

PART ONE

PRAXIS

MARX AND THE HEGELIAN
BACKGROUND

*Marx's "Theses on Feuerbach"*¹

(1)

THE CHIEF DEFECT of all previous materialism (including Feuerbach's) is that the object, actuality, sensuousness is conceived only in the form of the *object or perception* [*Anschauung*], but not as *sensuous human activity, practice* [*Praxis*], nor subjectively. Hence in opposition to materialism the *active* side was developed by idealism—but only abstractly since idealism naturally does not know actual, sensuous activity as such. Feuerbach wants sensuous objects actually different from thought objects: but he does not comprehend human activity itself as *objective*. Hence in *The Essence of Christianity* he regards only the theoretical attitude as the truly human attitude, while practice is understood and fixed only in its dirtily Jewish form of appearance. Consequently he does not comprehend the significance of "revolutionary," of "practical-critical" activity.

(2)

The question whether human thinking can reach objective truth—is not a question of theory but a *practical* question. In practice man must prove the truth, that is, actuality and power, this-sidedness of his thinking. The dispute about the actuality or non-actuality of thinking—thinking isolated from practice—is a purely *scholastic* question.

(3)

The materialistic doctrine concerning the change of circumstances and

1. "Theses on Feuerbach" in *Writings of the Young Marx on Philosophy and Society*, ed. by Loyd D. Easton and Kurt H. Guddat, pp. 400-402 (hereafter referred to as *Young Marx*); Marx/Engels *Werke*, Bd. 3, pp. 5-7. For a detailed analysis of Marx's "Theses on Feuerbach," and the philosophic background of these theses, see Nathan Rotenstreich, *Basic Problems of Marx's Philosophy*.

education forgets that circumstances are changed by men and that the educator must himself be educated. Hence this doctrine must divide society into two parts—one of which towers above [as in Robert Owen, Engels added].

The coincidence of the change of circumstances and of human activity or self-change can be comprehended and rationally understood only as *revolutionary practice*.

(4)

Feuerbach starts out from the fact of religious self-alienation, the duplication of the world into a religious and secular world. His world consists in resolving the religious world into its secular basis. But the fact that the secular basis becomes separate from itself and establishes an independent realm in the clouds can only be explained by the cleavage and self-contradictoriness of the secular basis. Thus the latter must itself be both understood in its contradiction and revolutionized in practice. For instance, after the earthly family is found to be the secret of the holy family, the former must then be theoretically and practically nullified.

(5)

Feuerbach, not satisfied with *abstract thinking*, wants *perception*; but he does not comprehend sensuousness as *practical* human-sensuous activity.

(6)

Feuerbach resolves the religious essence into the *human* essence. But the essence of man is no abstraction inhering in each single individual. In its actuality it is the ensemble of social relationships.

Feuerbach, who does not go into the criticism of this actual essence, is hence compelled

1. to abstract from the historical process and to establish religious feeling as something self-contained, and to presuppose an abstract—*isolated*—human individual;

2. to view the essence of man merely as “species,” as the inner, dumb generality which unites the many individuals *naturally*.

(7)

Feuerbach does not see, consequently, that “religious feeling” is itself a social product and that the abstract individual he analyzes belongs to a particular form of society.

(8)

All social life is essentially *practical*. All mysteries which lead theory to mysticism find their rational solution in human practice and the comprehension of this practice.

(9)

The highest point attained by perceptual materialism, that is, materialism that does not comprehend sensuousness as practical activity, is the view of separate individuals and civil society.

(10)

The standpoint of the old materialism is civil society; the standpoint of the new is human society or socialized humanity.

(11)

The philosophers have only *interpreted* the world in various ways; the point is, to *change* it.

The eleven theses on Feuerbach jotted down by Marx in 1845 when he was only twenty-seven but published with some revisions only after his death as an appendix to Engels' *Ludwig Feuerbach*, is one of the most remarkable and fascinating documents of modern thought. The theses were written after a period of intensive philosophic study and a deepening interest in politics and economics. They contain the quintessence of Marx's thought at the time, which is articulated in greater detail in the famous 1844 *Paris Manuscripts (Economic and Philosophic Manuscripts)*, and *The German Ideology* written less than a year after the theses. This was a period when Marx's diverse studies and interests were developing into a coherent perspective, and the theses can serve as a basis for understanding his later development, including the writing of *Capital*. All of these theses revolve around the meaning and significance of *praxis*. *Praxis* is the central concept in Marx's outlook—the key to understanding his early philosophic speculations and his detailed analysis of the structure of capitalism. It provides the perspective for grasping Marx's conception of man as “the ensemble of social relationships” and his emphasis on production; it is the basis for comprehending what Marx meant by “revolutionary practice.” The theses have important critical practical consequences; they also have metaphysical and epistemological ramifications. To comprehend these theses in detail, we must look backwards to the origin of *praxis*, and forward to the way in which this concept affects Marx's later development. To understand what Marx meant by *praxis* we must first dig back into Hegel. It was Feuerbach who helped Marx see what was wrong and what was right in Hegel's philosophy. But as the

theses made clear, Marx was severely critical of Feuerbach's solution to the "riddle" of Hegel.

Geist²

Geist (which is best translated as "spirit," not "mind") is the most fundamental concept in Hegel's philosophy, just as *praxis* is basic in Marx's thought. There is not a theme or subject in Hegel that does not lead us back to the nature and dynamics of *Geist*, and the same can be said about the centrality of *praxis* in Marx. *Praxis*, I intend to show, is itself the result of a dialectical critique of Hegel's *Geist*.

Geist is at once a most elusive and seductive concept. It turns up every place in Hegel's philosophy and plays numerous roles. If we are to gain some grasp of what Hegel means by *Geist*, we must approach it from a variety of partial (Hegel would say, "abstract")

2. Any brief discussion of Hegel is bound to be inadequate, or to use Hegelian idiom, "abstract" and "false." I have explored Hegel's thought only insofar as it is necessary to understand the post-Hegelian thinkers and movements who were reacting against Hegel or stressing one aspect of his thought. Furthermore, I discuss those aspects of Hegel's thought which are most *directly* relevant to their concerns. Marx, Kierkegaard, Sartre, Peirce, and Dewey have all criticized Hegel and in each case there is an important issue of whether they correctly interpreted Hegel. In many instances it is clear that they have not done so. Since my aim is to understand the distinctive character of their thought and this frequently depends on how *they* interpreted Hegel, I have emphasized *their* reading of Hegel and the Hegelians rather than exploring the correctness of their interpretations. There are also complex questions concerning how well acquainted each of these thinkers was with Hegel's writings. While it is clear that Marx had a deep knowledge of the Hegelian corpus, this is less true of the other thinkers. In approaching each of these thinkers from the perspective of their reaction to Hegel, I am not assuming that each self-consciously started with a critique of Hegel. Rather, I think that we can understand the thought of each with reference to a "problematic" which can be located in Hegel's thought.

Until recently, Hegelian scholarship in English has been very sporadic and is quite inferior in sophistication when compared with French and German scholarship where there has been a long tradition of serious interest in Hegel. For a brief bibliography of some of the better works on Hegel see the Bibliography in Walter Kaufmann's *Hegel: Reinterpretation, Texts and Commentary*.

perspectives. Hegel self-consciously attempts to integrate and synthesize in a single concept two independent leading ideas that have shaped Western thought. The first is that of Reason or *Noûs*, especially as this concept emerges from Greek philosophy. The second is that of God as Spirit as this concept emerges from the Judaeo-Christian tradition, where God is conceived of as an omniscient, omnipotent, active Being who makes Himself manifest in history and guides history in the form of Divine Providence.

To appreciate what Hegel intends when he tells us that *Geist* is rational, or is Reason, we must divest ourselves of certain modern conceptions of reason and project ourselves back into the Greek—more specifically—the Aristotelian understanding of *Noûs*. Much of modern thinking about reason has been shaped by the Humean doctrine that separates reason from experience and the passions, and conceives of reason as a faculty of individual men that has no inner *conatus* or dynamic force of its own. Reason is a faculty or instrument for drawing logical consequences. Except for the narrow class of analytic truths (or in Humean terminology, "relations of ideas") reason cannot make any inferences without presupposing premises or starting points that are based on experience. Hume's famous doctrine that "reason is, and ought only to be the slave of the passions"³ is not intended to be a license for irrationality, but rather a way of calling attention to the impotence of reason when not motivated by the passions. Furthermore, "reason" is actually a predicate and not a subject. Reason, by itself, doesn't *do* anything. To speak of reason is to speak of an abstraction. It is individual men who reason; reason is a faculty possessed by and exercised by individuals. It sounds odd to the modern ear to say, for example, that "Reason knows the world," or that "Reason rules the world." But if we think of the ways in which reason has been understood in the mainstream of Western philosophy, we realize that the Humean conception of reason is a tributary of the mainstream. Philosophers from Anaxagoras to Spinoza felt no intellectual embarrassment in speaking of Reason itself as a subject with its own power and *telos*. From this point of view, *we* are rational insofar as we manifest or participate in universal Reason or *Noûs*—a universal Reason closely associated

3. David Hume, *A Treatise of Human Nature*, ed. by L. A. Selby-Bigge, p. 415.

with the concept of the Divine. For Aristotle as well as for many modern rationalists, we are most godlike when we manifest our Reason. Reason, from the perspective of this tradition, is not merely a faculty, capacity, or potentiality, it is an actuality. When Reason is fully actualized, both the understanding and what is understood are characterized as rational: they are, according to Aristotle, identical. When Reason is understood in this manner, the aim or *telos* of philosophy as the highest form of *theoria* is to *interpret* the world—to grasp its ultimate rational principles and to contemplate the nature of reality. This reality is properly understood when we grasp the rational order inherent in it. It is not a metaphor to speak of Reason pervading the world; it is a literal and fundamental truth. To say that Reason rules the world is to say that there are rational principles, or universal unchangeable laws that govern the world.

For Hegel these general claims about Reason are “abstract,” and consequently “false,” until we have shown concretely and in detail precisely how Reason is realized in the world. When Hegel comments on Socrates’ criticism of Anaxagoras’ claim that Reason rules the world, he says: “It is evident that the insufficiency which Socrates found in the principle of Anaxagoras has nothing to do with the principle itself, but with Anaxagoras’ failure to apply it to concrete nature. Nature was not understood or comprehended through this principle; the principle remained abstract—nature was not understood as a development of Reason, as an organization brought forth by it.”⁴ *Geist* for Hegel is Reason or *Noûs* as charac-

4. *Reason in History*, trans. with an introduction by Robert S. Hartman, p. 14; *Vorlesungen über die Philosophie der Weltgeschichte*, ed. by J. Hoffmeister, p. 38. Hegel never published a book with the title “*Die Vernunft in der Geschichte*,” or “*Vorlesungen über die Philosophie der Weltgeschichte*.” These “Lectures” are essentially lecture notes; so even the German edition is basically an edited version of Hegel’s lecture notes. Furthermore, the German text is supplemented by students’ notes. Eduard Gans’ edition appeared in 1837. A revised and enlarged edition was edited by Hegel’s son, Karl, and was published in 1840. Karl Hegel published still another edition in 1843. An entirely new edition of the “Lectures” was prepared by Georg Lasson in four volumes (1917-1920). Since Lasson’s original edition, four more editions of Vol. I, *Die Vernunft in der Geschichte: Einleitung in die Philosophie der Weltgeschichte*, have appeared. The most recent is by J. Hoffmeister. It appeared in 1955, reprinted in 1963. Hartman’s *Reason in History* is a

terized by the Greeks, but *Geist* is not “abstract” understanding, it is not *Verstand*; it is Reason (*Vernunft*) fully actualized in the world.

The above comment on Anaxagoras, especially the phrase “the development of Reason,” reveals an important distinction for Hegel and suggests a second perspective for understanding *Geist*. The distinction is that between nature and spirit. Ultimately, *Geist* is all-comprehensive, but in the course of its development it dirempts itself into a realm of nature and a realm of spirit. “Spiritual life is distinguished from natural, and particularly from animal, life in this, that it does not merely remain *in itself*, but is *for itself*.”⁵ Hegel here is making the point that what distinguishes the spiritual from the natural is the development of consciousness, and ultimately self-consciousness. But this diremption of *Geist* into the natural and the

pastiche. It is based on Karl Hegel’s second edition; but Hartman interpolates passages from other editions as well as some passages of his own.

The above gives a brief idea of the editorial problems involved in quoting from Hegel. Hegel published only four books during his lifetime, some essays and some book reviews. Most of what we today consider to be his *Werke* was published posthumously, some of it reconstructed and supplemented with student notes. Problems are further compounded by the fact that Hegel followed the typical nineteenth-century German practice of extensively revising and rewriting his works when he published subsequent editions of them. While I have made use of the full range of Hegel’s works, including the posthumous works and student notes published with them, I believe that every passage cited is a true reflection of his thought and can be supported by passages from those works which are considered to be most authoritative. For an excellent discussion of the state of Hegel’s editions and their translations, see Walter Kaufmann, *Hegel: Reinterpretation, Texts, and Commentary*, especially his “Bibliography.” See also Otto Pöggler’s illuminating discussion of the history of Hegel-editing and its close connection with Hegel research, “Hegel-editing and Hegel Research.” This article will be published in a forthcoming volume of papers from the 1970 Hegel Symposium sponsored by Marquette University. For a discussion of the special textual problems involved in *Die Vernunft in der Geschichte*, see the Hoffmeister edition, pp. 272 ff.

5. The translations of this passage and the next passage are by Findlay. J. N. Findlay, *Hegel: A Re-examination*, p. 37. See also William Wallace, *The Logic of Hegel*, pp. 54-55 (hereafter referred to as *Hegel’s Logic*); Hegel, *Werke*, Bd. VI, p. 55. Wallace’s translation is based on the first part of Hegel’s *Encyclopaedia*, and is frequently called “The Lesser Logic” in order to distinguish it from Hegel’s *Science of Logic* which has recently appeared in a new translation: *Hegel’s Science of Logic*, trans. by A. V. Miller.

spiritual spheres is eventually *aufgehoben*⁶ in the full development of *Geist*. "Nature is by no means something fixed and finished for itself, which could also exist without Spirit: rather does it first reach its aim and truth in Spirit. Just so Spirit on its part is not merely something abstractly beyond nature, but exists truly and shows itself to be Spirit, insofar as it contains nature as subjugated in itself."⁷

When Hegel speaks of *Geist* in this manner, he is thinking of *Geist* as God who does not abandon the world to chance and accident but guides it by Providence. "The truth that a Providence, that is to say, a divine Providence, presides over events of the world corresponds to our principle; for divine Providence is wisdom endowed with infinite power which realizes its own aim, that is, the absolute, rational final purpose of the world."⁸ *Geist*, according to Hegel, turns out not only to be the final cause of the world, it is also the material, efficient, and formal cause. It is the material cause in the form of the natural and spiritual realms (the spiritual realm is the realm of history). It is the efficient cause, for through the "cunning of Reason" (*List der Vernunft*) which works in devious ways through the passions of men, *Geist* is the agency of historical development. It is the formal cause, for as *Noûs*, it is the source of the rational structure or form of the world. And it is the final cause, because *Geist* guides history to its true and final aim—the complete realization of freedom. Hegel is claiming that if we take a world historical perspective, we will see that there is an inner *logos* to the seemingly chaotic multiplicity of events. This *logos* has a teleological form. There is a narrative or "story" to be discovered in history—this is the epic of the devious ways in which *Geist* is realizing itself, moving from freedom and self-determination as an abstract idea to its concrete embodiment in human institutions. Hegel is fully aware of the ambitiousness, initial implausibility,

6. There is no English word that captures the distinctive meaning that "aufheben" has for Hegel. Baillie's translation "to sublimate," and Kaufmann's translation "to sublimate" are pallid substitutes. "Aufheben" is to negate, affirm and transcend, or go beyond. These are not necessarily three distinct moments, but can be involved in a single process. Throughout, I use the German expression. Its full meaning for Hegel and Marx will be brought out from the contexts in which it is used.

7. Findlay, op. cit., p. 37; Hegel's *Logic*, p. 180; Hegel, *Werke*, Bd. VI, pp. 190-191.

8. *Reason in History*, p. 15; *Vorlesungen über die Philosophie der Weltgeschichte*, p. 39.

and emptiness of these grand claims. He fully realizes that he is drawing together the two most profound traditions that have shaped Western culture—the classical Greek tradition and the Judaeo-Christian tradition. As he himself emphasizes, these abstract claims are empty, for they neither provide us with a clear meaning of "Geist" nor a proof that it is actually manifest. But if we grasp the import of Hegel's claims, we can already see what he would have to do to make these abstract claims concrete and to validate them. He would have to show us in complete systematic detail how *Geist* manifests itself. This is precisely what he attempted to do. Hegel's entire system can be viewed as an attempt to reveal the meaning and to demonstrate the truth of these claims. This is why in his *Phenomenology of Spirit*, he announces that the time is ripe to show that philosophy can relinquish the name of the *love* of wisdom and finally become actual wisdom; philosophy is finally to be elevated to a science revealing the inner necessity of the truth of *Geist*.⁹

But how does *Geist* realize itself or make itself manifest? Here we have a third perspective for understanding *Geist*. The logic or dynamic structure of *Geist* manifesting itself is not a direct or immediate unfolding of its nature.

The transition of its potentiality into actuality is mediated through consciousness and will. These are themselves first immersed in their immediate organic life; their first object and purpose in this natural existence as such. But the latter, through its animation by Spirit, becomes infinitely demanding, rich, and strong. Thus Spirit is at war with itself. It must overcome itself as its own enemy and formidable obstacle. Development, which in nature is a quiet unfolding, is in Spirit a hard, infinite struggle against itself.¹⁰

Geist is perpetually alienating itself, dirempting itself, and struggling with itself. But it is not a meaningless struggle. It is by means of this life and death struggle with itself that *Geist* emerges triumphant and realizes itself. Hegel uses and modifies the oriental image

9. See "The Preface to the *Phenomenology*," translated by Walter Kaufmann, *Hegel: Reinterpretation, Texts, and Commentary*, p. 372; *Phänomenologie des Geistes*, ed. by J. Hoffmeister, p. 12. English quotations from the "Preface" are from Kaufmann's translation in the above-mentioned work, which is hereafter referred to as *Hegel: Reinterpretation*.

10. *Reason in History*, p. 69; *Vorlesungen über die Philosophie der Weltgeschichte*, pp. 151-152.

of the Phoenix to convey his meaning about the nature of the ceaseless activity of *Geist*. The Phoenix prepares its own pyre and consumes itself "so that from its ashes the new, rejuvenated, fresh life continually arises."¹¹ Hegel goes on to comment:

This picture, however, is Asiatic; oriental, not occidental. The Spirit, devouring its worldly envelope, not only passes into another envelope, not only arises rejuvenated from the ashes to its embodiment, but it emerges from them exalted, transfigured, a purer Spirit. It is true that it acts against itself, devours its own existence. But in so doing it elaborates upon this existence; its embodiment becomes material for its work to elevate itself to a new embodiment.¹²

Lest we think that Hegel is speculatively spinning metaphors, we need to realize how seriously he takes this picture of the eternal self-struggle of *Geist*. We find here the kernel of what Hegel means by "dialectic." There has been a lot of loose talk about Hegel's dialectic being a movement from thesis to antithesis to synthesis. Not only do these concepts play an insignificant role in Hegel's philosophy, they are essentially static concepts and completely misrepresent what Hegel means by "dialectic."¹³ The dialectic of *Geist* is essentially a dynamic and organic process. One "moment" of a dialectical process, when it is fully developed or understood gives rise to its own negation; it is not mechanically confronted by an antithesis. The process here is more like that of a tragedy where the "fall" of the tragic hero emerges from the dynamics of the development of his own character. When *Geist* is dirempted, alienated from itself, a serious struggle takes place between the two "moments." Out of this conflict and struggle, out of this negativity, emerges a "moment" which at once negates, affirms, and transcends the "moments" involved in the struggle—these earlier moments are *aufgehoben*. In the course of *Geist* realizing itself, this process which involves a stage of self-alienation that is subsequently *aufgehoben* is a continuous, restless, infinite one. The logic of the development of *Geist* is dialectical where *Geist* struggles with what *appears* to be "other" than it—a limitation, or obstacle which must be overcome. *Geist* "returns to itself" when it overcomes the specific obstacle that it

11. *Reason in History*, p. 89; Hegel, *Werke*, Bd. IX, p. 90.

12. *Reason in History*, p. 89; Hegel, *Werke*, Bd. IX, pp. 90-91.

13. See Gustav Emil Müller, "The Hegel Legend of 'Thesis-Antithesis-Synthesis'" in *Journal of the History of Ideas* 19 (June 1958).

encounters, only to renew the dialectical process again. *Geist finally* "returns to itself" when all obstacles and determinations have been overcome, when everything that has appeared "other" than itself is fully appropriated and thereby subjectivized. This is the final aim or goal of *Geist*. The *negativity* and *activity* of *Geist* come into focus in this dialectical characterization.

Death . . . is what is most terrible, and to hold on to what is dead requires the greatest strength. That beauty which lacks strength hates the understanding because it asks this of her and cannot do it. But not the life that shrinks from death and keeps itself undefiled by devastation, but the life that endures, and preserves itself through death is the life of the spirit. Spirit gains its truth only by finding itself in absolute dismemberment. This power it is not as the positive that looks away from the negative—as when we say of something, this is nothing or false, and then, finished with it, turn away from it to something else: the spirit is this power only by looking the negative in the face and abiding with it. This abiding is the magic force which converts the negative into being.¹⁴

The self-realization and the self-fulfillment of *Geist* takes place only by self-destruction. This tremendous power of the negative has dramatic consequences for the study of history. History is the scenario of perpetual struggle and self-destruction where all *finite* social institutions are destroyed and *aufgehoben*. History is "the slaughter-bench at which the happiness of peoples, the wisdom of states, and the virtue of individuals have been sacrificed."¹⁵ But the power of negativity does not result in meaningless destruction; it is the means by which the progressive development toward concrete freedom is realized.

It should be manifest that by "negativity" Hegel means an active process. *Geist* is the principle of self-activity itself. "The very essence of spirit is *action*. It makes itself what it essentially is; it is its own product, its own work."¹⁶ This is the dimension of Hegel's *Geist* that most fascinated and deeply influenced Marx. Or again, Hegel tells us the "criterion of Spirit is its action, its active essence."¹⁷ If we keep in mind that it is man, who according to Hegel reflects the develop-

14. Hegel: *Reinterpretation*, pp. 406-408; *Phänomenologie des Geistes*, pp. 29-30.

15. *Reason in History*, p. 27; Hegel, *Werke*, Bd. IX, p. 27.

16. *Reason in History*, p. 89; Hegel, *Werke*, Bd. IX, p. 91.

17. *Reason in History*, p. 51; Hegel, *Sämtliche Werke*, Bd. VIII. 2, p. 93.

ment of *Geist* and is the agent through which *Geist* expresses itself in history, then we can understand what he means when he says "Man is his own action, the sequence of his actions, that into which he has been making himself."¹⁸ *Geist* is what it does, and man is what he does. This strain in Hegel's thought has had the profoundest influence on post-Hegelian thinking. We shall see how fundamental this view of man—as a being who is what he does—is for Marx and how this motif stands at the very center of existentialist thought.

But we need to counterbalance the negativity and activity of *Geist* with an opposite image that is just as important and basic for Hegel. This is an image that dates back to the Greeks (and even earlier) and that held a special fascination for Hegel. It is the image of circular or spherical motion. The rotating sphere is at once in continual motion and always at rest. The ceaseless activity of *Geist* corresponds to the way in which the sphere is always in motion. But *Geist* is also eternal, infinite, and unchangeable; *Geist* is always the self-same, always at "rest." Just as Hegel gives a distinctive twist to the oriental image of the Phoenix, he gives a dialectical twist to the occidental image of the sphere. The dialectical activity of *Geist* is more like a spiral than a circle or a sphere. What is potential and implicit in *Geist* becomes actual and explicit. The eternal logical structure of *Geist* is always the same. Appreciating the ceaseless activity of *Geist* is essential for understanding history, the rise and fall of political and social institutions, the development of the stages of consciousness. However, from the perspective of logic, of *Geist* as *Noûs* or Reason, *Geist* displays an eternal, necessary, rational structure. Consequently, when Hegel writes a logic laying bare the fundamental categories of the Concept (*Begriff*); or a phenomenology of the developing stages of consciousness, self-consciousness, and spirit; or a philosophical analysis of world history or the evolution of political society, he is not telling different "stories," but the same basic story of *Geist* from different perspectives.

While we might rebel against what at first appears to be Hegel's mythmaking, we cannot help being impressed with the power of this vision of *Geist* when Hegel deals with specific dialectical movements. This is especially true in following the developments traced for us in the *Phenomenology of Spirit*. The *Phenomenology* presents us with still another perspective for grasping the nature of *Geist*. The

18. *Reason in History*, p. 51; Hegel, *Sämtliche Werke*, Bd. VIII. 2, p. 93.

Phenomenology follows the stages in the development of consciousness from its most primitive stage to its final stage of absolute knowledge. The general movement of the *Weltgeist* is repeated in the individual spirit. "The individual must also pass through the contents of the educational stages of the general spirit, but as forms that have long been outgrown by the spirit, as stages or a way that has been prepared and evened for him."¹⁹ Three angles of vision must be maintained for a correct reading of the *Phenomenology*. It is a phenomenology of *Geist*, and as such it is not merely a study of the stages that each individual spirit passes through. Nevertheless, Hegel maintains an "ontogenetic principle" whereby the stages of *Geist* are repeated in the individual spirit. Finally, we must realize that there is a philosophic "we" that is describing and interpreting the stages of consciousness—a "we" which already knows the end of the story and is able to detect the overall dialectical movement taking place at each stage of development of *Geist*.

Hegel begins his *Phenomenology* with what today we might call an "epistemological" orientation. He examines three stages of our cognitive awareness of objects: sense certainty, perception, and understanding. In each of these progressive stages, consciousness seeks to know directly and immediately the object that it confronts; consciousness seeks to fulfill itself and found itself on a firm foundation. And in each stage, contradictions and conflicts emerge in the quest for immediate certainty that force us to a "higher" stage. We think, for example, that in confronting the mere object denoted by such expressions as "here" and "now" we are directly grasping the particular which stands before us. But Hegel not only seeks to expose the speciousness of this claim to immediate knowledge of particulars and the illusion that sense certainty provides us with the "richest kind of knowledge,"—"a knowledge of endless wealth" (*Phen.*, p. 149; p. 79),²⁰ he wants to show us that the hard objectivity of the "facts" before us dissolves into subjectivity. This forces

19. Hegel: *Reinterpretation*, p. 402; *Phänomenologie des Geistes*, p. 27. For a critical discussion of various interpretations of the "point of view" in the *Phenomenology*, and especially the status of the philosophic "we," see Kenley R. Dove "Hegel's Phenomenological Method," *The Review of Metaphysics* 23 (June 1970).

20. Page references to *The Phenomenology of Mind* are included in the text. Page numbers of the English translation are followed by the page numbers of the German text.

us to a more comprehensive stage of perception where our basic category is the thing or substance manifesting different properties. But this stage in turn is unstable and we are led to the next stage where we postulate entities that are neither sensed nor perceived in order to account for that which confronts us.²¹

When we (or more properly "we" as the embodiment of *Geist*) pass through the first three stages of consciousness and come to the realization that what we know—that which stands as an object for consciousness, is nothing but another form of consciousness itself, we reach the stage of "Self-consciousness." Summing up the result of the first three stages of consciousness, Hegel says:

In the kinds of certainty hitherto considered, the truth for consciousness is something other than consciousness itself. The conception, however, of this truth vanishes in the course of our experience of it. What the object immediately was *in itself*—whether mere being in sense-certainty, a concrete thing in perception, or force in the case of understanding—it turns out, in truth, not to be this reality; but instead, this inherent nature (*Ansich*) proves to be a way in which it is for an other (*Phen.*, p. 218; p. 141).

With this realization that consciousness in its attempt to know an "other"—an object truly independent of consciousness—is really knowing *itself*, the journey of *Geist* takes a distinctively practical turn. The task of *Geist* is to make "itself what it essentially is; it is its

21. The opening section of the *Phenomenology*, "Consciousness," which deals with "sense certainty," "perception," and "understanding," is rarely read and discussed by contemporary philosophers. This is a pity because these sections can be read as a perceptive and incisive commentary and critique of a dialectical development in epistemology which has been repeated in contemporary analytic philosophy. The stages in contemporary epistemological investigations which have moved from phenomenism with its foundation in "sense data" to the emphasis on a "thing language" as an epistemological foundation, to the realization of the importance of "theoretical constructs" and finally the "new" concern with total "conceptual frameworks" or "language games" closely parallels the development that Hegel sketches for us in the opening sections of the *Phenomenology*. One can find analogues in the development of epistemology during the past fifty years for the difficulties that Hegel locates at each dialectical stage. I do not mean to suggest that Hegel was prophetic, but rather that he had a genuine insight into a dialectical progression of epistemological positions, which has repeated itself in a linguistic mode during our time.

own product, its own work."²² In the stage of "Self-consciousness." *Geist* seeks to establish its *own* self-certainty.²³ But self-consciousness cannot fully realize itself, fulfill itself, or know itself unless it is recognized by another self-consciousness. "Self-consciousness exists in itself and for itself in that, and by the fact that it exists for another self-consciousness; that is to say, it *is* only by being acknowledged or 'recognized' " (*Phen.*, p. 229; p. 141). *Es ist ein Selbstbewusstsein für ein Selbstbewusstsein*. This is the way in which Hegel begins one of the most famous sections of the *Phenomenology of Spirit*, "Lordship and Bondage" (*Herrschaft und Knechtschaft*). Only when self-consciousness reaches that stage when it is fully recognized, acknowledged, and reflected in another self-consciousness will it complete its journey, attain satisfaction and fulfillment by being actually free and self-determined. At the terminus of this journey all forms of objectification and alienation are *aufgehoben*. The language here is distinctively Hegelian, but the insight reflects back to Kant's concept of a kingdom of ends (where we treat others not as means but as ends-in-themselves). It also foreshadows Marx's vision of a humanized society where our labor is a "free manifestation of life and an enjoyment of life," where "our productions would be so many mirrors reflecting our nature," and where I not only "would have objectified my *individuality* and its *particularity*, but be affirmed in the thought and love of my fellowmen."²⁴

The stage of a fully developed and free self-consciousness that is recognized and reflected in another self-consciousness is the end of the story of *Geist's* journey. In "Lordship and Bondage" Hegel provides a phenomenological description of the first stage of the encounter between self-consciousnesses where the lord or master attempts to realize himself and gain recognition by dominating the bondsman or slave. The essential drive of *Geist* in any of its forms is to infinitize itself, to prove to itself that it is truly infinite and self-sufficient. In the form of Lordship it seeks to show that "it is fettered to no deter-

22. *Reason in History*, p. 89; Hegel, *Werke*, Bd. IX, p. 91.

23. The first section of "Self-Consciousness" (*Selbstbewusstsein*) deals with "The Truth of Self-Certainty." For a discussion of this section, see Part II, pp. 85-86.

24. *Young Marx*, p. 281; Karl Marx/Friedrich Engels, *Historisch-kritische Gesamtausgabe*, ed. by D. Rjazanov and V. Adoratskij, I.3, p. 546. Hereafter referred to as *MEGA*.

minate existence" (*Phen.*, p. 232; p. 144). Self-consciousness must test and prove itself. The existence of an "other" (another self-consciousness) is initially a threat, a limitation upon the self-sufficiency of the lord. "The relation of both self-consciousnesses is in this way so constituted that they prove themselves and each other through a life-and-death struggle" (*Phen.*, p. 232; p. 144). Hegel emphasizes that "it is solely by risking life that freedom is obtained" (*Phen.*, p. 233; p. 144). But if one self-consciousness succeeds in literally destroying his opponent, he does not succeed in his project. He does not succeed in gaining the recognition that he demands to assert himself as a fully developed free self-consciousness. Death becomes an "abstract negation, not the negation characteristic of consciousness, which cancels in such a way that it preserves and maintains what is sublated, and thereby survives its being sublated" (*Phen.*, p. 234; p. 145). This latter form of negation is one of dominance or subjugation. The one self-consciousness is "independent, and its essential nature is to be for itself; the other is dependent, and its essence is life or existence for another. The former is the Master, or Lord, the latter the Bondsman" (*Phen.*, p. 234; p. 146). To be a lord or master requires a bondsman or slave. The slave produces or works for the master; the slave's essential nature is expressed in the things he produces for the master. His essence takes the form of "thinghood." The master's relation to the slave is not only mediated by the things that the slave produces for the master, the slave's life is dependent on the whims of the master. The master is the power dominating the slave and he keeps the slave in thrall by consuming the objects that the slave produces. "In these two moments, the master gets his recognition through another consciousness, for in them the latter affirms itself as unessential, both by working upon the thing, and, on the other hand, by the fact of being dependent on a determinate existence" (*Phen.*, p. 236; p. 147). It would seem that the master does achieve his project of affirming himself and negating any limitations, by making the slave subservient and dependent upon him. But ironically (and here we find a typical Hegelian dialectical turn) the more the master succeeds, the more he fails. "Just where the master has effectively achieved lordship, he really finds that something has come about quite different from an independent consciousness. It is not an independent, but rather a dependent consciousness that

he has achieved" (*Phen.*, pp. 236-237; p. 147). In his desperate attempt to become an independent self-consciousness, a true master, he has actually enslaved himself, made himself dependent on the slave for his own existence *qua* master. It is by virtue of the slave, who was initially taken to be unessential, that the master has achieved lordship. The slave then is not really unessential, he is the essential reality of the master, i.e., he is the essential condition by which the master can be what he is. This is the dialectical movement by which the master's project ends in failure, a failure that results from the process of trying to achieve fully developed lordship. But let us see what happens from the perspective of the bondsman or slave.

As a self-consciousness, the slave initially takes the master to be his (the slave's) essential reality. For the slave is what he is by virtue of the master. The slave lives in fear of his own being, he feels "the fear of death, the sovereign master" (*Phen.*, p. 237; p. 148). Furthermore, the slave's essential nature is realized in his labor, the work he does to satisfy the master. He sees his own essential consciousness expressed in the objects that he produces, in the products of his labor. He himself is "nothing," his sole function is to produce. By his labor, the slave shapes and fashions objects and thereby externalizes himself. "The consciousness that toils and serves accordingly attains by this means the direct apprehension of that independent being as its self" (*Phen.*, p. 238; p. 149). But at the very moment that the slave is most closely reduced to nothingness, where he empties himself in the form of objects that he labors on and produces for the master, he becomes aware of the fact that he has a "mind of his own"—that he is not simply a thing, that his essential nature is not exhausted in the things that he produces. Only when the slave is shaken by absolute fear, only when his consciousness has been "tottered and shaken" (*Phen.*, p. 240; p. 150) does the slave realize that he is not simply an instrument of the master, but is a consciousness in his own right. "In the master, the bondsman feels self-existence to be something external, an objective fact; in fear self-existence is present within himself; in fashioning the thing, self-existence comes to be felt explicitly as his own proper being, and he attains the consciousness that he himself exists in its own right and on its own account (*an und für sich*)" (*Phen.*, p. 239; p. 149). This is the beginning of the slave's own freedom. At first it

is only an abstract freedom which does not issue in any specific concrete action; it is only the realization that he too is an independent self-consciousness, but this abstract freedom is the seed out of which concrete freedom will emerge. Ironically (or dialectically) it is precisely out of and because of his labor which initially was labor for another (the master) that the slave comes to the realization of his own self-existence and freedom. "Thus precisely in labor where there seemed to be merely some outsider's mind and ideas involved, the bondsman becomes aware, through this re-discovery of himself by himself, of having and being a 'mind of his own'" (*Phen.*, p. 239; p. 149).

We have presented Hegel's analysis of the dialectic of lordship and bondage for a variety of reasons. It is a paradigm of what Hegel means by dialectic and it shows what Hegel means by *Geist* realizing itself through its own "negation." This particular dialectical movement is one of the most suggestive and richest in Hegel. In the literature of the twentieth century, there has been a deep fascination with variations on the dialectic of master and slave. We find this theme reverberating in the writings of Marx, Nietzsche, Freud and Sartre in their own attempts to account for the conflicts and paradoxes of the individual psyche and our relations with our fellowmen. There are commentators on Hegel such as Kojève (whose reading of Hegel has exerted an enormous influence on contemporary French philosophers) who see in this dialectical movement the quintessence of Hegel's thought.²⁵ We must be careful, however, not to read this passage from an exclusively social point of view, for the *Phenomenology* is a study of the stages of the development of *Geist*, and "Lordship and Bondage" is only one brief moment in the realization of *Geist*. As the subsequent sections in the *Phenomenology* ("Stoicism," "Skepticism," and "Unhappy Consciousness") show, the dialectic of master and slave is not exclusively a dialectic that takes place between different individual self-consciousnesses or even between classes of men; it repeats itself within a single "Unhappy Consciousness."²⁶

25. See Alexandre Kojève, *Introduction à la lecture de Hegel*, ed. by Raymond Queneau. Excerpts of this book have appeared in an English translation: *Introduction to the Reading of Hegel*, ed. by Allan Bloom.

26. Cf. George Armstrong Kelley's discussion, "Notes on Hegel's 'Lordship and Bondage,'" *The Review of Metaphysics* 19 (June 1966).

Before leaving our preliminary analysis of what Hegel means by *Geist*, we need to explore one more aspect of the nature of *Geist*. This is the issue of Hegel's "idealism," for it has significant consequences for understanding Hegel and for understanding Marx's "materialism." Almost everyone agrees that Hegel is an idealist; *prima facie*, labeling Hegel as an "idealist" appears to be perfectly sound. *Geist* is spirit and is the all-inclusive and all-encompassing reality. The upshot of the *Phenomenology* is to show us that when we think we are encountering something other than consciousness, it turns out that this "other" is really an alienated form of consciousness. Isn't it clear that Hegel is forcefully asserting his idealism when he declares "The spiritual alone is the actual; it is [i] the essence or being-in-itself; [ii] that which relates itself and is determinate, that which is other and for itself; and [iii] that which in this determinateness and being outside itself remains in itself—or, in other words, it is in and for itself?"²⁷ We find the same type of point made in the *Logic* when Hegel introduces the stage of "Being-for-self" (*Fürsichsein*); for he announces that "In Being-for-self enters the category of Ideality."²⁸

Yet despite all this, I want to maintain that it can be extraordinarily misleading to think of Hegel as an idealist.

The classificatory term "idealism" is normally contrasted with "materialism" or "realism." These contrast terms, which have become fashionable in modern philosophy, can best be understood against the background of Cartesian dualism. If one excludes the status of God (who is really the only fully independent substance), Descartes claims that reality consists of two types: thinking substance and extended substance. Mind is thinking substance while body or matter is extended substance. Much of modern philosophy since Descartes has presupposed this dualistic framework. Even philosophers who have denied the ontological reality of one of these types of substance and have argued that everything is *really* mental or everything is *really* material, have basically accepted the dichotomy formulated by Descartes. This ontological contrast generates the idealist/materialist dichotomy. But if we think of idealism in this manner—as the contrast to materialism—then Hegel is certainly *not* an idealist. The whole thrust of his philosophy is toward

27. *Hegel: Reinterpretation*, p. 396; *Phänomenologie des Geistes*, p. 24.

28. Hegel's *Logic*, p. 178; Hegel, *Werke*, Bd. VI, p. 188.

the concrete, toward showing that what may appear to be "other" than *Geist* is really spiritual in its true nature. Thus, for example, when Hegel deals with history, he does not view it as a march of bloodless mental abstractions. "The actions of men spring from their needs, their passions, their interests, their characters, and their talents."²⁹ History is the drama of the playing out of men's most deeply felt passions. Hegel insists upon the *prima facie* "irrationality" of history more vehemently than any classical materialist. His claim, however, is that men's passions are not something other than *Geist*, they "constitute the tools and means of the World Spirit for attaining its purpose, bringing it to consciousness, and realizing it."³⁰ So too when we try to comprehend the nature and realization of freedom in the political sphere, we cannot limit ourselves to "abstract" Reason; for the "material" of *Geist* consists of the actual human political institutions that do and have existed. In every sphere of Hegel's thought, the drive is to reach down to the inner recesses of what is taken to be recalcitrant facticity; not to deny its ontological status, but to show how *Geist* operates in and through it. Even this use of the terminology of agency in characterizing the role of *Geist* can be misleading insofar as it suggests a picture of the matter of the world or history as inherently passive, waiting upon the bidding of *Geist*. *Geist* literally *informs* the matter of the world. What Hegel seeks to achieve is an *Aufhebung* of the dichotomy of ideality and materiality. If we are to discover the working of *Geist*, we must understand its concrete working in the "material" of the world.

This same point—the attempt to achieve an *Aufhebung* of the materialist/idealist dichotomy—can be seen in Hegel's *Logic*, especially the second part dealing with Essence (*Wesen*). Hegel examines the major metaphysical dichotomies which have been fundamental to Western philosophy, including Identity (*Identität*) and Difference (*Unterschied*); Ground (*Grund*) and Existence (*Existenz*); Matter (*Materie*) and Form (*Form*); Content (*Inhalt*) and Form (*Form*). He seeks to show us that if we isolate one of these contrasting concepts from its "other" the result is an unstable contradiction. Ultimately these concepts do not isolate ontological dualities or dichotomies; they are moments in a single unified totality (*Totalität*). Thus the attempt to isolate "pure" materiality or "pure" ideality

29. *Reason in History*, p. 26; Hegel, *Werke*, Bd. IX, p. 26.

30. *Reason in History*, p. 31; Hegel, *Werke*, Bd. IX, p. 32.

results in an empty abstraction. Each demands the "other" to complete itself, to fulfill or to realize what it is in itself. The general point is nicely illustrated in one of the informal additions (*Zusätze*) to the *Logic*.

The various matters of which the thing consists are potentially the same as one another. Thus we get one Matter in general to which the difference is expressly attached externally and as a bare form. This theory which holds things all round to have one and the same matter at bottom, and merely to differ externally in respect of form, is much in vogue with the reflective understanding. Matter in that case counts for naturally indeterminate, but susceptible of any determination; while at the same time it is perfectly permanent, and continues the same amid all change and alteration. And in finite things at least this disregard of matter for any determinate form is certainly exhibited. For example, it matters not to a block of marble, whether it receive the form of this or that statue or even the form of a pillar. Be it noted however that a block of marble can disregard form only relatively, that is, in reference to the sculptor: it is by no means purely formless. And so the mineralogist considers the relatively formless marble as a special formation of rock, differing from other equally special formations, such as sandstone or porphyry. Therefore we say it is an abstraction of the understanding which isolates matter into a certain natural formlessness. For properly speaking the thought of matter includes the principle of form throughout, and no formless matter therefore appears anywhere even in experience as existing.³¹

Rather than simply classifying Hegel as an idealist and thereby grouping him with other philosophers who want to deny that the world has a material substratum, it is more perspicuous to see that he is radically challenging the very framework within which the idealist/materialist dichotomy arises. 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. I 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 I do want to insist that to think of Hegel as a traditional idealist is drastically to misconceive his position. When we examine Marx's thought, we shall see—despite his frequent polemics

31. Hegel's *Logic*, p. 236; Hegel, *Werke*, Bd. VI, pp. 257-258.

about the idealism of Hegel and philosophy—that his materialism makes sense only against the background of the transformation of the idealist/materialist dichotomy effected by Hegel.

The misleading character of the idealist/materialist dichotomy bears on two other dichotomies that have been fundamental to modern philosophy and which can get in the way of understanding Hegel's philosophy. These are the dichotomies of reason and passion or affection; and theory and practice. Our modern consciousness has been shaped by a sharp contrast between reason and the passions. Once again we are reminded of Hume's neat dichotomy. But even in Kant, who is sharply critical of Hume's conception of reason, we find a variation on this dichotomy in the distinction between pure reason and the desires or inclinations of men. We have already noted that Hegel's conception of *Geist* as Reason is close in spirit to Aristotle's universal *Noûs*. Hegel would also agree with the merging of *eros* and *logos* that Plato so beautifully illustrates in the *Phaedrus*. Hegel is challenging the modern dichotomy between reason and passion. Reason without passion is empty and passion without reason is blind. Hegel seeks an *Aufhebung* of the modern dichotomy of reason and passion, and to restore what he takes to be the truth inherent in the classical Greek view of an ultimate organic unity and harmony of the rational and affective dimensions of human life. Once again, to think of *Geist* as a universal Reason which is distinct from the phenomenal world of men's passions, affections, and inclinations would result in an abstract and "false" understanding of *Geist*.

We find this same drive for an *Aufhebung* of all dichotomies which modern philosophy has taken as fundamental in Hegel's reflections on theory and practice. From one perspective, Hegel is squarely in the classical tradition that conceives of philosophy as the highest form of *theoria* which has the *telos* of interpreting, understanding, comprehending reality.

To comprehend what is, this is the task of philosophy, because what is, is reason. Whatever happens, every individual is a child of his time; so philosophy too is its own time apprehended in thoughts. It is just as absurd to fancy that a philosophy can transcend its contemporary world as it is to fancy that an individual can overleap his own age, jump over Rhodes. If his theory really goes beyond the world as it is and builds an ideal one as it ought to be, that world exists indeed, but only in his

opinions, an unsubstantial element where anything you please may, in fancy, be built.

One more word about giving instruction as to what the world ought to be. Philosophy in any case always comes on the scene too late to give it. As the thought of the world, it appears only when actuality is already there cut and dried after its process of formation has been completed. The teaching of the concept [*Begriff*], which is also history's inescapable lesson, is that it is only when actuality is mature that the ideal first appears over against the real and that the ideal apprehends this same real world in its substance and builds it up for itself into the shape of an intellectual realm. When philosophy paints its grey in grey, then has a shape of life grown old. By philosophy's grey in grey it cannot be rejuvenated but only understood. The owl of Minerva spreads its wings only with the falling of dusk.³²

This passage from the preface of *The Philosophy of Right* is fascinating. It indicates that Hegel was fully aware of the limitations of philosophy, including his own. And it contains a crucial ambiguity. If it is true—as Hegel sometimes writes—that history is reaching its fulfillment, then philosophy too, as the world "apprehended in thoughts" is also reaching its fulfillment. The end of history as the fulfillment of the *telos* implicit in history also signals the completion of philosophy. But to the extent that one argues that history and culture have not yet reached fulfillment, then the task of philosophy still remains to be accomplished.³³

The above passage also throws into sharp relief Marx's claim that the philosophers have only interpreted the world in various ways. This is not intended (as it is frequently read) as a blanket condemnation of philosophy; it is a characterization of what philosophy is. Ironically, Marx is in perfect agreement with Hegel's own characterization of philosophy. Marx adds a "but" that signals his departure from Hegel. It is as if Marx were saying to Hegel, "Yes, you are right, the *task* of philosophy is to interpret the world, but

32. *Hegel's Philosophy of Right*, trans. with notes by T. M. Knox, pp. 11-13; *Grundlinien der Philosophie des Rechts*, pp. 16-17.

33. For an exploration of the ambiguity of Hegel's conception of time and eternity and its significance for an understanding of the nature of philosophy, see Nathan Rotenstreich, "The Essential and the Epochal Aspects of Philosophy," *The Review of Metaphysics* 23 (June 1970); Alexandre Kojève's discussion of time and eternity in his *Introduction to the Reading of Hegel*.

with your System, that task is now completed and we can now understand philosophy for what it really is and pass beyond or overcome philosophy. Now the point is to change the world. What is needed is an *Aufhebung* of philosophy.”

How does the above passage, which seems to signal the impotence of philosophy—the highest form of *theoria*—bear on the issue of practice? Philosophy does not and cannot guide practice. Philosophy’s sole task is to comprehend the actual; it is the actual “apprehended in thoughts.” But what is the actual? Our discussion of *Geist* provides the answer, for actuality is *Geist* actively realizing itself in the world. The actual is not a static reality, but the process of activity itself manifested in a variety of forms. *Geist* as activity itself is *praxis*. *Theoria*, in its purest form, as philosophy, is nothing but the articulation of the rationality ingredient in *praxis*. There is then an ultimate harmony of theory and practice—*theoria* and *praxis*—not in the sense that philosophy guides action, but rather in the sense that philosophy is the comprehension of what is; it is the comprehension of the *logos* ingredient in *praxis*, i.e., *praxis* as the self-activity of *Geist*. There is an ultimate unity of theory and practice, a unity that becomes intelligible when we understand that *Geist* is at once *praxis*, and in its self-reflective form, *theoria*. And we shall see that Marx accepts this unity of *theoria* and *praxis* and dialectically transforms it—in Marx, Hegel’s unity of *theoria* and *praxis* is *aufgehoben*.

The Hegelian Origins of Praxis

We know that Marx’s early encounter with Hegel’s philosophy was traumatic. His discovery of Hegel during his student days at the University of Berlin bears many of the marks of a “religious conversion.” Isaiah Berlin eloquently describes this period in Marx’s life.

Hegelianism at first repelled his naturally positivist intelligence. In a long and intimate letter to his father he described his efforts to construct a rival system; after sleepless nights and disordered days spent wrestling with the adversary, he fell ill and left Berlin to recuperate. He returned with a sense of failure and frustration, equally unable to work or to rest. His father wrote him a long paternal letter, begging him not to waste his

time on barren metaphysical speculation when he had his career to think of. His words fell on deaf ears. Marx resolutely plunged into an exhaustive study of Hegel’s work, read night and day, and after three weeks announced his complete conversion. He sealed it by becoming a member of the *Doctorklub* (Graduates’ Club), an association of free-thinking university intellectuals, who met in beer cellars, wrote mildly seditious verse, professed violent hatred of the King, the church, the bourgeoisie and above all argued endlessly on points of Hegelian theology.³⁴

To speak of Marx’s “conversion” can be an overstatement, for Marx was never a slavish disciple of Hegelianism. From his first encounter he struggled with a critique of Hegel; he felt deeply that there was something essentially right and something desperately wrong with Hegelianism. In the course of the next few years he returned over and over again to articulate for himself what was of lasting value in Hegelianism and what had to be rejected as mystification. In rapid succession, he absorbed, utilized, and rejected tools of critique that he picked up from the other young Left Hegelians.³⁵ Marx’s scribbles on Hegel, especially during 1843-1844, reveal his Talmudic temperament. He would copy down texts from Hegel and then proceed to write laborious involuted commentaries on them. Most of this material was never published during Marx’s lifetime; they were exercises for sharpening, testing, and formulating his own ideas. But the posthumous publication of these documents reveal the intensity of his struggle with Hegel. Marx began with a critique of Hegel’s political philosophy, but soon he also took up the *Phenomenology* and Hegel’s *Logic*. An early remark about Feuerbach, who Marx thought was the first to show the way to a thorough critique of Hegel, reveals the direction of Marx’s own thought. In a letter to Ruge dated March, 1843, Marx writes the following comment about Feuerbach’s provocative *Thesen*: “The only point that I do not like about

34. Isaiah Berlin, *Karl Marx: His Life and Environment*, pp. 67-68. For a description of Marx’s early life, see David McLellan, *Marx Before Marxism*; Auguste Cornu, *Karl Marx. Sa vie et son oeuvre* and *Karl Marx et Friedrich Engels: leur vie et oeuvre*; Maximilien Rubel, *Karl Marx: essai de biographie intellectuelle*.

35. David McLellan’s recent study, *The Young Hegelians and Karl Marx*, presents a good synopsis of the thought of the various young Hegelians. This study clearly shows how much Marx borrowed (and ultimately rejected) from his contemporaries. See also Sidney Hook, *From Hegel to Marx*, second edition, and William J. Brazill, *The Young Hegelians*.

Feuerbach's aphorisms is that he talks too much about nature and too little about politics. The latter is the only means by which present philosophy can become a reality."³⁶ This remark is especially revealing because in Marx's first detailed systematic critique of Hegel, it is Hegel's political philosophy that was subjected to devastating criticism. Until recently, Marx's *Critique of Hegel's Philosophy of Right*, which is a commentary on paragraphs 261-313 of Hegel's *Rechtsphilosophie*, has been generally ignored and overshadowed by the more famous 1844 *Paris Manuscripts*. But Shlomo Avineri has brilliantly demonstrated that a careful reading of this document shows the emergence of many of Marx's distinctive themes before Marx seriously studied political economy.³⁷ For example, in Marx's criticism of Hegel's analysis of bureaucracy as the universal class, Marx argues that it is a fraud to think that the bureaucracy has truly universal interests. Bureaucracy identifies the interest of the state with its own private goals. But Marx doesn't reject the idea of a "universal class," he "historicizes the term, and as a dynamic term it looms very large in the evolution of his thought towards the proletariat."³⁸ As Avineri points out, when Marx mentions the proletariat for the first time in "Toward The Critique of Hegel's Philosophy of Law: Introduction" (1843), Marx's description is dominated by universalistic attributes:

A class must be formed which has radical chains, a class in civil society which is not a class of civil society, a class which is the dissolution of all

36. Quoted in McLellan, *The Young Hegelians*, p. 113; *MEGA*, I.1.2, p. 308.

37. Shlomo Avineri, *The Social and Political Thought of Karl Marx*. This is now one of the best books in English dealing with Marx's social and political thought. I am not only indebted to Avineri for his demonstration of the importance of Marx's *Critique of Hegel's Philosophy of Right*, but for many other points discussed in this part. See also his "The Hegelian Origins of Marx's Political Thought," *The Review of Metaphysics* 21 (September 1967). For further discussions of the *Critique of Hegel's Philosophy of Right*, see Louis Dupré, *The Philosophical Foundations of Marxism*; Henri Lefebvre, *The Sociology of Marx*; Jean Hyppolite, "Marx's Critique of the Hegelian Concept of the State," *Studies on Marx and Hegel*; J. Barion, *Hegel und die marxistische Staatslehre*. Sections of the *Critique* have been translated in *Writings of the Young Marx on Philosophy and Society*, ed. by L. Easton and K. Guddat. The entire manuscript has been translated by Joseph O'Malley. This translation, which has been published by Cambridge University Press, was unavailable at the time of writing this book.

38. "The Hegelian Origins of Marx's Political Thought," loc. cit., p. 39.

classes, a sphere of society which has a *universal* character because its sufferings are *universal*, and which does not claim a particular redress because the wrong which is done to it is not a particular wrong but wrong in *general*. There must be formed a sphere of society which claims no traditional status but only a *human* status, a sphere which is not opposed to particular consequences but is *totally* opposed to the assumptions of the German political system; a sphere, finally, which cannot emancipate itself without emancipating itself from *all* other spheres of society, without, therefore, emancipating *all* these other spheres; a class which is, in short, a *total* loss of humanity and which can only redeem itself by a *total* redemption of humanity. This dissolution of society, as a particular class, is the *proletariat*. . . .³⁹

So too, Avineri shows us how in an obscure section of the *Critique of Hegel's Philosophy of Right* we can detect the origins of Marx's conception of private property. By dialectically twisting Hegel's defense of the right of primogeniture, Marx sketches for us what was to become a major thesis for him, that under a system of private property, it is an illusion to think that man is truly a master of his property. Man is himself made into an object of property and his own products master and enslave him.⁴⁰ One by one, Marx subjects Hegel's claims in the *Philosophy of Right* to the same sort of dialectical critique.

Marx's procedure in this unpublished manuscript may strike a contemporary reader as perverse. Why dedicate all this energy to the critique of another philosopher's work in order to arrive at a correct analysis of existing political institutions. To understand what Marx is doing, we need to realize how seriously Marx takes Hegel's pro-

39. Quoted in "The Hegelian Origins of Marx's Political Thought," p. 41; *Frühe Schriften*, I, p. 503. McLellan has recently suggested that Marx's understanding of the proletariat at this time is "empirically based" and that "Marx's proclamation of the key role of the proletariat is a contemporary application of the analysis of the French Revolution he had outlined earlier in his article, when he talked of a particular social sphere having to 'stand for the notorious crime of society as a whole so that emancipation from this sphere appears as general self-emancipation.'" (David McLellan, *Marx Before Marxism*, pp. 156 ff.) I do not think that this lessens the significance of the Hegelian origins of Marx's thought. The issue is not primarily whether Marx had empirical evidence for his concept of the proletariat but rather how he *interpreted* this evidence. The above passage makes clear that at this early stage of his career, Marx's understanding of the proletariat is shaped by Hegelian categories.

40. "The Hegelian Origins of Marx's Political Thought," pp. 42 ff.

ject. The *Philosophy of Right* cannot be viewed as an afterthought or an appendix to Hegel's system. If one takes the Hegelian impulse toward concreteness with full earnestness, then the crucial test of the system is its ability to explain and comprehend existing political institutions. This is a demand entailed by Hegel's most central convictions about what philosophy is. Marx doesn't reject the claim that a correct theoretical understanding can and ought to explain what is. But the cumulative result of his critique of Hegel is that Hegel has failed—completely and in detail—to comprehend the nature and meaning of existing political institutions; Hegel glosses over real and fundamental contradictions in these institutions. Marx is, in effect, applying Hegel's own criterion to the evaluation of Hegel's political philosophy. Hegel would be the first to insist that if one discovers unresolved conflicts and contradictions, this is a sure sign that one has not yet arrived at a true rational account of what is. Marx's attack in the *Critique of the Philosophy of Right* is an immanent dialectical critique of the master himself; it could only be performed by one who identified himself with the Hegelian project of rational comprehension.

The method that Marx uses in his manuscript is one that he took over from Feuerbach—the transformative method. According to Feuerbach, Hegelian philosophy is a "mystification" because it inverts the subject-predicate relation. "It is important that Hegel always converts the Idea into the subject and the particular actual subject, such as 'political sentiment,' into the predicate" (*Y.M.*, p. 159; *I*, p. 266).⁴¹ *Geist* or *Reason* is not a subject; it is not a source of agency. It is a predicate, the result of real, active, subjects. But Hegel, so Marx claims, has mistaken these real subjects as mere consequences, effects, or predicates of *Geist*. Over and over again, Marx attempts to show how Hegel's detailed analyses are guilty of this reversal and this mystification. The transformative method may at first seem like a logical gimmick, and it is too simple to say that either Feuerbach or Marx "merely" reverses the roles of subject and predicate in Hegel. But one should not underestimate the powerful overtones of this transformation. What Feuerbach noted—and what Marx took over from Feuerbach—was that the

41. Page references to passages cited from the *Young Marx* (*Y.M.*) are given in the text followed by the reference to the German source in *Frühe Schriften*, I.

grand dialectic of *Geist* is basically a myth. Like powerful myths it contains a latent truth, one which needs to be uncovered. The story of the development of *Geist* with all its divine attributes which ends in the realization of freedom is nothing but the story of the development of man with his ideal human attributes. And the successive forms of the self-alienation of *Geist* turn out to be nothing but the forms of *human* alienation. In the 1844 *Paris Manuscripts*, Marx writes:

Feuerbach is the only one who has a *serious, critical* relation to Hegel's dialectic, who has made genuine discoveries in this field, and who above all is the true conqueror of the old philosophy. The magnitude of Feuerbach's achievement and the unpretentious simplicity with which he presents it to the world stand in strikingly opposite inverse ratio.

Feuerbach's great achievement is: (1) proof that philosophy is nothing more than religion brought to and developed in reflection, and thus is equally to be condemned as another form and mode of the alienation of man's nature;

(2) the establishment of *true materialism* and *real science* by making the social relationship of "man to man" the fundamental principle of his theory;

(3) opposing to the negation of the negation, which claims to be the absolute positive, the self-subsistent positive positively grounded on itself (*Y.M.*, pp. 316-317; *I*, p. 639).

Once Marx made this breakthrough in understanding and "conquering" Hegel, his eyes were open to a new reading of the *Phenomenology*—a reading that brings us close to the role that *praxis* was to serve for Marx.

The *Phenomenology* is thus concealed and mystifying criticism, unclear to itself, but inasmuch as it firmly grasps the *alienation* of man—even though man appears only as mind—all the elements of criticism are implicit in it, already *prepared* and *elaborated* in a manner far surpassing the Hegelian standpoint.

The great thing in Hegel's *Phenomenology* and its final result—the dialectic of negativity as the moving and productive principle—is simply that Hegel grasps the self-development of man as a process, objectification as loss of the object, as alienation and transcendence of this alienation; that he thus grasps the nature of *work* and comprehends objective man, authentic because actual, as the result of his *own work*. The *actual*, active relation of man to himself as a species-being or the confirmation

of his species-being as an actual, that is, human, being is only possible so far as he actually brings forth all his *species-powers*—which in turn is only possible through the collective effort of mankind, only as the result of history—and treats them as objects, something which immediately is again only possible in the form of alienation (*Y.M.*, pp. 320-321; *I*, pp. 644-645).

This passage, written under the dominating influence of Feuerbach, especially in its reliance on the concept of "species-being," pre-figures Marx's own analysis of *praxis* and shows the direction he was taking in his dialectical critique of Hegel. Marx's "depth" reading of Hegel shows that the *Phenomenology* is not properly a phenomenology of *Geist*, but of *man*. The point here is the way in which Marx transforms the meaning of the activity of *Geist*, of its self-realization in history. This is in reality a concealed way of describing and criticizing the "development of man as a process." "Process" is not a general vague term: it refers to human activity in the form of work. Just as the objectifications of *Geist* are to be properly understood, according to Hegel, as the ways in which *Geist* congeals itself, objectifies itself and thereby alienates itself, so too the products that a man produces are not just accidental by-products; they are the objectification, the concrete expression of what he is. And under prevailing conditions of political economy, it is the very process of objectification, production, that results in human alienation. Human alienation is the true latent content of Hegel's myth of *Geist*. Nevertheless human alienation finds its expression in the actual social and political institutions that encompass man. There exist practical contradictions in the world; contradictions which have the consequence of dehumanizing man and of separating him from his true species-being. And just as in Hegel there is an incessant drive to overcome (*aufheben*) all contradictions, so too Marx sees the demand for an *Aufhebung* of the practical contradictions that really exist. It is only a short step to the demand for "revolutionary *praxis*" as the way of overcoming the forms of human alienation which have existed until now and of achieving a humanistic society in which man reappropriates his own essence, his own species-life:

If Marx's dialectical critique of Hegelianism had stopped here, he might have had the same status and significance that the other Left Hegelians have for us today. Much of what we have thus far attrib-

uted to Marx was said by other young Hegelians and intellectuals of the day. We have already noted that Marx was not the first to emphasize *praxis*. But where others were content to stop, Marx relentlessly dug deeper. "To be radical," Marx declared, "is to grasp things by the root" (*Y.M.*, p. 257; *I*, p. 497). By 1845, Marx was already far beyond most of his contemporaries. The intellectual journey that began with the critique of Hegel culminated in a critique of political economy. Along with his contemporaries, Marx engaged in the critique of philosophy, the critique of the state and the law, and the critique of religion. But the criticism of religion results in the demand for unmasking "human self-alienation in its *unholy forms* . . ." (*Y.M.*, p. 251; *I*, p. 489). "Religious suffering is the expression of real suffering and at the same time the *protest* against real suffering" (*Y.M.*, p. 250; *I*, p. 488). "The criticism of religion ends with the doctrine that *man is the highest being for man*, hence with the *categorical imperative to overthrow all conditions* in which man is a degraded, enslaved, neglected, contemptible being . . ." (*Y.M.*, p. 257-258; *I*, p. 497). There is a direct dialectical continuity from the critique of Hegel to the critique of political economy to (as we shall see) the diagnostic analysis of the contradictions inherent in capitalism.⁴²

42. It should be clear from what I have said already that I share the view of those interpreters of Marx who emphasize the dialectical continuity of his development. By this I mean that Marx was engaged in a continuous process of self-criticism in which he sought to extract the "truth" implicit in his earlier hypotheses, reject what he took to be vague, inadequate, and misleading, and pass beyond to new insights and hypotheses. This is a characteristic that pervades Marx's thinking from his earliest gropings to the latest fragments. Reading Marx in this way demands that we be sensitive to what is absorbed and refined as well as what is rejected in the course of his intellectual development. To demonstrate that this is a correct reading of Marx would require a detailed and exhaustive study of his intellectual development which neither exaggerates nor denigrates any stage of that development. The reader, at least, may be alerted that I reject those interpretations of Marx which claim to find sharp and radical breaks in his development where some early phase of development is *totally* rejected as false. The most sophisticated recent reading of Marx which emphasizes the sharp breaks in his thought is Louis Althusser, *For Marx*. For a critical discussion of Althusser, see Gajo Petrović, "The Development and Essence of Marx's Thought," *Praxis* 3/4 (1968).

Praxis as human activity and human alienation

We have already detected in Marx's comment on the *Phenomenology* the seeds of Marx's concept of *praxis*. This provides us with a background for understanding Marx's first thesis on Feuerbach.

The chief defect of all previous materialism (including Feuerbach's) is that the object, actuality, sensuousness is conceived only in the form of the *object or perception* [*Anschauung*], but not as *sensuous human activity, practice* [*Praxis*], not subjectively. Hence in opposition to materialism the *active* side was developed by idealism—but only abstractly since idealism naturally does not know actual, sensuous activity as such.⁴³

Marx develops the theme we have already encountered in his critique of Hegel's *Phenomenology*. Idealism (here Marx has in mind not only Hegel but Fichte) did emphasize the essential active dimension of human life. "Activity" here has the same overtones as the activity of *Geist* described by Hegel, where *Geist* produces, objectifies, and thereby alienates itself, only to be engaged in a powerful struggle to overcome the forms of alienation. Hegel mystified this essential truth by conceiving it primarily in terms of "thought objects"—or at least so Marx claims. The great contribution of materialism has been to locate properly this dimension of *Geist*, to see it for what it really is, "*sensuous human activity*." Nothing could be further from Marx's meaning than the classical mechanistic materialist doctrine that reality consists exclusively of basic discrete particles or atoms in motion—matter regulated by mechanical laws. The failure of classical materialism has been the failure to understand that the basic actuality is *active*, not passive. No end of confusion has resulted from the misconception that when Marx characterizes his own position as "materialism," he means some variety of mechanistic materialism.⁴⁴ Even in Marx's shrillest polemics against "idealism," the contrast he has in mind is not that of mechanism versus teleology. Marx's materialism is essentially teleological, not in the sense that teleology commits us to the fantastic notion that a final cause precedes in time an actual event and somehow directs it, but in the empirical sense of teleology where we want

43. *Young Marx*, p. 400; Marx/Engels *Werke*, Bd. 3, p. 5.

44. See Jürgen Habermas' discussion of Marx's "materialism," *Theorie und Praxis*, p. 269.

to distinguish goal-directed activity from the mechanical regularity of matter in motion. Even when Marx is most explicit about his materialism—in *Capital*—he characterizes human activity in the form of labor as directed by *purposes*.

We pre-suppose labor in a form that stamps it as exclusively human. A spider conducts operations that resemble those of a weaver, and a bee puts to shame many an architect in the construction of her cells. But 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 labor-process, we get a result that already existed in the imagination of the laborer 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. And this subordination is no mere momentary act. Besides the exertion of bodily organs, the process demands that, during the whole operation, the workman's will be steadily in consonance with his purpose.⁴⁵

From its origins in the 1840's through its later development, Marx's materialism is properly understood as a synthesis of both traditional materialism and idealism. Earlier we indicated that Hegel stresses that *Geist* is manifested in its material forms of life and our access to *Geist* is through these concrete manifestations. Hegel did not intend to give a materialistic emphasis to these claims. But this is the very aspect of Hegel's philosophy that Marx is stressing. Marx's materialism can best be understood as an *Aufhebung*—in precisely the sense in which Hegel used this concept—of previous materialistic and idealistic doctrines; he at *once* negates, affirms, and goes beyond these polar "moments."

One extremely important consequence of this "synthesis" which is already suggested by the first thesis on Feuerbach is Marx's relocation or reinterpretation of "consciousness." "Consciousness" is not something other than "sensuous human activity" or *praxis*. It is to be understood as an aspect or moment of *praxis* itself. Furthermore the forms that "consciousness" takes in society are to be understood within the context of the forms of social *praxis*.

There is another aspect of Marx's conception of human activity

45. Karl Marx, *Capital*, ed. by Friedrich Engels and trans. by Samuel Moore and Edward Aveling, Three volumes, I, p. 178; Marx/Engels *Werke*, Bd. 23, p. 193.

or *praxis* that needs to be recognized from the outset. From the perspective of common sense categories, it may seem that talk of *Geist* objectifying itself, or human activity objectifying itself is, at best, "merely" metaphorical. If we accept a view of the world—which is fashionable among some contemporary analytic philosophers—that the basic entities in the world are persons and things, we are inclined to think of a person working on a thing, shaping it, or using it in some way. But we will say that the person and the thing that he shapes are distinct, they belong to different ontological categories. To think of a person and a thing under the same category would be the grossest sort of "category mistake."

But both Hegel and Marx are challenging this ontological division. The object or product produced is *not* something "merely" external to and indifferent to the nature of the producer. It is his activity in an objectified or congealed form. We have encountered this idea in Hegel's claim that *Geist* continually objectifies itself and we have seen a particular representation of this idea in the description of the bondsman whose essence is expressed in the form of "thinghood." Everything that is of fundamental importance in Marx's outlook depends on grasping this manner of viewing the relation of the objects that a man produces and his activity: it is essential for understanding what *praxis* means, the precise significance of human alienation, the concept of a "humanized nature," and even the labor theory of value that dominates *Capital*. Echoing the Hegelian claim that the self is what it does, Marx maintains that a man is what he does. Consequently the very nature or character of a man is determined by what he does or his *praxis*, and his products are concrete embodiments of this activity. In an alienated society, man is not only alienated from the products he shapes, but the very activity by which he produces these objects is itself alienated. Man is alienated from his fellow men as well as from himself. More perspicuously, all alienation can be understood as a form of self-alienation. Alienation does not result from the fact that man objectifies himself, produces objects—this is man's distinctive character. Alienation results when he produces in such a way (conditioned by the political economy in which he finds himself) that his products are at once an expression of his labor-power and at the same time are not a true expression of his potentialities—what Marx, following Feuerbach, called man's "species-being." His products become hostile to him; they negate

and dehumanize him. In short, to understand Marx, we must grasp the sense in which a product can both *be and not be* an expression of the producer (just as for Hegel, the slave *is* and *is not* his products). It *is* the producer in the sense that in it is a congealed form of his most distinctive attribute—activity. But in an alienated society, it *is not* he in the sense that the product assumes an independent, hostile dimension which dehumanizes the producer.

In order to clarify further what alienation means for Marx and to see where he departs from Hegel, it is necessary to discriminate between objectification (*Vergegenständlichung*) and alienation (*Entfremdung*). Objectifications for Hegel represent the finite stages in the development of *Geist* dirempting itself and overcoming these diremptions. All forms of objectification must be overcome, *aufgehoben*. "According to my view, which must justify itself by the presentation of the system, everything depends on this, that we comprehend and express the true not as substance but just as much as subject."⁴⁶ Even nature for Hegel is a congealed form of *Geist* and must be thoroughly subjectivized when *Geist* comes to full realization. But Marx sharply distinguishes objectification and alienation and accuses Hegel of confusing the two.⁴⁷ Objectification is the condition for human material existence. Dropping the Hegelian idiom, man simply cannot survive without producing, without working and using his products. Marx tells us in *The German Ideology*, "Man can be distinguished from the animal by consciousness, religion, or anything else you please. He begins to distinguish himself from the animal the moment he begins to *produce* his means of subsistence, a step required by his physical organization. By producing food, man indirectly produces his material life itself."⁴⁸ Marx makes essentially the same point in *Capital* in his characterization of "labor-power." "Labor-power exists only as a capacity, or

46. Hegel: *Reinterpretation*, p. 388; *Phänomenologie des Geistes*, p. 19.

47. The distinction between "objectification" (*Vergegenständlichung*) and "alienation" (*Entfremdung*) which represents a historical form of "objectification" is an extremely important distinction for Marx. This is the basis of his conviction that an alienated condition can be overcome by revolutionary *praxis*. But Marx's claim that Hegel failed to make such a distinction is very dubious, for Hegel never claims that all forms of objectification are forms of alienation. This is one more example of where Marx is interpreting (or misinterpreting) Hegel in order to make his own position clear.

48. *Young Marx*, p. 409; Marx/Engels *Werke*, Bd. 3, p. 21.

power of the living individual. Its production consequently presupposes his existence. Given the individual, the production of labor-power consists in his reproduction of himself or his maintenance. For his maintenance he requires a given quantity of the means of subsistence."⁴⁹ Furthermore, Marx ridicules the Hegelian notion that nature is objectified or congealed spirit. Nature is rather the source of the objects that man employs or consumes in order to satisfy his needs and desires. There is nothing about the *intrinsic* nature of production or objectification that results in alienation. But alienation is a *form* of objectification. Objectification becomes alienation only in a given historical social setting. When man exists in a social situation where the objects that he produces and the "system" in which these are exchanged is such that his products gain a mastery over him and dehumanize him, then *this* form of objectification is alienation. Alienation has no fundamental ontological status, it is a historical condition, and one of Marx's chief endeavors was to lay bare the structures of the historical social situations in which objectification becomes alienation.⁵⁰ Marx characterizes this process as it occurs in a capitalist society in the 1844 *Paris Manuscripts*.

49. *Capital*, I, p. 171; Marx/Engels *Werke*, Bd. 23, p. 185.

50. For a further discussion of the significance of the distinction between objectification (*Vergegenständlichung*) and alienation (*Entfremdung*) see Avineri, *The Social and Political Thought of Karl Marx*, pp. 97 ff.; Jean Hyppolite, *Studies on Marx and Hegel*, trans. by John O'Neill, pp. 70 ff.; Jean-Paul Sartre, *Search For a Method*, trans. by Hazel E. Barnes, pp. 150 ff.

One of the most explicit statements of the import of the distinction between "objectification" and "alienation" appears in the writings of the "mature" Marx. In the *Grundrisse*, he writes: "The stress is not on being objectified, but on being *alienated*, externalized, estranged: on the fact that the immense objective power *set up by social labor*, as one of its moments, *over against itself*, does not belong to the worker but to the personified conditions of production, i.e., to capital. Inasmuch as at the standpoint of capital and wage-labor the production of this objective body of activity unfolds in opposition to direct labor-power—this process of objectification appears in fact as a *process of alienation* from the standpoint of labor and as *appropriation of alien labor* from the standpoint of capital—this perversion and overturning is real, not imagined; it does not merely exist in the mind of the workers and capitalists. But obviously this process of overturning is only a historical necessity; it is a necessity for the development of the productive forces from a certain point of departure, or basis, but by no means an absolute necessity of production as such; rather it is a disappearing necessity, and the

The *increase in value* of the world of things is directly proportional to the *decrease in value* of the human world. . . . The object which labor produces, its product, stands opposed to it as an *alien thing*, as a *power independent* of the producer. The product of labor is labor embodied and made objective in a thing. It is the *objectification* of labor. The realization of labor is its objectification. In the viewpoint of political economy this realization of labor appears as the *diminution* of the worker, the objectification as the *loss of and subservience to the object*, and the appropriation as *alienation* [*Entfremdung*], as externalization [*Entäusserung*].⁵¹

But unlike many existentialists who have focused on this aspect of Hegel, Marx is perfectly clear that it is not objectification *per se* that results in alienation. The contrast to an alienated society is *not* one in which objectification no longer takes place—this is impossible. Rather, a radically different form of objectification takes place—one in which the objects that a man produces are no longer the chains for alienating him, but the means by which there is a free, social, and human expression of him in the very activity he performs and in the products that he produces. An unalienated society is one in which it is no longer the case that "the process of production has mastery over man"⁵² but the process is controlled by him to satisfy and give expression to his human needs and desires. Among Marx's unpublished notes written in 1844 there is an almost euphoric description of what such an unalienated society would be like.

result and end which is immanent in this process is the supersession of this basis and this particular form of objectification. Bourgeois economists are so tied to the representations of a determinate historical stage of social development that in their eyes the necessary objectification of labor's social powers is inseparable from the latter's necessary *alienation from living labor*. However, with the supersession of the direct character of living labor as merely individual—or as merely internally, or only externally universal—labor, with the constitution of the individual's activity as *directly universal, i.e., social activity*, the objective moments of production will be freed of this *form of alienation*; they will be constituted as property, as the *organic body of society* in which individuals reproduce themselves as individuals, but as *social individuals*." *Grundrisse der Kritik der politischen Ökonomie (Rohentwurf)*, p. 716. The above translation is given by I. Mészáros, *Marx's Theory of Alienation*, p. 329.

51. *Young Marx*, p. 289; *MEGA*, I.3, pp. 82-83.

52. *Capital*, I, p. 81; Marx/Engels *Werke*, Bd. 23, p. 95.

Suppose we had produced things as human beings: in his production each of us would have *twice affirmed* himself and the other. (1) In my *production* I would have objectified my *individuality* and its *particularity*, and in the course of the activity I would have enjoyed an *individual life*; in viewing the object I would have experienced the individual joy of knowing my personality as an *objective, sensuously perceptible*, and *indubitable* power. (2) In your satisfaction and your use of my product I would have had the *direct* and conscious satisfaction that my work satisfied a *human* need, that it objectified *human* nature, and that it created an object appropriate to the need of another *human* being. (3) I would have been the *mediator* between you and the species and you would have experienced me as a redintegration of your own nature and a necessary part of your self; I would have been affirmed in your thought as well as your love. (4) In my individual life I would have directly created your life; in my individual activity I would have immediately *confirmed* and *realized* my true *human* and *social* nature.⁵³

We can now draw a number of consequences which will help us pinpoint what Marx means by "alienation" and thereby rescue this concept from the way in which it has been abused and vulgarized in recent times. First, alienation is clearly, for Marx, a social category—a category for understanding "political economy," not an ontological category rooted in the nature of man. Alienation is no more and no less fundamental than the reality of the determinate set of political and economic institutions and practices.⁵⁴ If these are radically transformed (and they can be so transformed) then alienation can and will be overcome (*aufgehoben*).

Secondly, in recent times "alienation" has widely been used to designate some sort of psychological condition in which the individual feels frustrated, unsatisfied, and unfulfilled. However, the psychological dimension of alienation is not primary for Marx, it is sec-

53. *Young Marx*, p. 281; *MEGA*, I.3, pp. 546-547.

54. The most comprehensive discussion in English of the theme of alienation in Marx is to be found in I. Mészáros, *Marx's Theory of Alienation*. The bibliography of this book is a fine guide to the voluminous literature on this subject. In addition to a detailed analysis of the meaning of alienation in Marx's early writings, Mészáros shows how this concept pervades Marx's "mature" writings. One limitation of Mészáros' study is that he doesn't explore in detail the ways in which the theme of alienation is transformed and given greater specificity in Marx's later works. See also Jean-Yves Calvez, *La Pensée de Karl Marx*.

ondary and derivative. One can be in an alienated condition and accept it without full consciousness of man's alienated condition. This is what Marx takes to be the condition of the working class of his time. The issue is not primarily how one—or even a class of people—feel or think of themselves. The issue is rather one of the *objective* conditions and relations under which men labor and produce. Marx is unmoved by the "fact" that those who have been exploited in a capitalist society may be content with their lot. We recall that in Hegel's dialectic of master and slave, there is a moment when the slave sees his reality and essential nature as being a slave for a master. This is one of the major reasons why Marx is sharply critical of those who think that amelioration of the basic frustrations of the working class gets at the political and economic roots of alienation. On the contrary, the chief task of revolutionary leaders, "the educators who must be educated," is to foster and develop the consciousness of the basic alienated condition of the exploited. In an early letter to Ruge, Marx spells this out for us, "The reform of consciousness exists *merely* in the fact that one makes the world aware of its consciousness, that one awakens the world out of its own dream, that one *explains* to the world its own acts. Our entire purpose consists in nothing else (as is also the case in Feuerbach's criticism of religion) but bringing the religious and political problems into the self-conscious human form" (*Y.M.*, p. 214; *I*, pp. 449-450).

Thirdly, the technology that has resulted and continues to be developed by capitalism is neither the *intrinsic* source nor cause of human alienation. Here, too, Marx's concept must be carefully distinguished from those contemporary prophets of doom who look upon advanced technology as the source of all human ills and alienation. Marx is not only completely unsentimental about technology, he sees in technology the sole means for overcoming alienation. With the development of technology, man for the first time in history can gain a mastery over nature; he has the means for satisfying basic human needs. The communist or humanist society that Marx sees as emerging from the womb of advanced technological capitalism is a post-industrial and technological society, not a pre-industrial pastoral utopia. This is why Marx condemns all "utopians" and "sentimental socialists" who are fixated on an imaginary past golden age, rather than on what is emerging from present conditions.

Our initial attempt to clarify the meaning of *praxis* has led us to an appreciation of *praxis* as human activity, with the realization that this human activity is for Marx the most basic and distinctive characteristic of man. We have also seen how this view of man helps us to understand the sense in which classical mechanistic materialism and idealism are *aufgehoben* in Marx. We have begun to see how Marx's concept of *praxis* is a dialectical transformation of Hegel's *Geist*; it would be impossible to make sense of *praxis* without the Hegelian background. But just as *Geist* must be understood as an active unifying principle and as the power of negativity bringing about its own alienation, so too must *praxis* be understood in this double perspective. *Praxis* in its present historical form is alienating activity. But Marx's very analysis of alienation, and the way in which it must be distinguished from the generic concept of objectification, already begins to point the way to the real historical overcoming of alienation. But thus far, I (and Marx) have been exceedingly vague about how this overcoming is to be realized. It is necessary to take a closer look at the development of Marx's thinking about the meaning of *praxis*.

From "Relentless Criticism" to "Revolutionary Practice"

Among the young Hegelians there was a heady sense that they were living in a time of great crisis, a time when the old world and the old philosophy were on the verge of collapse, and they were to be the *avant garde* of a new, radical, exciting era. Their enthusiasm for the great changes that they believed were about to take place frequently blinded them to considering the more mundane matter of how and what changes would actually take place. They agreed that as intellectuals their weapon was to be "criticism," but when it came to specifying what was to be criticized and how such criticism would be effective, there was a good deal of polemic but not much illumination.

One of the earliest places where Marx speaks directly to this issue is in an exchange of letters with Ruge written in the spring and fall of 1843 which was published in the first and last issue of *Deutsch-Französische Jahrbücher* in February 1844. Ruge, who for

a short time had served as Marx's mentor, expressed his deep pessimism about the prospects of a revolution in Germany. Marx took up the challenge directly; he was much more optimistic about the prospects of revolution—not because he detected the beginnings of a revolutionary class, but because he thought that conditions in Germany were rapidly deteriorating. He was self-conscious about the task that "we intellectuals" must play in bringing about the revolution. "It is true," Marx affirms, "the old world belongs to the Philistine" (*Y.M.*, p. 205; *I*, p. 432). "Freedom, the feeling of man's dignity, will have to be awakened again in these men. Only this feeling, which disappeared from the world with the Greeks and with Christianity vanished into the blue mist of heaven, can again transform society into a community of men to achieve their highest purposes, a democratic state" (*Y.M.*, p. 206; *I*, p. 433). Marx still speaks here in the language of German radical liberalism. But exactly how is this new sense of "man's dignity" to be awakened? What is the role that the intellectual is to play? In a subsequent letter, Marx spells this out. "We wish to find the new world through criticism of the old." Marx goes on to say—expressing convictions that were central to him throughout his life—"Even though the construction of the future and its completion for all times is not our task, what we have to accomplish at this time is all the more clear: *relentless criticism of all existing conditions*, relentless in the sense that the criticism is not afraid of its findings and just as little afraid of the conflict with the powers that be" (*Y.M.*, p. 212; *I*, p. 447).

Many young Hegelians would have championed this manifesto, but there was an enormous difference between what they meant by it and what Marx intended. In the main, the young Hegelians thought of "relentless criticism" as criticism of religion and philosophy. For Marx this was only the beginning, not the end of criticism. Criticism of philosophy, religion, and even the political state led inevitably to the roots of all criticism—the forms of alienation and the practical contradictions inherent in the actual institutions of political economy. "Our slogan, therefore, must be: Reform of consciousness, not through dogmas, but through analysis of the mystical consciousness that is unclear about itself, whether in religion or politics" (*Y.M.*, p. 214; *I*, p. 450).

Marx's remarks help us to appreciate his life-long preoccupation

with understanding *present* institutions rather than speculating about the future. Projecting future possibilities, speculating about the nature of utopian future societies, is idle and irrelevant. One must understand the tendencies inherent in present institutions. At many stages of his career Marx insisted that it is only by understanding and criticism of what is now taking place that we can successfully come to understand what are the real possibilities for society. These reflections also indicate Marx's view of ideology, the general outlook of the world accepted by men. Ideology does not conform to the way things really are, although it tells us something important about social reality. It is not accidental that men conceive of social reality in the ways that they do. Their "thought forms" are a reflection of this reality, only they do not yet understand this. In a passage that is frequently quoted and misinterpreted, Marx illustrates what he means by ideology.

Religious suffering is the *expression* of real suffering and at the same time the *protest* against real suffering. Religion is the sigh of the oppressed creature, the heart of a heartless world, as it is the spirit of spiritless conditions. It is the *opium* of the people.

The abolition of religion as people's *illusory* happiness is the demand for their *real* happiness. The demand to abandon illusions about their condition is a *demand to abandon a condition which requires illusions*. The criticism of religion is thus in *embryo a criticism of the vale of tears whose halo is religion* (*Y.M.*, p. 250; *I*, pp. 488-489).

Criticism, then, is not a matter of arbitrarily *condemning* an institution or a belief, but of *understanding* it. Marx doesn't view religion as an accidental stupidity of men, a hoax perpetrated by a priestly class. Religion is an illusion, but one rooted in existing social reality, one which is a reflection of the real alienation that man suffers. It is also a protest against this condition. The criticism of religion leads to an understanding of the meaning, causes, and the ultimate resolution of the "latent" content of "manifest" religious suffering. The program that Marx projects in these early writings is one in which a similar critique would be performed of law, philosophy, theology, politics, and political economy.⁵⁵

55. "Political economy" (politische Ökonomie) has a distinctive meaning for Marx. He characteristically uses the expression to refer to actual bourgeois economy or to the theories and explanations of this economy by the "classical

The most important feature of these early reflections is that they indicate what *praxis* originally meant for Marx. Although his ideas were rapidly developing, he never abandoned the view that the task of the revolutionary intellectual—"the educator"—is in the first instance "relentless criticism of all existing institutions," a criticism that demands a correct *theoretical* analysis of existing institutions and the contradictions inherent in them. Throughout his life, Marx heaped scorn on those who were ready to plunge into action without such a critical understanding. This is the gist of his condemnation of "true socialists" and his devastating attack on the Gotha Program.⁵⁶ The latter represented sentimental sloganizing. Marx went through the document line by line, exposing its lack of "relentless criticism" and suggesting how such a program should have been written when based on a critical understanding of social reality.

But how could such a program of criticism be efficacious? What reason is there to believe that even a "correct" critical understanding of existing institutions would lead to a transformation of these institutions? Marx turned against his fellow young Hegelians who frequently wrote and acted as if their intellectual posturing would shake worlds. We detect here a second "moment" in Marx's development of the concept of *praxis*. In his article "Toward the Critique of Hegel's Philosophy of Law: Introduction" written in 1843, Marx says, "The weapon of criticism obviously cannot replace the criticism of weapons. Material force must be overthrown by material force. But theory also becomes a material force once it has gripped the masses. Theory is capable of gripping the masses when it demonstrates *ad hominem*, and it demonstrates *ad hominem* when it becomes radical" (*Y.M.*, p. 257; *I*, p. 497). "Theory is actualized in a people only insofar as it actualizes their needs" (*Y.M.*, p. 259; *I*, p. 498). No more than Hegel, did Marx believe that men are primarily motivated by conscious rational considerations.

economists." Already in his essay, "On the Jewish Question" (1843), Marx distinguishes between the level of "politics" and the more basic level of "political economy." He criticizes Bauer for the superficiality of his thinking in restricting himself to political emancipation. Real emancipation—human emancipation—demands a transformation of political economy.

56. "Critique of the Gotha Program" in *Marx and Engels: Basic Writings on Politics and Philosophy*, ed. by Lewis S. Feuer; *Marx/Engels Werke*, Bd. 19.

For both of them history is the playing out of men's deepest passions. The reason why criticism can be efficacious is that it speaks directly to these passions. It has the power *not* of delineating some utopian ideal which is to be striven for, but of revealing to men a critical understanding of what they are suffering. Unless criticism does this, it becomes idle speculation; the test of the correctness of a radical critique is its ability to bring genuine human problems suffered by men to a "self-conscious human form." This is the meaning of the second thesis on Feuerbach: "The question whether human thinking can reach objective truth—is not a question of theory but a *practical* question. In practice man must prove the truth, that is, actuality and power, this-sidedness of his thinking."⁵⁷

The union of theory and practice that Marx develops for us is the culmination of his various lines of inquiry. His early *Critique of Hegel's Philosophy of Right* indicates Marx's acceptance of the Hegelian principle that a correct theoretical analysis of politics and political economy—the pay-off of The System—leads to a critical understanding of existing institutions. His sharp critique of Hegel does not challenge this principle, but attacks the adequacy of Hegel's theoretical analysis of politics. Hegel was guilty of the worst of all possible Hegelian sins, of rationalizing instead of providing true understanding. But if it is true, as Marx claimed, that the real locus of conflicts and contradictions is in these very existing institutions, then these must be *aufgehoben* by radical transformation. This is the conclusion that all of Marx's early critiques were pointing toward.

Marx still speaks as a philosopher, calling for a new direction in philosophy. He states as much when he declares, "As philosophy finds its *material* weapons in the proletariat, the proletariat finds its *intellectual* weapons in philosophy. And once the lightning of thought has deeply struck this unsophisticated soil of the people, the *Germans* will emancipate themselves to become men" (*Y.M.*, pp. 263-264; I, p. 504).

But even in the article in which Marx expresses this interplay of philosophy and the proletariat, he was already moving beyond this view to a third "moment" in the understanding of *praxis*. He speaks of transcending philosophy and warns, "you cannot transcend [*aufheben*] philosophy without actualizing it" (*Y.M.*, p. 256; I,

57. *Young Marx*, p. 401; Marx/Engels *Werke*, Bd. 3, p. 5.

p. 495). By the time he wrote the eleventh thesis on Feuerbach, this aspect of Marx's view of *praxis* had crystallized. "Practical-critical" activity becomes "revolutionary practice." Marx's own critique of philosophy had led him beyond philosophy—this is the point of the last thesis; it is not a call for a new direction in philosophy. Philosophy, which had reached its culmination in Hegel, had led to the full articulation of the demand for freedom to be realized—not the freedom of *Geist*, but the freedom of human sensuous individuals. But philosophy was impotent to bring about this freedom, impotent to bring about revolution. This had been revealed by philosophy itself. The critique of philosophy had dialectically led Marx to the conclusion that only a correct, detailed understanding of existing social reality could effect such a revolution. The root of all critique is the critique of political economy. After the 1840's Marx no longer has much to say about philosophy—the task had now become to change the world. But even this declaration was not a call for "direct action," but for the concrete theoretical knowledge that could guide revolutionary *praxis*.

Praxis as Labor-Power

One of the most popular and sterile issues in Marxist scholarship during the past few decades has been the debate about the "early" Marx versus the "mature" Marx. The debate starts from the fact that Marx's early writings are much more philosophical and speculative in tone than his later detailed, technical investigation of capitalism. The problem then is one of "reconciling" these two aspects of Marx. The variations on this attempt at reconciliation are numerous. At one extreme there are those who think that the early Marx is the *true* humanistic Marx and the Marx of *Capital* represents a rigidified, degenerate position. At the other end of the spectrum there are those who scorn the early works as immature speculations which are superseded by the mature "scientific" position developed in *Capital*. We have already suggested that this is a pseudo-issue, that the claim that there are "two" Marxes is a fiction. There is the development and dialectical continuity of a single total perspective which cannot be understood unless we appreciate its Hegelian origins and the ways in which Marx continually refined,

specified, and criticized his own investigations.⁵⁸ It is ironic that so many Marxist scholars have failed to appreciate the dialectical character of Marx's own development—dialectical in the precise sense in which he and Hegel used the concept where a stage is *aufgehoben*: negated, affirmed, and transcended. But advocates of this specious dichotomy or break in Marx's thought are likely to charge us with basing our interpretation primarily on Marx's early work. They will point out that not only the concept, but the term "*praxis*" virtually disappears in Marx's mature thought.⁵⁹ To meet this challenge and

58. Although Avineri is not primarily concerned with attacking the myth of the "two" Marxes, his book, *The Social and Political Thought of Karl Marx* cogently demonstrates the speciousness of this myth. See also I. Mészáros, *Marx's Theory of Alienation*.

59. An entire library of literature has already been published on the problem of the "early Marx" and the "late Marx," and the debate is rapidly becoming "scholastic" where almost every possible variation on this theme has been advanced. Until recently, one scandal in this debate has been a neglect of Marx's *Grundrisse der Kritik der politischen Ökonomie (Rohentwurf)*. This is an enormous volume of Marx's writings from 1857-1858. These writings were first published in two parts by the Marx-Engels-Lenin Institute in Moscow in 1939 and 1941. But this edition was little known and almost unavailable. In 1953 the Dietz publishing house in Berlin republished the two volumes together with some excerpts from Marx's notebooks of 1850-1851. This edition is now out of print. A fragment from the *Grundrisse* was translated into English under the title *Pre-Capitalist Economic Formations* with an introduction by E. B. Hobsbawm. The title indicates the way in which the *Grundrisse* has frequently been read—as notes toward the writing of *Capital*. A distorted French translation which minimizes the Hegelian cast of this work was published in Paris in 1967-1968. An English translation of selections is promised for 1971 and a complete translation of the whole work is now planned. Despite the fragmentary and repetitious character of this work, I believe that when it is better known and more carefully studied, it will emerge as one of Marx's major works—if not his major work. Concerning the issue of the "young Marx" vs. the "old Marx," the availability of the *Grundrisse* will place this discussion on a new level of sophistication. For what is so clearly evident in the *Grundrisse* is the ease with which Marx moves from a "Hegelian" idiom to a more "scientific" idiom. It conclusively shows the falsity of the claim that Marx dropped all significant discussion of "alienation" and "*praxis*" after the 1840's.

The *Grundrisse* has much greater significance than simply helping to clarify the issue of Marx's intellectual development. We are only beginning to discover how rich a source it is in seeing Marx working out hypotheses concerning the nature of class conflict, the theory of surplus value, the significance of production in understanding capitalism, and an understanding of the "Asiatic

to further our understanding of *praxis*, it is therefore essential that we show its development in *Capital*.

Three very fashionable claims have been made about Marx's "mature" outlook in *Capital*. First, that Marx rejects his early philosophical speculations—and with them, the terminology so dominant in his early writings, including the concepts of "*praxis*" and "alienation." Secondly, that with *Capital*, Marx's "reduction" of all basic categories to economic categories is clear and explicit. Thirdly, that the image of man that emerges from *Capital* is that of a class animal swept along by a web of impersonal forces that have a law-like regularity—laws that determine what man is and over which he has no control.

All three of these interrelated claims are false. On the contrary, one cannot make much sense of *Capital* unless one is sensitive to how earlier themes dialectically emerge in it, especially the concepts of *praxis* and alienation. Furthermore, it is extremely misleading to think of *Capital* as a study in economics where "economics" is understood in the *contemporary* sense of the term. We normally think of economics as one of the social sciences, along with political science, sociology, anthropology, psychology, etc. Economic categories pre-

mode of production." The scope of the *Grundrisse* is much broader than that of *Capital*. It becomes clear that the three volumes of *Capital* represent only a small fragment of the comprehensive theory projected in the *Grundrisse*. Rather than the *Grundrisse* representing a fragmentary groping toward the doctrines of *Capital*, *Capital* represents a small part of the total theory outlined in the *Grundrisse*. Three recent articles in English discuss enthusiastically the significance and content of the *Grundrisse*. See Martin Nicolaus, "The Unknown Marx," *The New Left Reader*, ed. by C. Ogelsby; and "Proletariat and Middle Class in Marx: Hegelian Choreography and the Capitalist Dialectic," *For A New America*, ed. by J. Weinstein and D. W. Eakins. See also David McLellan's "The Missing Link," *Encounter* 35 (November 1970). I. Mészáros cites numerous passages from the *Grundrisse* that discuss alienation. George Lichtheim has discussed the theory of the "Asiatic mode of production" as it is developed in the *Grundrisse* and says, "I express a mere personal opinion when I say that the argument outlined in pp. 375-396 of the *Grundrisse* seems to me to be among the most brilliant and incisive of Marx's writings," George Lichtheim, "Oriental Despotism," *The Concept of Ideology and Other Essays*, p. 85. For other appreciations of the *Grundrisse*, see Maximilien Rubel, "Contribution à l'histoire de la genèse du 'Capital,'" *Revue d'histoire économique et sociale*, 2 (1950); André Gorz, *Strategy for Labor*, pp. 128-130; and Herbert Marcuse, *One-Dimensional Man*, pp. 35-36.

sumably locate only one *aspect* of human activity. But the thrust of *Capital* is to reveal that under seemingly abstract, impersonal, economic categories, a great *human* drama is taking place. Economy, or to use Marx's term, "political economy" is not a single, selective dimension of human life; it is a congealed or crystallized form of human activity—of *praxis*. To think of economic categories as referring to a single, abstract dimension of human life is to be guilty of what Marx himself called "fetishism." The third claim above is the most misleading. It is certainly true for Marx that economic systems, and capitalism in particular, exhibit a regularity and law-likeness that shapes those who function in them. And it is also true that Marx is attempting to lay bare and understand the fundamental dynamic mechanisms operating in capitalist society. But these are not eternal, immutable mechanisms; they arise and will pass away in history. They are historical tendencies that manifest one of the forms that human *praxis* has taken. A major, if not the major aim, of Marx's analysis of capitalism is to unmask the forms of mystification in capitalist ideology—the ways in which we can all too easily lose sight of the basic fact that underlying the complex interrelationships in a capitalist society are various forms of congealed human labor. The apologists for capitalism have sought to justify capitalism by an appeal to rigid, economic laws; and this is what Marx is attacking and criticizing. Emerging from the study in *Capital* is not a sanctification or reification of economic laws, but the very opposite—a demonstration of the mutability of all so-called economic laws, the ways in which they arise, the internal dynamic contradictions they harbor, and the ways in which they pass away. Marx is uncovering for us the "long and painful process of development" by which men have not controlled their own activity and have been controlled by the process of production in which they find themselves. The critical understanding of this process opens up the real possibility of a society of "freely associated men" in which their production "is consciously regulated by them in accordance with a settled plan."⁶⁰ The thrust of *Capital*, and all of Marx's thinking, is *not* to affirm the impotence of man in the face of impersonal forces but rather to affirm the *real* possibility of a critical understanding of the world which allows man's eventual mastery of his own fate.

60. *Capital*, I, p. 80; Marx/Engels *Werke*, Bd. 23, p. 94.

In order to substantiate our counterclaims to the three widely held prejudices that we have listed, let us begin by recalling Marx's comment on Hegel's *Phenomenology* in his 1844 *Paris Manuscripts*.

The great thing in Hegel's *Phenomenology* and its final result—the dialectic of negativity as the moving and productive principle—is simply that Hegel grasps the self-development of man as a process, objectification as loss of the object, as alienation and transcendence of this alienation; that he thus grasps the nature of *work* and comprehends objective man, authentic because actual as the result of his *own work*.⁶¹

This "great truth" became the kernel of what Marx meant by *praxis*. In the process of *praxis* as human activity, the products men produce are congealed or crystallized forms of their activity or their labor. When the product gains an independent hostile power, when the system of political economy in which men produce and work is such that their practical activity is in conflict with itself—i.e., their activity is essentially "forced" activity and not free activity, then men are alienated from their products, their fellow men, and themselves.

This concept of *praxis* provides the orientation needed for understanding the most fundamental category in *Capital*, the concept of value, or more specifically, labor value. The value of a product that a man produces is a crystallized form of labor-power.⁶² In our

61. *Young Marx*, p. 321; *MEGA*, I.3, p. 156.

62. In the two articles by Martin Nicolaus previously mentioned, he describes in detail the shift that takes place in the *Grundrisse* from an economics of "competition" to an economics of "production." This shift is reflected in the importance that Marx assigns to the concept of labor-power (*Arbeitskraft*) as contrasted with labor (*Arbeit*). This new category enables Marx to explain how "surplus-value" comes into existence. "What the worker sells is not 'labor' but *labor-power* (*Arbeitskraft*); not a commodity like any other, but a commodity which is unique. Labor alone has the capacity to create values where none existed before, or to create greater values than those which it requires to sustain itself. Labor alone, in short, is capable of creating *surplus-value*. The capitalist purchases control over this creative power, and commands this power to engage in the production of commodities for exchange during a specified number of hours. The worker's surrender of control over his creative power is called by Marx exploitation," Martin Nicolaus, "The Unknown Marx," p. 98.

While I think that Nicolaus is correct in emphasizing this shift to the concept of *Arbeitskraft* as the key for understanding surplus-value, he overstates his case when he says that the shift from the concept of *Arbeit* to *Arbeitskraft*

advanced forms of exchange economies, we think and act in relation to the commodities we exchange and use as if these were impersonal physical things. According to Marx, this is a form of fetishism.⁶³ We fail to realize that these commodities are social products and that the value they possess (the labor value) is nothing but a *materialized form of labor activity*.

Hence, when we bring the products of our labor into relation with each other as values, it is not because we see in these articles the material receptacles of homogeneous human labor. Quite the contrary: whenever, by an exchange, we equate as values our different products, by that very act, we also equate, as human labor, the different kinds of labor expended upon them. We are not aware of this, nevertheless we do it. Value, therefore, does not stalk about with a label describing what it is. It is value, rather, that converts every product into a social hieroglyphic. Later on, we try to decipher the hieroglyphic, to get behind the secret of our social products; for to stamp an object of utility as a value, is just as much a social product as language. The recent scientific discovery, that the products of labor, so far as they are values, are but material expressions of the human labor spent in their production, marks, indeed, an epoch in the history of the development of the human race, but, by no means, dissipates the mist through which the social character of labor appears to us to be an objective character of the products themselves. The fact, that in the particular form of production with which we are dealing, viz., the production of commodities, the specific social character of private labor carried on independently, consists in the equality of every kind of that labor, by virtue of its being human labor, which character, therefore, assumes in the product the form of value—this fact

is “the crucial difference on which may be said to hinge the entire distinction between Marxist and non-Marxist economics—as well as the distinction, perhaps, between the ‘young Marx’ and the ‘mature Marx.’” (Martin Nicolaus, “Proletariat and Middle Class in Marx: Hegelian Choreography and the Capitalist Dialectic,” p. 267.) Nicolaus suggests but fails to make explicit that the “mature” emphasis on production and labor-power as the source of surplus-value is in harmony with and develops Marx’s early understanding of the concept of *praxis*. Indeed without such an understanding of *praxis*, whereby the object produced is understood as a congealed form of the activity, it would be impossible to make sense of the rationale for claiming that labor alone creates values where none existed before or that labor creates greater values than those necessary to sustain it.

63. See the section, “The Fetishism of Commodities and the Secret Thereof” in *Capital*, I, pp. 71-83; Marx/Engels *Werke*, Bd. 23, pp. 85-98.

appears to the producers, notwithstanding the discovery above referred to, to be just as real and final, as the fact, that, after the discovery by science of the component gases of air, the atmosphere itself remained unaltered.⁶⁴

The conception of labor value articulated in the above passage functions as a leitmotif throughout *Capital*. As Marx methodically introduces more and more complex analytic distinctions in order to understand critically the complexities of a capitalist society, as he explicates the concepts of money, constant capital, variable capital, surplus value, profit, interest, etc., he argues that while they appear to the participants in a capitalist society as impersonal entities and forces, they are in reality—when demystified from their reified and fetishistic appearances—various forms of social *praxis* or social labor.

The subtitle of *Capital* is *A Critique of Political Economy* and there is a dialectical continuity between the sense of “critique” as it is used here and the sense in which it was used in Marx’s first “critique,” *The Critique of Hegel’s Philosophy of Right*. Just as Marx sought to demystify Hegel’s *Philosophy of Right*, he now seeks to demystify political economy; to reveal to us what is really going on underlying the elaborate forms of reification of the world of economic “things” within which we operate. And just as the earlier critique led us to the idea of *praxis* as the “secret” for understanding Hegel, so now Marx is spelling out in detail what human *praxis* concretely means as human labor and production. “The life-process of society, which is based on the process of material production, does not strip off its mystical veil until it is treated as production by freely associated men, and is consciously regulated by them in accordance with a settled plan. This, however, demands for society a certain material ground-work or set of conditions of existence which in their turn are the spontaneous product of a long and painful process of development.”⁶⁵

Capital is the drama of *praxis* as labor or production in modern society. It is a drama because the cumulative effect of Marx’s apparently dry and technical analysis is the unmasking of the alienated forms of labor—the ways in which the worker is exploited.

64. *Capital*, I, p. 74; Marx/Engels *Werke*, Bd. 23, p. 88.

65. *Capital*, I, p. 80; Marx/Engels *Werke*, Bd. 23, p. 94.

While alienation or exploitation reaches its apogee in advanced capitalist society, the dynamic contradictions inherent in capitalism provide the "material groundwork" for passing beyond capitalism, the stage in which the exploitation and alienation of a capitalist society are finally *aufgehoben*. Capitalism, then, is only one historical form that human *praxis* has taken, and *Capital* is concerned with the origins of the historical set of conditions and the passing beyond this alienated form of *praxis* or labor.

The above considerations significantly qualify a narrow "economic" reading of *Capital*, but Marx is quite explicit about what he intends by the use of economic categories. In the *Grundrisse der Kritik der politischen Ökonomie*, Marx takes issue with Proudhon's narrow conception of "economic" and his claim that property has an "extra-economic" origin. In criticizing Proudhon, Marx remarks:

But to claim that pre-bourgeois history and each phase of it, has its own *economy* [Ökonomie] and an *economic base* of its movement, is at bottom merely to state the tautology that human life has always rested on some kind of production—*social* production—whose relations are precisely what we call economic relations.

The original conditions of production cannot initially be themselves produced—they are not the results of production. (Instead of original conditions of production we might also say: for if this reproduction appears on one hand as the appropriation of the objects by the subjects, it equally appears on the other as the moulding, the subjection, of the objects by and to a subjective purpose; the transformation of the objects into results and repositories of subjective activity.) What requires explanation is not the *unity* of living and active human beings with the natural, inorganic conditions of their metabolism with nature, and therefore their appropriation of nature; nor is this the result of a historic process. What we must explain is the *separation* of these inorganic conditions of human existence from this active existence, a separation which is only fully completed in the relationship between wage-labor and capital.⁶⁶

The outlines of what we might call Marx's "anthropology" should now be clear. Man is by nature an active, productive animal. "By nature" simply means that man is a creature who cannot survive unless he produces—exercises labor-power—in order to maintain

66. Karl Marx, *Pre-Capitalist Economic Formations*, trans. by Jack Cohen; ed. and with an introduction by E. J. Hobsbawm, pp. 86-87; Marx, *Grundrisse der Kritik der politischen Ökonomie*, pp. 388-389.

himself. This essential productive dimension of human life is *praxis*. But the social forms that this labor takes are historically conditioned. In the course of history, a variety of different and successively more complex social forms of production have evolved. Moreover, the succession of these modes of production has a rationale or *logos* in the sense that we can discover how one mode of production when fully developed (especially in Western societies) tends to undermine the very conditions that have given rise to it and eventually provides the basis for a new mode of production. In this process there is an increasing "separation of these inorganic conditions of human existence from this active existence," a separation that reaches its culmination in capitalist society. Just as all previous forms of production (in Western forms of production as distinguished from "Asiatic" production)⁶⁷ have in the course of their full development destroyed themselves, Marx in *Capital* is showing us how this same instability is inherent in a capitalist mode of production. However, with the passing away of capitalism, there is a real possibility (not a logical necessity), that the "separation" or "alienation" which has been characteristic of the development of man thus far will be overcome, *aufgehoben*, and human *praxis* will achieve its full, positive, creative, actualization. In another passage from the *Grundrisse*, where Marx sharply distinguishes the present potentialities of *praxis* from a nostalgia for some ancient "golden age," he writes:

Thus the ancient conception, in which man always appears (in however narrowly national, religious or political a definition) as the aim of production, seems very much more exalted than the modern world, in which production is the aim of man and wealth the aim of production. In fact, however, when the narrow bourgeois form is peeled away, what is wealth, if not the universality of needs, capacities, enjoyments, productive powers, etc., of individuals, produced in universal exchange? What, if not the full development of human control over the forces of nature—those of his own nature as well as those of so-called "nature"?

67. Marx's views on the Asiatic mode of production not only have intrinsic importance, they help to overthrow the myth that Marx had a rigid historical theory of economic development applicable to all societies. For excellent discussions of Marx's reflections on the Asiatic mode of production, see George Lichtheim, "Oriental Despotism," *The Concept of Ideology and Other Essays*, and Shlomo Avineri's "Introduction" to *Karl Marx: On Colonialism and Modernization*.

What, if not the absolute elaboration of his creative dispositions, without any preconditions other than antecedent historical evolution which makes the totality of this evolution—i.e., the evolution of all human powers as such, unmeasured by any previously established yardstick—an end in itself? What is this, if not a situation where man does not reproduce himself in any determined form, but produces his totality? Where he does not seek to remain something formed by the past, but is in the absolute movement of becoming? In bourgeois political economy—and in the epoch of production to which it corresponds—this complete elaboration of what lies within man, appears as the total alienation, and the destruction of all fixed, one-sided purposes as the sacrifice of the end in itself to a wholly external compulsion. Hence in one way the childlike world of the ancients appears to be superior; and this is so, insofar as we seek for closed shape, form and established limitation. The ancients provide a narrow satisfaction, whereas the modern world leaves us unsatisfied, or, where it appears to be satisfied with itself, is *vulgar* and *mean*.⁶⁸

This passage further articulates a point which we have previously emphasized—that Marx sees modern bourgeois capitalist society as developing the material conditions required for the full development of man. It shows how the concept of “alienation” is still fundamental to Marx’s “mature” thought. Furthermore, the claim that the “complete elaboration of what lies within man, appears as the total alienation,” is fundamental (as we shall see in the next section) for understanding Marx’s primary concern with the present and why he scorned speculation about future societies which was not rooted in a systematic critique of present institutions. But this passage further substantiates our claim that in order to appreciate and understand Marx’s use of “economic” categories, we must view them as encapsulating the fundamental modes of human production—*praxis*.

We have now set the stage to justify our third counterclaim—that the point of *Capital* is not to sanctify the immutability of “economic laws” but to reveal their mutability in history. Capitalist society has brought about the most complete and thorough form of alienation that has yet existed. Or to use the distinctive language of *Capital*, capitalism is based upon and increases exploitation and the “rational” efficient use of surplus value to increase capital. Without surplus value—the value of products appropriated by the

68. *Pre-Capitalist Economic Formations*, pp. 84-85; Marx, *Grundrisse der Kritik der politischen Ökonomie*, pp. 387-388.

capitalist which is over and above the portion of value needed to sustain the producers and the means of production—there is no capitalism. But the story that Marx tells through the three volumes of *Capital* is of an economic mode of production that is inherently unstable and contradictory. The more capitalism succeeds in achieving its aim of increasing capital, the more it succeeds in undermining itself. Near the end of Vol. III of *Capital* (a passage taken from fragments of Marx’s writings and published posthumously by Engels) Marx reflects on where his complex, intricate investigation of capitalism has led him. Even the language of this section (“The Trinity Formula”) echoes the language of Marx’s “early” writings.

In the case of the simplest categories of the capitalist mode of production, and even of commodity-production, in the case of commodities and money, we have already pointed out the mystifying character that transforms the social relations, for which the material elements of wealth serve as bearers in production, into properties of these things themselves (commodities) and still more pronouncedly transforms the production relation itself into a thing and money. All forms of society, insofar as they reach the stage of commodity-production and money circulation, take part in this perversion. But under the capitalist mode of production and in the case of capital, which forms its dominant category, its determining production relations, this enchanted and perverted world develops still more.⁶⁹

Marx proceeds to review “the complete mystification of the capitalist mode of production” whereby it becomes perfectly natural “for the actual agents of production to feel completely at home in these estranged and irrational forms of capital-interest, land-rent, labor-wages, since these are precisely the forms of illusion in which they move about and find their daily occupation.”⁷⁰ For Hegel, the end of history, the *telos* of *Geist*, is the concrete realization of freedom. In order to achieve this freedom, *Geist* must pass through a long and painful process. So too for Marx, the long painful history of *praxis* in the forms of modes of production which culminate in the capitalist mode of production is the necessary condition for freedom whereby the “economic laws” of capitalist society are *aufgehoben*. Freedom “can only consist in socialized man, the associated producers,

69. *Capital*, III, pp. 826-827; Marx/Engels *Werke*, Bd. 25, p. 835.

70. *Capital*, III, p. 830; Marx/Engels *Werke*, Bd. 25, p. 838.

rationally regulating their interchange with Nature, bringing it under their common control, instead of being ruled by it as by the blind forces of Nature; and achieving this with the least expenditure of energy under conditions most favorable to, and worthy, of their human nature."⁷¹ The end of history—or as Marx claimed, the end of prehistory and the beginning of human history—comes when man finally triumphs over the “blind forces of Nature” and the economic regularities and laws which have determined what he has been thus far, not in the sense that man is finally free *from* all law-like regularity, but in the sense that he rationally and freely regulates his life in a way that is most favorable and worthy of his human nature.

Species-Being, Praxis, and Alienation

Throughout our discussion thus far we have uncritically followed Marx in his appeal to the concepts of “species-being” and “human nature.” But the problems posed by these concepts are central ones for Marx and for understanding *praxis*. Marx’s early use of the concept of “species-being” and his subsequent criticism of this concept is a typical instance of his own progressive dialectical development in which he negates, affirms, and passes beyond an earlier stage in his thinking. Marx relies heavily on this concept in his writings during the early 1840’s. Species-being is man’s true or ideal nature and it becomes fully manifest only when human alienation is overcome. Already in 1845, in his sixth thesis on Feuerbach, Marx is critical of this concept.

Feuerbach resolves the religious essence into the *human* essence. But the essence of man is no abstraction inhering in each single individual. In its actuality it is the ensemble of social relationships.⁷²

Feuerbach is compelled “to view the essence of man merely as species, as the inner, dumb generality which unites individuals *naturally*.”⁷³ Marx is not only criticizing Feuerbach, he is also criticizing himself. While Marx used the concept of “species-being” in the

71. *Capital*, III, p. 820; Marx/Engels *Werke*, Bd. 25, p. 828.

72. *Young Marx*, p. 402; Marx/Engels *Werke*, Bd. 3, p. 6.

73. *Young Marx*, p. 402; Marx/Engels *Werke*, Bd. 3, p. 6.

1844 *Paris Manuscripts* to refer to man’s *historical* nature, he did not pin down the precise meaning and justification of this concept. Let us review the stages in Marx’s own acceptance and subsequent rejection of the concept of “species-being.”

Feuerbach played the role of helping Marx to see that once Hegel’s philosophy is demystified—once we uncover the latent content of Hegel’s great “myth,” we realize that *Geist* is nothing more than a disguised way of referring to man or humanity. Echoing, but at the same time transforming, Hegel’s story of the journey of *Geist*, Marx writes in his 1844 *Paris Manuscripts*: “Since for socialist man, however, the *entire so-called world history* is only the creation of man through human labor and the development of nature for man, he has evident and incontrovertible proof of his *self-creation*, his own *formation process*.”⁷⁴ In order to understand the dynamics of *Geist* (and consequently *praxis*) a double perspective is needed. *Geist* is concretely realized in the actual stages of history and is also the dynamic potential to overcome all forms of alienation. Without this double perspective, it would not make any sense to claim that *Geist* is not “satisfied” or “fulfilled” in any of its determinate forms. Nor would we be able to say that *Geist* continually “strives” to overcome all determinations or objectifications and to infinitize itself. The same double perspective is needed to account for Marx’s own analysis of *praxis* as human alienation. The very meaning of “alienation” seems to presuppose a vision, ideal, or norm of what man can become when his creative potential is fully and freely developed.

For Feuerbach, this ideal of what man can become (and will become) is expressed in the concept of species-being—this is the truth implicit in the Hegelian notion of *Geist* once the transformative method is applied to it. The idea of a “species” (*Gattung*) which had been popularized by D. F. Strauss was taken over by Feuerbach. Feuerbach’s *The Essence of Christianity* begins by telling us that man is distinguished from the animals because he alone is conscious of himself not only as an individual but as a species.⁷⁵ God, for Feuerbach, is a projection and reification of the human species. When man acts so that he is conscious of himself as a species-being,

74. *Young Marx*, p. 314; *MEGA*, I.3, p. 125.

75. Ludwig Feuerbach, *The Essence of Christianity*, trans. by George Eliot, p. 1.

his acts are qualitatively different from those when he acts as a single individual. The idea of a human species is that of all human perfections concretely realized.

Marx was initially impressed by the underlying humanism of *The Essence of Christianity*. We can detect its influence in his essay "On the Jewish Question" and the 1844 *Paris Manuscripts* where he adopted Feuerbach's concept of "species-being" as the background for analyzing human alienation. In "On the Jewish Question," where Marx criticizes the notion of political emancipation which is not yet full human emancipation, he says:

Political democracy is Christian in that it regards man—not merely one but every man—as *sovereign* and supreme. But this means man in his uncivilized and unsocial aspect, in his fortuitous existence and just as he is, corrupted by the entire organization of our society, lost and alienated from himself, oppressed by inhuman relations and elements—in a word, man who is not yet *actual* species-being (*Y.M.*, p. 231; *I*, p. 468).

Or again in the 1844 *Paris Manuscripts*, Marx, repeating Feuerbach, says:

Man is a species-being (*Gattungswesen*) not only in that he practically and theoretically makes his own species as well as that of other things his object, but also—and this is only another expression for the same thing—in that as present and living species he considers himself to be a *universal* and consequently a free being.⁷⁶

But for all the importance that species-being plays for Marx in these early writings, there is no serious attempt to analyze and justify this crucial concept. When Marx criticizes this concept in the sixth thesis on Feuerbach and says that the essence of man is "in its actuality the ensemble of social relationships," he is already foreshadowing his concept of class as the appropriate social category for understanding what man is. What first appeared to be a move away from Hegel to concreteness (from *Geist* to species-being) turns out to be another form of misplaced concreteness. This is the sort of criticism that Marx was developing of all the young Hegelians (including his own earlier efforts). They were not being radical enough; they were not getting at the "roots."

By the time that Marx wrote *Capital*, he was quite explicit about

76. *Young Marx*, p. 293; *MEGA*, I.3, p. 87.

the abandonment of species-being and its replacement by the concept of class. Early in *Capital*, when Marx introduces the concept of exchange, he says: "The persons exist for one another as representatives of, and, therefore, as owners of, commodities. In the course of our investigation we shall find, in general, that the characters who appear on the economic stage are but the personifications of the economic relations that exist between them."⁷⁷

But the critique of the concept of species-being would appear to create a serious intellectual problem for Marx. Throughout his writings in the 1840's there is a strong moralistic tone. The sharpness with which Marx describes the varieties of alienation and dehumanization only serves to highlight his positive vision of what man can and "ought" to become—man as actual species-being. How can it make any sense to speak of the "dehumanization" of man unless we have some viable ideal or norm of what it is to be a human being? The very notion of alienation with its pejorative overtones seems to presuppose some positive view of what it means to be unalienated, and this positive view needs to be articulated and justified. Many critics and some defenders of Marx have interpreted him as being primarily a moralist, a prophet holding before us a vision of what man is to become. Many have claimed that it is at this crucial point that we can detect the essential confusion of Marx's position. Marx, so the criticism runs, is constantly confusing descriptive and evaluative claims—evaluative claims which he never justifies. The issues raised by this line of criticism are so central to our understanding of Marx and the concept of *praxis* that we must confront them squarely.

I want to challenge the claim that Marx *presupposes* an ideal of what man can and ought to become and condemns existing social reality by measuring it against some ideal norm. This way of "interpreting" Marx distorts the main thrust of his work. Marx's central thought is that a correct understanding of present political economy and its historical origins provides the sole basis for revealing genuine human potentialities. This point is nicely expressed by Lobkowitz when he says, "Neither Hegel nor Marx measures man's 'alienated state' either against a transhistorical human nature or against a 'logically predetermined' future. Rather, they measure it against a human potentiality revealed by the very phenomenon of alienation—against a human potentiality which though at first it emerges in an alienated

77. *Capital*, I, pp. 84-85; Marx/Engels *Werke*, Bd. 23, pp. 99-100.

state, allows one to envisage a previously unknown possibility of ultimate human self-actualization."⁷⁸

Such an orientation cuts at the very heart of the modern dogma that there is an unbridgeable gap between the descriptive and the prescriptive, or between fact and value, or between the "is" and the "ought." For Marx, human alienation is an *objective* social condition. On the basis of a critical understanding of the roots and causes of this alienation, we can come to discover real human potentialities and "envisage a previously unknown possibility of ultimate human self-actualization." The metaphysical and epistemological implications of his position echo a more classical Greek, especially Aristotelian, view of man that maintains that it is only by understanding what man is—his actuality—that one can appreciate what he can become—his potentiality. Just as there is no clear "fact-value" or "is-ought" dichotomy in Aristotle, so there is none in Marx. This similarity should not blur the sharp differences that exist between Marx's and Aristotle's understanding of "actuality" and "potentiality." The most dramatic difference is that for Marx both man's actuality and his potentiality change in the course of man's historical development. Genuinely new potentialities arise as a result of human *praxis*. Marx's understanding of human potentialities as rooted in history foreshadows themes that have been central to contemporary phenomenology with its insistence that the basic reality that man encounters is his *Lebenswelt*, and that it is only by sensitively understanding this *Lebenswelt* that one discovers new human potentialities.

The essential thrust of Marx's dialectical development throws into relief another common objection to his thought and resolves a perplexity which many readers have felt. It is frequently pointed out that Marx provides us with only the sketchiest outlines of what a future communist or humanist society will be like. Some readers have been perplexed by Marx's relentless scorn of utopian thinking. For Marx as for Hegel, speculation about future possibilities which is not rooted in a critical understanding of present institutions is idle and unrealistic. Marx is in complete agreement with Hegel when he says in the Preface to the *Philosophy of Right* that "if . . . theory really goes beyond the world as it is and builds an ideal one as it ought to be, that world exists indeed, but only in his opinions,

78. Lobkowitz, op. cit., p. 315.

an unsubstantial element where anything you please may, in fancy, be built."⁷⁹ On many occasions, Marx warns that he is concerned with communism and socialism only as they emerge from the womb of capitalism—from present political and economic institutions. Marx does not begin with a vision or norm of what ought to be and then proceed to criticize what is, in light of this norm. His position (and Hegel's) is severely critical of this Kantian bias. It makes eminently good sense—from the perspective of this dialectical development in Marx's thought—that *Capital* and his other writings after the 1840's are dedicated almost exclusively to a critical understanding of present institutions and developments.

The above sketch not only reveals the direction of Marx's thought, it has important metaphysical and epistemological implications. Marx's central concepts such as alienation and *praxis* demand a radical rethinking of the most fundamental epistemological concepts that have preoccupied modern philosophers. Marx was not only aware of this: we can find in his writings hints of such a radical epistemology, one which challenges what I have called the main epistemological dogma of modern philosophy.

It is not by any superficial or careless reasoning that most modern thinkers have been led to maintain dichotomies between the is and the ought, the descriptive and the prescriptive, fact and value. In a variety of ways, philosophers have argued that whatever status we assign to values, norms, and ideals, they are not objective phenomena to be discovered in *nature*. Science, our most powerful and successful means for exploring nature, can tell us only what is; it can describe, explain, predict, but it cannot tell us in any categorical sense what ought to be. If we want to find the philosophic arguments in support of such a position, we need only study the works of most of the major figures or movements in philosophy since Descartes. Hume (in some of his moods), Kant, classical materialism, logical positivism and empiricism are all agreed about this "dogma." But it is precisely this dogma that is the focal point of Marx's (and Hegel's) attack.

In a soul-searching letter written to his father in 1837 when Marx was nineteen—he announces this concern: ". . . I was greatly disturbed by the conflict between what is and what ought to be. . . . In

79. *Philosophy of Right*, p. 11; *Grundlinien der Philosophie des Rechts*, p. 16.

the concrete expression of the living world of thought—as in law, the state, nature, philosophy as a whole—the object itself must be studied in its development; there must be no arbitrary classifications; the rationale of the thing itself must be disclosed in all its contradictoriness and find its unity in itself” (*Y.M.*, pp. 42-43; *I*, p. 9). Marx’s thought here is still inchoate but the direction is clear. What Marx found in Hegel is an attempt, indeed the most ambitious attempt in post-Kantian philosophy, to overcome the dichotomy of the “is” and the “ought,” and throughout his life, Marx’s polemics against those who insisted on some version of this dichotomy were no less vehement than Hegel’s similar critiques.

To sharpen our sensitivity to the issues involved, consider again the passage cited from Lobkowitz, in which he says that Hegel and Marx measure man’s alienated state “against a human potentiality which, though at first it emerges in an alienated state, allows one to envisage a previously unknown possibility of ultimate human self-actualization.” From the bias of modern philosophy, this claim is at best misleading and at worst false or nonsensical. Human alienation is, strictly speaking, not an objective phenomenon. It is not something that is directly or even indirectly observed. Strictly speaking, we should say that we observe certain value-free characteristics and when we label these “alienation” we are making a logically independent value judgment. The very concept of potentiality is suspect from the perspective of a tough-minded empiricism; it is a posit or construct based upon what is directly observable. It is this anti-septic notion of observation—and more generally—the view that our cognitive categories are value neutral that Marx (and Hegel) are attacking as false. In his own way, Marx is attacking the notion of the “myth of the given”⁸⁰—the idea that we can sharply distinguish that which is immediately given to us in cognition from what is constructed, inferred, or interpreted by us. In this respect there is a strong family resemblance between what Marx is claiming and what has been claimed by many of the most sophisticated contemporary philosophers, whether of an analytic or phenomenological orientation. Marx would agree that all observation is “theory-

80. This expression has been recently popularized by Wilfrid Sellars. His own philosophic investigations represent a sustained critique of “the myth of the given” in its multiple forms. See *Science, Perception and Reality*, especially Chapter 5, “Empiricism and the Philosophy of Mind.”

laden,”⁸¹ and that the reality we know and encounter is conditioned by the “forms of life” that have evolved in human social institutions.

The central motif here can be traced back to Kant who emphasized the constructive, categorical aspect of judgment. But unlike Kant, Marx does not believe there is any *Ding-an-sich* that stands apart from human knowing, and furthermore, Marx would maintain that our basic categories change and develop in history. Nor is Marx sympathetic with those thinkers who interpret man’s cognitive perspective as an act of individual will or arbitrary convention. What is distinctive about Marx’s reflections on human cognition is the way in which he relates it to the evolution of man’s practical needs as manifested in his social life. It is *praxis* that turns out to be the key for understanding the full range of man’s developing cognitive activities.

Georg Lukács first underscored this aspect of Marx’s thought and more recently Leszek Kolakowski has articulated the epistemology implicit in Marx’s early writings—one that shows us that man’s practical relation to the objects and the world he confronts is the basis for understanding man’s cognitive relationship to the world.⁸²

Human consciousness, the practical mind, although it does not produce existence, produces existence as composed of individuals and divided into species and genera. From the moment man in his onto- and phylogenesis begins to dominate the world of things intellectually—from the moment he invents instruments that can organize it and then expresses this organization in words—he finds that world already constructed and differentiated, not according to some alleged natural classification but according to a classification imposed by practical need for orientation in one’s environment.⁸³

The world that man encounters, attempts to dominate, finds satisfaction in, and wants to know is not a world that exists in and of itself independently of man’s relation to it. We must be careful here.

81. See N. R. Hanson, *Patterns of Discovery*; Paul Feyerabend, “Explanation, Reduction, and Empiricism,” *Minnesota Studies in the Philosophy of Science*, Vol. 3.

82. Georg Lukács, *Geschichte und Klassenbewusstsein*; Leszek Kolakowski, “Karl Marx and the Classical Definition of Truth,” in *Toward a Marxist Humanism*, trans. by Jane Zielonko Peel. Sartre, in a very perceptive footnote, points out the epistemological implications of the concept of *praxis*: *Search for a Method*, pp. 32-33; *Critique de la raison dialectique*, I, pp. 30-31.

83. Kolakowski, op. cit., p. 46.

For while Marx is appropriating an insight central to idealism, he rejects Hegel's notion that nature is externalized *Geist*. There is always a nonhuman "natural substratum" or "stuff" that man works upon and shapes. He is a natural being among other natural beings. And there "exists a reality that is common to all people, and that remains forever in a state of incipience."⁸⁴ But Kolakowski is dead right when he characterizes Marx's basic idea as follows:

that man as a cognitive being is only part of man as a whole; that that part is constantly involved in a process of progressive autonomization, nevertheless it cannot be understood otherwise than as a function of a continuing dialogue between human needs and their objects. This dialogue, called work, is created by both the human species and the external world, which thus becomes accessible to man only in its humanized form.⁸⁵

But how do these epistemological considerations bear on the issue of the dichotomy between description and prescription, fact and value? The very roots of this dichotomy are misconceived. This dichotomy is based on a false understanding of man's practical-cognitive relation to the world. "The values and practical preferences we have put into this world are concealed within it, we no longer see the mark we have stamped upon the world and upon its permanent human coefficient."⁸⁶ When Marx describes the condition of man as an alienated one, he is *not* imposing arbitrary value judgments on a value neutral world; he is uncovering and revealing the *social* reality in which we find ourselves. But this social reality is not man's fixed permanent human reality. It is itself the resultant of the dynamics of human social *praxis* congealed into a world of "things" and alienated institutions. This is what Marx means when he says that "In bourgeois political economy—and in the epoch of production to which it corresponds—this complete elaboration of what lies within man, appears as the total alienation, and the destruction of all fixed, one-sided purposes as the sacrifice of the end in itself to a wholly external compulsion."⁸⁷ It is this under-

84. Kolakowski, p. 56.

85. Kolakowski, p. 66.

86. Kolakowski, p. 63.

87. Karl Marx, *Pre-Capitalist Economic Formations*, p. 85; Marx, *Grundrisse der Kritik der politischen Ökonomie*, p. 387.

standing of our present objective alienated condition that reveals the possibility of a humanized nature—one in which the reality that man shapes and works upon no longer has the status of an alien, hostile character, but is a world in which

man appropriates to himself his manifold essence in an all-sided way, thus as a whole man. Every one of his *human* relations to the world—seeing, hearing, smelling, tasting, feeling, thinking, perceiving, sensing, wishing, acting, loving—in short, all the organs of his individuality, which are immediately communal in form, are an appropriation of the object in their *objective*-relation [*Verhalten*] or their *relation to it*. This appropriation of *human* actuality and its relation to the object is the confirmation of human actuality.⁸⁸

But if it is true that man's present reality and world is an objectively alienated one, then the abstract possibility of a "humanized world" only becomes a real possibility through a radical transformation of this objectified alienated condition—by revolutionary *praxis*.

I want to be as explicit as I can in clarifying what I am and am not claiming concerning Marx's basic orientation—one which emerges from his understanding of *praxis*. I am not claiming that Marx solved, once and for all time, the so-called problem of fact and value or the "is-ought" dichotomy. I am claiming, however, that to approach Marx from the perspective of these dichotomies is to distort what he *sought* to achieve. Marx was only incidentally interested in metaphysical and epistemological issues—and after his early writings they receded into the background for him. We find, at best, hints and suggestions, not a well-developed theory. Nevertheless, one cannot overemphasize the change of perspective on social reality that Marx was attempting to bring about—one which would justify an understanding of man where it could be legitimately claimed that "In bourgeois political economy—and in the epoch of production to which it corresponds—*this complete elaboration of what lies within man, appears as the total alienation . . .*" (italics added).

The complex issues involved here are not only fundamental for an understanding of Marx—his scorn of utopian thinking, his relentless criticism of existing institutions of political economy, his attacks on Kantians of all varieties—they have formed the essential prob-

88. *Young Marx*, p. 307; *MEGA*, I.3, p. 118.

lematic of much of the history of Marxist thought since Marx. Some have read Marx as a crypto-moralist and some as a crypto-positivist announcing the coming of the new and final science of man. Both extremes, and the many variations on them, neglect the ways in which Marx's understanding of *praxis* and alienation presents a basic challenge to the dichotomy of the descriptive and the prescriptive which has shaped so much of modern thought and is presupposed by so much of contemporary "social science." For those who seek to develop a Marxist perspective, the most central and difficult task is to further develop, explore, and justify Marx's radical "anthropology."

We have now attempted to justify our claim that *praxis* is the central concept of Marx's outlook and to articulate what he means by *praxis*. What might at first seem to be a chaotic array of meanings—*praxis* as human activity, production, labor, alienation, relentless criticism, and revolutionary practice—are aspects of a single, comprehensive and coherent theory of man and his world. Our primary emphasis thus far has been to develop an interpretation of the meaning and centrality of *praxis* for Marx, but we must now ask in a more direct manner, just what Marx and Marxism have contributed to our understanding of human action.

But first let us consider the recent revival of interest in Marx. During the past few decades, no other intellectual figure has received so much discussion and has so deeply influenced men's thinking throughout the world. Marx's influence is not sufficient to justify the correctness of his orientation, but it can provide clues to the power and insight of his thought. The revival of interest that I have in mind has little to do with the dogmatics of Marxist interpretation that has become a form of scholasticism in many Communist countries and for many Communist parties. It is a revival that represents a counter-movement and challenge to Communist dogmatics. Roughly speaking, we can classify the revival of interest in Marx into three groupings: scholarly, religious, and political.

Recently there has been a tremendous scholarly interest in interpreting and rediscovering the "historical" Marx. In part this has been stimulated by the publication of Marx's early writings which have become available only since the 1930's. Scholars from almost every country in the East and West have participated in this study

and in the problems and conflicts generated by the variety of interpretations. Even though we can bracket this aspect of the Marxist revival as an "objective" scholarly interest, there is frequently an underlying motivation or rationale for the "new" scholarly interpretation of Marx. It is too simple to think that the concern for Marx is sufficiently explained by the fact that Marx is taken as the "official" philosopher or intellectual spokesman of existing Communist societies. The Marx that is being "rediscovered" is drastically different from the "official" Marx of Communist ideologists. As so frequently happens in the history of scholarship, the examination of a thinker becomes a central concern because there is a deep belief in the relevance of his ideas to our present situation. Certainly this motivation is manifest in much of the best writing on Marx in our time. Although the historical scholar can and must abide by the canons of historical research and objectivity, he can and often does select his subject because he feels a special empathy with it, because he thinks that we can not only learn about the past but about ourselves from a proper understanding of a great thinker's thought. But what is it about Marx that still "speaks" to so many intellectuals? We can approximate a partial answer by considering the "religious" interest in Marx.

At first, it might seem surprising that Marx, who was so critical of religion and theology, should have a special significance for religious thinkers. But some of the best interpretation and discussion of Marx in France, Germany, and even America has been by religious thinkers. Perhaps one might think this is simply a matter of knowing "one's adversary," but again I think this is too superficial an answer. We have seen in our discussion of *praxis* and human alienation that Marx can be read as developing a systematic and comprehensive "philosophical" anthropology. The more one penetrates to the quintessence of Marx's thought, the more one can see the presence of themes (in a secularized form) that have preoccupied religious thinkers throughout the ages—the severity of human alienation, the apocalyptic sense of the imminence of the coming revolution, and the messianic aspiration that infuses much of Marx's thinking. Even the temperament and outlook of Marx are in the direct vein of the Biblical prophets. Ironically, just as Marx sought to uncover the latent truth in religious suffering, so now many contemporary religious interpreters of Marx seek to uncover the religious

significance of his secular thought. Contemporary theologians claim that Marx speaks much more directly to man's religious condition than do acknowledged "religious thinkers." Marx, especially the early Marx, has come to be *used* as a basis for critique of more superficial theological and religious beliefs. Marx's thought not only expresses the dominant themes of the history of Western culture, it also speaks to our deepest aspirations and hopes—that the day will come when man will be freely and creatively fulfilled.

The third aspect of the revival of interest in Marx is, I believe, the most interesting and important. Although it is often disguised behind the façade of scholarly interest—especially in Eastern Communist countries—it has explosive political significance. In countries such as Poland, Czechoslovakia, and Yugoslavia, the rediscovery of "authentic" Marxism has been the primary intellectual weapon for the criticism of the totalitarian and bureaucratic tendencies of existing Communist regimes. Implicitly—and sometimes explicitly—the basic argument emerging is that Communist societies do not represent the historical realization of Marxism, but its betrayal. This underlying political concern finds its counterpart in the West. Two outstanding thinkers who look to an enriched Marxism as providing the viable context for coming to grips with present political, economic, and social problems are Jean-Paul Sartre and Maurice Merleau-Ponty. In West Germany and even in unofficial circles in East Germany, Ernst Bloch has served to stimulate this dimension of the contemporary interest in Marxism. The "Frankfurt school," including Adorno, Horkheimer, Marcuse, and Habermas represents one of the most creative developments of Marxist thought. In Italy the work of Gramsci is being rediscovered. For most European Marxists, both in Eastern and Western countries, the pivotal figure for the new humanistic reading of Marx has been the Hungarian Marxist, Georg Lukács. Even in America, which has never been hospitable to Marxism as a viable political orientation, we find that the basic themes that have played such a dominant role in the recent European revival of Marxism have elicited a similar response among a small but articulate group of radical thinkers groping for a political orientation with which to confront and criticize existing institutions.

What is common to the variety of types of interest in Marx—

scholarly, religious, and political—and the great diversity of thinkers deeply influenced by Marx is not any fundamental agreement about what tenets of Marxism are correct or even most important. Pervading this revival is a general sense that Marx and Marxism still provide a fund of insight, challenges, hypotheses, and suggestions for understanding what man is, for confronting existing problems, for carrying on "relentless criticism of all existing conditions." While there isn't a single claim or thesis articulated by Marx that does not demand significant critical rethinking, starting with Marx's reflections on *praxis* provides us with some of the most fruitful leads in understanding and criticizing our *present* social reality, for coming to a better grasp of what man is and can become.

One way of judging the value and significance of an intellectual orientation is by the problems it uncovers, the challenges it forces us to confront, the hypotheses it suggests, and the insight that it brings to bear on a variety of issues—by what Whitehead once called the "sense of importance." On these grounds, Marxism—and in particular the Marxist conception of *praxis*—must be judged to be one of the richest and most vital intellectual orientations of our times. Marxism has been pronounced "dead" many times, but it would be difficult to specify another intellectual orientation that has elicited so much original thought.

As we follow out the themes of *praxis* and action in the other thinkers and movements to be explored, we will see more vividly how Marx's thought functions as a corrective and a challenge (while it also needs to be complemented by these other views). In tracing the "logic" of existentialist thought, we will see how it faces the danger of resulting in a form of romantic solipsism where the obsessive concern for the existing individual is in danger of losing all contact with social reality. This tendency is poignantly illustrated in the intellectual biography of Sartre, who after developing a thoroughgoing ontology in which the individual is virtually isolated from his fellowmen (despite Sartre's counter claims), has been for the last thirty years desperately trying to fight his way out of this impasse. It is no accident that in his systematic attempt to come to grips with social reality and its complex facticity and dynamics, Sartre has turned to Marx—and, in particular, to Marx's concept of *praxis*—for illumination.

We shall see too that when we discuss pragmatism, there are striking similarities and differences with Marxism. The pragmatists have been especially sensitive to the epistemological and metaphysical consequences of the shift in orientation that focuses on man as an active being who is shaped by and shapes existing practices. The dominance of the category of the practical, the emphasis on social categories for understanding man and the ways in which man functions in a community, and even the understanding of man's cognitive activities from the perspective of his practical activity, pervade the pragmatists' investigations. Although Peirce was almost totally indifferent to the concrete problems of social and political philosophy, Dewey considered these to be central to a reconstructed philosophy. Paradoxically, Dewey—of all the thinkers considered—is the closest and furthest away from Marx. *Au fond*, Dewey was a reformer. He was deeply skeptical of the demand for revolution as understood by Marx. Dewey's advocacy of liberal amelioration would have been seen as the greatest threat to genuine revolutionary *praxis*, and I have no doubt that Marx would have attacked Dewey in the same ruthless manner in which he attacked all "true socialists." The dialectic that can take place between Marx and Dewey is the political dialectic of our time. On the Marxist side, there is the sharp criticism that liberalism can be self-defeating and sanction what it seeks to change. From a Marxist point of view, reformist liberalism of Dewey's variety doesn't get at roots and fails to appreciate the extent to which conditions of political economy as they now exist in advanced capitalist societies (including the state capitalism of many so-called Communist countries) continues to perpetuate the alienation and exploitation of man. If we are honest about the inadequacy of Dewey's faith in creative intelligence, in his fundamental belief that through the educational process we can create a new type of man and a new type of society, we cannot be insensitive to the Marxist critique. The crises that we are now confronting in America in race relations, in the crumbling of our cities, in the failures of our school system, in the realization of how impotent government controls are in the face of increasing pollution, are indications of inability of reformist liberalism to come to grips with the social problems and crises that confront us all. But on the side of Dewey and the pragmatists, we cannot forget how easily a demand for absolute

humanism and human emancipation can turn into its opposite—absolute totalitarianism. Radicalism, not simply as a professed intellectual ideal but as actual political practice, is double-edged. It can and has at times ended in destroying the basic ideals professed by the most thoroughgoing radicals. We can, from the vantage point of scholarly objectivity, say that the crimes committed in the name of "orthodox" Marxism are the greatest perversion of the letter and spirit of Marx's work, that the Marxism represented by a Stalin is an absolute distortion of Marx. But such a claim, which is all too common today, tends to be naive about those elements in Marxism which allowed for such a perversion and misinterpretation. I recognize that we cannot condemn Marx for the barbaric practices carried out in his name. But I believe that we must be sensitive to those elements in Marx's own thought which have allowed for this perversion. Here I think that the pragmatists can be helpful. For they had a more thoroughgoing understanding of what must be the norms of objective, self-correcting inquiry. Epistemologically and practically, they have been aware of how any theory, hypothesis, or doctrine, can all too easily pass into dogma. Marx himself practiced what the pragmatists preached about self-corrective inquiry. Although he announced and defended his theses boldly and attacked his foes with stinging polemic and sharp criticism, he was always ready to turn this critique on himself and reject what he took to be vague, misleading, and superficial. But it cannot be said that this ongoing critique has always been practiced by those who have called themselves "Marxists." Too frequently, and with tragic results, they have turned Marxism into a new form of uncritical dogmatism. I do not think that there is any neat solution to the claims and counterclaims of a Marx and a Dewey, but I do believe that the issues that arise from this confrontation are the central issues of social philosophy in our time.

The issues and orientation that are characteristic of Marx and Marxism and those of analytic philosophy are extremely remote from each other. As a historical comment, this is undeniable. But here too there is the real possibility of a creative dialectic. On the side of analytic philosophy, perhaps no other movement in the history of philosophy has placed such a high priority on clarity, rigor, and subtlety. It has made us self-conscious of intellectual standards that must be placed on any legitimate intellectual position, includ-

ing Marxism. It places upon Marxism the challenge to seriously encounter the insights, distinctions, and claims that have been the fruit of analytic investigations. To condemn the whole of the analytic movement as nothing but a faulty outcropping of an idealistic bourgeois superstructure is to be guilty of the worst sort of intellectual provincialism. It is to betray what was so fundamental to Marx himself, the willingness and ability to carry on a careful critique of alternative intellectual orientations. But analytic philosophy has paid a heavy price for this clarity and rigor. It is itself guilty of harboring suppressed premises and convictions. To a greater extent than is warranted, analytic philosophy has isolated itself from the practical concerns of men, from what Dewey called the "problems of men." Its contribution to political and social philosophy has been virtually nonexistent, and analytic ethics has tended to become an arid, scholastic jungle. Analytic philosophers, and especially younger students of analytic philosophy, are growing restless with the artificial, self-imposed limitations of the movement. I am not making the fashionable but false charge that analytic philosophy fails to treat the "big, important" issues of life. We will see that this is not true. My quarrel is an immanent one, which can be justified only when we examine analytic philosophy in detail, but which can be briefly indicated here. From a variety of angles, analytic philosophy has affirmed the importance of social practices and institutions in understanding man—his language, his morals, and especially his activity. But analytic philosophers tend to stop the inquiry just where Marx and the Marxists begin to ask questions. There has been virtually no attempt among analytic philosophers to press further, to ask critical questions about the origin and development of these social institutions and practices which shape what we are. In principle, analytic philosophers are open to such questions. In fact, they have not seriously asked them. Marx thought he had discovered an overall pattern that could explain and throw critical light on all existing social institutions, not just well-recognized political and economic ones, but institutions that affect every aspect of human life and activity. Whatever our reservations and conclusions about Marx's theory, it cannot be denied that he showed the possibility and the importance of asking and trying to answer questions which analytic philosophers have scarcely begun to ask—questions concerning the origin and nature

of social institutions that pervade and shape human life. These questions cannot be conveniently assigned to some other approach or discipline; they are questions that must be confronted in pursuing the very issues central to analytic philosophy. The richness, the variety of possible directions for explorations, the challenges presented to every other contemporary intellectual orientation, the profundity of Marx's reflections on *praxis* continue to provide a matrix for us in coming to an understanding of what it is to be an active human being.