here is that, this act of human being, is facilitated by labour. Labour, Engels submitted, "is the prime basic condition of all human existence, and this to such an extent that, in a sense, we have to say that labour created man himself"³⁷.

In an elucidation of this point, Engels wrote that at the attainment of the stage of homo erectus, the value of the hands was discovered, and this established "the decisive step in the transition from ape to man". From there "our ancestors gradually learned to adapt their hands" to the tasks of meeting needs of their subsistence. At this stage, he declares:

. . . the decisive step had been taken, the hand had become free and could henceforth attain ever greater dexterity; the greater flexibility thus acquired was inherited and increased from generation to generation. Thus the hand is not only the organ of labour, it is

36. See, K. Marx, F. Engels, Selected Works, (One Volume), p. 359.

37. Ibid., p.354

also the product of labour. Labour, the adaptation to ever new operations, the inheritance of muscles, ligaments, and, over longer periods of time, bones that had undergone special development and ever-renewed employment of this inherited finesse in new, more and more complicated operations, have given the human hand the high degree of perfection required to conjure into being the pictures of a Raphael, the statues of a Thorwaldsen, the music of a Paganini.³⁸

But the story does not end there, because, "the hand did not exist alone, it was a member of an integral, highly complex organism. And what benefited the hand, benefitted also the whole body it served"³⁹. "The body benefitted", Engels explains, "from the law of correlation of growth, as Darwin called it. This law states that the specialised forms of separate parts of an organic being are always bound up with certain forms of other parts that apparently have no connection with them"⁴⁰. Thus the whole evolution of the human organism, with its highly complex faculties, took place on the influence of the development of the hand - the organ of labour. "Mastery over nature began with the development of the hand, with labour, and widened man's horizon at every new advance"⁴¹, Engels concluded.

The same point was also made earlier in The German

38. Ibid. p. 357

39. Loc. cit.

40 Loc. cit.

41. Ibid., p. 356

Ideology: "Men", wrote Karl Marx with Engels, "begin to distinguish themselves from animals as soon as they begin to produce their means of subsistence, a step which is conditioned by their physical organisation . . ."42

Therefore, human freedom, and Marx's concern with this, to whatever extent that it could be identified as "humanism", is strictly perceived and interpreted within the context of historical materialism whereby the conditioning role of the economic development process on human nature is central. Within this, is proclaimed the fact that human freedom is depended on the process of changes that occur in the historical interaction between development in productive forces and social relations, in which process the role of the human being is significant only to the extent of its manifestation in the domain of the labour activity. This is an aspect we will now focus on, showing how Marx's concept of the human being is interlinked and is inseparable from his view of man as being essentially in the process of being free where, however, this freedom is essentially presented as a feature of a revision of the human being's relation to and participation in economic production. This view we find encapsulated in the following statement made by Marx in the Gotha Programme:

42. op cit. p. 36

In a higher phase of communist society, after the enslaving subordination of the individual to the division of labour, and therewith also the antithesis between mental and physical labour has vanished; after labour has become not only a means of life but life's prime want; after the productive forces have also increased with the all-round development of the individual, and all the springs of co-operative wealth flow more abundantly - only then can the narrow horizon of bourgeois right be crossed in its entirety and society inscribe on its banners: From each according to his ability, to each according to his needs!⁴³

This is radically different from Feuerbach's philosophical anthropology which merely saw the freedom of the human person as securable in the reformation of philosophical discourse, where "Man" would be made the central point of departure and concern. Correlative to this, Marx's assertion is that "Liberation is a historical and not mental act, and is brought about by historical conditions".⁴⁴

8.4. THE LABOUR-PROCESS AS THE ESSENCE OF HUMAN BEING

The process of labour in Marx's analysis acquired a radically vital signification of the process of human self-creation as well as self-expression. Our following discussion expositis these two concepts.

Marx, with Engels, introduced a philosophical reconceptualisation of labour, whereby this became an

43. Selected Works (One Volume). p. 19

44. The German Ideology, in, Collected Works, Vol. 5, p. 35

activity which is indicative of the fact of the separation of freedom, or the urge for it, from what is definitive of being human. In addition, they demonstrated how, in turn, the process of labour, the human person's production of his subsistence and ordering of his environment, is an act of freedom. Besides introducing a new conceptualisation of work, this also suggested a new meaning for social liberty.

As developed seminally in On The Jewish Question, authentic human freedom was to be seen as being something more than just political freedom, but a process of self-expression that brooks on the seams of an historical epoch (a mode of production). Grounded on labour, this related the fact that in working and having in the process to improve the tools of his work, the human person is unleashing a chain reaction which induces a change not only in the environment he is fashioning but also in his own very nature. Through labour, a development occurs in productive forces, as these productive forces develop within a mode of production, they, of necessity, result in an antagonism between themselves and the obtaining social relations (relations of production). This antagonism between productive forces and relation of production resolves itself, scientifically speaking, into a social revolution which results in a movement from one system of production or social formation to the higher one. A

newly created socio-economic environment in turn forms the new material basis which conditions man's further social activity, and thus his very nature, forms of thought and behaviour. In working, man produces himself. "By producing their means of subsistence, men are indirectly producing their actual material life"⁴⁵ wrote Marx and Engels. Human society is a product of its own creation (under predetermined conditions).

To this effect, Marx wrote in Theories of Surplus Value (1863):

In the same way the existence of the human race is the result of an earlier process which organic life passed through. Man comes into existence only when a certain point is reached. But once man has emerged, he becomes the permanent pre-condition of human history, likewise its permanent product and result, and he is pre-condition only as his own product and result.⁴⁶

The human person is the pre-condition of history because he is the only labouring agent in history. It is his labour, the inescapable need for subsistence and survival, which is the immediate motor of historical development. But at the same time, he is also the object of this very historical development of which he is a subject. (This is one of our crucial points of dispute with Miranda. He would emphasise only the first

45. Ibid., p. 31

46. K. Marx, Theories of Surplus Value: Capital Vol. IV, (Moscow, Progress Publishers, 1971), p. 491

proposition which refers to labour as human activity as being the motor of history, while neglecting the attendant proposition that this man carries out this activity within pregiven conditions of the system of production within which he comes into existence⁴⁷).

Contraposing this view of the historical role of labour against that of the Political Economy of Adam Smith, Marx goes further. He wrote in the Grundrisse:

It seems quite far from Smith's mind that the individual, 'in his normal state of health, strength, activity, skill, facility', also needs a normal portion of work, and the suspension of tranquility. Certainly, labour obtains its measure from the outside, through the aim to be attained and the obstacle to be overcome in attaining it. But Smith has no inkling whatever that this__overcoming__of__obstacles__is__in__itself__a__liberating__activity-and that, further, the external aims become stripped of the semblance of merely external natural urgencies, and become posited as aims which the individual himself posits - hence as a self-realization, objectification of the subject, hence as real freedom, whose action, is precisely, labour.⁴⁸ (emphasis ours)

The points raised in the above quotation are very pertinent to an understanding of Marx's conception of the ontology of human being. However the most important lies in the last sentence which making reference to the "objectification of the subject". Here lies the key to this aspect of Marx's philosophy. The same is also

47. See, Miranda, op cit., p. 57,58

48. R. Marx, Grundrisse: Foundations of the Critique of Political Economy (New York, Vintage Books, 1973), p. 611

contained in the above quotation on the human being 's existence as the "producer and product of history".

Marx conceived of a human being or society as being in a perpetual process of freedom. This freedom, is continually manifested as a practical self-realisation as the human being unavoidably employs his human hands and mind. The produce of this hand and mind, the social environment, stands as a mirror of what the human being actually is. It is the imprint of his will and plan. We read from Capital(I):

What distinguishes the worst architect from the best of bees is this, that the architect raises his structure in imagination before he erects it in reality. At the end of every labour process, we get a result that already existed in the imagination of the labourer at its commencement. He not only effects a change of form in the material on which he works, but he also realises a purpose of his own that gives the law to his *modus operandi*, and to which he must subordinate his will . . . the process demands that, during the whole operation, the workman's will be steadily in consonance with his purpose.⁴⁹

The subject, the human person, externalises his being (the self-exertion of his will and purpose) in labour; the products of his labour are the object, and this object is himself, his own self-expression.

It is Ludwig Feuerbach who initiated - after an intellectual struggle with Hegelianism dating from 1830 - this critical isolation and application of this

49. Capital_Vol._1, p. 174

originally Fichtian conceptualisation of the relationship between Object and Subject with his, The Essence of Christianity of 1841, as we observed in our previous chapter. And it can safely be surmised that it is from him that Marx received the critical structure of this particularly fundamental aspect of his theory⁵⁰. Below we discuss the extent to which Marx critically reversed the conceptualisation of the relationship between Subject and Object from the way Feuerbach had originally conceived of it, and how he converted this into a category which informed the materialism of his conception of human nature and society.

8.4.1. Marx on the Conception of unity between Subject and Object

The schema of Marx's theory of an objectivisation of the human "essence" (which in Marx is the material existence and not contemplative consciousness) is the same as that of Feuerbach's. However, in Marx, the "essence" of the self that is being objectivised is not a contemplative consciousness, as Feuerbach saw it, but a hypostasis of human material existence which manifests itself in labour.

Marx's break with Feuerbach's humanistic analysis,

⁵⁰. See, F. Engels, Ludwig Feuerbach and the End, in, op. cit., p. 592

is essentially based on his realisation of what is codified in the Sixth of the Theses on Feuerbach: "The human essence is no abstraction inherent in each single individual. In its reality, it is the ensemble of social relations". This is further amplified in The German Ideology:

The sum of productive forces, forms of capital and social forms of intercourse, which every individual and generation finds in existence as something given, is the real basis of what the philosophers have conceived as "subsistence" and "essence of man"⁵¹

Labour, Marx maintained, "is the necessary condition for effecting exchange of matter between man [subject] and Nature [object]; it is the everlasting Nature-imposed condition of human existence"⁵². Therefore, Marx perceived his task as being two-fold: firstly he needed to go beyond Feuerbach's application of this theory of converse self-objectivisation restrictively to religion; secondly, as being to expose and criticise, as he does in The German Ideology, the epistemological preconceptions of Feuerbach's restrictiveness.

Also, unlike in Feuerbach's conception of alienation, in Marx, the object (the externalised), the product of human labour is - by virtue of being the result of man's creativity which is aimed at -----

51. Ibid., p.28

52. Capital I, p. 179

creating a conditions for a livelihood - necessarily not estranged from man - the subject. Instead it stands out in a proces of mutual development. It acts back on him and contributes in the formation of his nature: " . . . by thus acting on the external world and changing it, he at the same time changes his own nature"53. There is a dialectical interaction between subject and object. For it is the cardinal character of labour that, "it uses up its material factors, its subject and its instrument, consumes them, and is therefore a process of consumption. in so far then, as its instruments and subjects are themselves products, labour consumes products in order to create products, in other words, consumes one set of products by turning them into means of production for another set."54.

Within this context, the production of human being where the human actor is the subject which becomes the object in the produce of its activity, and in turn as an object becomes a subject again so as to engage in further production, is a notion of the unity of subject and object, par_excellence. It is a combination of Feuerbach's genetical-analysis, and the basic form of Hegel's dialetics.

In Marx, the conception of "alienation" in the

53. Capital_Vol_1., p. 173

54. ibid, p. 179

individualistic model which describes what occurs in the individual's psyche, as presented by Feuerbach, is eschewed. Concentration, or rather a point of departure, is the interrogation of how the materially existent system of production of the time of his writing inhibits and frustrates human development and self-expression. It is from this angle that the capitalist mode of production is immediately discovered as being a gross cause of dehumanisation. Man is not free in the capitalist system because according to the functioning of this system, the product of human labour (his self-realisation) is given a dual character of use-value and surplus-value, where the latter is consumed by another person, the owner of productive forces - the capitalist. Besides this anthropologically assaulting practice, man is also forced to bring "his labour power to the market for sale as a commodity"⁵⁵. This in terms of the philosophical roots of Marx's exposition, is equal to the human being selling himself to another person. The cardinal evil of capitalism is its commodification of labour - human self-objectification - and the reduction of this to a factor of production which is part of the property of the owner of the means of production.

This goes beyond simple Feuerbachian "alienation" in that even if it could be explained as an alienation, it

55. Ibid. p. 174

cannot be solved by a simple redefinition of the role of man as being either solely a subject. The sort of anthropological assault like the one unleashed on the human race by capitalism, according to Marx, as is principally an occurrence that is taking place in social reality, can only be resolved through a social revolution which is essentially precipitated by the development of productive forces conjured by capitalism itself.

Broadly, this uniquely Marxist view of "alienation" (and the way it is to be overcome) was introduced as follows in the Preface:

The bourgeois relations of production are the last antagonistic form of social production-antagonistic not in the sense of individual antagonism, but of one arising from the social conditions of life of the individuals; at the same time, the productive forces developing in the womb of bourgeois society create the material conditions for the solution of the antagonism. This social formation brings, therefore, the prehistory of human society to a close.⁵⁶

Robert Tucker perceived this quite rightly (even though he holds to the view of perennial humanism in Marx) when he submits that, in his counter-vision to capitalism, Marx envisaged a future whose . . . definitive features were that man in the mass would achieve mastery of his surroundings and collective life-process, and 'labour' in the historic sense of the drudgery, would give way to productive self-expression of fully

⁵⁶. K. Marx, "Preface to The Critique of Political Economy", in Selected Works (Vol. 3), p. 362

developed human beings seeking exercise of their diverse and many-sided talents . . . instead of sacrificing themselves in order to create the material prerequisites of an authentically human existence, future generations would actually experience such an existence. The species' arduous growth-process would terminate in its maturity. Human being would take the place of historical becoming . . . he envisaged collective man as master of his circumstances and living in a developed society at the end of history."57

This point is related to our conclusion (in chapter 3) on the centrality of Marx's reworking of Hegel's philosophy, in giving a meaning to the structure of his theory. There we made reference to Charles Taylor's exposition of how Hegel's philosophy is linked to the the post Enlightenment epistemological concern with the duality and conflict the human being suffers in the epistemological process as he has to be both a subject and an object of knowledge, and how in Hegel this was solved in the theory of self-expressivism (the unfolding self-expression of the Idea)58. In Hegel's system, the object of the Idea or Geist, is at the same time the reality of the Idea's own self-externalisation. Alienation, which is a state of the negation which induces a dialectical development to higher forms of the reality of the Idea, lies "positively" within the innate self-contradictory nature of the product of self-externalisation. The same sense of the "positivity" of

57. Robert Tucker, Philosophy and Myth in Karl Marx, p. 234,

58. See, Charles Taylor, Hegel, pp. 3, 11f.

alienation, or "antagonism" as used in the Preface, is alluded to in Marx's theory. It is the antagonism between the arena of human labour (development of productive forces) and relations of production within which this is exercised that induces a social revolution.

The following resume of this notion by Charles Taylor, though faithfully put in Hegelian "speculative-rationalist" terms (which is the only thing Marx changed) should further clarify the philosophical history of Marx's anthropology as we sought to present it above:

Human life is both fact and meaningful expression; and its being expression does not reside in a subjective relation of reference to something else, it expresses the idea which it expresses . . . life is seen as self-expression also in the sense of clarifying what we are. This clarification awaits recognition by a subject, and man as a conscious being achieves his highest point when he recognizes his own life as an adequate, a true expression of what he potentially is - just as an artist or writer reaches his goal in recognizing his work as a fully adequate expression of what he wanted to say⁵⁹.

Marx "materialised" this sense and concept of being human, and radically went beyond Feuerbach with his inclusion of the category of labour as an arena and process of the unity of human subjective self-consciousness and objective self-expression. However,

⁵⁹. Ibid. p. 17

he retained Hegel's "positive" conception of alienation (as a dynamic of a dialectical relationship⁶⁰).

According to Marx, therefore, to be free is to be; that is, to be a labouring human being who is an ensemble of the productive relations obtaining within a particular epoch. This is freedom within the limits of an obtaining mode of production, and a freedom which is a process of becoming insofar as every epoch is transient (rendered thus by the fact of the labour activity which continuously contributes to the development of productive forces).

3.5. CONCLUSION: MARXIST THEORY AND ETHICS

In reading our emphasis on the centrality of human freedom and labour in Marx's thought it is important to note that this is presented in deliberate contradiction of an emphasis like that of Erich Fromm, when he states in his, Marx's Concept of Man, that:

It must be noted that labour and capital were not all for Marx only economic categories; they were anthropological categories, imbued with a value judgement which is rooted in his humanistic position⁶¹.

The same goes for Miranda's elaborate discussion of

60. See, Capital I, p. 29

61. Erich Fromm, Marx's Concept of Man, p. 40

"the moral content of Marx's economic analysis"62, as well as Eugene Kamenka's thesis that:

after Marx's discovery of the materialist interpretation of history in the spring of 1845, we find a certain change in style and a growing socio-historical concreteness. Marx's concern shifts from the philosophical nature of freedom to ever-deepening studies of the social and historical conditions that produce alienation, but we do not find a change of theoretical structure or a major revision of his philosophical premisses63

Marx's philosophic point of departure, which took him through the rigours of a demand for a critique of Hegel and Feuerbach, and ultimately into a study of Political Economy, was a quest for a post-Feuerbachian and "post-philosophical" (scientific) analysis of being human. What he engaged in, and the theoretical system he produced, is a description of modes of human life, whose description is normative only to the extent that it critically announces a programme of human self-realisation in contra-relation to the existing social circumstances. He was not interested in working out a sermon-like moral-diatribes against capitalism. His work is a description of the formation of social formations from a perspective which had discovered the crucial role of the economic activity in influencing this development, and on the basis of an observation of the pattern that this process has taken in the past,

62. Title, of Chapter 6 of, "Marx Against the Marxist" (p.

63. The Ethical Foundations of Marxism, p. vii

proceeds to offer hints on the way the present shall be end. It is a replacement of speculative and reflectional philosophy with an economico-historical science of social formations. Thus, it is a Theory, and not an philosophico-ethical system. It is primarily descriptive, and is normative only in the dynamic sense that it can be used normatively. (Theory seeks to base itself more on empirically verifiable premisses than is the case with an ethical system).

The very first principles of this theory are located in the realisation codified in The German Ideology and The Poverty of Philosophy, on the material basis of human life: in that, in producing the means of their subsistence, out of an operation of natural necessity, and on the basis of the circumstances produced by previous generations, human beings are producing a socio-economic infrastructure, of which they become a part, and which in turn proceeds to regulate how they produce their further subsistence. "Circumstances make men just as men make circumstances"⁶⁴, and "all history is nothing but the transformation of human nature".⁶⁵

In a letter of 28 December 1846 to Annenkov, Marx reiterated in his conclusion of a summary of his

64. The German Ideology, in, op cit., p. 54.

65. The Poverty of Philosophy (New York: International Publishers, 1975), p.165

materialistic conception of history as opposed to

Proudhon's :

. . . it can only be concluded that the social history of man is never anything else than the history of his individual development, whether he is conscious of it or not. His material relations form the basis of all his relations. These material relations are but the necessary forms in which his material and individual activity is realised⁶⁶.

In distinction from the normativity alluded to by Erich Fromm (that the ethical import of Marxism lies exclusively on the fact of its humanistic objective), and the theological Humanism preached by Miranda, Marx's theory as we understand it, and as summarised in the above quote from the letter to Annenkov, is a twin affirmation of both the cardinal feature of human self-development as natural characteristic of history and not the result of some moral advocacy. The second is an affirmation of the fact that this development is occurring within the conditioning strictures of material reality, since it has as its locus the productive process (labour). The balancing of these two facts and a conceptualisation of them into a single idea, is what marks out Karl Marx's concern about humanity from a general humanistic philosophy. He affirms the struggle for human freedom, at the same time he asserts the determining value of material factors on this.

66. Collected Works, Vol. 38, p. 96

The motif of Miranda's argument - that Marx's thought is principally about human freedom - can thus be shown as being a misplaced emphasis which is theoretically unnecessary, and at the same time, fallacious. This is "theoretically unnecessary"⁶⁷, since, as we saw, a concern with human freedom is implied in the main motif of historical materialism and permeates the whole of Marx's thought.

Marx's work may be humanistic in its impact and goal, but it is "anti-humanistic" in its philosophic method. The goal is humanistic in the sense that the work is intended at contributing to the subversion of capitalism - a system which happens to embody the oppression of human self-realisation. The method, however, is a deliberate employment of the dehumanistic epistemology which is formulated from a critique of Feuerbach.

67. This is a fallacy equivalent to a justification of a subject of a simple, a__prior statement. When applied in theory, it is like, for example, arguing about the political theory of liberal democracy by emphasising the role of the people in the political process described by this theory without recognising that, in any case, the theory will be meaningless without this particular fact.

CHAPTER 9

SIMILARITIES BETWEEN THE PHILOSOPHY OF FEUERBACH AND LIBERATION THEOLOGY

9.1. AN AFFIRMATION OF THE CONCRETE HUMAN SUBJECT

According to Jon Sobrino in The True Church and the Poor¹, Latin American theology of liberation signifies a consciously initiated "epistemological break" with the methodology of European theology, which, as characterised, has as its hallmark, an employment and veneration of abstract thinking and Idealism. Liberation theology, he explains, came about, and remains a negation of this Idealism². It is a conscious attempt at a materialist (practical) epistemology in the sense of this being a negation of Idealism, and a speculation which fails to issue in action.

It is on an accentuation of this quest and drive for a practical-material basis for theology that liberation theology goes further and pins itself critically against European political theology which

1. Jon Sobrino, The True Church and the Poor (London, SCM Press, 1981)

2. Ibid., pp. 35-38

may be taken as the historical precedent and a genus of the same process of the "materialisation" of theology³. The epistemological self-definition of liberation theology reaches to the extent of finding the existentialist basis of European political theology inadequate⁴. Whereas the latter has restrictively focussed on drawing attention to the imperatives of reappropriating traditional Christian dogma in terms of historical consciousness, liberation theology critically goes beyond this and aims at working out actual strategies for the participation of the theological effort in political struggles for revolutionary social change⁵. In other words, the aim is to render theology a facilitator of practical commitment for the liberation of the "poor". According to Jose Miguez Bonino, it is this "revolutionary commitment"⁶ which has been the inspiration and continues to be the basis of a theology of liberation.

Of note though, is the fact that, this revolutionary commitment, is conceived of as chiefly being aimed at

3. See J.L. Segundo's criticism of Harvey Cox, in The Liberation of Theology. (Dublin: Gill and Macmillan, 1977) pp. 10-13; and, Hugo Assman, Theology for a Normal Church. (Maryknoll, N.Y: Orbis, 1976)

4. Jose Miguez Bonino, Revolutionary Theology Comes of Age, pp. 79,80 -

5. See, Duncan B. Forrester, Theology and Politics (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1988), pp. 57-82

6. Jose Miguez Bonino, Revolutionary Theology Comes of Age, pp. xxv, 38 f. -

realising a kind of liberation which is perceived as ultimately aimed at redeeming the human being from his alienation at the historico-structural level by political injustice, as well as the personal-psychological level.⁷ As Gustavo Gutierrez justifyingly puts it,

Modern man's aspirations include not only liberation from exterior pressures which prevent his fulfillment as a member of a certain social class, country, or society. He seeks likewise an interior liberation, in an individual and intimate dimension; he seeks liberation not only on the social plane but also on a psychological one. He seeks an interior freedom understood however not as an ideological evasion from social confrontation or as the internalization of a situation of dependency. Rather it must be in relation to the real world of the human psyche as understood since Freud.⁸

As another example: in describing the "historical project" which liberation theology has set for itself in Latin America, vis_a_vis the plight of the poor, Bonino explains that in liberation theology,

Development is not seen as merely economic or structural change; rather, there is a strong emphasis on the human dimension . . . liberation is the process through which and in which a 'new man' must emerge, a man shaped by solidarity and creativity over against the individualistic, distorted humanity of the present system.⁹

This is a clear adumbration of humanism, primarily as

7. A Theology of Liberation, p.30

8. Loc. cit.

9. Op cit., p. 40

an adoption of the problematic of the human condition as a point of departure and goal of theology.

The combination of these two characteristics - a methodic disavowal of the tradition of abstract-speculation in theology, and a move toward a materialism which is essentially humanist in the specific sense of evoking the urgent need of practical revolutionary commitment for the liberation of the materially poor, which is what differentiates liberation theology from European political theology- is encapsulated in the following statement by Gutierrez:

A goodly part of contemporary theology seems to take its start from the challenge posed by the non-believer. The non-believer calls into question our religious___world, demanding its throughgoing purification and revitalization. Bonhoeffer accepted that challenge and incisively formulated the question that undelies much of contemporary theological effort: How are we to proclaim God in a world come of age? In a continent like Latin America, however, the main challenge does not come from the nonbeliever but from the nonhuman -i.e, the human being who is not recognized as such by the prevailing social order. These are the poor and exploited people, the ones who are systematically and legally despoiled of their being human, those who scarcely know what a human being might be. These nonhumans do not call into question our religious world so much as they call into question our economic, social, political, and cultural world. Their challenge impels us toward a revolutionary transformation of the very bases of what is now a dehumanizing society. The question then, is no longer how we are to speak about God in a world come of age; it is rather how we are to proclaim him Father in a world that is not human and what the implications might be of telling nonhumans that

they are the children of God¹⁰

The foregoing, we maintain, bears a striking resemblance to what we saw as the unique kind of materialism which Feuerbach formulated, viz., an affirmation of the concrete subjective over against the conceptual objective which translates itself into a rejection of speculative epistemology in favour of an assertion of the significance of the human subject. In similitude to the "reformation" which Feuerbach effected upon Hegel's philosophy, which may well be called an "epistemological break", liberation theology claims to be born out of a new epistemological-methodological framework which affirms the significance of concrete reality and human existence, while consciously and systematically contradicting speculative rationalism. Against traditional theology's exclusive focus on spirituality and the conceptual clarity of dogma, here there is a decided affirmation of the concrete environment of which the human being is seen as being a sine qua non, a Subject.

Even though liberation theology affirms this notion of the primacy of the concrete human subject like Feuerbach, and evidently edges beyond him in that it tries to take the sociological factor much more

10. Quoted in, Rosini Gibellini, ed., Frontiers of Theology in Latin America (London: SCM Press, 1980), p. x

seriously, we maintain that, the introduction of the personal-psychological plane as the ultimate dimension of liberation, situates its philosophical presuppositions - within the spectrum of a post-Hegelian philosophy - firmly within Feuerbachian philosophy. It is this very fact, that it takes the social context and analysis significantly more seriously than Feuerbach, which created a perception that by virtue of this step, it is Marxist. We now proceed to investigate the actual nature of the relationship of this (the taking of the social-concrete as a point of departure) by Latin American liberation theologians to Marx's epistemology.

9.2. THE MATERIALISM OF LIBERATION THEOLOGY: ON PRAXIS

Sobrino's work (referred to above) is important in that it seeks to specifically register the argument that the entire motif of liberation theology derives its justification from a castigation of "speculative thought", and focuses on the importance of the social context of the thinking being as the point of departure of the theological process. The same theme is repeatedly taken by other protagonists of liberation theology¹¹. Throughout, they emphasise that it is

11. See, Jose Comblin, "What Sort of Service Might Theology Render?" in, R. Gibelinni, ed., Frontiers of Liberation Theology, pp. 58-78; J.L. Segundo, The Liberation of Theology, pp. 8,9

conditional to the self-authentication of whatever can be equated with Christian theology that it begins its activity with an analysis of the social conditions of those who are involved in the theological process (not necessarily professional theologians, but ordinary believers and others). This injunction for the need to engage with the social and historical context of the locus__theologicus¹², is then transformed into a methodological category of praxis.

The arrival at a formulation of praxis as an epistemological-methodological framework brings liberation theology into a dramatic affinity with the historic materialist tradition of Western philosophy, as Nicholas Lobkowitz's study, Theory__and__Practice: History_of__the__Concept__from Aristotle to Marx, reminds us¹³. This matter has also been brought succinctly within the field of theological debate by writings such as A. Nicholas' article, "The Story of Praxis, Liberation Theology's Philosophical Handmaid"¹⁴. We

12. Gustavo Gutierrez identifies the locus_theologicus as being exclusively the activity of the Church (A Theology of Liberation, p.12). Jose Miguez Bonino, on the other hand, is readily inclined to include the extra-ecclesial liberation movements as also constituting the locus__theologicus (A Revolutionary Theology Comes of Ages, pp. 53f). This may have to do with the fact that Gutierrez thinks from within his Catholic background, whereas Bonino thinks as a Protestant (Methodist).

13. N. Lobkowitz, Theory__and__Practice:__History__of__the__Concept__from__Aristotle__to__Marx (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 1984).

14. in, Religion in Communist Lands, 17:1 (Spring 89), pp. 45-58.

will want to question this assumption of the materialist affinity of liberation theology to the thought of Karl Marx by enquiring on how is the concept of praxis actually understood within the context that it is being used in liberation theology and to what extent does it differ from Marx's conception of the same.

Praxis, as defined by Gustavo Gutierrez in the now classic, A Theology of Liberation (1971), means, the methodological imperative on taking account of the social, economic and political context in which the believer lives, which context happens to be (as primarily, as is the case in Latin America) riddled with conditions which demand a struggle for liberation¹⁵. Hence for him, the accent for the primary context or material from which liberation theology arose and continues to rise is the context of, "Christian participation in the liberation process"¹⁶. In the course of the emergence of liberation theology, observes Gutierrez, "revolutionary activity simply became a new field for the application of theological reflection"¹⁷.

Further to this, Sobrino's assertion is also illuminative: that, unlike in "European theology", in

15. Op. cit., pp. 10-13

16. "Liberation Praxis and Christian Faith", in, R. Gibellini, Op. cit., p.2,

17. Ibid., p.7

Latin American liberation theology, it is the demands arising out of life experience that provide material for theological work, and not reasoning and logic¹⁸. Not even the demands of living according to the injunctions of this reason as ecclesiastical orthodoxy, is the point_de_depart and objective of liberation theology. Instead, and in negation of this, the main preoccupation is orthopraxis. The employment of "orthopraxis". Gutierrez had already explained, is "to recognize the work and importance of concrete behaviour, of deeds, of action, of praxis in the Christian life."¹⁹

We proceed to critically distill some of the features of this theological appropriation of praxis.

9.2.1. A Humanist Praxis and Marx.

In liberation theology, the extra-rational reality (the extended) which is affirmatively encapsulated in the category praxis, is wholly and primarily conceived of in humanistic terms. Leaving aside what we have already noted on Miranda in the preceding sections, we find this wildly humanistic definition of praxis from Enrique Dussel:

Praxis or prattice denotes any human act

18. Op Cit., p.20

19. Ibid., p.10

addressed to another human person; further, praxis denotes the very relationship of one person to another. Praxis is both act and relationship: 'those who believed lived at one (Acts 2:44) 20

This is praxis as differentiated from its original Aristotelean meaning of human activity as being activity vis_a_vis the socio-political fabric of the human being's environment, the polis²¹. It is praxis specifically and restrictively as a normative concept of the dynamics and vicissitudes of human activity towards another human being. "A practical relationship between persons is called praxis"²², asserts Dussel.

In order to distill this meaning, Dussel draws attention to another Greek word related to "practice" from which praxis has to be differentiated. This is poiesis. Poiesis, he explains, unlike praxis, refers to the human being's relationship with nature: "a fashioning, a making, a producing with or in something, a working with nature. It denotes the person-nature relationship."²³. This leaves praxis as a concept restricted to use only in reference to inter-personal relations.

20. Enrique Dussel, Ethics and Community (Maryknoll, N.Y: Orbis, 1986), p.8

21. See, Richard J. Bernstein, Praxis and Action: Contemporary Philosophies of Human Activity, pp. ix, x.

22. Op. cit. p. 8

23. Ethics and Community, p9

Among Latin American liberation theologians, Enrique Dussel distinguishes himself as one thinker who has sought to subject liberation theology to the scrutiny of philosophical rigour²⁴. We therefore take this view of his on praxis as being a well considered one.

One other noteworthy aspect of praxis as employed in liberation theology, which tallies with Dussel's emphasis, but adds the epistemological dimension, is offered by Leonardo and Clodovis Boff in their Introducing Liberation Theology. There we read:

. . . if we are to understand the theology of liberation, we must first understand and take an active part in real and historical process of liberating the oppressed. In this field, more than in others, it is vital to move beyond a merely intellectual approach that is content with comprehending a theology through its purely theoretical aspects . . . We have to work our way into a more biblical framework of reference, where "knowing" implies loving, letting oneself become involved body and soul, communing wholly - being committed . . .²⁵

Praxis, therefore, is not only having to do with the dynamics of human inter-personal relationships as a perspective of viewing economic and political structures (Dussel, Gutierrez), it also refers to the need of a personal, humanistic commitment from the theologian. It

24. See for e.g., his, Philosophy of Liberation (Maryknoll, N.Y.: Orbis, 1985); Ethics and the Theology of Liberation (Maryknoll, N.Y.: Orbis, 1978). For an extensive bibliography of his writings, see, Ethics And Community, p. 253.

25. L. Boff, C. Boff, Introducing Liberation Theology (Kent: Burns & Oates, 1987), p. 9

has to do with the ethics of both the method of social engagement and propounding of a certain quality of social relations. As Dussel conclusively explains, the theme of praxis

. . . furnishes an occasion for an explanation of the radical__principle of Christian ethics and of liberation and community ethics (which is the central aspect of basic theology) in particular. That radical principle operate[s] as the light that illumines, the horizon that criticizes, the root from which we must nourish all our subsequent ethical discourse . . . The radical principle of Christian ethics is the face-to-face of the person-to-person relationship in the concrete, real, satisfied, happy, community, in the gladness of being one with God and one with our brothers and sisters, members of the community.²⁶

In the "post-Hegelian" milieu from within which Marx formulated his thinking, the concept of praxis re-entered the philosophical arena with a decidedly new import, as a criticism of Hegel's philosophy of history or rather, a right-wing interpretation of this by the Old Hegelians. This was initiated by Marx's contemporary, the Left Hegelian August von Cieszkowski (1814-1894) with his Prolegomena__to__Historiography, which was published in 1838²⁷.

While David Strauss is credited with being a pioneer of the demystification and eventual "decomposition" of

26. Ethics and Community, p.16

27. A.V Cieszkowski, Prolegomena zur Historiosophie (Berlin: Veit, 1838). English translation of Chapter 3 of this, published in, Lawrence Stepelevich, The Young Hegelians: An Anthology, pp. 57-89

Hegel's philosophy with his Life of Jesus (1835), Cieszkowski is credited as having introduced a reinterpretation of the concept praxis into the critical language of the Left Hegelians, which concept was to become the most instrumental category in the eventual reworking of Hegel's philosophy.

Cieszkowski worked out a complete re-orientation of Hegel's philosophy by highlighting, out of Hegel's phenomenology of the Geist, a notion that this Geist's self-externalisation cannot be statically understood in terms of the past of history, but as an extension to the future. That is, that there is in history a teleology. In proclaiming this "teleology of world history"²⁸, within a Hegelian context, Cieszkowski stumbled on the truth that this telos can only realise itself in reality, as the practical life of the self-externalising Geist. Therefore, all reality is an active and practical life of the Geist with a definite telos as its driving force. In explication of this, he referred to the famous statement from Hegel's Lectures on the Philosophy of History, namely: "World history is the progress in consciousness of freedom - a progress which we have to perceive in its necessity". Out of this he proposed that instead of being an "aesthetic of history"²⁹, history according to Hegel is a patently

28. in, Stepelivich., p. 57

29. Ibid., p. 62

future orientated and constantly self-determining realisation of freedom. For this reason, he proclaimed that philosophy, one of the Volksgeistes of Hegel's Geist (others being art and religion), had "to become a practical philosophy or practical activity, of praxis, exercising a direct influence on social life and developing the future in the realm of concrete activity"³⁰.

It was left to Marx to protestingly state against all his Left-Hegelian colleagues that this teleological movement of the Geist__to freedom via stages of Volksgeistes, its praxis, is actually taking place as concrete social formations and not abstract Volksgeistes or collective human consciousness. Hence, after Feuerbach had unmasked the deliberate self-mystification of Hegel, Marx's first act on his turn at the Master, was to focus on the latter's Philosophy of Right - Hegel's propositions on the forms that the Geist realises itself in political life. Through this process Marx developed a praxis of the uncloaked Geist (conflicting human group interests which necessitate political institutions, principally the State) which was congenially based on the breadth and depth of social and political reality as an arena where human groups were in action in pursuit of diverse interests. From

30. Cited in, David McLellan, The Young Hegelians and Karl
Marx (London: Macmillan, 1969), p. 10

here. after 1844, a communist analysis was added to this, and eventually with the formulation of historical materialism, this praxis, deliberately assumed a non-personalistic and anti-Feuerbachian-humanistic meaning. It became class struggle, as the schema of a society whose mode of production has divided into conflictual relations of production.

This differs from a notion of praxis as being merely an eudaemonial-epistemological principle, that is, as a category whose employment is seen as essentially exhausting the normative implications of human relations, as used in liberation theology (Cf. Dussel, above). Against Dussel's praxis of a vision of a "community in the gladness of being one with God", Marx sees in the now, a society riddled with class antagonisms and in the travails of class struggle. Also, as part of the philosophical element of the thought of the post-Feuerbachian Marx, this is grounded on a conception that seeks to go beyond anthropology and psychology³¹ to a sociology which views the human person only as an "ensemble of social relationships".

As praxis, reality, for Marx is singularly an

31. Besides, Gutierrez, A Theology of Liberation, p.32, see, Juan Luis Segundo's proposal for the uses of Freud's psychology of the consciousness to a theological understanding of "the human condition", in his, Grace and the Human Condition: A Theology for a New Humanity (Dubllin: Gill and Macmillan Ltd., 1980), pp. 35-37

empirical reality which is sociologically cognized, as it is a theatre where the actors are human beings who are ensembles/ representations of productive interests which are necessarily in conflict in a class society; and for this very reason it is historical (in the sense Cieszkowski suggested) - it is in constant movement towards a certain goal (fuller realisation of freedom in a classless society).

The conception of praxis within a historical materialist context of change and sociological movement is the touch-stone of Marx's critique of Feuerbach. Theses_XI, "The philosophers have only interpreted the world in various ways, the point is, to change it"³². Praxis does not consist in establishing the principles of interpreting the world, nor in "reflecting" on what is going on in the world, even if such a "reflection" is laden with normative humanist intentions. Neither does it consist in adding the themes of sociology and politics to an intractably idealistic system, even if this be called an introduction of a "historical project" into theology, as Jose Miguez Bonino does³³.

On the contrary, it consists in doing, in living, in labouring, and thereby being part of a life which is

32. Karl Marx, Theses on Feuerbach, in Nathan Rotenstreich, Basic Problems of Marx's Philosophy, 26

33. Revolutionary theology Comes of Age, pp. 40-41.

under the historical eventuality of change³⁴. The labour process, the materialistic mediation of human existence, life and self-production, contributes to a development of forces of production which result in corresponding forms of social relations, a further development in the area of labour induces a tension with the social relations, leading to social revolution. This is what Marx' in Thesis_I calls " 'revolutionary', practical-critical activity"³⁵. Labour. How is labour the definitive of this "sensuous human activity, practice" which is at the same time "practical-critical"? Does it not include intellectual labour as well; and the development of productive forces, does not this involve the development of skills, know-how, science? Is the "interpretation of the world", theoria, not labour? Is it not therefore part of the reality, praxis? It is. If it is, does it mean that liberation theology, as theory, is praxis? Yes, it is, but, as we demonstrate below, it is not a revolutionary theory, a material force.

The foregoing answers the question on as to how the

34. The Communist Manifesto declares that the material force of change in the epoch of capitalism is the social class of the exploited workers (ensemble of relations of production), who in turn have been produced by the development of the capitalist system itself. This production of the proletariat, and what the proletariat does in isolated skirmishes against capitalism, including the plethora of competing ideologies and behavioural tendencies accompanying this, is praxis.

35. in, Rothenstreich, p.23

world can be changed without there being an act of explaining the reason (interpretation) and mechanisms of changing this - theoria. Marx addressed that question at the height of his Feuerbachian haze, as it were, in the "Contribution to the Critique of Hegel's Philosophy of Right: Introduction" (1844). He had to. Because of his understanding of Hegel according to Cieszkowski, the fact of Feuerbach's pronouncements on the end of philosophy (which only proved to be hypocritical in the end), could not allow him to totally ignore the question of theory. Strictly speaking, this question of the relationship between theory and praxis, is a Feuerbachian problematic (In the 1850's Marx discovered the scientific method as an adequate synthesis of theory and praxis since science seeks to describe phenomena objectively and faithfully, in a supra-ideological manner, and recognises the progress of knowledge³⁶). Nevertheless, even in his state as a Feuerbachian, the direction of his eventual position, which we attempted above, was visible. He wrote (in 1844):

In the struggle against this state of affairs [Prussian politics] criticism is no passion of the head, it is the head of passion. It is not a lancelet, it is a weapon. Its object is its enemy, which it wants not to refute but to exterminate . . . The weapon of criticism cannot, of course, replace criticism of the weapon, material force must be overthrown by material force; but theory also becomes a material force as soon as it has gripped the

36. See, "Preface to the Second German edition of Capital and, F. Engels. Anti-Duhring

mass. Theory is capable of gripping the mass as soon as it demonstrates ad hominem, and it demonstrates ad hominem as soon as it is radical. To be radical is to grasp the root of the matter . . . theory is fulfilled in people only insofar as it is the fulfillment of the needs of that people
. . . for revolutions require a passive element, a material basis³⁷

Theory remains secondary to what Marx, illuminatively, merely calls the material. This material includes the masses who are brought into being, mobilised, by theory. However, Marx, goes further and stipulates the proviso under which theory can become a material force. This incites the question, which we touched upon above, as to liberation theology's fulfillment of this proviso, as a "reflection on liberation praxis" (Gutierrez)

To summarise, and to highlight the fact that Marx's understanding and use of praxis (practice) is what sets a point of difference between Feuerbach's humanist-materialism and his historical-materialism, we reproduce the following pertinent sections of the Theses on Feuerbach (numbers, I, VIII, and XI, consecutively):

The chief defect of all materialism up to now (that of Feuerbach included) is that the object, the reality, sensibility, is conceived only in the form of the the object or of contemplation, but not as sensuous human activity, practice [praxis], not subjectively. Hence it happened that the active side, in contradistinction to materialism, was developed

37. From the volume, Marx K., Engels, F., On Religion (Moscow: Progress Publishers, 1957), pp. 40, 45, 46

by idealism - but only abstractly, since of course, idealism does not know real, sensuous activity as such. Feuerbach wants sensuous objects substantially differentiated from the thought objects, but he does not conceive human activity itself as objective reality. Hence, in the Essence_of_Christianity, he regards the theoretical attitude as the only genuinely human attitude, while practice is conceived and fixed only in its dirty-judaical form of appearance. Hence he does not grasp the significance of 'revolutionary', 'practical-critical', activity' . . .

All social life is essentially practical. All mysteries that induce theory to mysticism find their rational solution in human practice and in the conception of this practice

The highest point that contemplative materialism reaches, that is, the materialism that does not conceive of sensibility as practical activity, is the perception of the single individual in 'civil society'

We therefore note, in a provisional conclusion, that Marx's notion of praxis - a philosophic conceptualisation of reality, is firmly grounded on his post-Feuerbachian development, and that insofar as this development is supremely characterised by a rejection of Feuerbach's humanism, the extent to which liberation theology centers its analysis on the human condition does not readily fall into place with this Marxism. In order to further support this conclusion we need to consider the following two issues which are in part a continuation of the points we raise in this section.

9.2.2. The Production of Theology and the Mode of Production

Secondly, in comparing liberation theology's conception of praxis with Marx's thought, we note that in liberation theology, the "concrete" is exclusively given primary affirmation and turned into a polemic against traditional theology only on its importance as the starting point and main subject of theological reflection, i.e., as a methodological imperative. It is not seen as a historical activity of a conglomeration of socio-historical and economic factors, which according to a historical materialist epistemology, should have an influence on the development of theology, insofar as it is an intellectual system³⁸. The same applies to the seriousness of an awareness of the influence that historico-material conditions have on the locus theologicus, the church, insofar as this is a social institution³⁹.

38. The closest that liberation theology comes to this recognition is only at noting the influence of ideologies current within the historical context from which the activity of theologising occurs. This is the issue which Juan L. Segundo has brought as his main preoccupation and challenge to his fellow theologians. See, his The Liberation of Theology (pp.7, 97f.) and Faith And Ideologies.

39. Leonardo Boff, Church, Charism and Power: Liberation Theology and the Institutional Church (New York: Crossroad Publ. Co., 1985), is a noteworthy attempt in this direction.

This attitude differs from the way Marx would assert the relationship between a development of an intellectual system and its material conditions. Dialectico-historical materialism goes a qualitative step further than liberation theology and would assert that the material subjective should not only be taken up as a theme of a theology; rather theology itself as a discipline, in both content and form, should be taken as nothing but a product of "men . . . as they are conditioned by a definite development of their productive forces"40. In an annunciation of this central principle of a Marxist epistemology, Marx with Engels wrote in The German Ideology,

Men are the producers of their conceptions, ideas, etc, and precisely men conditioned by the mode of production of their material life, by their material intercourse and its further development in the social and political structure . . . in accordance with the different stages of their development, they make up the nonsense of substance, subject, self-consciousness and pure criticism, as well as religious and theological nonsense, and later they get rid of it again when their development is sufficiently advanced.41

At a philosophical level, within the background of our earlier discussion, the differences on this issue, reveals a more fundamental conflict. Marx's view of the intercourse between theory and praxis, and the relative genitive dependence of the former on the latter, issues

40. K. Marx, E. Engels, The German Ideology, (Collected Works Vol.5) p. 36

41. Ibid., p.36

from his differences with Feuerbach on the question of the relationship between Subject and Object. Feuerbach maintained the independence of one from the other, by urging for the isolation of the (human) Subject from the Object (of thought). Marx, in contradistinction, went back to the Hegelian position, concentrated on the dialectic, and formulated a theory of the dialectical relationship between the two. He redefined and broadened the Subject on the basis of Feuerbach's "empiricist" emphasis and replaced Feuerbach's "Man" with historico-social reality, and in the process showed how the Object - thought forms, ideas, consciousness - does not only follow the Subject but is actually conditioned by the Subject. This is a unique view of the unity of Subject and Object: historical reality is self-productive, i.e., as Subject it is at the same time Object. The seeds of its future alternative are embedded within itself.

A failure to take full and practical note of the genitive relationship of theory to the material base, is a Feuerbachian defect. In Thesis IV on Feuerbach, Marx mentions that in having as the starting and finishing point of his philosophy the fact of the self-alienation of man by taking, in religion, the imaginary world as the real thing, Feuerbach overlooks the fact that after this analysis, there is "the chief thing" which "still remains to be done". This is the fact that,

this self-projection and alienation, happens only because and as result of the fact that the real world (reality) is itself riddled with alienations (self-contradictoriness, class antagonism). "Thus, for instance, once the earthly family is discovered to be the secret of the holy family, the former must then itself be criticised in theory and in practice".

This, in an amplified application in relation to theology, is another way of raising the fact that religious doctrines are inspired in their formulation and content by the historico-material conditions within which they are formulated, and are simply a reflection of these conditions. In an obituary to Bruno Bauer, Bruno Bauer and Early Christianity (published on May 4, 1882) Frederick Engels applies this perspective to demonstrate how the growth of Christianity into a world religion was simply facilitated by the economic and philosophical contradictions which beset the Roman empire during the first three centuries, a period during which the doctrinal basis of Christianity was formulated⁴².

Were liberation theology to take this Marxist doctrine seriously, it would mean either of the two things. Firstly, liberation theology would be imbued with the task of working for its self-dissolution as a

42. See, On Religion, p.173f

theology since it is working for social change, which if it be in Marxist terms, is toward communism - as Jose Miranda is bold enough to declare⁴³ - where according to Marx, there will be no alienation inducing class antagonisms and religion will naturally turn superfluous. Or at least, it will have to have as its central theme and raison_d'etre, an instigation that theology should be kept open toward praxis - the ever-moving reality, and be allowed to be constantly and radically moulded by these material changes. Within this level it also would have had to demonstrate how each and every dogmatic theme and notion of Christian theology - God, Grace, Salvation, Sin, Immortality, Kingdom of God, et___cetera - in their original formulation and deployment (not meaning given to them after they came into the vocabulary of the Church) has been inspired and conditioned by certain class and cultural interests.

The second test of the taking of Marx's doctrine seriously, would have been a willingness to accept that the mutation of classical "European theology" into a liberation theology should itself be taken as merely an event that accompanies a certain conjecture of a stage of development of productive forces with their corresponding nature of relations of production within a

43. See, J.P. Miranda, Communism in the Bible (Maryknoll, N.Y: Orbis, 1982), passim

given historico-economic epoch, and not a prophetic reformation of theology as such. Within this context of enquiry it would raise the question as to whether there is a certain level of a development in productive forces of a given social context within which liberation theology can be expected to emerge. And if the answer to this be in the affirmative, the implication will be that the mystical connotations of "the prophetic" as being an action of the non-sensuously conceived "God", will be exposed as being but a self-deluding mystification of what in truth is only a historical-material activity, viz, an emergence of a theology of liberation as a result of the inducement of historical material factors.

In an article "Theology and Production Relations: The Case of Southern Africa"⁴⁴ Matthew Schoffeleers, an anthropologist at the Free University of Amsterdam, raises the very same question and presented it as a paradigm for explaining the failure of the methodology of South African Black Theology, which is developed in a more industrialised and urbanised part of the country, to be appreciated in the still rural parts of the same country. He argues that liberation theology in South Africa has been able to outgrow a fascination with the traditional agenda of continental African theology-

44. Journal of Theology for Southern Africa, No 61, Dec. 1987, pp. 14-26

that of concentration on cultural emancipation from Anglo-Saxon cultural norms - only due to the profound changes in production relations that occurred as black people of South African became urbanised.

The view of praxis as employed in liberation theology, we observe, is only a restrictive one. It refuses to go beyond being a mere affirmation of the epistemologically --subjective. On the other hand it does not show a full appreciation nor assimilation of this aspect of Marx's epistemology - the effect of the material in determining thought formation. Liberation theologians face the same criticism Marx levelled against Feuerbach (Thesis_VII): "Feuerbach . . . does not see that the 'religious sentiment' is itself a social product . . ."

9.3.3. Praxis_and_Transcendence

In addition, as we note from Gutierrez's definition of theology as "a critical reflection on historical praxis"⁴⁵, the rationalistic-theoretical is still accorded a significant measure of prominence⁴⁶. Even though it is obvious that Gutierrez's view retains the value of the "reflective" more conservatively than the

45. A Theology of Liberation, p.11

46. See, als, G. Gutierrez, "Liberation Praxis and Christian Faith", in The Power of the Poor in History (Maryknoll, N.Y: Orbis, 1983)

way Comblin and Sobrino would, the central conception of theology as a logos, and a religious reflection, is generally adhered to and preserved. By virtue of the pioneering nature of his work, Gutierrez entrenched the fact that despite everything else, liberation theology remains "a reflection". He wrote,

Theology as a critical reflection on praxis in the light of the Word [of God] does not replace the other functions of theology, such as wisdom and rational knowledge; rather it presupposes them.⁴⁷

This issue of the nature of the cognitive process which is employed in an epistemological process is very crucial to our disquisition. We saw in our discussion of Louis Althusser⁴⁸, that one of the main elements of an affirmation of "theoretical anti-humanism" as a feature of a philosophical position Marx develops after 1845, is his establishment of a qualitative differentiation between ideology and science as theoretical practices. As a consequence of his awareness of the determining influence of socio-material factors on all intellectual activity, and the "theoretical inferiority" of the realm of ideas as a realm which is derived from the material base, he identified "ideology", as a theoretical practice - as well as products of this - which is either not conscious of the secondary nature of its formulations, or which deliberately seeks to conceal

47. Op. cit., p.13

48. Chapter 2, above

its awareness of this fact in order to further partisan interests. As a step leading away from this petrification and corruption of knowledge of reality, he devoted himself to cultivating a non-ideological, "scientific" way of analysis. Such a method, would have as its hall-mark, the adoption of an understanding of the socio-material basis of all life as its point of departure. That is, instead of starting off from the interpretative level of the superstructure, it would focus on the genitive and "determining" infrastructure and adopts this as an interpretative key and framework of a superstructural phenomenon.

In Ludwig___Feuerbach, Frederick Engels, in a reflective statement of how this change in method was arrived at explains that it was

. . . the result of a return to the materialistic standpoint. That means, it was resolved to comprehend the real world - nature and history - just as it presents itself to everyone who approaches it free from preconceived idealist crotchets. It was decided mercilessly to sacrifice every idealist crotchet which could not be brought into harmony with the facts conceived in their own and not in a fantastic interconnection. And materialism means nothing more than this.⁴⁹

In other words, it is a denial of any other reality beyond that which is sensuously experienced.

We have two hints of the application of this

49. Selected Works (One Vol.), p. 608

materialist epistemology. The first is its announcement as a method in a criticism of Feuerbach, in Theses On Feuerbach, (Thesis IV). There we read:

Feuerbach starts off from the fact of religious self-estrangement, of the duplication of the world into a religious world and a secular one. His work consists in resolving the religious world into its secular base [or substratum]. But the fact that the secular lifts off from itself and establishes itself as an independent realm in the clouds [is not explained. And this] can only be explained by the inner strife and self-contradictoriness [Sichselbwidernsprechen] of this secular base. Therefore, the latter must itself be both understood in its contradiction and revolutionised in practice. Hence, for example, once the earthly family is discovered to be the secret of the holy family, the former must then itself be destroyed in theory and in practice.

That is, in a development away from Feuerbach, "The criticism of heaven is transformed into the criticism of earth, the criticism of religion into the criticism of law, the criticism of theology into the criticism of politics"50.

The second example is the declaration that Capital (I), is a demonstration of this method. Indeed, Althusser makes a point that one just needs to compare the methodological style of the Economic and Philosophical Manuscripts of 1844, and that used in Capital to discern a radical intellectual shift in Marx's thinking. The difference is not necessarily in

50. Karl Marx, "Towards a Critique of Hegel's Philosophy of Right: Introduction", in D. McLellan, Karl Marx: Selected Writings, p.64

the themes adressed, but in the way they are handled and the operative perspective which is used as a key. In the preface to the second German Edition of Capital(I), Marx wrote: "My analytical method does not start from man but from the the economically given social period."⁵¹

The analytical method which started from "Man" - on a jeremiad on the obfuscation of the essence of this "Man", the denials of his freedom, and a call that this Man should be the center of all philosophy, that philosophy should have as its supreme content "Man"- is what Feuerbach and the Marx of 1844 were all about. This principle was not rejected during 1845-46 because Marx had anything against the promotion of the well-being of "man", on the contrary, he was chiefly against Feuerbach's assumption of this "man" as merely an abstract philosophical principle ("Man") which is put forward as an abstract principle from which all material reality was to be interpreted and be given meaning.

Moreover, within Feuerbach's philosophy, this revealed another element which Marx takes up in Thesis_V, namely, that: "Feuerbach, not satisfied with abstract thinking, advocates sensuous contemplation . . .". That is, in the place of Hegelian abstract idealism,

51. Preface to the second German edition of Capital_I

Feuerbach suggested a "contemplative materialism" (Thesis IX). The word that Marx used, for "contemplative" in the German original of the the Theses, is Betrachtung. Betrachtung translates into English as meditation or reflection. Based on his awareness of how the philosophical principle of Man as continually validated by reference to religion is advocated as a means of unravelling reality, Marx came to the conclusion that Feuerbach's epistemology is nothing but a meditation seeking to be materialistic.

In considering the relationship between Marxism and liberation theology we are therefore struck by the appearance of "reflection" as a proposition for a revolutionary cognitive practice. What are the elements of this "reflection on praxis in the light of the Word of God"⁵²? We can isolate only one, namely, what the phrase literally means, that is, the abstraction of theological schema, themes as well as dogma, and a use of these as a paradigm for interpreting concrete social reality. In affirmation of this, Gutierrez wrote:

Theology . . . as linked to praxis, fulfills a prophetic function insofar as it interprets historical events with the intention of revealing and proclaiming their profound meaning. (emphasis ours)⁵³.

This is, precisely, an epistemological practice

52. A Theology of Liberation, p.13

53. Loc. cit.

whereby theology - which is a superstructural intellectual system - is used to "give meaning" to the infrastructure of natural existence. This disregards the fact that theology, according to historical-materialism, is generated and shaped by the substratum of the socio-economic active relations of the context out of which it emerges. It also contradicts Marx's method of starting with the materially given as the modicum of giving meaning to the theoretical (in its institutionalised forms); and therefore, by starting with, or basing itself on the theoretical, the "Word" (Logos, John 1:1-14!), liberation theology opens itself to the charge of being identified as an ideology, as understood in Marx.

In his Faith and Ideologies, Segundo offers a spirited defence of the fact that transcendentalism or a transcendentalist epistemology does not of necessity have to preclude a materialist method of analysis⁵⁴. He even identifies the tendency to separate the two as one probable mistake of Marx⁵⁵. Segundo, as it can be expected, engages into this in a reactive awareness of the critique that emerges from what we present above, and in a bid to defend the Faith basis of liberation theology. Unfortunately, he is not aware that his proposal is not all that novel: Ludwig Feuerbach had

54. J.L Segundo, Faith and Ideologies, pp.238f.

55. Ibid. p.240

worked all that out before. What Segundo does is to confirm our view that liberation theology is, insofar as its epistemology is concerned, principally a Feuerbachianism.

But what about Feuerbach's critique of religion? Isn't it a contradiction to claim that Feuerbach, who "is regarded as the most significant critic of Christianity in the nineteenth century"⁵⁶, has principal affinity with a theology of liberation which, as we demonstrated in our earlier discussion, is intent on preserving Christianity⁵⁷? Without referring to our demonstration in the previous section on the minimal extent to which Feuerbach sought to see the obliteration of religion, we refer to the argument we present in our critique of Alistair Kee's advocacy for liberation theology to confront Marx's "ontological" critique of religion⁵⁸. There we argue that the development of the critical postulate of the reversal of reality as Feuerbach pioneered this by explaining it in relation to religion, was not a substantive postulate, but a heuristic theory which was used to shed light and expose a certain reality.

56. Alistair Kee, The Way of Transcendence: Christian Belief Without Faith in God (London: SCM Press, 1985, 2nd ed.), p.188

57. See, our Review of Alistair Kee's Criticism of Liberation Theology's Relation to Marxism in Appendix A, below.

58. In p. 346 below

Feuerbach's original and main objective was to show how speculative philosophy exacerbates the self-alienation of "man"; and he put forward his observation that speculative philosophy in_its Hegelian form, falls into this mode because it bases itself on Christian theological thought patterns, he then had to go further and explain how and why Christian theology has this negative influence on philosophy and by extension on "man". The aim was not to criticise religion for the sake of criticising it, or to study it for purposes of achieving any goal to the detriment of the continued practice of religion. It was for a demonstration of the theory of the inversion of reality. Therefore, it is more than logical that liberation theology can be seen to be related to Feuerbach's philosophy, especially its expression by the young Karl Marx.

We propose to proceed to demonstrate how this contemplative materialism works, or exhibits itself in liberation theology.

As one example of the "reflection" method of liberation theology and the way it reveals "profound meaning" we find this summary definition of history from Gutierrez:

Human history is . . . a political occupation through which man orients and opens himself to the gift which gives history its transcendent meaning: the full and definitive encounter with

How "profound"! Is this not a mystification of human history, a conversion of this into "History", a mere concept? Is it not the same as Feuerbach's apotheosisation of Anthropology into a theologico-philosophical analysis concerned with "Man" , and the induction of the theme of love into social relations?.

In The_German_Ideology, Marx provided the following succinct analysis of Feuerbach's transcendentalist method, which we maintain, can well be applicable to theologies that claim a material socio-political point de depart whilst on the other hand they venerate the supernatural dimension as the framework of interpretation:

Feuerbach's 'conception' of the sensuous world is confined on the one hand to mere contemplation of it, and on the other to mere feeling; he posits 'Man' instead of 'real historical man' . . . in the contemplation of the sensuous world, he necessarily lights on things which contradict his consciousness and feeling . . . to remove this disturbance, he must take refuge in double perception, a profane one which perceives 'only the flatly obvious' and a higher, philosophical one, which perceives the 'true essence' of things'.60

By applying theological categories on concrete socio-historical reality, and to pose this categories as

59. A_Theology_of_Liberation, p. 10

60. Collected_Works. Vol.5., p.39

determinative hermeneutical premisses of explaining this reality, liberation theology is actually creating abstract notions out of socio-historical reality. In the least, which cannot be denied, it imposes an interpretative mantle of religion upon its object of analysis, and gives to social reality purely mythical meanings which go beyond the acceptable role of a myth as being a hermeneutic tool. It reduces the process of human experience to ontological (theological) dogmas; the result being that the whole of praxis, reality, is then left perceived as a riddled system of dogmatic inconsistencies which are perpetually in search of some form of a logical reconciliation or another. The most pertinent example is with the application of the doctrine of sin, as a substantive principle, in political analysis. For instance we find this social analysis in Enrique Dussel's political ethics:

. . . someone may be born wealthy, a member of the dominant class and a moneyed, bourgeois family. He or she is surely not responsible for having been born there. But just as surely, this individual inherits this institutional 'originary' sin. Thus as Paul proclaims, it is possible for death to reign even over those who had not sinned by breaking a precept as did Adam (Rom 5:14).⁶¹

This is a social vision of a dominant class in class society, according to Dussel. The bourgeoisie, the ruling class, is a community of sinners, and most of them are sinners not by their choice, but simply

61. Ethics and Community, p. 21

through the misfortune of being born into families which happen to exploit and oppress the "poor". And about the oppressed, whom Marx within a capitalist economic system will identify as exploited wage-labourers are defined in the following terms:

The constitutive act of the 'poor' in the Bible is not lacking goods, but being dominated, and this by the sinner. The poor are the correlative of sin. As the fruit of sin, their formality as 'poor' constitutes the poor or oppressed, and as such, the just and holy

. . . The poverty or want suffered by the poor is not the sheer absence of goods. No, the poverty of the poor consists in having been despoiled of the fruit of their labour by reason of the objective domination of sin."62

This portrayal of victims of a negative system in terms which makes it difficult to create a programme for their liberation, or an analysis in which they can see the causes of their domination in material-scientific terms, is, according to Engels, exactly what Feuerbach's "neueren Philosophie" was all about. And away from this, he and Marx had distanced themselves by critically developing a new methodology.

[Feuerbach] is realistic [materialist] since he takes his start from man . . . this man remains always the same abstract man who occupies the field of the philosophy of religion. For this man is not born of a woman; he issues, as a chrysalis, from the god of the monotheistic religions. He therefore does not leave in a real world historically come into being and historically determined.63

62. Ibid., p. 22

63. Feuerbach and the End, in, Selected Works (One Vol.),
p. 604

He is incapable of telling us anything definite either about real nature or real men. but from the abstract man of Feuerbach one arrives at real living men only when one considers them as participants in history. And that is what Feuerbach resisted But the step which [he] did not take had nevertheless to be taken. The cult_of_abstract_man, which formed the kernel of Feuerbach's new religion, had to be replaced by the science_of_real_men and of their historical development. This further development of Feuerbach's standpoint beyond Feuerbach was inaugurated by Marx in 1845 in The_Holy_Family.⁶⁴ (emphasis ours)

This is what led Engels in his review to conclude that the idealism of Feuerbach's "inconsistent materialism" lies exactly here: "as soon as we come to his philosophy of religion and ethics"⁶⁵. To subsume all reality into religion, is a hallmark of Feuerbachianism.

One other trend of liberation theology's idealist epistemology which goes to demonstrate the paramountcy of the ideal, and the extent at which this is allowed to pervade the entire method, is the precept that the church's (locus_theologicus) engagement and commitment to historical ("secular") liberation struggles is not an end in itself. "This commitment is the matrix for a discovery of the true meaning of discipleship", informs Jose Miguez Bonino⁶⁶.

64. Ibid, p. 607

65. Ibid., p. 601

66. Revolutionary_Theology_Comes_of_Age, p.xxv

Bonino goes on and quotes from the Final Document "Christians for Socialism" (participants at the conference held in Santiago, Chile, in April 1972 under the same theme⁶⁷):

The Christian committed to revolutionary practice discovers the liberating force of the love of God, of the death and resurrection of Christ. He discovers that his faith does not imply the acceptance of a world that is already made, or of a predetermined history, but rather that the very living of his faith involves the creation of a new and solidary world and leads to historical initiatives fertilized by Christian hopes.⁶⁸

Revolutionary participation in the evolution of history, is interpretatively rendered subservient to the higher ideal of attaining and experiencing a more profound religious experience. In other words, all forms of struggle, from the wider and the invisible class struggle to the very political skirmishes which the oppressed occasionally mount against their oppressors, are acts of Faith. They are ritual. As a matter of fact, George Pixley and Clodovis Boff, in their The Bible, the Church, and the Poor, preach that the poor, who are in struggle for their life against structures of oppressive opulence, are a "SACRAMENT of

67. See, J. Eagleson, ed. Christians for Socialism (Maryknoll, N.Y: Orbis, 1975).

68. Op. cit, p. xxv

God"69. This is caught up by Bishop Moacyr Grechi in his validative Foreword to this book. He summarises the message of the book with the singular theme that God is using the poor to save the Church, and thereby the world:

Without the poor, the church loses its Lord, who identified with them and elevated them into final judges of this world. Without the poor, the church is simply lost70

Furthermore, we note that even the construction of liberation theology itself is not, per__se, an intentional development of a theoretical tool which is aimed at being used as a weapon for social transformation and reconstruction. There is a higher goal beyond a construction of liberation theology, as Jon Sobrino explains:

Latin American liberation theology is interested in the liberating of the real world from its wretched state, since it is this objective__situation__that__has__obscured__the__meaning_of_faith. Its task is not primarily to restore the meaning of faith in the presence of the wretched conditions of the real world. It is to transform this real world and at_the_same_time_recover_the_meaning_of_the_faith. The task, therefore, is not to understand the faith differently, but to allow a new faith to spring from a new practice.71 (emphases ours)

Even the appreciation or employment of Marxism as a theoretical tool of analysis and mobilisation is

69. C. Boff, G. Pixley, The Bible, the Church and the Poor (Kent: Burns & Oates; Maryknoll, N.Y: Orbis Books, 1989), pp. 109-122

70. Ibid., p.xv

71. The True Church and the Poor. p. 20

primarily perceived as a religious artefact, a fetish. This is encapsulated in Bonino's epic pronouncement that Marxism is adoptively perceived in the programme of liberation theology as "the unavoidable historical mediation of Christian obedience"⁷². The theoretical system of dialectico-historical materialism, according Bonino, is the sine qua non of the Christian realisation of Jesus's Great Commission⁷³.

9.3. CONCLUSION

In the opening sections of The__German_Ideology Karl Marx gives a review of the philosophical advance of his Left-Hegelian colleagues, their joint concerns, until he himself gradually left them from the beginning of 1844. Below, we quote from this review, and present it as a fundamental conclusion of our foregoing discussion, as well as a corroboration of our view that Latin American liberation theology is based on Left-Hegelianism, and insofar as it seeks to go with Marx beyond Feuerbach, it remains a Neo-Feuerbachianism . . .

The entire body of German philosophical criticism from Strauss to Stirner is confined to criticism of religious__ conceptions. The critics started from real religion and theology proper . . . the advance consisted in including the allegedly dominant metaphysical, political, juridicial, moral and other conceptions under

72. Revolutionary Theology Comes of Age, p.98

73. Loc. cit.

the category of religious or theological conceptions; and similarly in declaring that political, juridical, moral consciousness was religious or theological consciousness, and that political, juridical, moral man - 'Man' in the last resort - was religious. The dominant role of religion was presupposed. Gradually every dominant relationship was declared to be a religious relationship and transformed into a cult, a cult of law, a cult of state, etc. It was thought merely a question of dogmas and belief in dogmas. The world was sanctified to an ever-increasing extent . . . The Young Hegelians are in agreement with the Old Hegelians in their belief in the rule of religion, of concepts, of a universal principle in the existing world.⁷⁴

74. Collected Works. Vol 5., p. 29

CHAPTER 10

HISTORY IN LIBERATION THEOLOGY: THE PERSISTENCE OF A MYSTIFIED DIALECTIC

10.1 INTRODUCTION

Karl Marx's theory of history as an account of comprehensive social development - historical-materialism - is more of an epistemological paradigm than it is a substantive account of history itself. It is an elaboration of an epistemological innovation of seeking to ground the dynamics of human cognitive process and perspective (Anschauung) on the premiss that the socio-economic context, the material production of life - is determinative of all life, in particular, of all theoretical mediations and accounts of this life.

In our preceding discussion we endeavored to establish the fact of the epistemological "inconsanguinity" of the fundamental presuppositions of liberation theology with Marxist epistemology, as well as points of discontinuity between the two. In the

process of demonstrating this, we submitted a number of instances in the systematic self-definition of liberation theology where this incommensurability becomes apparent. In doing this our primary goal was to state that in operating with what we exposed as being essentially a pre-Marxian epistemology, liberation theology was inevitably employing, in basics, a Feuerbachian epistemology as it manifested itself in the thought of the young Marx. We also emphasised that the definitional characteristic of this epistemology, which discloses its Feuerbachianism, is "theoretical-humanism" as originally defined by Louis Althusser.

In this chapter we proceed to concentrate on one aspect of the theology of liberation which further demonstrates our claim, and more significantly allows us to bring into a comparative perspective most of the issues we raised in our earlier discussions on the nature and social function of Marxism. This is the theme of "history" as it is understood and employed in Latin American liberation theology. Beyond a mere critical narration of this theme, it is important to remember that our objective is more to expose the epistemological framework which undergirds the kind of a formulation that liberation theologians come to on history. In this way it is an extension of our interrogation of the alleged affinity of Latin American theology of liberation to the materialism of Karl Marx.

The following should be read with a mind bearing our discussion on the chapters dealing with Miranda's contention of a humanist theory of history (Chapter 4) and our presentation of Marx's theory of history in chapters 5 and 6.

10.2. GUSTAVO GUTIERREZ'S THEOLOGY OF HISTORY

10.2.1. History and Salvation

Central to Gustavo Gutierrez's pioneering work of fashioning a systematic basis for a Latin American theology of liberation, is the reinterpretation of the classic Christian notion of history. Towards a rediscovery and reformulation of this, Gutierrez worked on the theme of the Christian dogma of salvation. It was on the basis of a search for a more socio-practical reinterpretation of both of these themes that a theology of liberation emerged. In brief, this was a reflective formulation that God's supreme activity is that of salvation of humanity, and that this salvation is not restricted to the personal spiritual plane, but that it takes place within actual human history to the effect that human history in its development becomes an arena of the evolution of God's redemptive intervention on behalf of His creation. Gutierrez proclaimed:

We have recovered the idea that salvation is an intrahistorical reality. Furthermore, that,

salvation - the communion of men with God, and the communion of men among themselves - orients, transforms, and guides history to its fulfillment.¹

A corollary of this became the reconceptualisation of sin - the correlative of the objective of salvation - and the reformulation of the hermeneutic import of the relevant dogma:

Sin is not only an impediment to salvation in the afterlife. Insofar as it constitutes a break with God, sin is a historical reality, it is a breach of the communion of men with each other And because sin is a personal and social intrahistorical reality, a part of the daily events of human life, it is also, and above all, an obstacle to life's reaching the fullness we call salvation.²

Salvation, therefore, is not only a process of history - the locus of God's activity in history, it is also the goal - the telos, of history. This intertwining of "salvation" and "history" which eventuates in the construction of the concept "salvific history", was derived from an adoption of a critical reinterpretation of the traditional Christian dogma of salvation which shifts the import of the meaning of salvation from what Gutierrez calls the "quantitative" to the "qualitative"³. This was a shift from a concern with the "salvation of pagans" to an awareness of the

1. A Theology of Liberation. p. 152

2. Loc. cit.

3. Ibid. p. 150

"universality of salvation"⁴. As a universal concept, salvation, "embraces all human reality, transforms it, and leads it to its fullness in Christ"⁵. In this universalist terms, the doctrine of salvation then allows that, "man is saved if he opens himself to God and to others, even if he is not clearly aware that he is doing so"⁶. This, asserts Gutierrez, "is valid for Christians and non-Christians alike - for all people"⁷. It is only in this universalist mould that "salvation" then becomes integratable with a concept of history.

The adoption of this peculiar understanding of salvation then, says Gutierrez, . . .

leads us to affirm that, in fact, there are not two histories, one profane and one sacred, 'juxtaposed' or 'closely linked'. Rather, there is only one human destiny, irreversibly assumed by Christ, the Lord of history. His redemptive work embraces all the dimensions of existence and brings them to their fullness. The history of salvation is the very heart of human history.⁸

The same point is highlighted more succinctly in Gutierrez's earlier writing "Involvement in the Process

4. Loc. cit.

5. Loc. cit.

6. Loc. cit.

7. Ibid. p. 151

8. Ibid. p. 153

of Liberation"⁹. There we read: "There is only one single process of human development, irreversibly assumed by Christ, the Lord of history"¹⁰

God's salvific action is central to His being as an object of faith; and in this sense, this salvation is realisable in actual history of humanity. In demonstration of this, we are referred to Creation (Genesis 1) as the "first salvific act" of God. For Gutierrez, the story of the creation of the universe and humanity as narrated in Genesis, and as theologically applied by other writers of the Bible, conclusively establishes at least two postulates¹¹.

The first is that God "reveals himself through historical events"¹², and therefore, historical events are imbued with a salvific significance. Creation-nature and history - is God's self-objectification, the modicum of his self-declaration to humanity, "his self-communication"¹³. And He communicates himself as "God who saves in history"¹⁴.

9. First published in 1969, reproduced as chapter 2 in, Gutierrez, The Power of the Poor in History, pp. 25-35

10. Ibid. p. 31

11. A Theology of Liberation. p.154

12. Ibid p. 158

13. The Power of the Poor in History. p.32

14. Loc. cit

Secondly, the Genesis story proves that God is the beginning and end of history: "God did not only create in the beginning; he also had an end in mind. God creates all men to be his children"¹⁵. This end (inclusive of end) is "salvation", which is encapsulated by the formulation of a doctrine of the end (eschatology). This launches into the vexed theme of "the kingdom of God". Across this, Gutierrez cuts through with a simple affirmation that in the eschatological, as derived from Biblical theology- which includes the theology of the evangelists on Jesus of Nazareth - the future and the present are enmershed together into the present as Promise¹⁶. In this sense, "The action of Yahweh in history and his action at the end of history are inseperable"¹⁷.

This link between Creation, the beginning, and the End, is initially taken in its literal temporal (in terms of time) meaning ("End"). At another instance, it is taken in its theological meaning, as eschatology. It immediately assumes this theologico-ethical dimension and meaning (end), when "Man" is brought into the picture. This theological meaning assumes paramountcy in the course of Gutierrez's outworking of his theology. In

15. Loc. cit.

16. A Theology of Liberation. pp. 160-164

17. Ibid. p. 164

inserting the factor of the human person into his account of God's movement through history from beginning to its end, Gutierrez briefly stumbles into Marx's conceptualisation of the role of the human person as a participant in bringing about the End of history. He submitted:

Man is the crown and center of the work of creation and is called to continue it through his labour (cf. Gen. 1:28) . . . By working, transforming the world, breaking out of servitude, building a just society, and assuming his destiny in history, man forges himself¹⁸.

Gutierrez does not leave the matter there though, in The Power of the Poor in History, he adds the following provocative theological qualification:

Creation and salvation have a christological import; in Christ all have been created and saved (see Col 1:15-20). Thus when we say that men and women fulfill themselves by carrying on the work of creation through their own labors, we are asserting that they are operating within the framework of God's salvific work from the very first. Subduing the earth, as Genesis bid them do, is a salvific work.¹⁹

Therefore, in principle, Gutierrez maintains that the motor of historical development is labour. Besides what we note in this passage that this takes place as part of God's act of salvation, he further introduces two other factors: The first is that, the model for this "labour" which fashions out creation towards God's salvific

18. Ibid. p.157, 158

19. Op. cit. p. 32

purposes, is principally derived from the labours of the Biblical prophets²⁰. It is not, essentially, labour in the material sense of its actual operation within an economic process. This is "labour" as a critical "building of society" through agitation as seminally paradigmmed in Moses and the Exodus event, from which the Old Testament prophets incessantly drew inspiration²¹. The other emphasis, as we noted, is the application of the theological-ethical as an over-riding key to the meaning of whatever is said about labour and historical change, and any injustices that constitute part of this process:

Every obstacle that degrades or alienates the work of men and women in building a human society is an obstacle to the work of salvation²² . . . [and] the historical destiny of humanity must be placed definitively in the salvific horizon.²³

We thus note that in Gutierrez history is insolubly conceived within the context of the religious notion of Salvation as this has been developed as a doctrine in Christianity. History - the sociological, economic, and political interactions and development of human life on earth - is a singular dynamic of the vicissitudes of God's salvific self-revelation. This view came to

20. A Theology of Liberation, p. 158.

21. Ibid., p.159

22. Loc. cit.

23. Ibid., p.153

pervade the whole of the construction of liberation theology after Gutierrez.

10.2.2. Utopia: A Resolution of a Contradiction between the Material and the Ideal

Gutierrez's theology of history bases itself on an affirmation of the temporospatiality of God's revelation in actual human history. From within this framework of a literal-actual affirmation, proceeds a postulation of an actual "end" of this history. This inevitably induces a serious difficulty, of the same kind as that faced by "New Testament" theologians in their attempts to reconcile that Jesus of Nazareth was the Promise (Messiah) become actual, and the apparent failure of the resolution of this Promise into their actual political aspirations and programme. That is, in claiming that God's salvation, by definition, takes historical forms, and that history is an evolution towards the fuller revelation of this salvation, one has to give both a description of the realisability of this ultimate salvation which is here affirmatively described in literal terms, and at the same time account for the contradiction between the existence of evil within this locus of God's self-revelation-history. The vision of the end, beatific as it should be ("the kingdom of God"), remains stubbornly idealistic, whilst the material present seems more and

more remote, in quality, from that envisioned end.

Liberation theologians, in general, meet the same problem; and like the authors of the book of the Gospel According to Matthew and letters to the Thessalonians, they take flight into a theological rationalisation. Being more privileged than their first century predecessors who had to make do with Platonic philosophy, liberation theologians have found a richer philosophical tradition to rely on in resolving this contradiction. This is the Marxism of Ernst Bloch²⁴.

Bloch provided a resolution of this contradiction by his formulation of the postulate that human being is defined by the fact of the human person's dream and hope for the future. Hope in this form, is, differentially, an "active hope" which subverts the existing order. In this way the ontology of "being" is transformed and rendered equivalent to the ontology of the "not yet"²⁵. Out of this, liberation theology developed a novel concept of utopia which was fortuitously embraced and applied in justifying the use of abstract and empirically unfathomable constructs in attempts to contribute to giving a revolutionary

24. See Gutierrez's discussion of Ernst Bloch in, A Theology of Liberation, pp. 216-220

25. See, Ernst Bloch, Man on His Own (A Selection of Bloch's Works), transl. by E.B Ashton (New York: Herder and Herder, 1970)

utilisable concept of historical development. This is employed towards reaching the conclusion which Gutierrez verbalises as follows:

The full significance of God's history is understood only when it is put in its eschatological perspective; similarly the revelation of the final meaning of history gives value to the present. The self-communication of God points towards the future, and at the same time this Promise and Good News reveal man to himself and widen the perspective of his historical commitment here and now.²⁶

And,

Faith and political action do not relate to each other except through the project of the creation of a new type of man in a different society, through utopia.²⁷

In 1981 George Pixley, a Nicaraguan Biblical scholar, devoted a book, entitled, __The Kingdom of God²⁸, to this problematic. In 1985, he joined Clodovis Boff in a comprehensive presentation of the concept of "the poor" as used in liberation theology in relation to history, in The Bible, the Church and the Poor. There a note is made that "indeed, the kingdom of God is an utopia"²⁹, this is made while it is being acceded that an utopic vision is, "the vision of the world that not only does not exist, but that indeed, can never exist in actual history"³⁰. This disclosed the crux of the matter,

26. A Theology of Liberation. p.165

27. Ibid., 236

28. Maryknol, N.Y: Orbis Books

29. The Bible, The Church, and the Poor, p. 105

30. Loc. cit.

namely: "Is the good news from God a vision of the perfect world that does not exist?"³¹

It is here that a Blochian interlocution is inserted as a rescue. Pixley and Boff's argument concludes:

While it is true that Utopia, as the image of social perfection, is unattainable, nevertheless, a valid utopia generates viable historical undertakings . . . [therefore] If the Kingdom of God, the God of the Bible it to be justified as a hope for the poor, it will have to generate viable historical undertakings.³²

This attempt of liberation theology to generate "viable historical undertakings" is subjected to an explicative review by Jose Miguez Bonino in his, Revolutionary Theology Comes of Age. Significantly, he focuses his review of attempts at this against the often propounded immediate ideal of the creation of a socialist alternative to capitalism. He informs that in Latin America, theologians of liberation have chosen to use the functional notion of a "historical project", as a "midway term between utopia, a vision which makes no attempts to connect itself historically to the present and a program, a technically developed model for the organization of society"³³. This in other words, is a political programme which, in Bonino's perception and

31. Loc. cit.

32. Ibid., p. 104

33. Revolutionary Theology Comes of Age, p.38

experience, liberation theologians have devoted themselves to. He outlines it under seven inter-related themes³⁴ which begin with a campaign for the rejection of "developmentalist solutions" against Latin America's subjugation by forces of international capital. The unitive concept of this project, is liberation, as a negation of developmentalism. The value of the notion of "liberation", Bonino, explains, lies in that:

It makes it possible to conceive of history as a process and to speak of man's relation to God as one and the same reality, although differentiated in three levels of meaning: socio-political liberation, humanization as a historical process of man's self-realization, and deliverance from sin . . . 35

It is sufficient for us to note that within this understanding of utopia, wherein the ethical-theological deductions seeking to explain history are presented as sources of utopic hope, two major themes which in fact are aspects of one and the same thing stand out. This is theme of "the kingdom of God", and its various elaborations in the social criticism that falls out in the process of liberation theology's self-construction, as well as the "historical project". These two are meant and considered to serve as sources of inspiration to subvert the existing order. The "historical project", in fact, is a de-theologised "kingdom of God". This is the theoria of liberation

34. Ibid., pp. 39-40

35. Ibid. p.70

theology.

A reference we made in the previous chapter on Marx's definition of the role of theory in relation to political revolution in "Towards a Critique of Hegel's Philosophy of Right: Introduction", and the qualification of liberation theology as a theory, in serving as a theory which is amenable to being a "material force" will be relevant here. We reserve a discussion of this for our conclusion.

10.3. THE POOR AS AGENTS OF A SALVIFIC HISTORY

10.3.1. The Poor and Gutierrez's Theo-centricism

Gutierrez's A Theology of the Liberation is most remarkable in the marginal focus it gives to outlining the actual process of the resolution of the movement of history from an oppressive status quo to one of freedom. Intermittent references are made to the victims of the socio-economic system which developmentalism sought to address, but no specific attention is given to developing the theme of the role of these victims in changing these oppressive power structures, i.e., in contributing to historical development. Only a few pages at the end of the book³⁶ are devoted to this; but even there, the motif is God's salvific abhorrence of

36. pp. 291-295

poverty, and there is absolute silence on the actual mode of the role of human beings in socio-historical change.

The element of the historical protagonists of social change, which a materialist account of history will seek to ground focus on, is not highlighted. Instead, Gutierrez concentrates on God - on the mode of his self-revelation through "salvation" and history, wherein the vehicle of this is mentioned as being the Church, the "visible sacrament of this saving unity [of the Trinity]"³⁷.

Gutierrez's "second book" is entitled "The Power of the Poor in History" (originally published in 1979). A reading of this, unfortunately, reveals that there is more in the title of the book than there is in its contents. The book is a collection of his isolated writing of the period 1969 to 1975, most of which are a repetition of the motif of A Theology of Liberation. None of these writings is devoted to systematically addressing the subject declared in the title of the book - the power of the poor in history.

The fact that Gutierrez, throughout, concentrates on registering the thesis that God is active in human

³⁷. Ibid., p. 260, Gutierrez quoting from the Papal encyclical, Lumen gentium, Para. 9

history, and that, this God communicates himself thereby, while failing to highlight the role of the immediate historical agents of this change, betrays a certain deliberate conviction and epistemological presupposition, namely, a positively theocentric conception of historical change. This, as we noted earlier, extends to an assertion that whatever subsists in history is seen as only being part of the larger theocentric movement. It is all part of the salvific self-objectification of God. In other words, history is not only the locus of Divine self-communication, rather, since "there is only one history whose Lord is Christ"³⁸, God is the locus of history. All things exist from, in, and through God; and in "Him", they exist for fulfilling "His" purpose - Salvation; and at the end return to "Him". History is God ad_vividus. "It is through the sacrament that men encounter God. This is an encounter in history, not because God comes from history, but because history comes from God"³⁹.

The extent to which history is here perceived as both God's self-communication and product, as well as arena of activity, goes to actually subverting the very use of the word "history" in this context. We therefore propose that "history", in liberation theology's terms, is best called, a "theostory". It is a treatise on what God

38. Ibid. p.153

39. Ibid. p. 259

does, for indeed, in Gutierrez's theology, all actions of humanity in history, "whether Christian or non-Christian" are imbued with religious significance⁴⁰:

Socio-political struggle, human maturity, reconciliation with God - do not belong to different realms, but to a single saving reality . . . God's grace and man's task are therefore also united.⁴¹

In another application of this notion that all political struggles, even those traditionally found reprehensible by orthodox Christianity, are part of God's single activity of realising His Kingdom on earth, we find this far-reaching reflection in Bonino, based on Gutierrez's thinking:

A few Christians have embraced Marxist ideology - understood in absolute terms - with a sort of religious fervor. This, in turn, results in a total loss of faith or in the surrender of the historical contents of the Christian Gospel. There can be no doubt as to the sincerity of many of these people. They may in fact be much closer to the Kingdom than most of their orthodox opponents.⁴²

Where does all this leave the "poor" (and their role) whom a Marxist class-analysis would isolate as the proletariat who are the "grave diggers" of the oppressive capitalist system? Are they merely a part of God, His self-revelation, and His grand plan of

40. A Theology of Liberation, p.72

41. Loc. cit.

42. Revolutionary Theology Comes of Age, p. 96

Salvation?

10.3.2. The Poor: Towards A Definition

George Pixley and Clodovis Boff's The Bible, the Church and the Poor, is the most comprehensive and intensive attempt at presenting and expounding liberation theology's conceptualisation of the "poor" as a factor in socio-historical development. There we find an explicit and a once-for-all attempt at defining the "poor" as identified in liberation theology.

The authors begin by declaring that, in liberation theology, the poor, are not taken metaphorically, but as an empirical social reality. They are those who suffer from basic economic need, "those who are deprived of the material goods necessary to live with any dignity"⁴³. Futhermore, beyond this empricial identification, there is, it is asserted, a "structural" identification of the poor. They are not the poor as individual cases but as a collective class. Corollary to this, the fact is noted that,

they constitute a social phenomenon that has been produced . . . they have been reduced to poverty (impoverished) or held in poverty by the forces of the system of domination. In this sense the poor are the dominated class.⁴⁴

In a summary, further to the fact that they are a

43. The Bible, The Church and the Poor, p. 1

44. Ibid. p.3

dominated class,

the poor of today can be defined by three adjectives: collective, conflictive, and alternative. The poor are a collective phenomenon, they are the product of a conflictive process and they demand an alternative historical process.⁴⁵

They fall into two main groups, (a) The marginalised - those who are outside the prevailing economic system or are positively excluded from it (the unemployed, beggars, outcasts etc.); (b) the exploited - those whom the socio-economic system treats unjustly. The "working poor", "the proletariat" and the rural workers⁴⁶.

The second dimension of Pixley and Boff's presentation is a critical isolation of traditional erroneous or ideologically malicious definitions of the poor. All these are definitions which concentrate on the poor as individuals who are victims of misfortune, and who should be helped through "charity" and "aid"⁴⁷. In contradiction of this, they assert the structuralist definition of the poor, as outlined above.

This definition or description of the poor, goes beyond the descriptive. It is also not merely normative in that it is laden with an implicit

45. Ibid. p.1

46. Ibid. p.4

47. Ibid. p. 3

judgement of the state of the poor. It, above everything else, insinuates protest. It "pretends" to offer a revolutionary analysis of a given context.

In conclusion, we note that this definition of the "poor" is well laden with Marxist epistemological sensibilities, in particular the class analysis of the Communist Manifesto. As we go further on, though, as we intend to do in the following paragraphs, we readily discover that this is only true at a prima_facie level. Most lamentably, at the crucial point where the self-liberative activity of the dominated-class-poor is to be described, our liberation theology's "poor" dissolve into a mystical-theological phenomenon.

10.4. THE MYSTIFICATION OF THE POOR

We begin by seeking to point out that besides the erroneous and ideogical malicious description of the poor isolated by the authors, and the rest of liberation theologians, there is another "erroneous"-by virtue of its revolutionary impotence - description which is implicit in liberation theology's own critical description. This is stated in the extension that, the poor, as a socio-economic category, as a class . . .

" are the Lazaruses who live in a conflictive situation and seek an alternative humanity"⁴⁸

48. Ibid., p. 8

where, in addition, the nature of this "conflictive situation", (historical epoch of the capitalist mode of production), is described in such terms:

"One could say that the present state of the world is a gigantic recreation of the parable of Dives and Lazarus [Luke 16:21-30]"⁴⁹

When making a tabular contrast of the different concepts of the poor: the individualistic, "bourgeois", and their reformational, collectivist one, Pixley and Boff provide the following schematic description:

['LAZARUS THEN':] Asking for charity: for bread in the world, while waiting for his reward in 'Abraham's bosom' . . .
['LAZARUS NOW':] Demanding justice: a place in the table with the rest now, while not denying heaven (the alternative system).⁵⁰ (emphasis ours, brackets original)

We therefore note that, the definition of the "poor" and their identification as a social reality, issues from and is constructed by a model and historical notion which is derived from the theological history of ancient Israel as recorded in the Old Testament, as well as other theological sources from the New Testament, as the above case indicates. This biblical theological nuance of the "poor" is adopted as an absolute conceptual determinant of a definition and

49. Ibid. p.7

50. Ibid. p.6

perception of the historical status and role of the "poor" - the victims of the capitalist system as experienced in Latin America and the Third World in general⁵¹. A theological construct - defining who the "poor" in the Bible were - is grafted onto a sociological analysis, and is used in such a manner as to render such an analysis dependent on it. For instance, Gutierrez climaxes his brief review of the "Biblical meaning of poverty" with this conclusion:

And finally, man not only has been made in the image of and likeness of God. He is also the sacrament of God . . . the reasons for the Biblical rejection of poverty have their roots here: to oppress the poor is to offend God himself; to know God is work for justice among men . . . in a word, the existence of poverty represents a sundering both of solidarity among men and also of communion with God. Poverty is an expression of sin, that is, a negation of love. It is therefore incompatible with the coming of the Kingdom of God, a kingdom of love and justice. Poverty is an evil . . . to eliminate it is to bring closer the moment of seeing God face to face, in union with other men.⁵²

The same line of thought is repeated with a more pointed emphasis by Bonino:

Poverty is not a hazard or misfortune but the result of certain people's greed and injustice. It is intolerable because it contradicts the very purpose of God's act of deliverance - to rescue his people from the slavery of Egypt. It robs man of his humanity as a steward and transformer of the world and therefore it contradicts the mandate of creation. Finally it breaks human solidarity, and consequently it

51. Ibid. pp. 53ff, See also, Gutierrez, A Theology of Liberation. pp. 291-302

52. A Theology of Liberation, p. 295

destroys fellowship among men and with God. Poverty in this sense is a scandalous fact which must be eliminated. God himself is engaged in the struggle against it; he is clearly and unequivocally on the side of the poor.⁵³

(emphasis ours)

Two elements which are pertinent to a probable struggle for the social transformation of this condition of poverty emerge on the foregoing statement of Bonino's. First, is that poverty, the existence of a class of the marginalised and exploited, though identified as caused by human greed, is found intolerable only (or primarily) because it contradicts some theological principles. He mentions three of these (underlined in quotation). Secondly, which in itself is an extension of the former since it is still a motivational theological principle, is the claim that God is engaged in the struggle of the poor. The class struggle of the proletariat, "the working poor", is a divine engagement. Besides resonating what we noted earlier on Gutierrez's notion of what we called "theostory", this is what enjoins the Church to perceive itself as a sacrament of salvation⁵⁴.

We note that the theological, again, serves as the (absolute) motivation and determinant of participation in the historical struggle for the liberation of the

53. Revolutionary Theology Comes of Age, p. 112

54. A Theology of Liberation, p. 255

poor. This governs the manner of participation in such struggles, as well as the kind of the goal which is envisaged, the result of such struggle. As we saw from Gutierrez above, the goal of any such struggle is the realisation of the (elusively defined) "kingdom of God".

At another dimension, or as the second descriptive identification of the "poor" (remembering that as we indicated above, the description offered here is an insinuation of protest which is suggestive of remedial action) we find an incidence of the reduction of the poor into an abstract theological category.

In their book, under a chapter headed, "The Poor: Sacrament of God's salvation"⁵⁵, Pixley and Boff give the most incisive (and innocent) development of this theme and tendency. The poor are established as a symbolic mediation of the knowledge of God and of Christian religious self-development. They are portayed as an icon and a sacrament. As icon:

The Christian God cannot be understood without the poor, the defenceless, the despised, all those in need.⁵⁶

In addition,

there is no separation or distance between Christ and the poor . . . we meet the poor in Christ . . . the poor are the living mediation

55. Op.cit. p.109f.

56. The Bible, the Church and the Poor. p.111

of the Lord, his real expression and not just an intermediary between us and him. It is in this sense that the poor are the sacrament of Jesus: the manifestation and communication of his mystery, the setting of his revelation and dwelling.⁵⁷

This "historicist" use of "sacrament", goes back to Gutierrez's pioneering work. In introducing this, he deliberately isolated the original Greek use of this category in the New Testament as misterion, and went on to distill the fact that "according to Paul, mystery means the fulfillment and the manifestation of a salvific plan"⁵⁸. As sacrament, and as a reality of history, which is a salvific "theostory", the poor are therefore a mystery. What they actually are, the essence of their being as a social entity, is beyond sensuous resolution. On the basis of this, Boff and Pixley affirmatively assert: "Without being rooted in the mystery of God, the option for the poor becomes a mere blueprint for action."⁵⁹

This further clarifies our critique in the previous chapter, that this is a tendency very much similar to Feuerbach's, where, as Engels and Marx pointed out, historical and empirical "man" becomes the theological-

57. Ibid., p. 113

58. A Theology of Liberation, p.259. For his discussion of "sacrament" and "mystery", see also, pp. 258- 262

59. Op Cit. p 109

philosophical abstract "Man"60. Here we have the same: the historical and sociological "poor" are turned into the a theological abstraction of "the Poor" - a sacrament, which by all definitions is but a mere symbol.

Boff and Pixley go deeper than this though. After quoting from the Vatican II's Lumen_Gentium, that "Indeed, the Church recognises in the poor and suffering the likeness of her poor and suffering founder"61, they continue to conclude that, "so we need to bear in mind that it was a poor person who founded the church. The option for the poor is based, then, on theological (permanent) reasons, not just on sociological (transient) ones"62

Here we are given a stark claim that the theological, the abstract theoretical deduction and idealism, is of a higher value, epistemologically, than material-sociological reality and analysis that are based upon this. (The option of the poor is not founded on a

60. "[Feuerbach] is realistic [materialist] since he takes his start from man . . . this man remains always the same abstract man who occupied the field of the philosophy of religion. For this man is not born of woman; he issues, as a chrysalis, from the god of the monotheistic religions. He therefore does not live in a real world historically come into being and historically determined." F. Engels, Feuerbach and the End in, Selected Works, One Volume, p.604

61. Lumen_Gentium, para. 8, quoted in op. cit., p.111

62. The Bible, the Church and the Poor, p. 111.

historical or socio-material analysis, but on a theological imperative).

Further on, within the same scope of affirmation, it is claimed that, "there is coincidence between Christ and the poor, not just in a moral, but in a mystical sense, and so on the deepest level of reality."⁶³

Is it possible for a system which entertains a claim that the mystical is the "deepest level of reality", to be associatable with a post-Feurbachian, and "contra-Hegelian" Marxist epistemology? How much more alien is this when it is used in relation to defining the role of the "working poor"!

In our last demonstration of the extent to which this sovereignty of theological abstraction - the application of ecclesiastical dogma, derived from the Bible and variously interpreted - is taken as a determinant of both the motivation and the goal (alternative) of the struggle of the poor, including the principles for the prosecution of their struggle for liberation, we read the following apt summary from The Bible, The Church, and the Poor:

Christianity is Christo-centric, and cannot be otherwise, in the sense that Jesus Christ undeniably occupies the center of everything for it, as Lord of the world and history. All the rest, including the question of the poor,

63. Ibid. p.113

is organised and harmonized around this greater reality . . .

The starting point or ultimate principle of the option for the poor is to be found in faith in Christ.⁶⁴

Linked to this is Gutierrez's reminder that :
Seeing human history as a history in which the liberation of Christ is at work broadens our outlook and gives political commitment its full depth and genuine meaning.⁶⁵

10.5. CONCLUSION

I

Resulting from all these: a positive theocentric definition of history, a mystical-theological conception of the "poor", plus an affirmation of the primacy of faith in Christ as the basis and motivation for engagement in a liberation process - we find that liberation theology reaches conclusions which exposes the serious limits to its utilisability in a liberation struggle.

For instance, having identified that the Church is the sacrament of God's salvation in history, Gutierrez finds himself, in having to work out the historical actuality of this salvation, confronted with the fact of class struggle. This leads him into a very illuminating perplexity:

How can we reconcile the universality of

64. Loc. cit., pp. 115, 116

65. The Power of the Poor in History, p. 63

charity [love] with the option for a particular social class? Unity is one of the notes of the Church and yet the class struggle divides men; is the unity of the Church compatible with class struggle?66

In searching for an answer, the following comes out of the same theological delimitation: The gospel demands love for all; class struggle demands an option for one class at the expense of the other; this is a contradiction which must be recognised and acknowledged as a challenge for the need of a cultivation of a balance and a synthesis between the two, an achievement of which will enhance one's faith profoundly. "This is a challenge that leads [a Christian] to deepen his faith and to mature in his love for others"67. Thus Gutierrez escapes.

However, the theory itself remains with a gaping exposure that he is not conscious of the fact that the church is not some mystical entity; that it is populated by human beings who are not only flesh and blood, but are social beings who are not abstractly presented with the choice as to which side of the "class struggle" they must throw their weight on; that by virtue of their existence in class-society, they belong to either the oppressor class or the class of the oppressed and exploited. The "sacrament" Church

66. Op. cit. p. 273

67. Ibid., p. 275

(the locus of liberation theology), in capitalist society, is a "sacrament" riddled with contradictions and antagonisms which, of necessity, obliterate the very "sacramentality" of the very Church. History bears ample testimony to this.

Liberation theology attempts to create a fusion, at the basic epistemological plane (where methodological presuppositions are formed), between traditional Christian thought matrix and Marxist analysis. This encounters problems from the outset. As a result a selection of certain aspects of Marx's theory which can be taken for assimilation into the intended enterprise of creating a theology which is of utilitarian relevance to a revolutionary situation is made⁶⁸. The main motif of our foregoing presentation is to demonstrate that this approach breaks down in the process. Moreover, it breaks at the most crucial stage of the systematic rationalisation of liberation theology: at the level of actual practice, where liberation theology is to be put into the hands of the "poor" as a theory converted into a material force. At this level it breaks down into not only an "aborted materialism", but into a conservative theology. In corroboration of this, we consider two conclusions, one from Boff and Pixley and the other from Gutierrez. The first one, below, from Boff and Pixley,

68. Note the other title of Bonino's book; Doing Theology in a Revolutionary Situation

should be read with Marx's theory of class struggle in mind:

The overall objective is not struggle against the ruling classes, but a struggle for justice and liberation . . . the initiative for the class struggle comes from the ruling classes, leaving the dominated no alternative but to fight to defend themselves. Finally, the struggle for the poor includes battling against situations that are simply the result of social backwardness, not directly the outcome of class relationships - illiteracy, lack of basic hygiene, and so on.

So, all in all, the option for the poor cannot be seen as simply a translation of the Marxist class struggle into Christian terms.⁶⁹

Illiteracy, lack of basic hygiene, and so on - poor and inadequate educational facilities and a general lack of social amenities in the Third World - is not the outcome of class relationships?!

The second conclusion, from Gutierrez, should be read with the inquiry as to the role of liberation theology as a instrument of change in terms of Marx's definition of the transition of theory into a material force in mind. It is also an ignominiously classic characterisation of liberation theology:

The theology of liberation . . . has no intention of being a revolutionary Christian ideology. It is reflection from a point of departure in the concrete historical praxis of human being. It seeks to understand the faith from within this historical praxis and from within the manner of living the faith as a revolutionary commitment . . . Hence its themes are the great themes of all true theology, but its focus, its manner of approaching them, is

69. The Bible, the Church, and the Poor, p. 131

different.70 (emphasis ours)

II

At a philosophical level, as we try to return to our position that what is definitional of Feuerbachianism, which we charge liberation theology for being a version of, is its methodological preponderance of the "human", we may seek to pose this again in the light of our foregoing conclusion. What has come out of this is that liberation theology is not only humanistic in the sense of the incidence of an methodological emphasis on the human person (e.g. Gutierrez's insistence that "the purpose of those who participate in the process of liberation is to 'create a new man'"71), it qualitatively goes beyond this. In a more stark revelation of what Feuerbach only showed subtly and was to be excavated from within his system by Frederick Engels, the human being, as he appears in liberation theology's critical-analysis, as "the poor", is taken much more as a theoretical-religious concept (symbol) than as an historical entity. "Man", wrote Gutierrez, "has not only been made in the image and likeness of God. He is also the sacrament of God"72.

70. The Power of the Poor in History. p.61

71. A Theology of Liberation. p.189

72. Ibid., p.295

Moreover, even the minimal theoretical recognition of the historical masses, the "poor", is embedded and defused into a theory of God who is in history. The "poor" are but just mediations of this God. On this score, liberation theology further exposes itself as being a Feuerbachianism which is grounded on assimilating aspects of the early Feuerbach, i.e., Feuerbach before his 1839 "Towards a Critique of Hegel's Philosophy". Its notion of history is dramatically Hegelian. In this regard, reference has also to be made to our discussion and conclusion of Miranda's quarrel with Althusser's notion of history as being a process without a teleological Subject.

Miranda's passionate emphasis on the primacy of the human actor, is merely a premise that is subtly deduced from the conclusion that there exists a supra-historical power, which humanity is subject to, which is controlling history. Even as an argument for the preponderance of human volition and independence in history, this volition of the human person, can be shown to be only a reaction of the person's subjection to some higher power. This is not the case only as far as believers are concerned, as we noted in the universalism of Gutierrez. Miranda betrays this presupposition in his statement that:

Aside from the absolutely fundamental theses in the thought of Marx and Engels . . . we also find another important conviction in their thought that may well be even more important.

It is the conviction that history has an end and a goal, and that this end is good . . . In strict logical consistency we cannot believe that a good end exists for history unless we believe that God is directing history . . . the most striking feature of Marx's thought is its full eschatological awareness

. . . The eschaton is the definitive triumph of good over evil. Scientifically speaking, however, we cannot demonstrate that good ultimately has to triumph over evil unless we include in our demonstration the prove of God's existence (the scientifically demonstrative procedure followed by Hegel)⁷³

This belief and hermeneutic presupposition of the fact of the Christian God as being the supreme Subject of history, according the "procedure folowed by Hegel", exposes the extent to which Miranda's campaign for the induction of the "human subject" into Marx's system, is merely a veiled propaganda for the preponderance of God as an agent of history.

Interestingly, he only introduces this as a deployed argument whenever he is confronted by outright declarations in Marx's writings about the reality of the fact that there are instances where there is a clear evidence of the independence of history from human will and action. His standard reduction of such incontrovertible evidence is that, "both Marx and Engels appeal to a higher principle which guides history, and which human agents and protagonists are

73. Marx Against the Marxists., pp. 265, 266

incapable of controlling"74. For instance, he uses this statement to interpret the following passage from Engel's Letter to Vera Zasulich (23 April 1885), making reference to the possibility of a revolution in Russia:

Supposing these people imagine they can seize power, what does it matter? Provided they make the hole which will shatter the dyke, the flood itself will soon rob them of their illusions. But if by chance these illusions resulted in giving them a superior force of will, why complain? People who boasted that they had made a revolution have always seen the next day that they had no idea what they were doing, that the revolution made did not in the least resemble the one they would have liked to make. That is what Hegel calls the irony of history, an irony which few historic personalities escape.75

Even though there is a reference to Hegel, the overall context of Marx and Engel's thinking, leaves no room for an inference that they were ascribing the autonomy of the dynamics of political revolutions to an activity of God, which is what is implied in Miranda's interpretation. Contrary to Miranda's use of this passage, it only further corroborates our thesis on how according to Marx and Engels, the human agents are non-determinant of history, but instead, as hinted above, that whatever form their involvement takes, it can only be the making of "the hole which will shatter the dyke", and that "the flood itself will soon rob them of their

74. Ibid., p. 89

75. Cited in, loc. cit., p.89, from: K. Marx, E. Engels, Selected Correspondence (New York, International Publ., 1942), p.

illusions". Doubtlessly, Engels was here writing out of the experience of his reflection and analysis on the tragedy of the the Paris Commune⁷⁶. Miranda's reading of Marx is clouded by his precocious inferences to the role of a "higher principle", God.

In Liberation theology, as we saw in Gutierrez's work, God, the "type" of Hegel's Geist, is not only the immanent and paramount, the fact that the question of his existence or otherwise is not raised, is itself a deliberate methodological stance. History is the self-objectification of God. Struggles in the Objective, in history and nature - existence of the poor as the result of the conflictive socio-economic set-up - are a process of the self-negation of God. He is there in the poor, in their struggle, as them and with them. He is the self-estranged struggling to return to itself. This recognition, a rational consciousness of this, is the Aufhebung of God - a gaining of the true knowledge of the Christian God ("the Christian God cannot be understood without the poor . . ."77).

This is a pre-critical Hegelianism as was nurtured in Feuerbach (to the extent of the emphasis on the

76. See, K. Marx, The Civil War in France (1871), in Marx, Engels, Selected Works (One Volume), pp 271 - 309.

77. The Bible, The Church, and the Poor, p. 111; See also, Jose Miguez Bonino, Christians and Marxists, A Mutual Challenge to Revolution (London: Hodder & Stoughton, 1976), pp. 32-33

thinking being), at the same time, it even risks falling outside of Feuerbach's later Idealist-Materialism (humanism) in its positing of "man in history" as a mere disguise of God. On the other hand, it is miles away from Marx's historico-dialectical materialism.

Ironically, and most noteworthy for us, is the fact that this Hegelianism of liberation theology comes from the fact of its endeavours at relating itself with Marx. It is from Marx that it gleaned its Hegelian consciousness. Unfortunately, this is done either from the young Marx, or from a perspective which uncritically emphasises the influence of Hegel on the thinking of the older Marx⁷⁸.

As we noted in the course of our disquisition, Marx developed his epistemology and theory of history-which marks the break between the Feurbachian philosophy of the young Marx, and Marxism - by going back to a critique of Hegel (using Feuerbach's affirmation of the material as well as his genetical-critical method, as a platform); by inverting Hegel's philosophy of history from a historical idealism into a historical materialism, through the inversion of Hegel's

78. See, Gutierrez, A Theology of Liberation, pp. 24,25, and p.38n12 for his positive references to the use of the Young Marx, as well as his claim that Latin American liberation theologians have found the Hegelianistic Marxism of Benneto Croce most useful.

dialectic from its idealist conception, into the materialist one. It is with this core of Marx's thought that liberation theology cannot be identified.

How apt therefore is Marx's remark, in the Economic and Philosophical Manuscripts of 1844, that:

On close inspection, theological criticism is found in the final analysis to be nothing but the culmination and consequence of the old philosophical, and especially the Hegelian, transcendentalism, twisted into a theological caricature [!]79

79. K. Marx, Economic and Philosophical Manuscripts of 1844 (Moscow, Progress Publishers, 1977), p. 20

S E C T I O N I V

SUMMARY OF CONCLUSIONS

This study has as its primary premiss the argument that while a Left Hegelian, Karl Marx was not merely an admirer of Ludwig Feuerbach, but that, his philosophical orientation and as well as the epistemological framework of all his work during the years up to 1845, were that of the philosophy of Feuerbach. It is only towards the end of his private research and reflection in what became the Economic and Philosophical Manuscripts of 1844 that he began to disavow the basic epistemological postulate of this philosophy. We draw attention to the fact that the differentia specifica of this Feuerbachian philosophy which Marx had then embraced, is its humanist materialism which was developed as a critique of Hegelian Idealism.

Thus, we demonstrated that the actual rejection of Feuerbach was expressly facilitated by Marx's own independent critique of Hegel's epistemology. This consisted in a reworking of the fundamental epistemology of Hegel's philosophy from its Idealistic form, and its reconstruction into a materialist one. We assert that

historical materialism is a critical negation of Hegel's historical Idealism, and a demonstrative statement of the inadequacy of Feuerbach's critique of Hegel. In introducing this assertion, our objective has been to draw particular attention to the fact that this historical materialism, being an epistemological paradigm, sets itself against and replaces Feuerbachian humanist materialism which Marx had espoused until then. Marx's explicit expression of an option of historical materialist as a progressive critique of Feuerbachian materialism is codified in his Theses on Feuerbach.

On the basis of this premiss we have contended against views that posit the argument of an absence of a discontinuity in Marx's thought between the period of his youth and that after 1845. Our main proposition is that Marx's formulation of historical materialism, is first and foremost an epistemological event. Secondly, that, as an epistemological development occurring within Marx's thinking, it is a personal discovery which radically replaces his earlier Feuerbachian epistemological framework of humanist materialism. The character of this Feuerbachian materialism we have described in Chapter 7., and compared and contrasted it with the relevant aspects of historical materialism, viz, Marx's anthropology and conception of human freedom in Chapter 8.

We also highlighted that, besides its humanistic basis, Feuerbach's materialism harboured and yielded another epistemological tendency, which is, transcendentalism. This, we discovered, is a result of Feuerbach's search for the middle ground between British empiricism and French mechanical materialism, on the one hand, and speculative rationalism, on the other. The net result of this is that his entire work remains within a Hegelian idealist frame of reference which is content with abstracting the ideal (Man) over the concrete (human being as existing within history as a participant in the process of production of social life).

We then adopted this elaborate and polemic historico-philosophical construct as a critical paradigm to test the claim of the genitive relationship and epistemological affinity between Latin American theology of liberation and the philosophy of Karl Marx. We investigated the extent of the awareness of liberation theologians of the implications of the coupure epistemologique Marx undergoes in 1844-45, especially insofar as this is a judgement on humanism. We found not only a general absence of this awareness, but also a defence - most systematically mounted by Juan Luis Segundo and Jose Porfirio Miranda - of this failure to note the importance of this to the composite

theoretical logic of Marxist materialism. In line with this position, there is then a claim, which is rigorously advocated by Miranda, that Karl Marx perennially retained the philosophy of the human being-humanism - as the epistemological framework of his entire work despite the methodological intentions he proclaims in The_German_Ideology (1845) and he applies in his work thereafter. We then pointed out that Miranda's assertion is equivalent to a claim that Marx remained a Feuerbachian through his life.

Our major observation, however, is that, in their advocacy of a humanist Marx, Segundo and Miranda are in fact exposing the nature of the philosophical basis upon which Latin American liberation theology has been constructed. While it has been claimed that liberation theology has emerged as a theological appropriation of Marxist philosophy, and continues to be inspired by this, they, as a matter of fact, reveal that it is out of the the Marxism of the Feuerbachian young Marx that the latter has been formulated. This led to our submission that Latin American liberation theology is essentially, in respect of its epistemology, a Feuerbachianism. This, as we demonstrate in Chapters 9 and 10, shows itself most glaringly when the transcendentalism of Feuerbach's materialism is recalled vis__a__vis the nature of theological worldview which liberation theology persists in retaining and employing

as a framework for analysing socio-historical reality. We pointed out that such a theological epistemology is objectionable when it is used in any way that seeks an identification with Marxist Theory. This exposure of the pre-Marxian nature of liberation theology leads to the conclusion that as a theoretical tool which seeks to be of service in informing actions of social transformation and human development, liberation theology cannot be of much use. This fact is amply attested to by liberation theology's "theory" of history - the mystical interpretation it accords to human involvement in revolutionary struggle - which we presented in Chapter 10.

A P P E N D I X

THE CONTOURS OF A MARXIAN CRITIQUE OF LIBERATION
THEOLOGY: A CRITICAL REVIEW OF ALISTAIR KEE'S
MARX AND THE FAILURE OF LIBERATION THEOLOGY

Alfredo Fierro seminally broached the subject of the problematic which the import of Marxist epistemology has for Latin American liberation theology with the publication of his The Militant Gospel: An analysis of contemporary political theologies¹. His critical review of the impact of the resurgence of interest on Marxism during the 1960s on the formulation of liberation theology led him to the conclusion which could only be framed as the question as to whether a "materialist theology" - which is what Marxist epistemology seems to conjure vis_a_vis theology - is ever possible². In 1978 Jose Porfirio Miranda dove-tailed Fierro's consternation and cautionings with the publication of his Marx Against the Marxist: The Christian humanism of Karl Marx³. This work served as a notable milestone within the corpus of the struggle of liberation theology to define the extent of its relationship with Marxism. In it Miranda went beyond a mere defence of the

1. Alfredo Fierro, El evangelio beligerante (Estella, Spain: Editorial Verbo Divino, 1975) English, trans. by John Drury (London, SCM Press, 1977)

2. Ibid., p. 378

3. El Cristianismo de Marx, Mexico City: Publ by author, 1978; English transl. by, John Drury (Maryknoll, N.Y: Orbis Books, 1980)

traditional position that Marxism and Christianity are compatible and posited an apologia to the effect that Karl Marx's entire thought was essentially and consciously a Christian humanism. Alistair Kee's work, Marx and the Failure of Liberation Theology⁴, published in 1990, falls within this context of Fierro's evaluation of the validity and implications of the use of Marxism in liberation theology.

However, unlike Fierro's, Kee's work has as its motif the paradigmatic application of the problematics of Marx's critique of religion to the proclaimed raison d'être of the theology of liberation, i.e., its being an intra-religious attempt at social change. He evaluates the extent to which various Latin American liberation theologians have assimilated Marx's critique of religion. Besides Miranda, the works of Hugo Assmann, Clodovis Boff, Leonardo Boff, Jose Miguez Bonino, Helder Camara, Gustavo Gutierrez, Antonio Perez-Esclarin, Juan Luis Segundo, Jon Sobrino and Camillo Torres, are assessed against this paradigm.

The conclusion he reaches, or rather, his thesis, is that liberation theology has satisfactorily responded to Marx's "moral" critique of religion: the

4. Alistair Kee, Marx and the Failure of Liberation Theology (London: SCM, 1990) Alistair Kee is a Reader in the Department of Theology and Religious studies at the University of Edinburgh.

construction and use of religion by the ruling classes as an institution of control and as a means of legitimating their political programmes⁵. Also, liberation theologians have responded assiduously to Marx's "ideological" critique: that, in its cultic forms and as an intellectual system of beliefs, religion perpetuates the idealistic notion that eclipses the fact that the formation of ideas is conditioned by material factors, and that therefore, religion itself is inexorably open to manipulation by the dominant class of any given society. Where liberation theologians have failed, according to Kee, is in confronting and assimilating Marx's critique of religion as being a reversal of reality, which Kee calls, the "ontological" critique.

This "ontological critique" is constituted by Marx's critical affirmation of Ludwig Feuerbach's conclusion that religion is essentially a circumlocution of the subject and object of human consciousness⁶. That in religion, the human being worships himself, subconsciously. That, in worship, the human subject externalises its real essence, and objectifies this through imagination as being something which is outside

5. Ibid., p.39

6. See, K. Marx, "Towards a Critique of Hegel's Philosophy of Right: Introduction", in, David McLellan Karl Marx, Selected Writings (Oxford: Oxford Univ. Press, 1987), pp. 63-74

of himself and, at the same time, awe-inspiringly greater and more perfect the himself⁷. As Kee explains, Marx adopted, and critically extended this view of Feuerbach by creating out of it a theory which exposes the process of alienation as effected by money, the State in capitalism. Just as in religion, so in the fetishisation of money and reverence of the State, is a human being not aware that he is in fact bowing down to what actually are the products of his mind and hands-his labour.

Kee draws attention to the fact that according to Marx religion is a framework and source which perpetuates this negative process of the reversal of reality and the alienation of the human person from himself⁸ (his species-being, which, according to Marx is labour⁹). He affirmatively extends this Marxian critique with an interpretation that, "given the place of religion in society . . . the religious inversion

7. See, L. Feuerbach, The Essence of Christianity, ed. by, G. Elliot (New York: Harper & Row, 1952), passim.

8. Kee, pp.41-45

9. Illustratively, Kee quotes from Karl Marx's Economic and Philosophical Manuscripts of 1844:

"Just as in religion the spontaneous activity of the human imagination, of the human brain and the human heart, operates on the individual independently of him - that is, operates as an alien, divine or diabolical activity - so is the worker's activity not his spontaneous activity. It belongs to another; it is loss of his self". (K. Marx, F. Engels, Collected Works, Vol. 3, London, Lawrence & Wishart, 1977, p. 274)

of reality makes other inversions possible and credible . . . anyone who is involved in religion, who accepts the reversal of reality, is more likely to accept other forms of reversal"10.

In failing to confront this fundamental indictment on religion liberation theologians have ipso facto failed to make any fundamental contribution to the "renewal" of Christian Theology11, according to Kee. Moreover, in their treatment of the question of Marx and religion, they have not only ignored this aspect of Marx's critique, but have deliberately rejected it12. "They have assumed that the ontological question is simply the European debate about the existence of God"13, he observes.

Kee's main contention is that Marx's fundamental critique of religion is ontological. This is the questioning of the very being of religion as well as its self-definitional form. As such, the implications communicated by this critique is that,

as long as religion continues in its present form it will reinforce and legitimize all forms of the inversion of reality, and will consciously or unconsciously support the

10. Kee, p. 46

11. Ibid., x

12. Ibid. p. 282

13. Loc. cit.

ideology of the ruling class¹⁴.

Accordingly, in failing to respond to this challenge in its systematic self-construction, and in even going out of its way to methodologically refuse to address this issue, insofar as it is a dimension of religion, liberation theology remains a reinforcement of the human propensity to invert reality and to subject himself to self-alienation. It belongs to the genre of religious intellectualism which has not awoken to the fact that, "the idea of the supernatural belongs to that world-view which has now been discredited."¹⁵

In addition, as a judgement derived from the fact of the omission to address the ontological critique of religion, Kee declares that, whereas Latin American liberation theology has been accused for being Marxist¹⁶, he, on the contrary, finds that, "it is not Marxist enough. Or rather, that Liberation theology, far from using Marxist philosophy 'in an insufficiently critical manner' [Cardinal Ratzinger], has not cared or dared to apply it in a sufficiently

14. Ibid. p. 87

15. Ibid., p. 280

16. Kee makes reference to the Vatican's "Instruction on Certain Aspects of the 'Theology of Liberation'", of Cardinal Joseph Ratzinger and Archbishop Alberto Bovone, of September 1984. See, J. L. Segundo, Theology and the Church: A Response to Cardinal Ratzinger and a Warning to the Whole Church (London: Geoffery Chapman, 1985).

careful and comprehensive manner"17.

He concludes that the deliberate omission to confront Marx on this particular line of his critique, puts the credibility of the work of liberation theologians in serious question. It delegitimizes the uses to which they employ marxist philosophy in the systematic construction of liberation theology and, in turn, the overall credibility of this theology, as both a historically novel theological-intellectual system, as well as a theology which claims a utilitarian value in facilitating social revolution. In a declaration of a conviction from which this conclusion flows, he states:

Marx's criticisms of religion have to be accepted before there can be profound and long-overdue change in theology. I am convinced that liberation theology has failed in this, it has failed at an intellectual level . . . it has failed the cause of the gospel of Jesus Christ in the modern world and consequently the very people it has attempted to serve.18

Our critique of Kee's proposition is based on two sets of arguments. The first questions the legitimacy of ascribing "ontology" to Karl Marx, in the manner that he does. The second is a set of issues that relate to the nature of liberation theology, and the methodological limitations it imposes on attempts to

17. *ibid.* p.211

18. Kee., p.x

apply a marxian critique to any of its features.

a) Ontology in Marxist Analysis?

Ontology is an abstraction of metaphysics. Quite rightly, The Concise Oxford Dictionary defines it as "branch of metaphysics dealing with the nature of being". It is an area of philosophical enquiry concerned with nature and meaning of existence, where existence is perceived in the traditional metaphysical sense of an empirical reality on which reason is being exercised as an independent activity. Marx's philosophy, via its progenitor of Hegelian and Feuerbachian philosophy, emerged as an express negation of this type of philosophy and epistemology. It is a consummation of a critical movement which was initiated by Hegel, where philosophy as metaphysics is transformed into meta-history, i.e., - from being a reflection on Nature to being a reflection on the process of Nature. With Marx, this was taken further from being a mere reflection (idealism) on the process of Nature, to being a utilitarian analysis of this process in relation to human communal life, leading to the assertive inauguration of the epistemological system of historical materialism. Historical materialism, as an epistemological system, is a revolutionary negation of "ontological epistemology".

We contend, therefore, that in his application of historical materialism Marx could not have been interested in a critique of religion as a static phenomenon - which is what ontological epistemology is essentially about - but on religion as a social reality. Contrary to Kee's identification of the "reversal of reality" critique as the fundamental aspect of Marx's critique of religion, we maintain that the apex of his critique of religion is centred on the proposition that religion, like all ideological formations, is but an epiphenomenon which is secondary to the material phenomenon of developments in productive forces and the nature of social relations from which a particular religion arises¹⁹.

Granted, Marx hinted critically on the relation of religion to the process of the reversal of reality. This, however, was already Feuerbach's discovery. All that he did was to convert this theory of Feuerbach's into a framework for the creation of a paradigm for the criticism of the way human society relates to the systems of its environment. He was not criticising religion for being a reversal of reality. After Feuerbach's The__Essence__of__Christianity that could have been a literal re-invention of the proverbial wheel. Neither was Marx creating a theory_for_the

19 . See, Preface to A Critique of Political Economy, in D. McLellan, op cit, p. 389

criticism_of_religion, as Kee claims²⁰. By 1843, two years before his engageemnt in a systematisation of historical materialism, he already held that, "the criticism of religion is essentially complete"²¹. Why create a theory for a criticism that is already exhausted?

At the risk of undermining the motif of his work, Kee is forced to make the same observation and a very startling admission. He writes:

Marx does not provide us with the criticism in its fully developed form. He takes the criticism of religion [as an inversion of reality, in dem.] and uses it as a model for application to other social institutions. But he did not care to return to apply it comprehensively to religion. That is the task which we have decided to undertake. In seeking to apply Marx's general theory of reversal to religion we are actually attempting to go beyond Marx himself . . .²²

Does this mean that it is not to the ontological critique of religion by Marx that liberation theologians have failed to respond to, but to Kee's own "marxian" ontological critique of religion?

The philosophic background and context to the "reversal of reality" critique is Marx's struggle to remould Feuerbach's philosophy into a system that could be utilisable in dealing with problems of political

20. op cit, p.49

21 . From, "Towards a Critique of Hegel's Philosophy of Right: Introduction", in D. McLellan, p. 63

22. Op. cit., p. 67

economy. To create a "science" out of an "ideology", to use Louis Althusser's categories²³. Marx was creating a Theory, a scientific explanation (which is what historical materialism as an explication of the history of human social formation claims to be), out of what Feuerbach had merely posited in contemplative terms. What was merely a jeremiad by Feuerbach on the negative effects of the process of self-projection as manifested in religion on the human individual was inverted into a Theory for the subversion of social reality in toto. Feuerbach's criticism of heaven was "transformed into the criticism of earth, the criticism of religion into the criticism of law, the criticism of theology into the criticism of politics"²⁴. The context of the "reversal of reality" critique is the criticism of Feuerbach, and not an "ontological critique of religion". Insofar as the critique of Feuerbach marks the starting point of Marx's development of historical materialism, this critique is the foundation of the development of Marxism in general, and not an isolated criticism of religion. Marxism - dialectico-historical materialism - is not founded on the criticism of religion, but on the critique of the underlying epistemology of Feuerbach's philosophy. This is encapsulated in the 1845 Theses on Feuerbach (Thesis IV):

23. Louis Althusser, Politics And History (Surrey, England: Unwin Brothers, 1972), p. 116ff

24. Karl Marx, "Towards a Critique of Hegel's Philosophy of Right: Introduction", in D. McLellan., p.64

Feuerbach starts off from the fact of religious self-estrangement, of the duplication of the world into a religious world and a secular one. His work consists in resolving the religious world into its secular base. But the fact that the secular lifts off from itself and establishes itself as an independent realm in the clouds is not explained. And this can only be explained by the inner strife and self-contradictoriness [Sichselbswidersprechen] of this secular base. Therefore, the latter must itself be both understood in its contradiction and revolutionised in practice. Hence, for example, once the earthly family is discovered to be the secret of the holy family, the former must then itself be destroyed in theory and in practice²⁵.

Herein lies the cantus_firmus of the theoretical advance from Feuerbachianism to Marxism. Marx observed that the self-alienation which Feuerbach had spotted as occurring within the individual human being due to an act of worship, is actually taking place in social reality, and that the fact of the occurrence of this alienation (Selbswidersprechen) in social reality is what actually makes religion possible. This is different from Kee's assertion that Marx claimed that religion makes social alienation possible. Historical materialism consists in having this the other way round. The material base facilitates and shapes the production of superstructural phenomena.

This fact also addresses the point that at the matured phase of his thought and system Marx never found it necessary to devote any writing to a criticism

25. K. Marx, F. Engels. Collected Works. Vol. 5, p. 3 (passage slightly paraphrased).

of religion. Kee recognises, albeit without any cogent theoretical account. The fact is that, within the field of the problematics which are called into being by a historical materialist epistemology, religion is not an issue of any special importance at all. It is theoretically superfluous. It adds nothing to the structural development nor interpretation of historical materialism. As an element of analysis within an historical materialist epistemology, it is found as dependent on the shape of an obtaining socio-historical reality. It is an epiphenomenon of the phenomenon of social alienation and pre-scientific conditions of social development. Changes at the material level determine the production of religion, and since there is a development in history from forms of social reality which are based on social antagonism and human alienation to forms of societal formations where this is absent, so will religion eventually become superfluous, in reality. Juan Luis Segundo well observed the first aspect of this point (theoretical superfluosity) in his argument that:

Historical materialism cannot be a metaphysics . . . it cannot propound general, atemporal statements about God or atheism, or even basic, human anthropological faith. It was, it is, it will always be, a critical tool . . .26.

b) Liberation Theology as a Methodology

26. J.L. Segundo, Faith And Ideologies (Maryknoll: Orbis Books, 1984), p. 194

--As the second stage of our critique, we suggest that one fundamental problem with Kee's work, is in its choice of the most fundamental aspect which should form the basis for the evaluation of liberation theology from a Marxist philosophical perspective. We maintain that an identification of such a basis has to be an outflow of a cogent analysis of liberation theology, which if it is to reach as far-reaching a judgement as the one Kee concludes with, has to be sure that it is based on what is of the essence of liberation theology.

The essence of liberation theology, is that it is a theology, or rather a critique of the dominant theology of the Christian religion. It is not an autonomous religious system, which needs to defend its status against phenomenological criticisms of religion, qua religion. As Jon Sobrino, painstakingly explains, "This theology understands itself as a theology, . . . theology here becomes conscious that it is theo-logy, an intellectual discourse in the service of liberation"²⁷. Kee seems to have failed to appreciate that liberation theology is an intellectual discourse on a particular religion -- traditional Christianity.

Liberation theologians are not "scientists of

27. Jon Sobrino, The True Church and The Poor (London: SCM Press, 1981), p.15

religion", but "scientists" of the Christian religion. Indeed, they are more than "scientists of the Christian faith"; this is what all Christian theologians are. Rather, they are "philosophers of the science of the Christian faith". Like activists in the philosophy of science, they engage in a critical second-order activity not on the Christian Faith per se, but on how theologians in the past and present have gone about the critical task of conceptualising this Faith²⁸. It is with the method of doing theology, the "science" of the Christian religion, that they are essentially concerned. This means that liberation theology is primarily a methodology²⁹, a "negative" systematic proposal of a new way of doing theology - a critical reflection on ecclesiastical praxis³⁰.

The work of liberation theologians is at this theological-critical, as opposed to the religio-scientific level of engagement with religion. A Marxian critique of religion, therefore, is required to engage

28. For example, Gustavo Guttierrez, A Theology of Liberation (Maryknoll: Orbis Books, 1973) opens with a chapter giving a critical review on how the task of theologising was understood throughout the past of Church history. (p. 6f.)

29. For example, Jose Miguez Bonino: "The new current of theological reflection in Latin America has not yet gone beyond prolegomena . . . the meaning of this new current lies precisely in its reformation of the preconditions, presuppositions, and methods of doing theology at all." in, ("Historical Praxis and Christian Identity", in, Frontiers of Theology in Latin America, Maryknoll: Orbis books, 1979, p.260).

30. Guttierrez, op cit., p. 12

liberation theology at this level - the hermeneutical-epistemological one. Liberation theology has to be interrogated on how seriously it has taken the epistemological implications of Marxism on its programmatic concern with realising the efficacy of the Christian faith in history.

The choice between Kee's proposal that liberation theology should confront the "ontological implications" of Marx's critique of religion, and our proposal for a confrontation of the epistemological implications, is neither arbitrary nor can it be an optional choice between two parallel approaches to a criticism of liberation theology. This is because the ontological issue, as presented by Kee, is based on a misconception of the epistemological intention of Marx's philosophy, as well as a false premise concerning what Latin American theology of liberation is all about.

c) The Affirmation of Christian Faith in Liberation Theology

The operational scope of the critical engagement of liberation theologians has never intended nor pretended to extend beyond the bounds of an acceptance of Christianity. As Jon Sobrino testifies, "Theologians in Latin America begin by accepting the Christian Faith"³¹.

31. Sobrino, op cit., p.37

Positing this as one of the paramount differences between the task of Anglo-Saxon theologians and Latin American theologians, and in an illuminative "response" to Kee's charge that liberation theologians skirt Marx's critique of "ontological" religion because they take the problem of God to be a European problem. Sobrino observes that:

The questions to which [European theology] has sought answers are . . . how is it possible to believe today? What meaning can faith have today when its meaning seems to have been lost? The task has been to recover the meaning of faith.

Latin American theology, [on the other hand,] is interested in liberating the world from its wretched state, since it is this objective situation that has obscured the meaning of the faith. Its task is not primarily to restore the meaning to the faith in the presence of the wretched conditions of the real world. It is to transform this real world and at the same time recover the meaning of the faith. The task, therefore, is not to understand the faith differently, but to allow a new faith to spring from a new practice.³²

This is a novel application of Karl Marx's XIth Thesis against Feuerbach: "The philosophers have only interpreted the world in various ways; now the point is to change it". This observation is important because Marx's XIth Thesis, specifically addresses the methodological issue (relating to Philosophy). It introduces the call for a unity of intellectual reflection and material reality, where the former is seen as dependent on, and determined by the latter. Sobrino's statement that in liberation theology, "the

32. Sobrino, op cit., p.20

task . . . is not to understand the faith differently, but to allow a new faith to spring from a new practice" alludes to Marx's VIIIth Thesis: "All social life is essentially practical. All mysteries that induce theory to mysticism find their resolution in human practice and in the conception of this practice". Practice, the historical reality of a given society, including its religiosity, must be recognised as the point of departure at the same time the object of transformation.

Hugo Assman would add that it is on the basis of the recognition of a particular issue's political relevance (question of power) that determines its inclusion in the agenda of the theological reflection (conception of practice) of the community³³. Consequently, the issue of a Marxian critique of religion, insofar as it appears as a theme within the vicissitudes of the subject of "secularisation", is viewed as irrelevant because it is deemed as not possessing a direct bearing on the practice of participants in the activity of liberation theology, and as a theme in European theology, it has been conducted in purely apolitical terms. Assman notes:

The 'secularization' theme as expressed in Europe and the United States, concentrates almost exclusively on the de-sacralization brought into the man-nature relationship by technology, and ignores the primordial (political) aspects of the man-nature-man relationship, and the whole question of

33. Hugo Assman, Theology of a Nomad Church (Maryknoll: Orbis, 1976), pp 35-36

The point raised by Sobrino above, indicates liberation theology's methodological option of an affirmation of Christianity while seeking its more appropriate applications within relative historical conditions of human suffering. The dynamics and experience of this human suffering, insofar as it is perceived as politically-caused, Assman would add, is what decides what is crucial to the system of liberation theology³⁵. This methodological affirmation of Christianity as a religion, is a direct outflow of an empirical realisation of the suffering and struggling of the "Third World", that - in the words of the Boff brothers - "Christianity can no longer be dismissed as the opium of the people, nor can it be seen as merely fostering an attitude of critique: it has now become an active commitment to liberation"³⁶.

Therefore, Kee's criticism that, "by adopting the perspective of the underside of history, liberation theology is a very radical revision of traditional orthodox theology, but it has never ceased to be just that. Nor can it be, as long as Marx's ontological

34. Ibid., p.57

35. Ibid., pp. 33-39

36. Leonardo Boff, Clodovis Boff, Introducing Liberation Theology (Kent: Burns & Oates, 1986), p.7

criticism of religion is deliberately avoided"37, is not a criticism at all, but, unawares to him, is a fair compliment of liberation theology. Liberation theology has never declared a willingness of being more than a radical revision of traditional theology. In his The Power of the Poor in History, which was published eight years after A Theology of Liberation, Gustavo Guttierrez declared:

The theology of liberation . . . has no intention of being a revolutionary Christian ideology. It is reflection from a point of departure in the concrete historical praxis of human being. It seeks to understand the Faith from within ihs historical praxis and from within the manner of living the faith as a revolutionary commitment . . . hence its themes are the great themes of all true theology, but its focus, its manner of approaching them, is different.38

d) The Scope of the Use of Marx in Liberation Theology

All liberation theologians referred to in Kee's work, demonstrate a consciousness of the fundamental epistemological and structural difference that exist between Marxism as a philosophy and social theory, on the one hand, and on the other, of Christianity as a Faith which is constructed by a set of basic tenets which define it in relation to other areas of human knowledge. In their employment of Marxism, these

37. Kee, op cit, p. 179

38. G. Gutierrez, The Power of the Poor in History (Maryknoll, N.Y: Orbis books, 1979), p.61

theologians, with perhaps a questionable exception of Miranda, are not attempting to create a new "field of knowledge" which is aimed at being a syncretism of Marxism and Christian theology. They seek to remain theologians (this includes Miranda). All that they are doing is a creation of a system of religious discourse which would be useful, primarily, to the Church (religious community), and which builds on reinterpreting traditional credal formulations by liberating them from their original culturo-historical embodiments, by seeking contextual meanings for them. It is therefore inappropriate to ask, as Kee does (rhetorically), that:

Now that liberation theology has been enlightened by Marx's social philosophy and purified by his moral criticism, why does it still cling to models and repeat doctrines from a tradition which is so alien to experience in the modern world?³⁹.

The following submission of Leonardo and Clodovis Boff, in their Introducing Liberation Theology, may be taken as a summary representation of liberation theology's calculated regard of the work of Karl Marx. As the first and cardinal point they state that,

In liberation theology, Marxism is never treated as a subject on its own but always from and in relation to the poor. Placing themselves firmly on the side of the poor, liberation theologians ask Marx: 'What can you tell us about the situation of poverty and ways of overcoming it?' Here Marxists are submitted to the judgement of the poor and their cause, and

39. op cit., p. 180

not the other way around.40

This is a statement that, there is no readiness to submit liberation theology to any fundamental revision by Marxist theory. Liberation theology as, ideally, a popular theological reflection by the people themselves, is primarily formulated by these people's experiences and not an outside theoretical system. On the other hand, liberation theologians do not see themselves as being in the task of refining and defending marxist philosophy. Liberation theology,

feels no obligation to account to social scientists for any use it may make - correct or otherwise- of Marxist terminology and ideas, though it does feel obliged to account to the poor, to their faith and hope, and to the ecclesial community, for such use41.

To put it in more specific terms, according to Leonardo and Clodovis Boff, "liberation theology freely borrows from Marxism certain 'methodological pointers' that have proved fruitful in understanding the world of the oppressed"42. And this is being done only within the restricted framework of a concord that "liberation theology uses Marxism purely as an instrument"43. Where there has been a show of special attention on Marxism,

40. Boff, Boff., p.28

41. Loc. cit.

42. Loc.cit.

43. Boff, Boff., p.28

this according to Segundo, has been engaged upon merely as an attempt, "to salvage the imperishable nucleus of Marx's ideology insofar as it does relate precisely to Faith"44.

The over-arching perception, and deliberate stance, is that:

Liberation theology maintains a decidedly critical stance in relation to Marxism. Marx can be a companion on the way (see Puebla, para. 544), but he cannot be the guide, because 'You have only one teacher, the Christ' (Matt.23:10).45

In the light of this, the title of Kee's work, Marx and the Failure of Liberation Theology may be misleading as it may be read to imply that liberation theology has failed to fulfill what it had set out for itself to achieve, namely, - in terms of his argument- to appropriate Marx "comprehensively" and "sufficiently". None of the works of the Liberation theologian Kee examined ever declared such an intention. The above presentation of the submission of Leonardo and Clodovis Boff accounts for this.

44. Faith and Ideologies, p. 179

45. Op. cit.

Conclusion:--The--Contours--of--a--Marxian--Critique--of--Liberation--Theology

A criticism of liberation theology vis a vis Marxism needs to be based on as contingent an assessment of the former as possible. In the first place, the scope of the intention at which liberation theology, or the work of specific liberation theologians, seeks to dialogue with Marxist philosophy has to clearly delimited. The danger of imposing an objective on liberation theology which it had never claimed needs be avoided. Secondly, as we have demonstrated above, it is crucially important to establish the fundamental hypostatic form of liberation theology: namely, that it is a way of interpreting religion, instead of being a religion itself. This in itself imposes a limitation of the range of issues raised by Marxist philosophy which could be deployed against liberation theology.

The constitution of the causa---bellum between liberation theology and Marxist philosophy, which works like those of Fierro and Kee is setting, needs also to be noted. The confrontation between liberation theology and Marxist philosophy, is more than just an engagement in a comparative study of the relationship between theology and philosophy. Marxist world-view constitutes the optics of liberation theology. Think of

the theme of praxis⁴⁶.

Undoubtedly, even as an "instrument", Marxism is an instrument which a theology of liberation cannot do without. This was recognised from the start. As Gutierrez testified in A Theology of Liberation:

It is to a large extent due to Marxism's influence that theological thought, searching for its own sources, has begun to reflect on the meaning of the transformation of this world and action of man in history.⁴⁷

Marxism is the most comprehensive critique of the dominant philosophical tradition which, in Latin America in particular, has been found to be the source of the suffering and oppression from which historical liberation is sought, i.e, Capitalism⁴⁸. In the epic words of Jose Miguez Bonino, "it has proved, and still proves to be, the best instrument available for an effective and rational realization of human possibilities in historical life⁴⁹ . . . it is the unavoidable historical mediation of Christian

46. See, A. Nicholas, "The Story of Praxis: Liberation Theology's Philosophical Handmaid", Religion in Communist Lands, 17:1 (Spring 1989), 45-58

47. A Theology of Liberation, p.9

48. See, J P Miranda, Marx and the Bible: Critique of the Philosophy of Oppression (Maryknoll, New York: Orbis Books, 1974), pp. xvi - xix

49. Jose M Bonino, Revolutionary Theology Comes of Age (London: SPCK, 1975), p.97

obedience"50.

The foregoing positive assertions on Marxism, do not contradict the schema outlined by Boff, which we introduced above. All of these, and to a large extent even what Miranda maintains, is posited within a pre-defined parameter of the acceptance of Marxism. A quick sorting of what is acceptable and not acceptable from Marxism has already been done, and liberation theology is being constructed only on the basis of what is found acceptable. As Boff would alert us, inter alia: "Marxist materialism and atheism do not even constitute a temptation for liberation theologians"51.

Therefore, a faithful criticism of liberation theology's use of the thought of Marx can, in its most radical extent, only go as far as a criticism of this restrictiveness of the acceptance of Marxist philosophy which liberation theologians have set for themselves. It will supremely have to ask: What are the epistemological, or even ideological, presuppositions which determine the width and depth of the scope of what liberation theologians have decided is to be taken from Karl Marx?

In contradistinction to Kee's approach, we propose

50. Ibid., p.98

51 Op. cit., p. 28

that since liberation theology is only a form of a "rational" mediation of the Christian Faith, the most legitimate and productive critique of this form of theology in relation to, or from a Marxian perspective, is the one that focuses on a critical assessment of the epistemological core and presuppositions of this theology apropos that of marxist philosophy. A primary justification of the fundamental significance of this approach, is borne by the fact that Marxist philosophy, insofar as it is by and large a doctrine of historical materialism, is an epistemological system. It is a systematic polemic on the new way of interpreting history. We maintain that what is called for is an interrogation of the quality of the "package" of Marxism which liberation theology has apportioned for itself to use as an instrument in its system.

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