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THE DEVELOPMENT OF MARX'S SOCIAL
AND POLITICAL THEORY

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SUMMARY

This thesis provides an argument concerning the development of Marx's social and political theory. The subject is divided into three separate parts dealing respectively with the intellectual foundations of Marx's thought, his social theory and his political theory. It is argued in Part I that the methodology and epistemology of Marx's writings of 1843 do not constitute the foundation on which his later theory is built. Indeed, the methodology and epistemology of the early writings are shown to be contrary to what is implicit in Capital and other later works. The final chapter of Part I demonstrates that the dialectical method in Marx is not a version of Hegel's. In the three chapters of the second part of the thesis is discussed the influence of Feuerbachian thought on Marx's theory of society, the concept of 'society' in Marx and his critique of liberal individualism, and finally, his theory of capitalist exploitation and dehumanisation. The last two chapters, in Part III of the thesis, explore themes of Marx's political theory; his theory of the state as alienated power in one, and the theory of the state as a class instrument in the other. In all of these chapters the relationship between Marx's early and mature thought is discussed as it affects the particular topic under consideration. The basic position taken in the dissertation is that there is a significant theoretical development in Marx's thought and that the early writings have a theoretical content quite unlike that of the mature work.

This thesis contains no material which has been accepted for the award of any other degree or diploma in any university and to the best of my knowledge, it contains no material previously published or written by anyone else, except when due reference is made in the text.

J. Barbalet

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NOTE ON CITATION

References in the footnotes are identified by author and title of work only, this is irrespective of whether the source referred to is a monograph, chapter of a book or an article.

Full bibliographical information is contained in the Bibliography at the end.

The abbreviation 'MESW' used in footnotes throughout refers to the Moscow edition, Marx and Engels, Selected Works in three volumes.

INTRODUCTION

Any work which attempts an argument concerning the development of Marx's thought must first face the question of whether it is to deal with his works chronologically or thematically, whether to begin with the writings of the early 1840s and proceed to the works of the 1870s, or to begin with alienation, say, and moving through a range of themes finish with surplus value or the dictatorship of the proletariat. The procedure employed in this dissertation is an amalgamation of both approaches.

The subject has been divided into three broad areas on a thematic basis, and within each area the separate chapters deal with different themes, although there is inevitably some overlap between them. The three parts of the thesis are respectively concerned with the intellectual foundations of Marx's theory, his social theory and his political theory. Within each of the three parts and within each of the eight chapters there has been some attempt to provide also a chronological treatment. The chapters of Part I, for instance, deal with issues raised in the 1843 Critique of Hegel's Philosophy of Right and the Introduction to the Critique and their relation to Marx's treatment of the same problems in his later writings. Part II similarly treats the Paris Writings and Part III, the transition of Marx's political theory from the Paris Writings to The German Ideology. Each chapter contrasts an early statement of an aspect of Marx's thought with a statement drawn from his mature writings.

Recent scholarly interest in Marx has focussed on two general problems, the theoretical content of his early thought and also its intellectual background, in particular its relation to the Hegelian tradition. A number of different positions have been taken by various writers in the critical literature, but two alternatives immediately present themselves as influential. One argues that Marx's early thought, drawn from an

Hegelian background, constitutes the theoretical foundation upon which his later thought is developed. The other, that Marx's early thought, drawn from an Hegelian background, does not constitute the theoretical foundation upon which his later thought is developed. These may be characterised as the 'continuity' thesis and the 'discontinuity' thesis. The argument to be presented here takes issue with both of these interpretations of Marx's development.

The common assumption, that Marx's theory bears some relation to Hegel's, while in a sense uncontestable, is quite misleading. It is argued in various places below that while Marx was clearly influenced by Hegel, and that he reacted against him, Marx's theory and method owe nothing of significance to Hegel. Not only does the emphasis on the Hegelian background of Marx's thought present an inadequate picture in itself, it also leads to the neglect of other intellectual influences on Marx which were in many ways more important. It will be demonstrated that in his early writings, where Hegel's influence is almost uniformly considered to be at its strongest, Marx's social and political theory is heavily coloured by English political economy, liberal social thought and the political doctrines of a revolutionary democratic tradition. Hegel's importance to Marx, on the other hand, is shown to be of a lesser order.

On the question of Marx's development, it will be suggested that there is a continuity in Marx's thought. Many of his early concerns were not abandoned, but formed the first exploratory attempts to grapple with a set of problems with which Marx continued to deal and of which he continued to achieve a deeper grasp. It will also be argued, however, that alongside this continuity of interests in Marx there is a significant theoretical discontinuity. Marx's explanation of the democratic state, for instance, of alienation, of class and private property, to name but a

few concepts Marx continued to use in his writing, are understood through different theoretical frameworks at different stages of his development. Methodological and epistemological principles are also shown to be fundamentally different at different times.

In his early critique of Hegel Marx outlined the idea that the development of the political state must be conceived in terms of human history. It is the elaboration of this idea which leads Marx to formulate a number of theoretical accounts of history and society, and on which he attempted to found a theory of revolution and human emancipation. Up to 1845 Marx seemed to be dissatisfied with the results of his research, for he abandoned several different theories almost as soon as they were formulated. Marx does find his intellectual feet, however, with The German Ideology and thereafter continues to build upon the social and political theory first outlined in that work. This thumbnail sketch of Marx's development, which is argued in detail below, recognises a unity of purpose in Marx's thought while at the same time suggesting that he was more interested in attempting to understand social reality than he was in remaining consistent with a position early stated.

It is possible to follow a single idea or cluster of ideas through Marx's work and observe the manner in which they are developed and are refined in his long-term treatment of them. Several chapters below do this for many concepts in Marx. There is an obvious continuity of thought when Marx can be observed to use the same concepts through a number of works, modifying them, extending or contracting their application, certainly, but nevertheless continually employing them as part of his intellectual equipment. A large and sophisticated literature, predominantly concerned with the concept of alienation, has demonstrated this type of linear continuity of concepts in Marx. It confirms a unity of

thought in Marx which would be foolish to deny. But a unity of this nature can coexist with a theoretical development in which there are many points of new departure.

The concept of alienation is most suitable in demonstrating that despite the various refinements and developments it undergoes in Marx's thought it can be found in his writings from the Critique of Hegel's Philosophy of Right to Capital. The development of concepts, however, entails much more than mere changes in their content. The fact that a concept is refined or changed in any way indicates an alteration in the system of thought in which it resides. For concepts derive their meaning from the theory of which they are a part. Outside of a theoretical context which relates concept to concept, provides them with meaning, ascribes them a significance and places them in a hierarchy of logical and explanatory order, concepts can exist only as vacuous categories. Conceptual development, then, entails modifications in the position and function of the concept within the theory in which it is used. Conceptual change pari passu amounts to a change in theory, to theoretical change.

This is not to say that such theoretical change will necessarily be of a fundamental nature. Clearly, a conceptual refinement may change a theory by making it internally consistent where it had been inconsistent prior to the modification of a concept or group of concepts. But the important point is that tracing the evolution of a particular concept through the course of Marx's intellectual development, demonstrating that he always had a place for it, without reference to the wider theoretical context, can not itself confirm a theoretical consistency in Marx's thought. As concepts are dependent on theories for their meaning the continuity of isolated concepts proves little in itself. The argument of the chapters below, that the theoretical content of Marx's thought is

different in different periods of his writing, is maintained by keeping the question of theory as opposed to that of concept at the forefront of discussion.

The proposition to be argued in this dissertation, that there is a theoretical dissimilarity between Marx's early works and his mature writings, is not based on an argument that Marx entertains merely different theories at different times. Marx's theory of surplus value, for instance, was developed in the late 1850s. It might be argued on this basis that Marx's writings prior to the draft Grundrisse der Kritik der Politischen Ökonomie, in which the theory was first elaborated, are 'discontinuous' with his writings after the Grundrisse. But such an argument which ignored the fact that the theory of surplus value was constructed through an application of the historical methodology first outlined in The German Ideology would run the risk of triviality. For while The German Ideology does not contain Marx's mature theory of exploitation the latter could be developed only on the foundation of the former. Any argument of discontinuity on the basis of an absence of the theory of surplus value in The German Ideology would demonstrate little of significance, even though the point itself may be important. The absence of an explicit statement of the implications and applications of a theory clearly can not be regarded as evidence for a claim that a theoretical framework employed at one time is different to that employed at another.

The position to be developed in the following chapters holds that from the point of view of theoretical formulation Marx's early works, written before The German Ideology, constitute a unit of thought which does not occupy the same methodological, epistemological and substantive theoretical space as his writings after The German Ideology. That is, his writings before the formulation of historical materialism in The

German Ideology do not constitute the theoretical foundation of Marx's mature thought. Several issues are raised by this proposition, such as the question of the unity of the early works on the one hand and the mature works on the other, the nature of the relation between the early and mature works, the general problem of historical or biographical periodisation and so forth.

To say that Marx's early and mature works constitute two distinct theoretical units is not to deny that Marx's thought underwent significant theoretical development before and also after 1845. Neither does it deny that the early writings provide the latter with a chronological and an intellectual foundation. For in dealing with particular problems which arose in the early writings the later works are furnished with a number of issues requiring resolution. The problem of the relation between the state and civil society, for instance, discussed in detail in the 1843 Critique, is dealt with by Marx in one form or another throughout his work. Up to 1845 a range of possibilities are explored, and after 1845 a number of treatments are elaborated. But the theoretical form of these different endeavours, which focus on what is essentially a common problem, are based on fundamentally different methodological, epistemological and theoretical foundations in the early writings than those employed in the mature works.

It is probably fair to say that all interpretations of Marx's thought generally accept a descriptive differentiation between a 'young Marx' and a 'mature Marx'. In his writings up to, say, 1846, Marx employed an expository style which is clearly quite different from the style of his writings after that year. It is also apparent that in the former period words such as 'alienation' are frequently used but relatively scarce thereafter. A primary concern in Marx with philosophical

issues is largely confined to his early writing, while economic analysis occupied his attention in the writings of the later period. Upon these differences of style, language and intellectual focus is based the shorthand terms referring to 'early' and 'mature' writings in Marx. This dichotomous periodisation recommends itself in being both simple and uncontroversial. In itself it implies nothing about the theoretical content of Marx's work. Arguments relating to this question have to be defended on other grounds. The eight chapters which follow attempt to perform such a task.

PART I

FOUNDATIONS

The three chapters which form the first part of this thesis deal with the foundations of Marx's thought. Beginning with Marx's major early writings, the Critique of Hegel's Philosophy of Right and the Introduction to the Critique, it is argued that the chronological foundations of Marx's work do not provide an intellectual foundation to his later thought.

The importance of theory to Marx was always its political significance. The first chapter begins, therefore, with a consideration of his early theory of revolution. It shows that while Marx employs in his early writings concepts similar to those found in his later work, they are different in content and import than those which form his later revolutionary theory. The concept of the proletariat, for instance, the agent of revolutionary transformation, has a place in the discussion of both the Introduction and the Communist Manifesto, but it refers to differently conceived social entities. The notion of theory and practice is also different in each work.

An account of Marx's analysis of civil society similarly demonstrates that the concepts of class and property developed in the Critique are different than the concepts of class and property elaborated in his writings after 1845. Through a discussion of Marx's early theory of revolution, state and society it is shown in the first chapter below that he does not provide a methodological foundation for his mature thought in the early writings. Indeed, it is demonstrated that Marx's early revolutionary theory is based upon a method which is quite different than that which he later employed.

This general theme is continued in the next chapter, which deals with Marx's epistemology. A close examination of the theory of knowledge of the Critique reveals that while Marx develops a forceful critique of

Hegel's epistemology, he elaborates an alternative to it which nevertheless does not escape the general confines of idealism. The essentialist epistemology of the Critique employs a model of reality which is non-empirical and formalist. This contrasts sharply with the epistemology of Capital, which is at once empirical without being empiricist. In Capital a notion of essence is developed in Marx's theory of knowledge which avoids conceptualising the phenomenal form of social relations and makes accessible the inner relations of empirical social forces which give rise to their phenomenal form.

It is shown in the second chapter, therefore, that Marx's mature epistemology, which is shown to be central to his social scientific enterprise, does not draw on his early thought, but contrasts sharply with it. The first two chapters, then, largely stress the discontinuity of the methodological and epistemological content of Marx's theoretical development. This is not to say that biographically speaking Marx's later thought did not evolve out of his early intellectual endeavours. It shows, rather, that the theoretical content of the early intellectual foundations of Marx's social and political theory is not the same as the methodology and epistemology at the root of his later social and political theory.

The argument of the third chapter is different than that of the previous two in so far as it stresses not discontinuity but continuity. It argues that Marx throughout his work continually rejected Hegel's dialectical method. In considering the intellectual foundations of Marx's social and political theory it is impossible to ignore the view, first propounded by Engels, but also advocated by numerous modern scholars, that Marx rescued Hegel's dialectical method from the speculative philosophical system which he repudiated.

It is shown in the final chapter of this first section of the thesis that what is usually cited as textual evidence for the view that Marx appropriated Hegel's dialectic and stood it on its feet, is in fact evidence for the contrary proposition. Marx rejected Hegel's dialectic — inverted or otherwise — at every opportunity. This is demonstrated by an examination of Marx's treatment of Hegel's 'dialectic of negativity' in the 1844 Economic and Philosophic Manuscripts and by Marx's discussion elsewhere. It is also revealed that Marx's own assessment of Hegel's method and his relation to it is totally at odds with the argument that Marx's dialectical method was bequeathed to him by Hegel.

Apart from the methodological and epistemological concern of the first part of this dissertation, a strong focus which emerges in these chapters is Marx's theoretical relation to Hegel. It is shown that Hegel was important to Marx's early development, but that he took little from him. In his earliest writings Marx's criticisms of Hegel sometimes took the form of an internal critique, so that he did not always escape the influence of Hegel's thought, even though he opposed it. But as Marx elaborated and developed his own position, and modified its original expression, Hegel was left far behind.

Other issues too emerge in these chapters, but only to be introduced. The question of Marx's use of Feuerbach's critique of Hegel, the early conception of civil society in Marx, the theme of alienation, and the theory of the state are all mentioned here but elaborated upon in later chapters. The more general question of the development of Marx's thought from his early grapplings with philosophical and social issues to his mature critique of political economy, and the different theoretical content of each, which is central to the discussion here, is also a part of all the discussion which follows in later chapters.

Chapter 1

METHODOLOGY

The question of method in Marx must inevitably lead to the further question of Marx's materialist theory, and the question of theory in Marx raises the question of its unity with practice. This chapter opens with the claim that Marx's first statement of a revolutionary commitment contains a strong non-materialist impetus which, assuming a correspondence of theory and practice, suggests that Marx was in 1843 not yet committed to materialism. There follows a comparison of the theory of proletarian revolution stated in the Introduction to the Critique of Hegel's Philosophy of Right on the one hand, and that of the Communist Manifesto on the other. The comparison demonstrates that Marx's theoretical formulations in the earlier work are replaced by a different conception of the proletariat and a different analysis of proletarian revolution in the later pamphlet. This suggests that the methodology of his early thought is also different from the methodology which underlies Marx's mature writings. This point is amplified in an examination which follows of the development of the class concept in Marx's writings, and also the concept of private property.

It has often been held that the works of the period 1843 to 1845 provide Marx's later thought with a theoretical and methodological foundation. The present chapter attempts to indicate that the revolutionary theory of Marx's early writings is based upon a different methodological foundation than that fundamental to the theory of the Communist Manifesto, for instance, and the works thereafter. By analysing Marx's discussion of the relations between state and civil society and his conception of the elements of civil society — namely class and property — in the Critique of Hegel's Philosophy of Right, it is demonstrated that the early works employ a different methodological model than that which is integral to Marx's mature social and political theory.

Several issues which are raised in this chapter are more fully developed later in the thesis. While the present chapter touches upon Feuerbachian materialism in Marx, a full discussion of Feuerbachian materialism and its role in Marx's early writings is left to Chapter 4 below. Marx's early conception of civil society is similarly mentioned in this chapter, but fully discussed in Chapter 5. There is also a brief account of Marx's early theory of the state in the present chapter, but a full discussion of the theory of the state as alienated social power is conducted in Chapter 7. In that chapter there is also an account of the development of the class concept in Marx's thought and the relevance of this development to other aspects of his social theory. These and other issues are referred to in the present chapter only to clarify Marx's methodological position.

I

The conception of Marxism as a unity of theory and practice crystallises exactly the close relation in Marx's thought between methodology and epistemology on the one hand, and political perception, orientation and objective on the other. Taking this notion a stage further, some commentators have argued that Marx's unchanging political objective — which might be summarised as the quest for human emancipation and liberation — is at the root of a theoretical unity in Marx's thought over time. This has led to the view in some writers that as it can be shown that Marx was a political revolutionary and materialist in his mature works, then evidence of revolutionary politics in the early works confirms their materialism also. Karl Korsch, for instance, argues for an underlying theoretical continuity on the basis of political orientation when he says that as early as 1842 Marx "was already a revolutionary materialist in [the] political sense although he was still using the

language of Hegel's idealism".¹ In this way political continuity is seen to imply methodological continuity. In a somewhat looser manner Iring Fetscher and also Gajo Petrović have written that Marx's continuing revolutionary political interest is the main unifying influence through the corpus of his work.²

While there is indeed a broad unifying political objective through Marx's writings from the mid-1840s to the 1870s, one as general as revolutionary emancipation can be conceived to have a number of different specific meanings and can be supported from a number of quite different positions, political and epistemological. It is not sufficient, therefore, in attempting to demonstrate a theoretical unity in Marx's thought, to merely show that his aspirations to a free society and his abhorrence of human servility form a common thread running throughout his work. It will be shown in this chapter that although Marx's general political objectives can be conceived as more or less uniform in his writings, the way in which he understood the goal of revolutionary practice, and also the way in which he saw that it could be achieved, are significantly different for different periods of his work. This is particularly significant as differences in the specific content of political objective corresponds to different methodological and epistemological foundations in Marx's thought. The question of epistemology will be dealt with in the following chapter. In the present chapter Marx's early theory will be discussed in terms of his methodological development.

Marx first made his revolutionary sympathies clear in a series of letters written to the Young Hegelian Arnold Ruge, which were published

¹Karl Korsch, Karl Marx, p. 173.

²Iring Fetscher, 'The Young and the Old Marx', p. 38; Gajo Petrović, Marx in the Mid-twentieth Century, p. 32.

in the Deutsch-Französische Jahrbücher. The third and last letter, dated September 1843, concludes

Our programme must be: the reform of consciousness not through dogmas but by analysing mystical consciousness obscure to itself, whether it appears in religious or political form. It will then become plain that the world has long since dreamed of something of which it needs only to become conscious for it to possess it in reality. It will then become plain that our task is not to draw a sharp mental line between past and future but to complete the thought of the past. Lastly, it will become plain that mankind will not begin any new work, but will consciously bring about the completion of its old work.

We are therefore in a position to sum up the credo of our journal in a single word: the self-clarification (critical philosophy) of the struggles and wishes of the age. This is a task for the world and for us. It can succeed only as the product of united efforts. What is needed above all is a confession, and nothing more than that. To obtain forgiveness for its sins mankind needs only to declare them for what they are.¹

Not only is this form of Marx's revolutionism "very idealistic", as David McLellan² says, it is also rejected by Marx in 1845. In The German Ideology he writes that

Since the Young Hegelians consider conceptions, thoughts, ideas, in fact all the products of consciousness, to which they attribute an independent existence, as the real chains of men (just as the Old Hegelians declared them the true bonds of human society) it is evident that the Young Hegelians have to fight only against these illusions of the consciousness. Since, according to their fantasy,

¹Karl Marx, Early Writings, p. 209. In the same letter Marx rejects communism as a "dogmatic abstraction", ibid., p. 207. Writing in the Economic and Philosophic Manuscripts of the following year Marx declares his support for communism. This is actually less significant than it first appears as the type of communism he rejects in 1843 is also explicitly rejected in the Manuscripts.

²David McLellan, Karl Marx, p. 77. Referring to this letter, George Lichtheim, The Concept of Ideology and Other Essays, p. 18, says that Marx "was already a revolutionary, but not yet a materialist".

the relationships of men, all their doings, their chains and their limitations are products of their consciousness, the Young Hegelians logically put to men the moral postulate of exchanging their present consciousness for human, critical or egoistic consciousness, and thus of removing their limitations. This demand to change consciousness amounts to a demand to interpret reality in another way, i.e., to recognise it by means of another interpretation.¹

Although Marx here mentions the Young Hegelians without referring to his own development, the position he rejects is precisely the one outlined in his letter to Ruge two or three years earlier.

It can be seen from the passages quoted above that Marx's general revolutionary position is formulated in somewhat contrary terms at different times. That Marx's later formulation does not include an explicit repudiation of his earlier view is immaterial to the fact that the two positions are dissimilar in content.² As Marx's earliest revolutionary statement takes an idealist form, it can not be taken for granted that the symmetry between the revolutionary political perception that human liberation requires the overthrow of an oppressive social order, and the materialist methodological view, that the conditions of men and their political institutions are based in social forms and relations, is the content of a political and methodological combination in Marx's thought. This is not to assert the absence of a political and epistemological symmetry in the early works, but rather to suggest that Marx's revolutionary politics in the period up to 1845 was not tied to a materialist methodology and epistemology, as it was thereafter.

¹MESW, I, 18-19.

²Bertell Ollman, Alienation, p. xiii, on the other hand, requires self-conscious self-criticism to confirm discontinuity of thought in Marx.

The discussion below will attempt to demonstrate that the theory of revolution in the Introduction to the Critique of Hegel's Philosophy of Right, which is Marx's first statement of a theory of proletarian revolution, is significantly different from the revolutionary theory outlined in the Communist Manifesto, written four years later. It will then be argued that the methodology of the earlier writings, and the 1843 Critique of Hegel's Philosophy of Right in particular, bears little formal relation to Marx's mature 'historical materialism', which forms the methodological basis of the Communist Manifesto.

II

The Introduction and the Communist Manifesto, published in 1844 and 1848 respectively, were written under very different circumstances, under the guidance of different influences and for different specific purposes. The Introduction was written with the first flush of revolutionary contact, against the ideas of fellow philosophers, to introduce a theoretical critique which was never completed in publishable form of Hegel's political philosophy. The Communist Manifesto, on the other hand, was written under the auspices of an international revolutionary organisation, to present a political programme to organised labour, and in effect heralded the revolutions which swept through Europe only weeks after it was first printed.

These differences aside, however, both works identify the proletariat as the class of revolutionary transformation. This is a stronger similarity than the mere call for revolution, which the otherwise dissimilar letter to Ruge of 1843 and The German Ideology share. Thus the Introduction and the Communist Manifesto, as they both express a theory

of proletarian revolution, encourage comparison. Jean Hyppolite¹ goes so far as to say that the Introduction is "the germ" of the Communist Manifesto, a statement which both acknowledges any superficial differences between the two works, while emphasising their essential unity. This general position, which postulates a theoretical unity in Marx's thought on the basis of a theory of proletarian revolution, has been advanced by a number of writers. The theoretico-political continuity in Marx's thought of proletarian revolution has been stressed by Donald C. Hodges and Oscar Hammen in their separate accounts of the different formulations over time of Marx's revolutionary theory.² The apparent theoretical changes which occur in Marx's writing, they argue, have to be understood in terms of a need to develop appropriate means to mobilise the labour movement, which, on this account, was the main object of Marx's literary activities. From this premise it is argued that while the theoretical core of Marx's thought remained the same, the formulations through which it was presented changed because the concepts and terminology employed from 1842, while appropriate to the German intellectual and social milieu of the day, were tactically unfit for the conditions Marx found in Paris during 1844.³ Theoretical changes are thus regarded to be reflections of merely tactical changes in Marx's politics.

¹Jean Hyppolite, Studies in Marx and Hegel, p. 122. A similar view is that of George Lichtheim, Marxism, pp. 53-54.

²Donald Clark Hodges, 'The Unity of Marx's Thought'; Oscar J. Hammen, 'The Young Marx Reconsidered'. Neither discusses the Introduction and the Communist Manifesto in particular, but the general question of a distinction between the Young and the Old Marx.

³Hammen, op. cit., pp. 114-115. Hammen says that "the transformation of the 'Young Marx' into an allegedly changed product represents little more than a shift in tactics", ibid., p. 110. Hodges, op. cit., p. 320, similarly says that the "significance of the divergent emphasis in Marx's earlier and later writings has to be sought...in a difference of strategy rather than of principle". Both authors are mainly concerned with Marx's frequent early and scarce later use of the concept 'alienation', but their discussion has a general relevance. The same general argument is presented by Robert Tucker, Philosophy and Myth in Karl Marx, pp. 172-173, and István Mészáros, Marx's Theory of Alienation, p. 238.

It is possible, as Hodges and Hammen argue, that the different mobilising capacities of distinct theoretical formulations had some influence on the content of Marx's writing. However, the strong statement of the claim in Hodges and Hammen relies upon certain erroneous points. Conceiving developments in Marx's thought as a result of tactical changes, which, by hypothesis, are held to be subordinate to a continuing theoretically grounded political objective faced with external circumstances, begs the question — which is really at issue — of the theoretical significance of such developments.¹ To stress the mobilising aspect of theory does not deny a priori the possibility of an evolution of concept formation and substantive analysis in Marx's thought, it merely minimises the theoretical significance of any new developments in the face of an allegedly continuing theoretical and political commitment to proletarian revolution.

Different theoretical formulations generally represent different theories; if they do not it is either because the difference in formulation is minor or because theoretical commitment to a semi- or extra-theoretical objective — such as proletarian revolution — is conceived as a part of theory itself. It is the implicit subscription to the latter fallacy which sustains the argument of Hodges and Hammen. By placing a primary emphasis on the mobilising aspect of Marx's theory, Hodges and Hammen, in effect, reduce the relation between his revolutionary theory and his revolutionary practice to a propagandist function of the former to the latter at the level of formulation. This makes of Marx a mere theoretical opportunist, a proposition which ignores the strong concern

¹Hammen's statement, quoted in part in the note above, more fully reads "the transformation of the 'Young Marx' into an allegedly changed product represents little more than a shift in tactics, coinciding chronologically with the adoption of the economic interpretation of history, elaborated in 1845". This really suggests a new theoretical development in Marx.

in Marx for theoretical clarity and minimises the significance of Marx's intellectual development. However, by treating Marx's theoretical statements in terms of his political concern of proletarian revolution Hodges and Hammen add an important interpretive dimension to the study of Marx's development, even though it may not be one that they intend.

Marx did not employ concepts and ideas only to mobilise, but preponderantly to interpret social reality. This cognitive aspect of theory has considerable importance in the service of political objectives; and it enjoys a political as well as an epistemological primacy over the propagandist and mobilising aspects of theory. This is not to suggest that Marx developed his theory as an instrumental science in the Baconian sense that underlying the scientific enterprise is vested the possibility of technical control. But in so far as a social theory analyses and interprets structures and relations and explains their historical development, it is able to inform a political movement on the limitations of its means of action and the nature and weaknesses of the forces to which it is opposed. Indeed, one measure of a social theory's strength is the extent to which it can fulfil these requirements. It is in this sense that Marx's social theory is politically instrumental.¹ This cognitive aspect of Marx's formulations returns our attention to the significance of theoretical development in his thought.

It is the continuing programmatic aspect of proletarian revolution in Marx's thought which led him to discard the idealist interpretation of history and historical change which he advocated in the Introduction to

¹Harold Laski, Communism, p. 22, has said that Marx "was the first socialist thinker to realise that it was less important to draw up a detailed constitution of Utopia than to discuss how the road thereto may be traversed. He was the first, also, to understand that the discovery of the road depended upon the detailed analysis of the environment about him".

the Critique of Hegel's Philosophy of Right. Not only were his early writings to become polemically and tactically inept, as Hodges and Hammen suggest, but more important, they were inadequate to Marx's revolutionary purposes through their failure to develop a comprehensive analysis of the oppressive social order which Marx sought to see overthrown.¹ Marx's early revolutionary politics were based upon an idealist expectation that revolutionary change could be achieved through the realisation of philosophy, and upon a social analysis premised upon the ethical supposition that abject poverty and degradation were necessary conditions for the insurrectionary mobilisation of the proletariat. Marx came to abandon these and related notions in his attempt to elaborate a theory of capitalist society which identified the operative variables of social dynamics, and the social processes which provided levers of action to the agents of social revolution.

In both the Introduction and the Communist Manifesto, the proletariat is identified as the revolutionary class, as the human agency of social transformation. Marx's conception of the proletariat in the Introduction, however, is not the same as the one developed in the Communist Manifesto. The basis of revolutionary emancipation is also differently conceived in each work: it results from the realisation of philosophy in the Introduction, while it follows from the proletariat's place in the production process according to the Communist Manifesto. Finally, Marx argues in the Communist Manifesto that proletarian revolution is to overthrow capitalism, whereas in the Introduction it is argued that revolution is to overcome Germanic backwardness only. The theoretical significance of these differences between the two works is of major importance in the development of Marx's thought.

¹Cf. Lichtheim, Marxism, p. 45.

The proletariat of the Introduction, the "class with radical chains", while seen as the result of industrialisation by Marx — it is the class "of the emergent industrial movement" — is defined by him in moral terms: the proletariat is a class "which is the dissolution of all classes, a sphere which has a universal character because of its universal suffering...which is, in a word, the total loss of humanity".¹ According to the Communist Manifesto, on the other hand, the proletariat is understood strictly in terms of its place in the capitalist production process and through its relation to the bourgeoisie.² The Communist Manifesto, of course, does not deny the degradation of the proletariat, which is so crucial to the analysis of the Introduction; but neither does it depict such degradation as total, nor does it account for the proletariat's "universal character" — its ability to effect human liberation — in terms of its suffering. These different conceptions of the proletariat have generally been noted in the literature. What has been largely overlooked, however, is the significance of these differences and their implications for the development of Marx's theoretical system.

The different definitions of the proletariat, one stressing its abject poverty and loss of humanity, the other its place in the production process and class system, has usually been seen as a difference of focus and empirical content. Marx's discussion in the Introduction is concerned with the small and immature German proletariat of the early 1840s, whereas his account in the Communist Manifesto is based on an examination of the English and French proletariats up to the middle 1840s. In this way changes between the two works in the presentation of the concept 'proletariat' have been seen as the result of differences of fact;

¹Early Writings, p. 256.

²MESW, I, 119.

differences of little or minor theoretical substance and consequence.¹ While the empirical content of the Introduction is indeed less detailed than that of the Communist Manifesto, the difference between the two works runs much deeper than the level of fact. It will be shown that they are different in significant theoretical ways as well.

What is most striking in a comparison of the two works is that the proletariat of the Introduction bears less resemblance to the proletariat of the Communist Manifesto than it does to what Marx identified in the latter work as the lumpenproletariat. This is not merely because of the total nature of the destitution of both the proletariat of the Introduction and the lumpenproletariat of the Communist Manifesto, but also their passivity. In the Introduction Marx makes it clear that the origins of the proletariat and its total poverty both result from social dislocation:

the proletariat is not formed by natural poverty but by artificially produced poverty; it is formed not from the mass of people mechanically oppressed by the weight of society but from the mass of people issuing from society's acute disintegration and in particular from the dissolution of the middle class.²

In the Communist Manifesto the proletariat's origins are partly the result of the break-up of the old society effected by the growth of modern industry, but more importantly, its life conditions of oppression and poverty are determined by the exploitative nature of the ongoing economic system rather than the disintegration of the prior social system.³ While the proletariat of the Communist Manifesto is pauperised through economic exploitation, a concept absent in the Introduction⁴, the degree

¹Cf. for example, Ernest Mandel, The Formation of the Economic Thought of Karl Marx, p. 23.

²Early Writings, p. 256.

³MESW, I, 115.

⁴The term 'exploitation' is mentioned, though, in the letter to Ruge discussed above, Early Writings, p. 205.

of pauperisation is not at its social lowest in that class, as it is in the proletariat of the Introduction. Below the proletariat of the Communist Manifesto is the sub-class of the lumpenproletariat, whose members suffer abject degradation in the manner of the proletariat of the Introduction, and, again like the proletariat of the Introduction, the abject degradation of the lumpenproletariat results primarily from social dislocation and disintegration.¹

The notion that the pauperisation of the proletariat is absolute, indicated in the claim that it suffers "the total loss of humanity", is maintained not only in the Introduction at a descriptive level, but repeated and theoretically elaborated in the Economic and Philosophic Manuscripts.² In The German Ideology, however, Marx draws a distinction between the proletariat as such and the abjectively pauperised proletariat, the lumpenproletariat of his later writings. In a polemic against the Young Hegelian Max Stirner, who "is constant...in identifying the proletariat with pauperism", Marx says that

pauperism is the position only of the impoverished proletariat, the lowest level to which the proletariat sinks who has become incapable of resisting the pressure of the bourgeoisie, and it is only the proletarian whose whole energy has been sapped who becomes a pauper.³

Although loosely and somewhat crudely outlined here, this is an important development in Marx's class analysis which already mentions the two essential characteristics of the lumpenproletariat, differentiating

¹In the Communist Manifesto the lumpenproletariat is described as "that passively rotting mass thrown off by the lowest layers of the old society", MESW, I, 118. For an economic analysis of the lumpenproletariat, cf. Capital, Vol. I, pp. 602-603. Cf. the discussion in Hal Draper, 'The Concept of the "Lumpenproletariat" in Marx and Engels'.

²This will be discussed in detail in Chapter 6 below.

³The German Ideology, p. 220. Cf. also MESW, I, 219-220.

it from the proletariat as it is described in Marx's mature writings. Not only does The German Ideology distinguish between the economic profiles of the proletariat and the lumpenproletariat, Marx also clarifies a discerning political point which serves to clearly distinguish the concept of the proletariat in the Introduction from that of the Communist Manifesto. Because its "whole energy has been sapped" the lumpenproletariat is necessarily a passive class, available for action only on behalf of other classes and as an instrument of other classes and social forces.¹ In the Introduction Marx describes the proletariat as a passive element of revolution, as the material weapon in the praxis of philosophy. The passivity of the proletariat here is the direct political correlate of its total pauperisation. This is contrary to Marx's account of the proletariat in the Communist Manifesto, which is not only cushioned from the floor of economic destitution by the lumpenproletariat, but achieves its revolutionary potential through its own practice and struggle; it realises its own interest through its own revolutionary efforts.²

Like the lumpenproletariat of Marx's mature thought the proletariat of the Introduction is a totally pauperised class, passive in itself and activated by an agency external to it, whose objective it serves. The major difference between the early depiction of the proletariat and the lumpenproletariat of Marx's later writings, is that in the Introduction

¹Marx's classic account of this process is in The Eighteenth Brumaire of Louis Bonaparte.

²MESW, I, 115-117. Hal Draper, 'The Principle of Self-Emancipation in Marx and Engels', argues for a contrary position. He distinguishes between two types of proletarian revolution, one in which the proletariat carries out its own revolution, the other in which the proletariat is used to carry out a revolution, and notes that Marx was sensitive to the distinction (p. 81). Draper goes on to argue, however, specifically referring to the Introduction, that Marx never held the view that proletarian revolution involves that the proletariat be used to carry out a revolution (p. 94). Lichtheim, Marxism, p. 38, note 1, on the other hand, maintains that in the Introduction Marx was a "German Jacobin for whom the proletariat existed primarily as the instrument of revolution".

the former is described as serving a revolutionary rather than a counter-revolutionary role, as it is in the The Eighteenth Brumaire, and is activated by philosophy rather than by a directly social force. It is the discussion in the Introduction of the role of philosophy in proletarian revolution which both highlights the difference between the Introduction and the Communist Manifesto and also substantiates the claim that in the earlier work Marx saw the proletariat as an essentially passive class.

It has been suggested by George Lichtheim, for instance, against the tenor of assessment developed here, that the account of the relation between philosophy and the proletariat in the Introduction remains implicit in Marx's mature work and that its theoretical content "was never repudiated, nor could it have been, for it is precisely what he meant by the 'union of theory and practice'".¹ Briefly, then, how is the unity of theory and practice in Marx generally understood? This notion is usually taken to mean that in the proletariat's practical discourse with adversity, a theory of the social world is evolved which has an instrumental value to the class in guiding future actions and evaluating its present practices. These actions and practices, in their turn, affect the continuing development of revolutionary theory. The relation between theory and practice, therefore, is reciprocal. There is one qualification, however; as the end of theory is practice and as the end of practice is emancipation of labour, practice has an ultimate primacy over theory. This does not undermine their reciprocity, though, for while revolutionary theory is epistemologically dependent upon revolutionary practice in this account, theory and practice nevertheless exist in a state of strong mutual reliance in so far as the power of one depends upon the potency of the other. This is quite unlike the relation between philosophy and the proletariat developed in the Introduction.

¹Lichtheim, ibid., p. 54.

The revolutionary potential ascribed to philosophy in the Introduction derives from a particular faculty of philosophy per se, rather than from the practice of the proletariat. It should also be noted that the mutual reliance of theory on practice in their unity relates to the application only of revolutionary philosophy in proletarian revolution, and not to its development.¹ Indeed, in the Introduction, philosophy is fully external to the proletariat in its development, which removes it entirely from the concept of the unity of theory and practice as it is understood in the description quoted from Lichtheim above. The application of philosophy to proletarian revolution, according to the Introduction, is a demonstration of the unity of the theory and practice of philosophy itself.² Marx's argument rests basically on the quasi-Hegelian view that History is a rational process which unfolds through the development of philosophy, for philosophy "is in the service of history".³ The revolutionary significance of philosophy is internal to philosophy, rather than operative through some other faculty. The point is emphasised by Marx when he claims that in contradistinction to theology, it is through philosophy alone that human emancipation will ensue.⁴

With the advent of human liberation through philosophy, Marx argues, philosophy itself will be transcended.⁵ The revolutionary role of the proletariat is introduced into Marx's discussion with the qualification that for philosophy to transcend itself, and for man to be thereby liberated from his oppression, the practice of philosophy requires a material

¹In the Communist Manifesto, on the other hand, Marx makes it quite clear that he regards the development of revolutionary theory as a consequence of the proletariat, MESW, I, 134.

²Early Writings, pp. 249, 251.

³Ibid., p. 244. Compare with The Holy Family, pp. 100-101, 110.

⁴Early Writings, p. 252.

⁵Cf. the discussion of practical and theoretical parties, ibid., pp. 249-250.

element, a material instrument, for "material force must be overthrown by material force".¹ Theory becomes such a force "once it has gripped the masses".² The masses, then, are subordinate to theory, even though necessary for its realisation and transcendence. For, as Marx says in the Introduction, "revolutions need a passive element, a material basis"³, and it is at this juncture that he begins to refer to the proletariat, the passive element of revolution which is gripped by philosophy and used in its revolutionary practice as a material force. While Marx says that "the proletariat finds its intellectual weapons in philosophy", this is secondary to the central point that "philosophy finds its material weapons in the proletariat".⁴ It is as an instrument of philosophy that the proletariat is a revolutionary force, according to the Introduction, and human emancipation is achieved through the realisation and transcendence of philosophy. This is a progression on Marx's thought prior to the Introduction, in which the instrument of philosophy was conceived as criticism, and criticism through journalism⁵, but it is nevertheless quite distinct from his later conception of proletarian revolution.

It can be seen, then, that Marx's German revolution of the Introduction, unlike the proletarian revolution of the Communist Manifesto, does not result from the development of the proletariat, beginning in "its struggle with the bourgeoisie" and accelerated by "the development of industry".⁶ Indeed, according to the Introduction revolution is to overthrow German backwardness rather than capitalism.

¹Ibid., p. 251.

²Ibid.

³Ibid., p. 252.

⁴Ibid., p. 257.

⁵Cf. Richard Hunt, The Political Ideas of Marx and Engels, Vol. I, p. 44.

⁶MESW, I, 115, 166. Cf. also ibid., pp. 213-214.

Revolution must occur because it is needed — it is "a pressing need of the German nation"¹ — and it is needed because of the German state's inability to bring about social reform. Revolution is precipitated in the "struggle against the German political present [which] is the struggle against the past of modern nations".² In the Communist Manifesto, on the other hand, the necessary condition of the proletarian revolution is a preceding bourgeois revolution, and the basis of revolutionary emancipation is the full development of capitalism. The industrial growth which gives rise to the proletariat also means that the "productive forces at the disposal of society no longer tend to the further development of the conditions of bourgeois property...they are fettered...[and] endanger the existence of bourgeois property".³ The revolution described in the Introduction, on the other hand, is merely against "an anachronism"⁴ and has a teleological if not a metaphysical basis.

Whilst elements of Marx's mature theory of proletarian revolution, as developed in the Communist Manifesto, such as class and the growth of modern industry, are present in the Introduction, the role they play in the early theory is quite unlike that given to them by the later theory. While there is class polarisation in the Introduction⁵, there is no class struggle; while there is industrial development it is seen to be responsible primarily for the disintegration of the old society rather than providing the basis for the development of the new social order. Marx's comments on industrialisation in the Introduction are hardly complete,

¹Early Writings, p. 247.

²Ibid. Cf. also the comments on Frederick William IV's rule, ibid., p. 253.

³MESW, I, 114.

⁴Early Writings, p. 247.

⁵"If one class is to be the class of liberation par excellence, then another class must be the class of overt oppression", ibid., p. 254.

but there is some suggestion of a causal link between the "emergent industrial movement" and "society's acute disintegration".¹ There is no mention here, as there is in the Communist Manifesto, of the role of the development of industry in the organisation of a revolutionary proletariat, nor of the development of industry giving rise to the socialisation of the process of production as the objective groundwork of socialist revolution. In any event, the discussion of industrialisation in the Introduction has more in common with the account given in the letters to Ruge of 1843² than to the theory outlined in the Communist Manifesto. The absence of the positive revolutionary role of industrialisation in these works is compensated by the revolutionary role given to philosophy. Indeed, the place of philosophy in proletarian revolution outlined in the Introduction strongly resembles the credo of critical philosophy given in the letter to Ruge quoted above and criticised in The German Ideology.³

The differences, then, between the Introduction and the Communist Manifesto can not be reduced to just a change in the empirical content of the conception of the proletariat, nor are they merely "minor changes in theories and ways of presenting them" as Bertell Ollman, in another context, suggests that they might be.⁴ Rather, the differences are substantial theoretical differences which raise questions of the methodological

¹"The proletariat is only beginning to appear in Germany as a result of the emergent industrial movement...the proletariat is...formed ...from the mass of people issuing from society's acute disintegration", Early Writings, p. 256. Cf. also ibid., p. 248.

²"...the system of industry and commerce...will lead much faster than the increase in the population to a rupture within existing society which the old system cannot heal...", ibid., p. 205.

³In the Introduction Marx says "The German nation must therefore link its dream history to its present conditions and subject not only these conditions but also their abstract continuation to criticism", ibid., p. 249. The place of "praxis" (p. 251) in this is the practice of philosophy, which engages the proletariat. In Marx's earlier writings the praxis of philosophy was through journalism.

⁴Ollman, Alienation, p. xiii.

development in Marx's thought. The morally defined proletariat and the dominating revolutionary role of philosophy in the Introduction hark back to the 'very idealistic' theory of the letters to Ruge rather than forge ahead to the 'materialistic' theory of the Communist Manifesto.

III

The very pronounced difference between the theory of proletarian revolution developed in the Introduction and the theory outlined in the Communist Manifesto suggests that there may be significant methodological and epistemological differences also between the works of the early and late 1840s. However, the Critique of Hegel's Philosophy of Right, written some months before the Introduction, has been regarded by some scholars as important in showing that Marx was at this early stage of his development already a materialist. If this were the case Marx's early writings would have to be seen to share a common methodology and epistemology with his later writings. An examination of the Critique, though, will reveal that its methodology is not that which is implicit in Marx's later writings.

The importance of the Critique lies mainly in the opportunity it gave Marx to identify his differences with Hegel and in the critical evaluation of both Hegel's discussion of political and social institutions and the Prussian political institutions themselves. As C.J. Arthur has noted, Marx's "inversion of the relation between the state and civil society as depicted by Hegel is of the highest importance, for it redirected his work from the critique of politics to a close study of civil society".¹ It is this new vision in Marx which sees political institutions in terms of the forces in civil society which has led some

¹C.J. Arthur, 'Editor's Introduction' to The German Ideology, p. 10. Cf. also Joseph O'Malley, 'Methodology in Karl Marx', p. 219.

scholars to find evidence of materialism in the Critique. While some writers have found earlier starting points of Marx's materialism, it is the Critique which Marx identified in 1859 as the beginning of investigations which "led to the result that legal relations as well as forms of state are to be grasped neither from themselves nor from the so-called general development of the human mind, but rather have their roots in the material conditions of life".¹

While the Critique was thus an important turning point in Marx's theoretical development, we should be careful not to see it as its consummation. Marx does not say in the 'Preface' that he developed the materialist theory of history in the Critique, but merely that he began work on the problem to which this theory is the solution. It is possible, of course, to perceive materialist elements in the Critique. Given the transitional nature of the work and its place in Marx's development it is not surprising that a materialist interpretation can find textual support. However, in any evaluation of the Critique the draft must be seen as a whole, and any materialist elements found in it should be understood in relation to the text as a whole. A general emphasis on social or economic causation is not in itself sufficient demonstration that a theory is materialist.²

¹'Preface to A Contribution to the Critique of Political Economy', MESW, I, p. 503. David McLellan, The Thought of Karl Marx, p. 12, pre-dates this by referring to an article written in January 1843 for the Rheinische Zeitung in which "Marx laid great stress on the importance of economic conditions as a determinant of political action". In fact the passage in question makes no mention of economic conditions.

²George Iggers, 'Introduction' to The Doctrine of Saint-Simon: An Exposition, p. xiii, points out that the Saint-Simonians were concerned with economic and social forces and looked to the interrelation of social forces in understanding history, but their general view of history, as the development of the moral conception of perfection, was idealist. Similarly, the liberal historian Lord Acton "emphasise[d] repeatedly the economic factor in history" but gave supreme importance to the causal influence of ideas; G.E. Fasnacht, Acton's Political Philosophy: An Analysis, p. 219, Chapter 7 and Appendix 1.

The method employed in the Critique bears some relation to the materialist theory of history for which Marx is known and which he outlined for the first time in The German Ideology¹, and while the Critique's methodology can therefore be seen as a precursor to that which Marx employed in later writings, it can not be regarded as identical to that of Marx's later writings. It is often held that the Critique's importance in Marx's theoretical development lies in the fact that it clearly articulates the view that the form of the state is the consequence of social and economic forces and relations.² An examination of the text suggests that this claim can not be allowed to stand without serious qualification.

The similarity of the substantive theory of the state outlined in the Critique to that of Marx's mature writings has been widely noted in the literature. The discussion of bureaucracy, especially, being more extensive in the Critique than in any of Marx's later writings, is generally held to manifest a full materialist expression in this, its earliest theoretical exposition.³ In summary the Marxist theory of the state bureaucracy, as it is widely understood, holds that in the social division of labour the bureaucracy occupies a field quite distinct from social classes and their ultimate economic concerns, and is largely motivated to promote its own interests which may, at times, clash with the

¹Engels was the first to coin the term 'historical materialism', which he did, with some embarrassment in the 'Special Introduction' to the 1892 English edition of Socialism: Utopian and Scientific, MESW, III, 103. While the term is not Marx's there is no good reason to abandon the established practice calling the methodology he did develop 'historical materialism'. The term is no more than a summary of his own description of the method outlined in The German Ideology, cf. MESW, I, 29-30.

²Lucio Colletti, 'Introduction' to Karl Marx, Early Writings, p. 45, on the other hand, says that this theory of the state pre-dates historical materialism.

³Cf., for example, Shlomo Avineri, The Social and Political Thought of Karl Marx, pp. 48-52; Henri Lefebvre, The Sociology of Marx, Chapter 5, especially pp. 138ff; Nicos Mouzelis, Organisation and Bureaucracy, pp. 8-11.

interests of the dominant class. The bureaucracy, then, has an existence of its own and tends to autonomy. This derives from the bureaucratic function of maintaining social order. The theory goes on to argue, however, that the social order is defined by the existing production relations of society and the property relations which arise through social production. In satisfying its own interests in the performance of its function the bureaucracy, therefore, maintains the existing economic relations of society; in doing so it satisfies the general political interests of the economically dominant class. So that while the bureaucracy might believe itself to be above class, it nevertheless serves the interests of the ruling class.¹

While the theory of bureaucracy in the Critique is similar to the version described above, which is drawn from Marx's mature writings, it differs from it in at least one important aspect. While the theory of bureaucracy in The Eighteenth Brumaire of Louis Bonaparte and The Civil War in France, for instance, incorporates a notion of class rule, there is no such notion in the Critique. According to the Critique the bureaucracy serves only its own interests and protects only its own property.² In the Critique, but not in the mature writings, Marx describes the bureaucracy as the ruling class and the property it safeguards in performing the state functions is the state itself.³

It could be argued that this difference between the Critique and later works, like the difference on the definition of the proletariat between the Introduction and what followed it, is primarily empirical

¹MESW, I, 463, 478, 482-483, 484-485.

²This important point, which is appreciated by Hunt, The Political Ideas of Marx and Engels, Vol. I, p. 66, escapes Avineri, op. cit., pp. 23-24.

³Early Writings, pp. 108, 109.

rather than theoretical.¹ Such an argument could propose that by focusing on the Prussian bureaucracy Marx examined a special case; for, as he wrote in The German Ideology, "during the epoch of absolute monarchy ... [the state] acquired an abnormal independence...which in other countries was only transitory...[although] it has [been] maintained in Germany until the present day".² We will see, however, that there are significant theoretical aspects of the analysis of bureaucracy in the Critique which not only suggest that its substantive theory of the state is more or less peculiar to that work³, no matter how much superficial resemblance it bears to later treatments, but that these peculiarities have methodological ramifications which distinguish the work from Marx's later materialist analyses. So that while Marx can be quoted as saying in the Critique that the "political constitution at its highest point is thus the constitution of private property"⁴, it can not be assumed that the meaning of this statement is equivalent to later statements of the materialist method made in his mature works. It is through a critical consideration of Marx's conception in the Critique of both 'class' and 'property' that the materialist content of the work will be assessed.

In his mature thought Marx defined class in terms of the social relations of production. This contrasts sharply with Hegel's conception, in which class is defined through objective spheres of service. In the Philosophy of Right it is the inter-dependence and reciprocity of men in the satisfaction of their needs which constitutes class relations.⁵ Hegel says that class divisions derive from "particular systems of needs,

¹This is suggested by David McLellan, The Thought of Karl Marx, p. 183.

²The German Ideology, p. 212.

³This will be discussed more fully in Chapter 7 below.

⁴Early Writings, p. 166.

⁵Hegel, Philosophy of Right, p. 129.

means, and types of work relative to these needs".¹ It is generally recognised that whereas Marx differentiated between the land-holding class and the peasantry, Hegel specified only an agricultural class comprising both lord and peasant; while Marx differentiated between the class of capitalists and the proletariat, Hegel specified only a manufacturing class. And while Marx shared with Hegel the observation that the state activity is functionally specific, he did not share Hegel's view that those drawn into the state service form a distinct governing class.² The difference between Hegel and Marx on the concept of class is thus well drawn.³ Or so it would seem.

In the Critique Marx's notion of class is much closer to Hegel's than the one which he went on to develop in The German Ideology and later works. It is evident in Marx's discussion of political class, for instance, that his theoretical precepts of class analysis, while composed as an alternative to Hegel's scheme, employs a general frame of reference which is restricted by essentially Hegelian limitations. In rejecting Hegel's exposition of the political role of the agricultural class as that of representing the unity of the political state, Marx postulates instead a primary role for "the class of private citizens".⁴ Use of the concept 'class of private citizens' indicates the Hegelian nature of

¹Ibid., p. 131.

²Ibid., pp. 131-132. It is interesting to note that Marx's view of the executive power of the state as comprising the police and the judiciary as well as the governmental executive is also Hegel's and acknowledged by Marx in the Critique, Early Writings, p. 100, to be an idea peculiar to Hegel, where other thinkers have treated "the administrative and judicial arms of government as antitheses".

³The difference between the Hegelian and Marxist theories of class is outlined in G.D.H. Cole, Some Relations Between Political and Economic Theory, pp. 66-67. Cole's book is largely forgotten, partly outdated, but nonetheless highly stimulating. A treatment of Hegel's theory of class can be found in Avineri, Hegel's Theory of the Modern State.

⁴Early Writings, p. 164, and also ibid., pp. 136, 144, 146.

Marx's class theory of 1843. The citizenry could constitute a class only in the context of Hegel's conception of class as a functional sphere of service, and the idea is foreign to Marx's mature model in which class is conceived materially as a consequence of the relations of social production. Similarly, while Marx complains that "Hegel proceeds from the assumption that the universal class is the class of civil servants"¹, his remarks are directed against Hegel's view of the alleged universality of the bureaucracy and not its supposed class nature. There is nothing to show that in the Critique Marx does not accept the bureaucracy as a fully constituted class, a position which he later rejected. The class component of the theory of the state bureaucracy in the Critique, like the conception of the class of private citizens, remains largely Hegelian and pre-materialist.

The assumption that the class analysis of the Critique is materialist is encouraged, perhaps, by the brief discussion in the work which has been identified by a number of writers as an anticipation in Marx's thought of the 'proletariat' as the class of historical transformation. Although he does not use the term, Marx's discussion of "the class of immediate labour", which he says is "not so much...a class of civil society as...the ground on which the circles of civil society move and have their being"², can be seen to foreshadow the discussion of the proletariat in the Introduction, written just after the Critique, and also in Marx's later work. It has been shown above that the conception of the proletariat in the Introduction is quite unlike that of Marx's later thought. It should also be emphasised that the concept of the class of immediate labour does not refer to the proletariat in the sense that Marx later came to understand the term, for it can be more readily seen

¹Ibid., p. 136.

²Ibid., pp. 146-147.

as a category employed to demonstrate the legalistic limitations of Hegel's class analysis, but not to initiate a materialist class model.

Shlomo Avineri¹ has said that Marx's discussion of the class of immediate labour follows the Philosophy of Right §243, in which Hegel points out that the amassing of social wealth through demographic and industrial expansion results in the poverty and distress of factory labour.² In the next paragraph Hegel goes on to argue that an intensification of poverty results in "the creation of a rabble"³, of the *pöbel* or proletariat. In Prussia during the 1840s 'proletariat' was a term used to signify not merely industrial workers, but a much larger social grouping in which dispossessed peasants and landless agricultural labourers predominated. This group was a numerically significant section of the population and largely 'unincorporated', that is, without membership of an estate and therefore outside the established order of civil society. Marx's class of immediate labour most probably refers to the large mass of dispossessed agricultural labourers who supported the grain export industry, Germany's main economic activity during the period. It could thus be said that the propertyless agricultural labourers ultimately supported German society, but because largely unincorporated they were themselves outside civil society and did not constitute a class in the Hegelian sense. Marx's reference to the class of immediate labour therefore, flies in the face of Hegel's class model and contradicts Hegel's description of the agricultural class as the "immediate" class which "has its capital in the natural products of the soil which it cultivates".⁴ The significance of Marx's comments is in the fact that they point to a

¹Avineri, The Social and Political Thought of Karl Marx, p. 25.

²Hegel, op. cit., pp. 149-150.

³Ibid., p. 150.

⁴Ibid., p. 131.

social development for which the traditional legalistic concept of class is inadequate, and specifically indicates the archaic analysis of class in Hegel.

Marx's account of class in the Critique is not, therefore, an endorsement of Hegel. On the contrary. In an endeavour to show that there is full harmony and no disparity between political and civil reality "Hegel wishes to demonstrate", as Marx says, "that the classes of civil society are the political Estates".¹ Marx entirely rejects this view for the position that there is a fundamental "separation of political life and civil society"², and argues for this proposition, in part, by claiming that since the French Revolution the Estates have been "transformed into social classes, i.e. the class distinctions in civil society became merely social differences in private life of no significance in political life".³ Marx, then, rejects the archaic content of Hegel's class analysis in saying that the essentially Medieval Estate is breaking down into merely apolitical classes of civil society.⁴ However, Marx's prognosis of the development from Estate to class demonstrates the extent to which his analysis derives from an Hegelian conception and amounts to a pre-materialist theory of class in the Critique.

It is clear that in 1843 Marx appreciated that a change had occurred in the reality of class and that the basis of class distinction had therefore changed also:

¹Early Writings, p. 144.

²Ibid., p. 146.

³Ibid.

⁴As we have seen, the bureaucracy provides an exception to this: "The Medieval 'Estate' survived only in the bureaucracy, in which civil and political positions are immediately identical", ibid.

Class distinction here [in civil society] is no longer a distinction between autonomous groups distinguished by their needs and their work... distinctions are [now] variable and fluid and their principle is that of arbitrariness. The chief criteria are those of money and education.¹

But in noting the change from a rigid structure of Estate hierarchies to a free forming order of economically determined social class Marx reveals a theory of the emerging class situation which he later dismissed as one of "'Vulgar' common sense"², and shows his ambiguity and uncertainty with the concept of 'class' itself. Money and education, while at least partly economic criteria of class distinction imply a model of class which is nonetheless at odds with the materialist analysis of class based on a comprehension of a social group's relation to the means of production. In employing the income criteria of class difference Marx restricts the meaning of class to the distribution through society of attributes which relate primarily to the individual. Not only does such a conception of class ignore the wider context of social factors which underlie the distribution of advantages, such as production relations, it conceives class society as a smooth gradation of income groups rather than a structure of social cleavage isomorphic to classes with antagonistic interests. Marx's class theory in the Critique differs from his later theory of class in so far as the former points to the distribution of the individual attributes income and education rather than the relations of social groups to the means of production and proposes, in effect, a stratification scheme rather than a model of class conflict.³ Indeed,

¹Ibid.

²"'Vulgar' common sense turns class differences into differences in the size of one's purse", Karl Marx, Selected Writings in Sociology and Social Philosophy, p. 208.

³For the difference between distributive and relational aspects of class, the individual nature of stratum and the group nature of class, and the notion of stratification as a smooth gradation and class implying conflict, see respectively, André Béteille, 'Editor's Introduction' to Social Inequality, p. 13; Ralf Dahrendorf, Class and Class Conflict in Industrial Society, p. ix; T.B. Bottomore, Classes in Modern Society, pp. 25-26.

Marx's prognosis of social differentiation over time conceives the historical development as a movement from Estate to class and from class to individual social position devoid of class determination.

Marx says that "civil society has divided within itself into class and social position" and adds parenthetically in the same paragraph that the "civil society of the present is the principle of individualism carried to its logical conclusion".¹ The discussion is far from precise, but in the context it appears that Marx sees the emergence of class out of the politically organised Estates as only a transition to individualisation in which class accounts for little and social difference has to be understood in terms of individual social position rather than class membership. Under such conditions social "distinctions are variable and fluid and their principle is that of arbitrariness", as we saw Marx claim above. This position is implied by the theory of stratification based on an income distribution criterion of social difference and quite in opposition to Marx's later theory of class, which both took account of the individualisation of bourgeois society and held that individual existence was largely conditioned by class position. And while in his later writings it is argued that there is an element of fluidity and arbitrariness at the individual level, Marx also maintains that this leaves unaltered the fundamental class reality.²

So far it has been shown that the concept of class employed in the Critique is largely derived from the Hegelian terminology and that Marx's own theory of social differentiation is similar to the stratification theory of certain trends in modern empirical sociology. We have also noted that this latter position is opposed to Marx's mature theory of

¹Early Writings, p. 147.

²Cf. The German Ideology, pp. 69-70, and also Selected Writings in Sociology and Social Philosophy, p. 208.

class. Marx's divergence from class theory in the Critique is partly a consequence of his uncertainty as to how far the class concept can be stretched when it retains an Hegelian form. It is only when the Hegelian class concept ceased to dominate Marx's thought that he was able to develop his own characteristic understanding of the class nature of bourgeois society and ceased to see civil society as composed of merely "isolated monads", to use a term he employed in the essay On the Jewish Question. As it is used in the Critique the concept 'class' denotes an objective sphere of service and presupposes a functional definition of class.¹ As the structural prerequisites of class defined in these terms were breaking down at the time of Marx's writing the Critique, and as this was the only concept of class available to him, Marx's projection of the social developments taking place at the time had to be described through a declassified terminology. Marx's vacillation on the usefulness of class analysis is clear in his statement that

...whether an individual remains in a class or not depends partly on his work, partly on chance. The class itself is now no more than a superficial determination of the individual, for it is neither implicit in his work, nor does it present itself to him as an objective community, organised according to established laws and standing in a fixed relationship to him. It is rather the case that he has no real relation to his substantive activity, to his real class.²

Marx obviously accepts that the concept of class refers to an objective community based on substantive activity of a particular service nature. As this reality of class has lost its legal and political sustenance, class can only be a superficial determination of the individual and this

¹Stanislaw Ossowski, Class Structure in the Social Consciousness, Chapter 4, provides a discussion of the functional definition of class, which unfortunately does not mention Hegel.

²Early Writings, p. 147.

means that the individual has no real relation to his 'real' class. That is to say that the class concept, as it is understood here, bears no relation to the class reality. A different class concept would define the class reality differently.

It will be clear from this discussion of class that Marx's ideas in the Critique are still being formed; he has not yet developed his own conceptions and in commenting on Hegel accepts Hegel's terms of reference. We have also seen that Marx's theory and methodology of class in the Critique could not easily be called 'materialist'. What is true of class in this regard is equally true of the state. Let us return to the quasi-methodological claims through which materialism is attributed to the Critique.

IV

It is from the general statement of man's social nature and the determining influence of social and economic forces on political structures and conditions, rather than from any particular theory of class or state bureaucracy, that evidence of the Critique's materialism can best be drawn. In the earliest pages of the Critique Marx takes issue with Hegel's idealism and appears to develop an alternative model of material determination. Marx complains that Hegel attempts "to provide the political constitution with a relationship to the abstract Idea and to establish it as a link in the life-history of the Idea — an obvious mystification"¹, and also that Hegel tends "to dissolve the existing political determinations into abstract ideas".² Marx's own view, on the other hand, is that

¹Ibid., pp. 69-70.

²Ibid., p. 73.

The family and civil society are the preconditions of the state; they are the true agents; but in speculative philosophy it is the reverse.¹

In the words of the well used phrase, Marx stands Hegel on his feet; and he does so by claiming that the human condition is determined not by Mind but Matter.² Hegel forgets, says Marx, that "the affairs of state are nothing but the modes of action and existence of the social qualities of men".³ It is, no doubt, the appearance of statements of this kind in the Critique which has led Shlomo Avineri, for instance, to conclude that Marx "must thus be considered a materialist at this period, and the dichotomy between a young, 'humanistic', 'idealist' Marx vis-à-vis an older, 'determinist', 'materialist' Marx has no foundation whatsoever in the Marxian texts themselves".⁴ Avineri's is a very strong claim. Not only does it assert the materialism of the Critique, it implies that Marx went on to do no more than refine the materialist method he first employed in 1843.

The 'materialism' Marx used in his critique of Hegel is an application of Ludwig Feuerbach's 'transformative method'. This latter basically consists of reversing the primacy Hegel attributed to the Idea or Spirit over Man and Nature, so that for Feuerbach Mind is a function of Natural Man. Feuerbach's critique of Hegel amounts to his pointing out that Man, the proper subject of both history and philosophy, has been turned by Hegel into a mere Predicate. The transformative method

¹Ibid., p. 62.

²Hegel did not deny the fact of social and economic forces, he assumed that these were merely the mechanisms through which the World Spirit operated.

³Early Writings, p. 78.

⁴Avineri, The Social and Political Thought of Karl Marx, pp. 38-39.

reverses and corrects what it conceives to be a conceptual inversion.¹ Avineri acknowledges the Feuerbachian nature of the Critique's materialism², but fails to explore or appreciate its implications for an understanding of Marx's methodological development.

While it is legitimate to describe Marx's employment of a negotiated transformative method in the Critique as a version of materialism, it is at best question begging and in fact erroneous to go on to maintain that this materialism is a genuine uniform element in the entire corpus of Marx's thought, as Avineri does. It ignores the real and significant differences between the Feuerbachian inspired materialism of the Critique and Marx's own version of historical materialism which he later developed. It also ignores the limitations of the Critique's materialism which were criticised and corrected in Marx's work after 1845.³

Although the Critique may be described as having a materialist element, this is an insufficient ground from which to contest the dichotomy between Marx's thought in his early work and his mature thought. In the latter the materialist methodology does not assume merely man's social essence, social causation or even that "the economic sphere ultimately determines politics"⁴, to mention a few phrases which have been used to typify the Critique's materialism. Marx's mature materialism assumes rather that there is a "connection of the social and political structure with production"⁵, as he puts it in The German Ideology. In 1847 Marx

¹"We need only turn the predicate into the subject and thus as subject into object and principle — that is, only reverse speculative philosophy. In this way we have the unconcealed, pure and untarnished truth", Ludwig Feuerbach, 'Preliminary Theses on the Reform of Philosophy', p. 154. For Marx's discussion of the subject/predicate mix in Hegel, cf. Early Writings, p. 80.

²Avineri, op. cit., p. 38.

³This is explored in Chapter 4 below.

⁴Avineri, op. cit., p. 38.

⁵The German Ideology, p. 36.

described his materialist methodology more fully when he argued that the process of production is at the heart of social relations and that the specific character of different societies can be attributed to differences in the means of production employed in different societies.¹ Historical materialism, then, argues that social and political relations undergo change in correspondence to changes in the productive forces and relations operating in the economic base of society; that the means of production engender particular social relations of production and that these set the limits to the form and relations of society and polity and have some causal connection with them. The major difference between the materialism of the Critique and Marx's later writings is that the latter specifies the production activity and its material concomitants as the determinant of social forms and relations, in the former there is no such notion.

Not only is the conceptual content of Marx's early materialism different from historical materialism, the theoretical function of each is also different. The materialism of the Critique is confined to the application of a somewhat mechanical method which has very little value beyond it providing a critique of Hegel's philosophy. It is a philosophical method rather than a scientific methodology of empirical significance; it makes a general point of principle rather than providing an understanding of particular societies, their structure and development. It looks very like a part of what Marx later described as "a general historico-philosophical theory, the supreme virtue of which consists in being super-historical".² Marx's mature materialism, on the other

¹Cf. 'Wage Labour and Capital', MESW, I, 159-160; The Poverty of Philosophy, pp. 95-96; 'Preface to A Contribution...', MESW, I, 503-504.

²Marx to the Editorial Board of the 'Otechestvenniye Zapiski', November 1877, Selected Correspondence, p. 313. The difference between 'method' and 'methodology' is appreciated by Joachim Israel, 'Remarks Concerning Some Problems of Marxist Class Theory', p. 12.

hand, is more properly a scientific methodology through which

Empirical observation must in each separate instance bring out empirically, and without any mystification and speculation, the connection of the social and political structure with production.¹

Marx's application of the materialist method in the Critique has none of this empirical tracing of political relations to the means and manner of material production, and is able to go no further than recognise in broad and general terms that the political constitution has a social basis. The relation postulated in the Critique between society and polity is quite unlike that assumed in Marx's mature materialist methodology.

This last point will be substantiated by a consideration of the claim made in the Critique that

...the political state cannot exist without the natural basis of the family and the artificial basis of civil society.²

The reference here to the family and to the difference between the natural basis of the family and the artificial basis of civil society has the character of a criticism of Hegel rather than an analysis of the political state in materialist terminology. Marx is arguing against Hegel's contention that "the natural principle of the family"³ is sufficient to explain the representation of landed proprietors in the Prussian legislature. Hegel's position is that the inheritance of landed property, which is carried through the family by primogeniture, provides a natural basis of political entitlement. Contrary to this Marx says that birth, and therefore the family, can only provide one with individual existence

¹The German Ideology, p. 36.

²Early Writings, p. 63.

³Philosophy of Right, p. 199, quoted by Marx, Early Writings, p. 173.

and constitute one as a natural individual, whereas "political determinations such as the legislature, etc., are social products, born of society and not of the natural individual".¹ Marx's materialism in the Critique takes him no further than the claim that it is social convention — "the artificial basis of civil society" — which ascribes political entitlement to the landed family, and not "the natural principle of the family" itself. There is here no materialist analysis of these conventions and Marx accounts for them by falling back on contract assumptions.² It is the social basis of the family as an institution and not the relations of social production which constitutes Marx's early 'materialist methodology'.

It is perhaps in his discussion of primogeniture and in his critique of Hegel's postulations on the matter that Marx most seems to employ a materialist methodology based on the primacy of economic factors. For it is in the analysis and critique of primogeniture that Marx develops an account of private property which strikingly resembles that found in his later historical materialism, but which on examination reveals the particular nature of his early materialism:

Whereas according to Hegel primogeniture represents the power of the political state over private property, it is in fact the power of abstract private property over the political state. He makes the cause into the effect and the effect into the cause, the determining factor into the determined and vice-versa.³

This statement concludes a paragraph which opens with a comment on the observation that for Hegel "primogeniture is merely an exigency of

¹Ibid., p. 174.

²"...a particular birth can become the birth of a peer or a king only by virtue of general agreement", ibid.

³Ibid., p. 167.

politics" in so far as the political need for social representation in the legislature is met by the entitled Estate of land-owners and that the mechanism by which the Estate is maintained and perpetuated is primogeniture. This runs parallel to Hegel's more directly central view that the state embodies a General Interest from which derives the various Particular Interests of civil society. Marx's response to Hegel's claim that primogeniture is a consequence of a political cause is the counter-claim that "In reality primogeniture is a consequence of private property in the strict sense, private property petrified, private property (quand même) at the point of its greatest autonomy and sharpest definition".¹ An examination of the notion of 'private property' employed in the Critique reveals that Marx's discussion is largely an internal philosophical critique of Hegel which, while bearing some resemblance to the concept found in his mature writing², can not be regarded as an application or instance of historical materialism.

Marx amplifies his notion of private property when he says that

The 'inalienability' of private property implies the 'alienability' of the universal freedom of the will and of ethical life. Property is no longer mine in so far as 'I put my will into it'; it is truer to say that my will only exists 'in so far as it exists in the property'. My will does not possess, it is possessed.³

The distinguishing feature, therefore, of private property is that the owner exists exclusively in terms of it. This is similar to what emerges in the discussion of exchange in Capital, where Marx says that "persons

¹Ibid.

²Shlomo Avineri, 'The Hegelian Origins of Marx's Political Thought', pp. 9-11, compares the early and later conceptions of 'private property', without discussing the methodological differences between them.

³Early Writings, p. 196. This is contrary to Hegel's view in which the unlimited right of the will to dispose of an object defines private property.

exist for one another merely as representatives of, and, therefore, as owners of, commodities...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".¹ The difference between the Critique and Marx's later writing, however, is that in the latter private property is seen as a product of the labour of producers or as synonymous with capital — it is understood in a materialist fashion, in terms of production²; in the Critique private property is the object of any relationship between an individual or group and a faculty to which he or it has exclusive access understood in political and moral terms based on 'needs'.³

The conception of 'private property' in the Critique is not only different from the conception of 'private property' in, say, Capital, it is also contradictory to it. Because "the dependence [of business] upon the government treasury has a high ethical content" the wealth of business can not be regarded as "true private property...[for] it is conditioned by its connections with the wealth of the whole society, with property conceived as social property".⁴ This point is not merely an empirical one about the dependence of Prussian industry and business on the Zollverein and other means of government support, for in the case of private property par excellence "the nerves connecting it to society are severed and its isolation from civil society is assured"⁵, so that theoretically speaking capital and commodities are precluded from the

¹Capital, I, 89.

²In the 1844 Manuscripts, for instance, Marx defines the subjective essence of private property as labour, and in the Communist Manifesto private property is synonymous with capital.

³Cf. the discussion in Early Writings, p. 166.

⁴Ibid., pp. 170, 166.

⁵Ibid., p. 166.

category of private property as it is understood in the Critique, for they require social production for their existence and embody a 'social substance', labour.¹ Private property in the Critique is, therefore, 'private' in the liberal sense of being free of the 'public' sphere in its formation or consequence. In any event, Marx's early conception of 'private property' is informed by different principles than those developed in the later writings premised on the historical materialist methodology.

While 'private property' has in one sense a much more limited application in the Critique than in the mature writings, in another sense its scope is much wider:

When we meet primogeniture in its classical form, i.e. among the Germanic peoples, we also encounter the constitution of private property. Private property is the universal category, the universal bond of the state. Even the general functions appear to be privately owned, the property of either a corporation or a class.

The various forms of trade and business are here the private property of particular corporations. Offices at court, powers of jurisdiction, etc., are the private property of particular classes. The different provinces are the private property of particular princes, etc. Service for one's country is the private property of the ruler. Spirit is the private property of the clergy. Any activities I carry out in the course of my duty are the private property of someone else, just as my rights are the private property of someone else. Sovereignty, in this case nationality, is the private property of the Emperor.²

One can not avoid noticing Marx's irony in all of this, an irony which comes from extending Hegel's own general definition of private property to a whole range of particular cases in order to expose the internal

¹Cf. 'Wage Labour and Capital', MESW, I, 160; and 'Wages, Price and Profit', MESW, II, 49.

²Early Writings, p. 178.

contradiction of Hegel's account of primogeniture and the state. But Marx's ironical and critical phrasing coincides with his acceptance of the formal definition of private property as an object to which an individual or group has exclusive right of access and disposal. If private property is "the universal category" — a category applicable to all things, including the state — the state could not embody the General Interest, as Hegel says it does, for "even the general functions [of the state] appear to be privately owned".

When Marx says that "primogeniture represents...the power of abstract private property over the political state"¹, he is not advancing a materialist proposition but extending the point he had earlier made concerning the bureaucracy. We have already seen that he argues that the bureaucracy, conceptualised as the universal class by Hegel, uses the state as its private property in the satisfaction of its own particular interests. "Primogeniture", Marx says, "is merely the particular form of the general relationship obtaining between private property and the political state".² This general relationship is one in which the various functions of the state serve particular interests as the property of those interests and that these interests, in their turn, direct the 'will' of the functionaries themselves. "Primogeniture is the political meaning of private property", Marx continues, "private property in its political significance, i.e. in its universal significance. Here then, the constitution is the constitution of private property."³ The landed Estate, which is maintained through primogeniture, is best suited to the legislative function not because of its incorruptability, as Hegel argues; rather it performs the legislative function because that function is its

¹Ibid., p. 167.

²Ibid., p. 177.

³Ibid.

private property and it is its private property because private landed property bestows a political significance and role. The constitution is the private property of the Entitled Estate. The power of private property over the state exists in the absence of a General Interest in the state. Political processes are not understood here in terms of the material processes of production in society, but in terms of the multifarious interest groups which hold functional positions in the state.

In formulating his critique of Hegel Marx develops a critique of the political state. His comments on primogeniture and the state can be interpreted as meaning both that the constitution is the property of the landed Estate and that the landed Estate defends its landed property in and through the constitution. This latter interpretation is not foremost in the Critique, but is certainly implied in it and is similar to the position Marx articulated during 1842 in Anekdoten and Rheinische Zeitung articles which condemned the advantage provided by certain laws to sectional interests.¹ These comments on the legal sanctions of material interests do not appear as a recognition of economic determination in political life, but are part of a critique of the political state based on very different premises. Unlike his mature writings, in which the state was condemned as a force of class oppression, the overthrow of which was the necessary condition of human liberation, Marx argues in the Critique (and the earlier essays) that laws such as these and the satisfaction of such interests are contrary to the true nature of the state which, as a rational organism, is capable of raising the true essence of

¹'Comments on the Latest Prussian Censorship Instruction', in Loyd Easton and Kurt Guddat (eds.), Writings of the Young Marx on Philosophy and Society; 'Proceedings on the Sixth Rhenish Parliament: Third Article', in David McLellan (ed.), Karl Marx: Early Texts.

man to its full station.¹ Marx's critique of Hegel, in David McLellan's words, is that his enterprise "was based on subjective conceptions that were at variance with empirical reality"², and his critique of the state is that the idealist vision of its potential is not yet realised. This raises the whole question of Marx's epistemology in the Critique, which will be discussed in the next chapter.

It will be clear from this chapter that Marx's early theory of revolution, state and society, his early conceptions of the proletariat, class and private property, indicate a methodology which is at variance with his later historical materialist methodology on which is founded a different social and political theory employing different conceptions of the proletariat, class and private property.

¹Cf. Early Writings, pp. 128-129, 185-186. Cf. also Auguste Cornu, The Origins of Marxian Thought, p. 78; Louis Dupré, The Philosophical Foundations of Marxism, pp. 106-107; Arthur McGovern, 'The Young Marx on the State', p. 444.

²David McLellan, Marx Before Marxism, p. 144; see the same author's Karl Marx, p. 69.

Chapter 2

EPISTEMOLOGY

The examination of the Critique and the Introduction conducted in the previous chapter has revealed that Marx's early thought is significantly distinct in many respects from his mature thought. It has also been shown that they are theoretically discontinuous in the sense that his early and mature thought can not cohabit a single intellectual space without contradiction. In particular we have seen that the theory of proletarian revolution in the Introduction contains not only a very different social analysis to the theory of proletarian revolution developed in the Communist Manifesto, but also that the two have very different conceptions of the unity of theory and practice -- one based on an appreciation of philosophy's potency which is denied by the other. It has also been shown that the method employed in the Critique is not 'materialist' in the sense of Marx's later materialism and that these dissimilar methods are related to quite distinct, indeed competing conceptions of class and property. Assuming the symmetry of political perception, orientation and objective on the one hand, and methodology and epistemology on the other, which was noted near the beginning of the previous chapter, it would follow that there is little likelihood of Marx's early writings providing the epistemological foundation of his mature thought. It will be shown in this chapter that Marx's epistemology in the Critique is more readily classified as idealist than materialist, and that Marx repudiated this epistemology in his mature writings.

While it is demonstrated below that the epistemology which Marx employs in the Critique is utterly unlike that found in his later writings, it is also noted that they manifest a verbal similarity in so far as both assume a distinction between 'essence' and 'appearance' and both assume that knowledge of reality is located in the conceptualisation of 'essence'.

The first part of this chapter attempts to elucidate the idealist essentialism of Marx's early epistemology and the second part, the naturalist or scientific nature of his mature essentialist epistemology. In the final section of the chapter is an argument attempting to demonstrate that contrary to some evaluations Marx's mature essentialism is indeed scientific.

A crucial characteristic, which distinguishes Marx's science, is its critical dimension. In his scientific analysis of capitalism Marx both criticises capitalism intellectually and furnishes a revolutionary political movement with cognitive elements necessary for an insurrectionary strategy against capitalism. Marx's early idealist epistemology too is of a critical nature. But as it is in substance so it is in this regard quite dissimilar to the mature epistemology. These differences between the essentialism of the Critique on the one hand, and Capital on the other, are also hinted at in the present chapter.

It will be attempted below to demonstrate over all that the epistemology of the Critique does not and could not furnish Marx's mature thought with an epistemological foundation, and that the epistemology employed in his later writings is not to be found in the Critique.

I

It is through Marx's notion of 'true democracy' and its attendant concepts that the Critique's epistemology can be most readily discerned, for it is in this notion that his assumptions concerning the intellectual conditions of knowledge most clearly operate.

We saw above that Marx accepted, with Hegel, that the state is a rational organism. His difference with Hegel on this matter concerns the question of the state's democratic element:

The direct participation of all individuals in deliberating and deciding on political matters of general concern is, according to Hegel, 'tantamount to a proposal to put the democratic element without any rational form into the organism of the state, although it is only in virtue of the possession of such a form that the state is an organism at all'. That is to say that where the state organism is purely formal, the democratic element can enter into it only as a formal element. However, the democratic element should rather be the real element which confers a rational form on the organism of the state as a whole. If on the other hand it enters the organism or formalism of the state as a 'particular' element, its 'rational form' will be nothing more than an emasculation, an accommodation, denying its own particular nature, i.e. it will function purely as a formal principle.¹

For Marx, but not for Hegel, the democratic element is the element of 'reality' in the state, without which the state denies its own nature, denies its rational form. Implicit in Marx's claim that the reality of the rational state is its democratic element is the further claim that undemocratic states, while not devoid of empirical existence, are nevertheless 'unreal' in so far as they lack a democratic element, for such states lack also a rational form. It is precisely in terms of their incompleteness in this regard, in their absence of democracy, that Marx describes the state when it takes the monarchic or the republican form.² Indeed, it is on this basis that Marx contrasts "the political state" with "the real state", the former being deficient of the rational form which is manifest in the latter.³ As an existing state may be less than 'real', so may existing democracy be less than 'true'. The political state, as it is understood in Marx's terminology, is able to attain no

¹Early Writings, pp. 185-186; emphasis added.

²Ibid., pp. 87, 89.

³The 'real state' is also called the 'material state' and the 'unpolitical state'; the 'political state', the 'constitutional state', ibid., pp. 90, 119, 120, 129.

more than a 'formal democracy', as opposed to 'real democracy'. Formal democracy is characterised by the fact that under its regime man leads a merely legal rather than a fully human existence.¹ The condition for existence of 'the real state', on the other hand, is 'true democracy', in which "the constitution [is] founded on its true ground: real human beings and the real people; not merely implicitly and in essence, but in existence and in reality".² The principle defect of the modern age, according to Marx, and this point summarises and unifies his comments on the state and democracy, is the separation of man from his objective essence.³ This condition of estrangement is sanctioned, according to Marx, in Hegel's refusal to acknowledge that the reality of the state as the rational organism is in its true democracy.

The full force of Marx's account of the state of true democracy relies upon a distinction between man's condition of alienated legal existence and the associated 'existing' structure of the state on the one hand, and the 'reality' of man's human existence in the rational state on the other. For Marx assumes that what exists, or appears to exist, may be neither real nor true. Marx also assumes, and this is crucial to his argument, that 'reality' is immanent in 'existence', that existing conditions – undemocratic and without rationality though they are – nevertheless contain unrealised 'reality'. For Marx argues that while the objective essence of man is denied its full expression when the state takes a purely political form, it nevertheless abides in man as a dormant or

¹*Ibid.*, p. 88; cf. also pp. 143-144.

²*Ibid.*, p. 87. Marx seldom refers to "true democracy" (p. 88), but "democracy", although it is clear from the context when he is talking about formal or true democracy.

³"The modern age...isolates the objective essence of man, treating it as something purely external and material. It does not treat the content of man as his true reality", *ibid.*, p. 148.

unrealised determinant.¹ The potential for reality, therefore, is in existence itself. Marx says, for instance, that the contradiction between civil society and the state which is manifest in the merely partial participation in the state "symbolise[s] the demand that this contradiction be resolved".² The transformation of existence into reality, according to these tenets, is the result of a progressive unfolding of the essence inherent in man and inherent in the state as constituted by the people in true democracy. In differentiating existence and reality Marx is not postulating, therefore, an ideal reality of a normative nature which is independent of empirical existence and which functions as an external principle of moral criticism. 'Existence' and 'reality' are for Marx but distinct phases in the state's development as the rational organism. In the state's phase of pre-historical existence, in its political form, the universality proper to it is absent. At this stage man's essence is suppressed in legal or political existence. In the real state, on the other hand, man's essence is realised with true democracy; the state then is a truly universal and rational organism.

The concept 'true democracy' serves three purposes in the Critique. Firstly, in demonstrating that the political state is not the real state it acts as a critical measure which is held against Hegel's idea of the state. While Hegel attempts to prove that the constitutional monarchy, the political state, represents the fulfilment of the ideal of the rational state Marx shows the exact opposite; that which Hegel applauds Marx proclaims illusory. The idealist vision is not yet realised. This raises the second purpose. By showing that the real state is one of true democracy Marx constructs the theoretical base from which he is able to

¹"...the real subject, man, remains the same and does not forfeit his identity in the various determinations of his being", ibid., p. 149.

²Ibid., p. 131; emphasis in original.

engage the Prussian state in a revolutionary polemic. It is in the letters published in the Deutsch-Französische Jahrbücher, written during and just after the drafting of the Critique, rather than in the Critique itself, that this polemic is conducted. But its theoretical basis is in the Critique, and as Marx regards Hegel's ideal is thoroughly Prussian, his Critique of Hegel's Philosophy of Right serves as an implicit critique of the Prussian state. Marx does not criticise the existing (Prussian) state for moral default and he does not appeal to such principles as equality and justice. Rather, he argues that a state which censors, promulgates tendentious laws and in other ways restricts the full participation of the people in the state is inevitably doomed. In the progressive unfolding of man's inherent essence the Prussian state, therefore, will be democratised out of existence into reality. Finally, the concept 'true democracy' signifies an epistemological position. As 'reality' is not the same as 'existence', but merely immanent in it, knowledge of reality, of what is true, can not be acquired from experience. This is because one can experience only what exists. Experience can not give rise to knowledge of the real state, for "in the modern world the idea of the state can appear only in the abstraction of the 'merely political state'".¹ In order to claim knowledge of the real state, in order to know what is true and therefore what is not true about existence, Marx requires the concept 'true democracy'. Marx's commitment to democracy in the Critique is as much an epistemological stance as a revolutionary political one.

These three functions of 'true democracy' are closely interrelated and it is therefore difficult, in particular, to separate the epistemological from the other aspects of the notion. Even more than his polemic

¹Ibid., p. 183.

against the Prussian state Marx's epistemology is implicit rather than clearly stated in the Critique. Its strands have to be extracted from the text and reconstructed ab extra. Let us recapitulate briefly. Marx argues that the truth of the state's reality cannot be known from experience of the existing state, for the idea of the real state can not be obtained from the abstraction of the political state. Marx also maintains that reality is immanent in existence. It is from this latter point that Marx is able to surmount the difficulties presented by the former. The empirical reality of man's essence, although denied its full expression in the political state, provides Marx with evidence of the full nature of reality. The involvement of individuals in offices of the political state, says Marx, indicates an essential quality in the incumbent. He goes on to criticise Hegel for contending that such offices have only an external and contingent link with the particular individuals engaged in state activity. Hegel forgets, continues Marx,

...that particular individuality is a human function and that the activities and agencies of the state are likewise human functions; he forgets that the essence of the 'particular person' is not his beard and blood and abstract Physis, but his social quality, and that the affairs of state are nothing but the modes of action and existence of the social qualities of men.¹

It is in this sense that the "political state is the mirror of truth which reflects the disparate moments of the concrete state".² Instead of abstracting from the political state Marx develops his idea of the real state by projecting from man's essence. Rather than starting with the political state to arrive at a conception of the real state Marx claims the empirical reality of man's essential sociality from which the faculties of state derive.

¹Ibid., pp. 77-78; emphasis in original.

²Ibid., p. 176; emphasis in original. "Concrete state" means here 'real state'.

But in proving his conception of the real state Marx is no more prepared to abstract from the empirical reality of man's essence than he is prepared to abstract from the political state in which man's essence is evident. While Marx finds evidence for the truth of the real state in man's sociality — it is the mirror of truth when expressed in offices of state — the proof of man's sociality is in democracy and democracy is the form of the real state. Any apparent confusion in all of this results from the close interdependence of true democracy, the real state and man's essential sociality, any one of which must be understood in terms of the other two. What is clear, however, and what must resolve any confusion, is the epistemological primacy of the concept 'true democracy' over the concepts 'real state' and 'man's essence'. Democracy is Marx's guarantee of truth, including the truth of man's essence; it is also, therefore, the foundation of his knowledge of the state and man. He says that "all forms of the state...are untrue to the extent that they are not democracy".¹ And when discussing the real state, in which "the people is itself the universal concern", Marx is "thus concerned with a will which can achieve its true existence as species-will only in the self-conscious will of the people".² Marx's position, then, can be summarised thus: It is the self-conscious will of the people which is denied in the political state, as the full participation of the people is there prevented. The universality of the real state is constituted in the people's self-conscious will, the true existence of which is found only in the real state, and the truth of its existence can be known only in democracy. Marx's commitment to democracy is therefore a commitment to epistemological guarantees.

¹Ibid., p. 89.

²Ibid., pp. 128-129; emphasis added.

Marx's commitment to democracy as a guarantee of truth is not unique to the Critique. The same principle is found in his article 'On a Proposed Divorce Law', published in the Rheinische Zeitung of December 1842, where it is claimed that "The guarantee... [that law express] reliable knowledge and universal insight... will be present only when law is the conscious expression of the will of the people, created with and through it".¹ Here, as in the Critique, the assumption which informs Marx's assertion is that given the opportunity of full participation in the state the people consciously express a will which is rational.² It can be confirmed that this is also Marx's position in the Critique by recalling that when quoting from that work above we saw Marx hold that the condition or state of true democracy, in which popular will is consciously expressed, "confers a rational form on the organism of the state as a whole". This is the final card in Marx's epistemological pack. The truth of democracy and the rationality of the state are connected through the essential sociality of man when fully expressed in self-conscious popular will. In summary: Democracy guarantees true knowledge of man and the state because man's essential sociality ensures a self-conscious popular will, expressed and proved in democracy, which is rational. The rationality of popular will, in turn, ensures the reality of the state as a rational organism. This reality of rationality in democracy, for Marx, is the final state in the development or evolution of the state organism.

This returns the discussion to where it began, to Marx's agreement with Hegel that the state is the rational organism and, implicitly, to Marx's contention that the contemporary separation of man from his

¹Easton and Guddat (eds.), Writings of the Young Marx on Philosophy and Society, p. 141.

²Cf. Richard Hunt, Political Ideas of Marx and Engels, Vol. 1, p. 40.

objective essence is sanctioned in Hegel's failure to acknowledge that the reality of the state as the rational organism is in true democracy. In the course of making this full circle, as it were, 'true democracy's' epistemological role in confirming the truth of man's nature and the state's reality as the rational organism has been outlined to some degree. Before going on to a fuller discussion of the Critique's idealist epistemology it is necessary to say something further of the nature of Marx's criticisms of Hegel.

While the dialectic of historical development in the Critique shares the essential rationality of Hegel's dialectic, Marx is critical of Hegel for constructing a rationality of logical, not human, development. Marx argues that for Hegel the generative force of rational development lies outside man and that man's institutions are merely produced by and subject to the logical development of Absolute Spirit, of the Idea.¹ Marx goes on to argue that this basic flaw in Hegel's account results from his treating man as a predicate of universal determination rather than as its subject.² The Feuerbachian critique of Hegel allows Marx to propose a Feuerbachian alternative to him:

Hegel proceeds from the state and conceives of man as the subjectivised state; democracy proceeds from man and conceives of the state as objectified man.³

Rational universality — which finds its expression in the true state — is created not in the "determinations of the Idea", according to Marx, but through the self-determination of "man's real universality", which is essentially inherent in man and has a pre-historical form in existing

¹Cf., for example, Early Writings, pp. 63, 73, 98.

²Ibid., p. 80.

³Ibid., p. 87. This is immediately followed by a statement of the Feuerbachian critique of religion.

institutions in so far as they are "modes of man's social existence".¹ Marx shares with Hegel a conception of the state's universality and its determination in the development of the rational. But whereas Hegel sees man as predicated through this development, that is subject to it externally, Marx sees this rationality as the subject of man's self-development, as the progressive unfolding of man's objective essence. Once again we see Marx arrive at his own position in the Critique through an internal critique of Hegel.² Louis Dupré, for instance, is therefore correct to point out that while the dialectic both in Marx and Hegel are essentially rational they are also essentially different; Marx's is the dialectic of man as an empirical flesh and blood being, whereas in Hegel the dialectical development is of the Idea.³ But it would be misleading if we assumed on this basis that Marx's internal critique of Hegel had led him out of the mire of idealism.

¹Ibid., p. 99; second emphasis added.

²Marx's internal critique of Hegel includes more than his application of the Feuerbachian subject-predicate inversion. An important but almost totally ignored aspect of the Critique is an elaboration of a revolutionary interpretation of Rousseau's political theory, in opposition to the interpretation of Rousseau implicit in Hegel's Philosophy of Right. It is inappropriate to discuss this here, but the following points, which would be central to such a discussion, may be mentioned. A significant aspect of Hegel's philosophy of the state is an elaboration of Rousseau's notion that man's essence is in the idea of freedom, which is expressed in the state. Marx's critique of Hegel can be read as an interpretation of Rousseau's Social Contract which stresses the revolutionary implications of primary or direct democracy, namely, that any state which is not a congress or union of people in an expression of the General Will is not an expression of a free rational will. Marx's discussion of whether "all, as individuals" should share in deliberating and deciding on political matters of general concern (Early Writings, pp. 185-195) shows that he is much more sensible to Rousseau's distinction between the General Will and the Will of All than is Hegel.

I am encouraged to find support for this interpretation in Colletti, From Rousseau to Lenin, pp. 185-187. The importance of Rousseau to Hegel and Marx is mentioned in both Hunt, Political Ideas of Marx and Engels, and Eugene Kamenka, Ethical Foundations of Marxism; the latter is more helpful than the former, although it is discussed slightly more by the former. David McLellan, Karl Marx, p. 12, note 1, sees striking parallels between Marx and Rousseau, but with respect to one of Marx's school essays and Émile. He does mention, though, that "during the summer of 1843 Marx...immersed himself in the political theories of...Rousseau" among others, ibid., p. 73.

³Louis Dupré, Philosophical Foundations of Marxism, pp. 92-93.

It is true that ontologically, on the level of what there is, Marx's discussion seems to imply a rejection of idealism, a rejection of the view that ultimate and determining reality is the reality of ideas. Indeed, Marx is strongly critical of the fact that in Hegel's formulation

Reality is not deemed to be itself but another reality instead. The ordinary empirical world is not governed by its own mind but by a mind alien to it; by contrast the existence corresponding to the real Idea is not a reality generated out of itself, but is just the ordinary empirical world.¹

Marx's complaint here is that Hegel denies that reality is generated in the empirical world through the realisation of man's essence, an essence which in its empirical existence in political institutions demonstrates man's potential to attain rational universality. For Hegel, Marx says, argues that the 'reality' of 'existence' derives from the Idea which is alien to the ordinary empirical world, and thus Hegel conceptualises 'reality' as an epiphenomenon of what Marx regards to be the basis of reality.

Marx therefore criticises Hegel's idealism in so far as it derives reality from the Idea, from a source other than empirical existence. But we should not assume from this that Marx wishes to identify extant existence with 'reality' as universal rationality. On the contrary. Marx's wider point is that man's sociality in its rational form exists empirically only in the final phase of man's development in the state of true democracy, and that this rationality is not expressed in the institutions of the political state, even though man's sociality is evident in them. In the political state, Marx argues, man's sociality is not rational, as it is in the real state. So that while man — as a being of sociality —

¹Early Writings, p. 62.

may exist empirically in both the political state and the state of true democracy, his empirical existence has the status of 'reality' only in the latter.¹ There is no suggestion in this statement of Marx's existence-reality dualism that he accepts an idealist ontology. There is no necessary succour for idealism in Marx's argument that man's sociality exists empirically but not in a rational form at a stage of development prior to its rational existence in the real state of true democracy. There is an idealism, though, in Marx's epistemology.

We say that the Critique's epistemology is idealist because Marx's knowledge of man's rationality in the real state and his knowledge of its absence in the political state derives from the concept 'true democracy', a concept which has no empirical reference and which acquires its meaning from a conception of the real state which, it will be suggested, presents itself as an idea only. There are two issues in this matter; that Marx's knowledge of man's rationality and of the real state is a knowledge without empirical reference and secondly, that the basis of Marx's knowledge of the empirical essence of man's sociality — which is the mirror of truth for the real state — is idealist.

According to Marx man's essentially social existence is not equivalent to man's reality in the state of rational universality, and knowledge of man's rationality can not be acquired by abstracting from man's condition in the political state, for rationality is absent from the political state. The political state can provide evidence of man's sociality in so far as political institutions are modes of man's social existence, but the rational content of sociality is evident only in the state of true democracy, in the real state. Marx, quite correctly,

¹Marx, of course, is critical of Hegel's generous ascription of rationality to empirical existence, for the political state is rational to Hegel. Cf. Early Writings, p. 63.

dismisses the possibility of obtaining a conception of the real state through an abstraction of the existing political state. There is no purpose, then, in looking for an empirical reference to Marx's knowledge of man's rationality and the real state.

What is the basis of Marx's knowledge of the empirical essence of man's sociality? We have already seen Marx argue that the real state evolves out of the empirical nature of man as a social being, through the realisation of man's essence, and it has been briefly shown that Marx's knowledge of man's rationality and of the real state is without direct empirical reference. The characteristics of the real state, by definition, are its universality and its rationality. This is uncontested for both Hegel and Marx. Marx differs with Hegel, however, on the question of the state's basis. For Marx it is in the dialectic of man's development rather than in the dialectical evolution of the Idea. The only human faculty which might give rise to the state's universality is sociality, for full sociality is universal. It has already been noted that Marx's proof of the empirical nature of man as a social being is in the rational universality of man in the real state. Such a proof must be largely logical and could be presented in the form of a syllogism arguing that full sociality is universal, the state's universality is rational, therefore man's universality in the real state is rational. But the real state is an empirical possibility by hypothesis only, the hypothesis of the rationality of the state in true democracy. It follows, therefore, that the essential essence of man as a social being has an empirical existence by hypothesis only. Marx's knowledge of the empirical essence of man's sociality is derived from his idea of the state of true democracy.

What Marx has rejected on the ontological level he accepts on the epistemological. Epistemologically, at least, Marx retains the idea of the state as an ideal conception, for knowledge of the real state is devoid of existing empirical referents. The determination of Marx's knowledge of reality is the concept of true democracy. Unlike Hegel's idea of the real state Marx's is a fully democratic state, Marx has democratised the idea of the state. However, the underpinnings of the Critique's idealist epistemology seem not to be Hegelian, for textual formulations suggest that Marx goes beyond Hegel back to Plato's doctrine of ideas.

Certain passages in the Critique suggest that Marx's model of true democracy bears some relation to the historical example of classical Greek antiquity.¹ While this reference in Marx's conception of the real state to a Greek past has been noted in the literature, the Platonic complexion of the idea of democracy described by Marx, which is central to his epistemology, has gone unnoticed. Yet what could be more Platonic than Marx's claim that

it goes without saying that all forms of the state have democracy for their truth and that they are untrue to the extent that they are not democracy.²

In his doctrine of ideas Plato distinguishes between the 'Form' or essential nature of a thing and particular instances of that thing. Only the Form or Idea is real; its particular manifestation or existence imperfectly represents reality and is, to that extent, unreal.³ Knowledge of

¹Ibid., pp. 91, 98, 113. Hunt, Political Ideas of Marx and Engels, Vol. I, pp. 82-84, makes this point strongly. A more sustained discussion which argues for the same proposition is Horst Mewes, 'On the Concept of Politics in the Early Work of Karl Marx'.

²Early Writings, p. 89.

³Plato outlines his theory of ideas in The Republic, Chapter 35, and in 'Phaedo', Portrait of Socrates, pp. 165ff.

a thing is sound only so long as it refers to its Form. Marx's concept of true democracy bears a strong resemblance, therefore, to a Platonic Form. But it is in his qualification of its Platonism that Marx most clearly suggests a conscious debt to Plato. Marx says that

democracy is the essence of all political constitutions...it is related to other forms of constitution as a genus to its various species, only here the genus itself comes into existence and hence manifests itself as a particular species in relation to the other species whose existence does not correspond to the generic essence.¹

The insertion of the words "only here" after describing democracy as the essence of all political constitutions which is related to particular constitutions as a general form to its particular manifestations, indicates that this formulation differs from what might otherwise be understood by the formulation as it is usually presented. The qualification "only here" is taken to indicate that not all that is ordinarily entailed in a stated position here applies. The need to say "only here" is the need to differentiate between two versions of a position and the phrase itself implies the author's debt to the usually understood version, from which he departs. Whereas in Plato's doctrine of ideas reality as the Form can not attain a particular existence, Marx contends that under certain specified conditions, namely when rationality is the expression of man's species-will, true democracy as reality "comes into existence". By specifying the peculiar attribute of true democracy in this way Marx, in effect, acknowledges a debt to Platonic epistemology in which knowledge of reality and particular existence derives from the Form of a thing.²

¹Early Writings, p. 88; emphasis added.

²Herbert Marcuse, Reason and Revolution, p. 271, on the other hand, regards Marx's epistemology as Hegelian.

It is the Platonic background of the Critique's epistemology which gives sense to Marx's critical comments on Hegel's concept formation.

When he [Hegel] deals with the idea which is to acquire reality in the sovereign, he does not have in mind the real idea of the executive, the executive conceived as an idea; he thinks instead of the subject of the absolute idea which exists bodily in the sovereign

and, Marx says a little further on, Hegel's speculative mystery results from

the fact that a concept (existence, etc.) is viewed abstractly, that it is not treated as something autonomous but as an abstraction from something else... [Hegel's confusion could have been avoided] partly with autonomous abstractions (of course, not abstractions from something else, but ultimately, self-abstractions).¹

Here we have in Marx a notion of the real idea which does not result from an abstraction of existence but from autonomous or self-abstraction. Marx's epistemology shares with Plato's doctrine of ideas the proposition that an intelligible reality may be without reference to empirical existence and that it take the form of the idea.

This underpinning epistemology of the Critique is implicit in other, related writings and is a contributing element in the general theoretical stance which Marx developed in this early period. It has been shown that while Marx's epistemology is idealist his dialectic of development insists that reality is implicit in existence. And, as we have seen, this is where he departs from both Hegel and Plato. Marx's knowledge of man and the state is based on the 'real' idea of the state of true democracy, but the reality which he knows through this idea is

¹Early Writings, pp. 154, 156; emphasis added. A very different critique of Hegel's concept formation is developed in The Holy Family, pp. 68ff.

immanent in existence. Marx differs with Hegel in so far as he does not regard all existence as real or rational and differs with Plato in so far as he maintains that under certain conditions reality may be manifest in a particular empirical existence.¹ Marx's combination of these views allows him to proclaim that the praxis of criticism, which was briefly discussed in Chapter 1 above, apprehends the truth of autonomous, self-abstracted concepts and is instrumental in the realisation of this truth in existence as rational reality. These views incorporating an idealist epistemology were diffuse through Marx's thought from the late 1830s to at least 1843. In his notebooks on Epicurian philosophy begun in 1839, which were preparatory to his doctoral thesis (submitted in 1841) Marx wrote that it "is criticism which measures individual existence against essence, particular actuality against the Idea".² In his letter to Ruge of September 1843, in which he declared the programme of "the reform of consciousness", Marx says that

Reason has always existed, but not always in a rational form. Hence the critic can take his cue from every existing form of theoretical and practical consciousness and from this ideal and final goal implicit in the actual forms of existing reality he can deduce a true reality.³

We can see from this that the epistemology of the Critique is not a new departure into a 'materialist' epistemology, but rather the culmination of an earlier development. Marx abandoned the Critique's epistemology in his construction of a materialist epistemology.

In it not possible here to retrace the steps in Marx's thought which took him from the theory of knowledge implicit in the Critique to

¹Marx says that democracy "is the first true unity of the particular and the universal", Early Writings, p. 88.

²Easton and Guddat, op. cit., pp. 61-62.

³Early Writings, p. 208.

the epistemology employed in the later writings.¹ We will be able to do no more than briefly indicate that Marx's mature epistemology amounts to a rejection of the early idealist epistemology. It contradicts the Critique's epistemology by denying the conflation of concepts and reality and by recognising that concepts are the products of existing conditions and not autonomous self-abstractions. The difference between the Critique's epistemology and the epistemology of the writings after The German Ideology, where Marx first developed the rudiments of his materialism and its epistemology, is particularly sharp when their similarities are considered. There is in all of Marx's reflections on the foundations of knowledge a continuing rejection of the positivist-empiricist account of knowledge, which claims that sense-experience and perception is a sufficient ground for knowledge, and a continuing critique of Hegel's view that one can conceptualise reality in abstracting from existence. However, the content of the apparently continuing themes in the mature writings is contrary to the Critique's version.

II

In his unpublished Introduction² Marx criticises a procedure of concept formation which points to those aspects of Hegel's conceptualisation criticised in 1843: in abstracting from "the real and concrete elements" Hegel "attenuates meaningful images to abstract definitions".³

¹Lloyd Easton, 'Alienation and Empiricism in Marx's Thought', outlines the evolution of Marx's theory of knowledge, but from a very different point of view than the one developed here.

²The 'Introduction' to A Contribution to the Critique of Political Economy was written in 1857. According to the 'Preface' to A Contribution..., the 'Introduction' was not published because it "anticipate[d] results which still have to be substantiated", A Contribution..., p. 19. The 'Introduction' has been published as an appendix to the A Contribution... since the American edition of 1904 and since 1939 as the first part of the collection of manuscripts published under the title Grundrisse.

³A Contribution..., pp. 205, 206.

But Marx's alternative to Hegel is not now the one he proposed in the Critique. He specifically denies the possibility of self-abstracting concepts, concepts which are "a product of the idea which evolves spontaneously and whose thinking proceeds outside and above perception and imagination".¹ Whereas in the Critique knowledge of reality is conceived to derive from such self-abstracting concepts, in the Introduction Marx maintains the contrary. Taking exchange-value as an example when discussing how "thinking assimilates the concrete and reproduces it as a concrete mental category"², Marx shows that the conditions of existence of a concept could not be more different from the conditions of existence of the things to which a concept refers. In doing this he demonstrates the fallacy of conflating reality and concepts of reality.

In the Introduction Marx rejects the positivist-empiricist account of knowledge, as he did in the Critique. "The concrete concept is concrete because it is a synthesis of many definitions...[it] leads from abstract definitions by way of reasoning to the reproduction of the concrete situation...as a concrete mental category."³ Knowledge of reality, according to Marx, is attained by reason rather than by the mere reception of sense-data. But the reasoning referred to here is not the reasoning employed in the Critique which deduces a real essence in existence which mere abstraction from existing conditions would be blind to. Neither is it the reason of rationalism for which reflective reason is the foundation of certainty in knowledge.⁴ Marx's position is that the

¹Ibid., p. 207. Cf. also the comments in Engels, Anti-Dühring, p. 116.

²A Contribution..., p. 206.

³Ibid.; emphasis added.

⁴George Lichtheim, The Concept of Ideology, p. 18, on the contrary, points to "the rationalist principle which Marx shared with Hegel: namely, the belief that cognition gives access to universal truths not present in immediate experience".

concepts which provide a knowledge of reality cannot be attained through the passive reception of sensation because not all that constitutes reality can be appreciated through direct sensation, for the sensuous world is "the product of industry and of the state of society...it is an historical product".¹ The historical dimension of reality is the dimension of man's practical activity in which he relates to others under existing and given conditions. Knowledge of these elements of reality is only possible, therefore, when the "conceptual entity...is a product of the thinking intellect".² Reason is necessary in Marx's mature epistemology to apprehend in thought the empirical conditions of the sensuous world which are not directly evident in sensation.

Reason plays a part in Marx's account of the attainment of knowledge because reality is here not a static phenomenon to be passively received through sensations, but an historical movement of active beings which can be known only by actively constructing a conception of reality. In his mature materialist epistemology Marx argues that knowledge of reality is produced, with the instruments of reason, by the knower. This contrasts with the account in the Critique where knowledge is available to the knower through his being privy to self-abstracting concepts. Reality itself is of an essentially historical nature in Marx's mature thought so that it can not be 'fixed' by concepts such as 'true democracy', for concepts of reality, and therefore knowledge of reality, are ultimately the products of existing empirical conditions.³ Marx's mature epistemology is fully materialist in maintaining both that reality is located in material existence and that knowledge of reality is a product of material existence.

¹The German Ideology, p. 57. Marx criticises Feuerbach for leaving the historical dimension out of his materialism; cf. ibid., pp. 59-60.

²A Contribution..., p. 207; emphasis added.

³Ibid., p. 210; The Poverty of Philosophy, pp. 91-92, 95.

Central to Marx's language of analysis in both his early and mature thought is the distinction he draws between a thing's appearance and its essence. This verbal continuity cuts across the theoretical discontinuity discussed above, but in no way diminishes its veracity. The significance and meaning of the appearance/essence distinction in the Critique is entirely different to that of the mature writings. An elaboration of this difference will further confirm the theoretical discontinuity between Marx's early and mature thought. After indicating above that Marx's mature epistemology amounts to a rejection of the early epistemology an account of the appearance/essence distinction will fill out the wider theoretical context of the early and mature epistemologies and detail the specific differences between them.

To point to the essential¹ is to indicate the determinate aspect of reality, to isolate what ultimately defines a thing and distinguishes it from others. In specifying an essence one has already distinguished between the peculiar characteristic quality and the incidental, peripheral and more variable aspects of a thing which, while important in determining its particular appearance or manifestation, are less crucial to its course of development and its relations with others. Given this general statement there are at least two senses in which the concept of essence can be conceived. One regards essence as a reality which truly exists, as a level of reality lying behind the reality of phenomenal form, behind the manifestation of appearance. In this sense essence is thus perceived as a level of real existence lying behind visible appearances, as a mode of being superior to the being of appearance. This idealist or metaphysical conception of essence, while primarily ontological, generally entails a self-conscious critical dimension, for it relates to the facts

¹A useful, although not entirely reliable discussion is Marcuse, 'The Concept of Essence', in his Negations.

of appearance by positing an alternative reality which reveals the deficiencies of existence which is imperfect when measured against the essential reality. This critical aspect of essence serves to emphasize its idealism. Its classic statement is Platonic, discussed above in relation to Marx's conception of 'true democracy'. The other manner of conceiving essence is naturalist and scientific. Here essence is discerned through an analysis of reality which reveals the true nature of appearance. It relates to the facts by bringing out their hidden internal logic, by specifying the nature of existence. It does not posit two realms of reality but conceptualises what exists in a way intended to bring out the truth of reality, to reveal in reality what is not apparent to direct experience and superficial reflection. In this sense essence is conceived epistemologically rather than ontologically, as a knowledge of reality as opposed to a being of reality.

In the Critique Marx shares with idealism the characteristic of conceiving essences in predominantly ontological terms. He refers to man's "objective essence", which is said to be isolated in the modern age, and also to the essence of all constitutions as democracy. He talks of "essence and true realisation" in the same breath, implying that essence is a particular state of being which constitutes a fully realised reality as opposed to an 'existing' reality and he distinguishes between "existing reality" and "true reality".¹ Marx has been shown to assert that the state and democracy can exist under conditions of being which are respectively not real or true. But it has been argued that while Marx develops an existence-reality dualism he avoids a thoroughly idealist ontology which maintains that there are two distinct levels of reality. He does this by arguing, in effect, for an evolutionary ontology which proposes

¹Early Writings, pp. 148, 88, 150, 208.

that reality develops out of existence, that essence can be immanent, but unrealised, in existence.

It is possible that Marx's arguments for what is called here an 'evolutionary ontology' are fallacious under certain interpretations and that his 'existence-reality' dualism could be stated in such a way as to render it formally equivalent to a 'two realities' dualism. However, such a reading of Marx would ignore the fine details of his position and the precise way in which he distinguishes it from Hegel's. Without discussing this further it should be clear that the characterisation advanced here is designed to render Marx's thought in a consistent form. There are ambiguities in the Critique and at times Marx appears to lean more toward an idealist rather than a naturalist ontology. However, in spite of these ambiguities — which are only natural in a working draft which explores the limits of Hegelian philosophy and at the same time tentatively puts an alternative view — the Critique overall does have a general unifying theoretical completeness and it is that which the discussion has attempted to capture.

In contradistinction to idealist ontology, then, Marx does not propose that there are two distinct levels of reality. He argues rather that man's essence as sociality, for instance, exists empirically but not in a rational form at a stage of development prior to its rational existence in the real state of true democracy. This means that for Marx in the Critique the essence which is ultimately real already exists prior to its full realisation; indeed, the form of existence is itself a consequence of the unrealised form of man's essence. Marx's conception of essence, therefore, is in some ways similar to the conception of essence in both idealism and naturalism. In common with idealism Marx holds the view that a thing's essence is the condition of its being. But unlike

the idealist conception and in common with the naturalist conception of essence Marx assumes that the essence of a thing is included in its appearance. But this is only in so far as it is implicit in 'non-real' or 'pre-real' existence, and it therefore remains a special ontological rather than an epistemological claim in the Critique. In naturalism, on the other hand, essence is included in appearance in the sense that the concept of appearance as experience of reality is incorporated in the concept of essence as knowledge of reality. Marx's conception of an ontological essence is relevant to his epistemology only in the sense that intellectual apprehension of the objective essence constitutes knowledge of reality.¹ It has already been shown that this bears no relation

¹The position is more complicated than it is stated here. In his Principles of the Philosophy of the Future, published in 1843, Feuerbach's naturalism ontologically includes essence in appearance, but in a different way to Marx. In §42 of his Principles Feuerbach says that the "distinction between essence and appearance...does not mean that there are two different realms or worlds...rather, this distinction is internal to sensuousness itself", Principles of the Philosophy of the Future, p. 232.

Feuerbach supports this claim with a discussion of botanic classification and therefore suggests that 'essence' is a nominal summary of sense experience with classes of objects and, therefore, epistemological in its meaning. Earlier discussion, however, in §27 of the Principles, shows that essence is epistemological only in so far as intellectual apprehension of an objective essence provides knowledge of reality. For he argues that being is inseparable from things, that essence is posited in being and, therefore, being and essence are identical. Essence is included in appearance. But under certain conditions, "in abnormal and unfortunate cases...man's essence is not where his being is", ibid., p. 215. This is not exactly Marx's position in the Critique, where the separation of man from his essence is not the condition of particular 'cases', but is the human condition subject to specific cases. Feuerbach's ontological essence is devoid of Marx's evolutionary aspect in which essence, though isolated from man, is immanent in man's being and nevertheless determining in political institutions and their development. Marx's critique of ontological essentialism in The German Ideology, although phrased as only a rejection of Feuerbach, indicates a rejection of his own similar position held in the Critique. This rejection of Feuerbach and Feuerbachian inspired ontological essentialism makes the language of essence distasteful to Marx in The German Ideology, even though he develops an epistemological essentialism in that work. Cf. the critique of Feuerbach in The German Ideology, p. 55; the note by Engels (ibid., p. 675), suggests that he rather than Marx penned the critique of Feuerbach's essentialism, although Engels may well have got the idea from Marx's 6th Theses of Feuerbach, which makes the same point.

to his mature epistemology. This, then, is the content of Marx's conception of essence in the Critique.

The appearance/essence distinction is also an important part of the language of Capital, but the concept of essence is given a markedly different meaning in that work than Marx gave it in the Critique. The meaning of 'essence' in Marx's mature thought can be demonstrated in the juxtaposition of two brief passages from Capital:

all science would be superfluous if the outward appearance and the essence of things directly coincided

and

a scientific analysis of competition is not possible, before we have a conception of the inner nature of capital, just as the apparent motions of the heavenly bodies are not intelligible to any but him, who is acquainted with their real motions, motions which are not directly perceptible by the senses.¹

In Capital 'essence' refers to a knowledge of reality rather than to a level of reality; and not just to knowledge but to scientific knowledge, a knowledge which is not directly sensual although fully empirical. In his mature thought the concept of essence is fundamental to Marx's materialist epistemology and to his model of science; it refers to a particular conceptualisation of reality.

The notion of essence developed in Capital is most obvious when it is deployed against the conception of reality in so-called 'vulgar economy', which Marx alleges lacks an understanding of essences. The famous thumbnail sketch of vulgar economy in the 'Afterword to the Second German Edition of Capital' stresses its ideological and apologetic nature, describes it in temporal terms as the post-Ricardian schools

¹Capital, III, p. 817; Capital, I, p. 300.

which emerged after 1830 and explains it through an historico-sociological account of the development of capitalist relations of production and the rise of the proletariat as a political force.¹ Although this sketch has a strong polemical thrust and compresses a number of ideas into a succinct and elegant argument, it suffers certain inadequacies. Not the least of these is that it does not fairly represent Marx's view of the history and development of economic thought and in particular it does not clearly articulate his key and crucial criticism of vulgar economy.

The fundamental character of vulgar economy is not its location in time nor its ideological function. In the unfinished fourth volume of Capital — posthumously published as Theories of Surplus Value — we find Marx's acclamation of the post-Ricardian Anglican clergyman Richard Jones, who "marks a substantial advance on Ricardo, in his historical explanation as well as in the economic details".² Marx's description of Jones is contrary to that which would be implied by the thumbnail sketch outlined above, but Marx is not concerned to force Jones into the die of vulgar economy cast in the 'Afterword'. What places Jones outside the camp of his vulgar contemporaries in Marx's estimation "is that he emphasises that the essential feature of capital is its socially determined form, and that he reduces the whole difference between the capitalist and other modes of production to this distinct form".³ Marx does not praise Jones because they agree that capital is a socially determined form. Indeed, to construe Marx's praise of classical political economy to be the result of a satisfaction obtained from agreement on this matter would be to misunderstand Marx's critique of the classical tradition and

¹Capital, I, pp. 24-25.

²Theories of Surplus Value, III, p. 402.

³Ibid., p. 424; emphasis added.

his departure from it. What Marx praises above all else in classical bourgeois economy is the fact that it employs essentialist conceptions, and it is this which allows Marx to distinguish Jones from vulgar economy. In a note which explicitly makes this point Marx draws the distinction between "that economy which...has investigated the real relations of production in bourgeois society,...[and] vulgar economy, which deals with appearances only".¹

The defining characteristic of vulgar economy, therefore, is in its concept formation, in its notion of economic knowledge, in its propensity to conceptualise appearances rather than essential or real relations. There are numerous citations available to substantiate that this is Marx's primary criterion for identifying vulgar economy. He says, for instance, that vulgar economy "sticks to appearances in opposition to the law which regulates and explains them" and that it operates from the "everyday conceptions of the actual agents of production, and...arranges them in a certain rational order".² That these characteristics are the obverse of scientific economy as such and not merely confined to an apologetic historical development is clear from Marx's description of Adam Smith's scientific default as the employment of a conception of reality which "takes the external phenomena of life, as they seem and appear and merely describes, catalogues, recounts and arranges them under formal definitions...[and thus] expresses the apparent connections without any internal relation".³ Smith, according to Marx, wrote as a scientific bourgeois economist, not as a hired prize-fighter or shallow

¹Capital, I, p. 85, note 1.

²Capital, I, p. 291; Capital, III, p. 830. A metaphor of the difference between scientific and vulgar economy can be found in the Critique, Early Writings, pp. 158-159.

³Theories of Surplus Value, II, p. 165.

syncretist¹, but when his work is less than scientific it is because his concepts merely reflect appearance.

Marx's critique of vulgar economy, therefore, implies that the distinction between a thing's appearance and its essence, as it is drawn in Capital, refers to two distinct forms of knowledge, to two different general conceptions of reality. The distinction, then, must be conceived as epistemological and not ontological. In what follows the precise meaning of Marx's mature essentialism will be outlined, and the content of 'essence', as it is conceived in Capital, will be clarified. A central issue raised by Marx's mature conception of essence, which will also be discussed below, is the seeming paradox of an epistemology which both rejects concepts formed in the direct experience of reality and claims to be materialist. In the following section of this chapter the question which has already been raised of the relation between Marx's mature essentialism and science will be discussed.

It has been shown that Marx's persisting criticism of what he calls 'vulgar economy' is that it conceptualises the external phenomena of economic life and in systematising and interpreting these builds a particular model of reality which is incomplete or otherwise defective in terms of his essentialist canons. Marx's own procedure begins with the premise that the scientific enterprise is possible only when the surface phenomena have been penetrated or bypassed, for "in their appearance things often represent themselves in inverted form" and an "exact analysis of the process[es of reality], therefore, demands that we should, for a time disregard all phenomena that hide the play of its inner

¹These are the terms Marx used to describe what he sees as two different groupings of vulgar economists, Capital, I, 25. The latter is not necessarily an apologist, cf. Marx's comments on J.S. Mill, ibid., p. 572, note 1.

mechanism".¹ This is not a claim on Marx's part that appearance is necessarily false, but merely an assertion that the basis of a full understanding of social reality can not be attained through an apprehension of its directly perceivable manifestations.

Marx does not doubt the reality of appearance, but argues that knowledge of reality can not rely upon categories of appearance. Under some interpretations, however, there is a suggestion that Marx holds that appearance itself "is merely a delusion"², implying that he dismisses appearance as a mystification or illusion and therefore regards it as false or somehow unreal. Such a view has not recognised the highly important distinction Marx draws between 'phenomena' on the one hand and 'phenomenal categories' on the other. When Hyppolite says that "the bourgeois economist deals with the phenomenon"³ he is not following Marx, as he believes, who maintains, on the contrary, that the bourgeois, or rather vulgar economist deals with conceptions of the phenomenon, deals with phenomenal categories. This difference between a phenomenon and a phenomenal category is crucial. Categories of phenomena may be quite misleading in their presentation of reality, as Marx says, but he does not go on to adversely reflect on the status of phenomena as the constituent elements of reality.

By 'phenomenal categories' Marx means the particular conceptions of the world which appear in the direct experience of reality; that is, categories which are generated in practical activity and employed in the everyday behaviour and thought of the practitioners themselves. Marx's point that phenomenal categories are inadequate to understand reality and,

¹Capital, I, pp. 503, 530.

²Jean Hyppolite, Studies on Marx and Hegel, p. 137. Henri Lefebvre, Sociology of Marx, p. 62, understands this better.

³Op. cit. Marx's formulations sometimes fudge the distinction, such as when he says, for instance, that vulgar economy "on principle worships appearances only", Capital, I, p. 504. Nonetheless, the distinction is amply clear in Capital.

under certain conditions, present a false conception of reality, can perhaps best be made clear by referring to his discussion of commodity fetishism. Marx argues that to the direct producers of commodities "the relations connecting the labour of one individual with that of the rest appear, not as direct social relations between individuals at work, but as what they really are, material relations between persons and social relations between things".¹ Marx does not deny that the commodity appears as it really is, for in the social act of exchange the product of labour acquires a characteristic which makes it commensurate with others as an article of trade. However, this conception of the commodity, formed in the direct experience of commodity production, is both enigmatic and woefully misleading, according to Marx.

To form a conception of commodities on the basis of their appearance, Marx argues, would be to give credence to the false view that the particular properties of commodities derive from their being as physical objects. Indeed, the conception of commodities as objects which "appear as independent beings endowed with life and entering into relation both with one another and the human race"² is not only in itself fantastic, he continues, but denies the fact that the conditions under which commodities qua commodities exist is "the peculiar social character of the labour that produces them".³ The social character of the labour expended in commodity production is not apparent to the labourers themselves because of the very nature of commodity production, under which social contact between producers is visible to them only in the act of exchanging their products. For in production for exchange, that is, in commodity production, the labour of society is mediated through the market so

¹Capital, I, p. 78; emphasis added.

²Ibid., p. 77.

³Ibid.

that the relations connecting the individual labourers does not become a part of their direct experience. Marx's argument, therefore, is that it is in the nature of commodity production to give rise to phenomenal categories which misrepresent reality; that under capitalist relations of production the categories which arise in practical activity will not reveal the reality of which phenomena are a part. This is a comment about the epistemological consequences of capitalist social relations¹, and not a comment on the reality or otherwise of appearance.

Given the unreliability of phenomenal categories for providing a conception of reality Marx begins to construct conceptions of its internal logic or relations which are not apparent to the senses, the knowledge of which he regards as an adequate and correct knowledge of reality, by differentiating between what a commodity, for instance, "appears, at first sight...[and what] analysis shows that it is, in reality".² Marx conceives the essence of reality by "analysing" and "criticising" phenomenal categories - to use the words that he repeatedly employs when describing his essentialist procedure. While Marx's knowledge of capitalism's essential nature is the consequence of his applying critical reason to categories of appearance it is not a deductive business of drawing conclusions from pre-given premises or a priori axioms, nor is it a nomenological exercise of understanding the world by establishing the meaning of terms. Marx's analysis and critique of categories of appearance is rather the result of his ascertaining what is the case in the empirical sense, with regard to entities and the relations between them, as opposed to what merely appears to be the case. A discussion of Marx's critique of the categories 'wages' or 'value and price of labour'

¹Compare Marx's comments on the invisibility of capitalist exploitation in everyday categories with his comments on the stark visibility of exploitation under serfdom, Capital, I, pp. 82, 314-315, 505, 533.

²Capital, I, p. 76.

as "categories for the phenomenal forms of essential relations"¹ will establish what he means by 'essence', how he arrives at a conception of essence, its function within his intellectual programme and its status as an instance of the scientific enterprise.

After opening with the remark that

On the surface of bourgeois society the wage of the labourer appears as the price of labour, a certain quantity of money that is paid for a certain quantity of labour²

and noting that this appearance gives rise to the conception of wages as the value and price of labour as a commodity, Marx immediately makes the simple points of reason that such a conception is tautological, absurd and inconsistent with received theory. Tautological because as the value of a commodity, in this case labour, is determined by the quantity of social labour expended in its production, the value of a day's labour would be equivalent to the quantity of the day's labour it contained. A proposition as meaningless as it is circular. Absurd because for labour to be sold on the market as a commodity it must have an objective existence independent of the labourer, which is ridiculous. And contradictory because the classical labour theory of value holds both that equivalents exchange and that capital is a residue of objectified labour retained by the purchaser of labour after production. If the labourer receives the full value of his labour — as he must if his wages are the value of his labour — then the basis of capitalist production described by classical political economy vanishes, for there is nothing left to transform into capital. If, on the other hand, the labourer receives less than the value of his labour, then equivalents do not exchange and the labour

¹Capital, I, p. 503. Marx's critique is conducted in Capital, I, Chapter 19.

²Ibid., p. 501; emphasis added.

theory of value is thereby faulted.¹ Each of these points are acknowledged by Marx in footnotes to be known to classical political economy, but because the latter "borrowed from everyday life the category 'price of labour' without further criticism" it was led into "inextricable confusion and contradiction".²

Marx's criticism of the concept 'price of labour' begins with a reassessment of the situation described by the phenomenal category, which leads him then to conceptualise it differently. "That which comes directly face to face with the possessor of money on the market", says Marx, "is in fact not labour, but the labourer. What the latter sells is his labour-power."³ This is a subtle but highly significant point. Marx says that classical political economy came close to this formulation as a result of its own analysis without being conscious of it because it stuck to the category 'value of labour' for wages. It realised, says Marx, that as with other commodities the value of the commodity sold by the labourer to the capitalist is determined by its cost of production. The issue for classical political economy then became "what is the cost of production — of the labourer, i.e., the cost of producing or reproducing the labourer himself?"⁴ In an earlier chapter of Capital Marx had already argued that the means of subsistence necessary for the maintenance of the labourer is that required to ensure his capacity for labour, his labour-power.⁵ It is the value of labour-power which is paid to the labourer by the capitalist in the form of wages and it is labour-power

¹Ibid., pp. 501-502.

²Ibid., pp. 503, 504.

³Ibid., p. 503.

⁴Ibid., p. 504.

⁵This is not merely biological subsistence, but subsistence understood historically and morally and includes the cost of training and education as well as the maintenance of the labourer's family, cf. Capital, I, pp. 167-169.

which is offered by the labourer for sale as a commodity. "What economists therefore call value of labour, is in fact the value of labour-power, as it exists in the personality of the labourer, which is as different from its function, labour, as a machine is from the work it performs."¹ Although Marx's dispute with political economy on this matter is conceptual he has not left the realm of fact, his interest is in providing categories adequate to take full cognisance of the facts.

Turning now to the question of how his reformulation of wages as the value of labour-power affects wider considerations Marx reasons, through an arithmetic example, that the labourer can produce the value of his own labour-power in a time less than the full working-day. As the labourer expends labour-power purchased by the capitalist for the entire working-day, the value it produces is greater than its own value, for "the value it produces depends, not on its own value, but on the length of time it is in action".² Marx makes the further point that whilst the value of labour-power paid to the worker as his daily wage is produced in a portion only of the working-day, it appears as the value or price of labour for the entire working-day, a working-day which, therefore, includes a portion of unpaid labour. "The wage-form thus extinguishes every trace of the division of the working-day into necessary labour and surplus-labour, into paid and unpaid labour. All labour appears as paid labour."³ Marx's argument, then, is that the money relation of wage-labour conceals the unrequited labour and the concept of wages as the value of labour obscures the real relation between the wage-labourer and the purchaser of his labour-power. Thus he is able to form a conception

¹Capital, I, p. 504.

²Capital, I, p. 505.

³Ibid.

of essential or real relations which, he says, are "beyond the cognisance of the ordinary mind"¹, by criticising and analysing categories of phenomenal forms.

Marx arrives at his conception of essential relations by considering the logical flaws in phenomenal categories, by re-assessing the factual situation of which they attempt to take account, by conceptualising that situation with more adequate categories and by generally attempting to discover what is the case as opposed to what merely appears or seems to be the case. In doing this he argues that the phenomenal category, 'value of labour', for instance, is false in so far as it "makes the actual relation [of wage-labour] invisible, and, indeed, shows the direct opposite of that relation".² Marx, therefore, rejects sensualist epistemologies which employ phenomenal categories, categories of the directly perceivable manifestation of phenomena, on the grounds that they do not provide the basis for an accurate knowledge of social reality. His own epistemology entails that an adequate knowledge of reality is attained by reason rather than sense-experience. Whilst his method of apprehending reality both rejects the sensualism of empiricists and retains reasoning normally associated with rationalists Marx's mature epistemology must still be regarded as fully empirical in that his criticism and analysis of phenomenal categories never departs from the realm of fact and attempts to grasp the factual relations necessary for the understanding of social reality.

The essence which Marx discovers, knowledge of which is not available to those who take appearance at face value, is the set of relations crucial to the workings of the social system under consideration and

¹Ibid., p. 506.

²Ibid., p. 505.

which determine its primary characteristics. Conceptions of these relations, therefore, provides knowledge of social reality. It is these essential or real relations which are held to be responsible for the content of direct experience of reality as it appears in phenomenal form and also those categories of phenomenal forms which "appear directly and spontaneously as current modes of thought".¹ Marx's essentialist analysis therefore specifies the material conditions necessary for the experience described by phenomenal categories and also the conditions which make possible the phenomenal categories themselves. On his own account Marx is in a position to argue that his analysis of the "true relation of things" - which, as they are relations not discoverable by experience must, he says, "be discovered by science"² - reveals not only real relations but also the ideological function of phenomenal categories, categories which form "the basis of all the juridical notions of both labourer and capitalist, of all the mystifications of the capitalist mode of production, of all its illusions as to liberty, of all the apologetic shifts of the vulgar economists".³ Marx's purpose in establishing knowledge of essential relations is not only to discover the real situation and conceptualise it adequately, which is the classical task of science, but, as the obscurisation in phenomenal categories is a natural consequence of the direct experience of capitalist production, his purpose is to also provide the basis of a critique of the social system which masks the reality of its own operation. Before evaluating Marx's mature essentialism as scientific procedure it is necessary to consider further its critical aspects.

¹Ibid., p. 507.

²Ibid.

³Ibid., pp. 505-506.

Quite unlike the role ascribed to criticism in the Critique and its cognate writings, the critical dimension of Marx's mature epistemology has a largely intellectual and not a directly practical importance. Marx has no illusions in Capital regarding the ability of a knowledge of capitalist relations of commodity production to undo commodity fetishism and the wage-form. Indeed, he observes with an irony appropriate in dispelling such an unlikely prospect that

The recent scientific discovery, that the products of labour, so far as they are values, are but material expressions of the human labour 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 labour appears to us as an objective character of the products themselves...just as...after the discovery by science of the component gases of air, the atmosphere itself remained unaltered.¹

The abolition of social forms requires social and political action, not scientific inquiry:

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.²

¹Ibid., p. 79.

²Ibid., p. 84. Herbert Marcuse has a different conception of Marx's mature essentialism which assumes that for Marx 'essence' is a reality rather than a way of conceptualising reality and that its critical aspect points to a defect in or potential of reality, rather than to a defective knowledge of reality acquired through categories of phenomenal forms. Marcuse says that 'essence', for Marx, "is conceivable only as the essence of a particular 'appearance', whose factual form is viewed with regard to what it is in itself and what it could be (but is not in fact)", Negations, p. 74. It is true that given his conception of the essential features of capitalism as its internal relations Marx would be able to hazard a conception of the future society emerging out of capitalism. Indeed, Marx says that capitalism "engenders the material conditions and the social forms necessary for an economical reconstruction of society", MESW, II, 75. But the essence of capitalism – even in an ontological and historical sense – remains for Marx a capitalist and not a socialist essence.

Where a scientific conception of essence does have a practical relevance, though, is in defining the relations which are the necessary conditions of the social system and, therefore, those relations upon which action has the consequence of significantly changing society.¹ It is in this sense that the critical potential of Marx's essentialism has political consequences.

Marx's materialist conception of history can be understood — as he understood it — as a set of propositions at the core of which is the thesis that the essential feature of a social system is the manner of production which it manifests. The difference between societies, according to this thesis, is to be located essentially in the specific manner of production found in and employed by different societies.²

This position provides Marx with the basis of a critique of a view common to political economy and non-revolutionary programmes of social reform and re-construction. Marx derides "the banality of those economists who proclaim production as an eternal truth, and confine history to the domain of distribution".³ For, while he concurs that all societies must produce in order to live, Marx maintains that the manner or mode of production is specific to each social system and that it is this fundamentally historical nature of production which marks the difference between different historical societies.⁴

¹"In order to seek a revolution...you must assume an overall viewpoint, take up a synthetic method, define the essence of a given society, and reject that essence." Raymond Aron, Main Currents in Sociological Thought, Vol. 1, p. 12.

²Cf. Capital, I, pp. 85-86, note; Capital, III, pp. 791-792.

³A Contribution..., p. 202.

⁴Marx raises this point as an objection to classical political economy on numerous occasions, although he did say that "the analysis carried out by the classical economists themselves nevertheless paves the way for the refutation of this conception", Theories of Surplus Value, III, p. 501. The radical liberal economist Arnold Toynbee also argued that classical political economy erred on this matter, but his own critique of it was that economic laws "express, for the most part, facts of human nature,

As he regards production relations as the essential relations of economic life Marx also argues that it is erroneous to conceive distribution as an independent variable; distribution has to be seen, rather, as dependent upon production. "Any distribution whatever of the means of consumption is only a consequence of the distribution of the conditions of production themselves. The latter distribution, however, is a feature of the mode of production itself."¹ The significance of these comments concerning the historical nature of production and the evaluation of distribution as a variable dependent upon production are not confined to economic considerations alone, as they have a programmatic corollary of political importance. Herein lies the critical dimension of Marx's epistemological essentialism in Capital.

Although Marx does not name John Stuart Mill specifically in his discussion of the economists of distribution, he would have been familiar with the latter's statement that "the laws and conditions of the Production of wealth partake of the character of physical truths" whereas "the Distribution of wealth...is a matter of human institution solely".² Marx regarded this type of claim as not only false in itself but politically objectionable in so far as it implied the view — which situates Mill as a precursor of Fabian socialism — that "Society can subject the distribution of wealth to whatever rules it thinks best".³ When this same view appeared in the 1875 Programme of the German Workers' Party Marx felt compelled to write that

(cont.) which is capable of modification by self-conscious human endeavour", Toynbee's Industrial Revolution, p. 22. Marx's critique of this type of position is outlined below.

¹'Critique of the Gotha Programme', MESW, III, 19. Cf. also A Contribution..., pp. 200-202.

²J.S. Mill, Principles of Political Economy, pp. 199, 200.

³Ibid., p. 201.

Vulgar socialism...has taken over from the bourgeois economists the consideration and treatment of distribution as independent of the mode of production and hence the presentation of socialism as turning principally on distribution.¹

Contrary to vulgar economy and vulgar socialism Marx believes that the distribution system is not so readily amenable to engineering and that endeavours for social change in general and socialism in particular are bound to fail if they confine themselves to challenging the system of distribution.² His essentialist conception of capitalism as an historical mode of production leads Marx to argue that it is only through the overthrow of capitalist production that the relations between the class of capital and the class of wage-labour can be abrogated and that nothing short of the overthrow of capitalism itself could lead to the emancipation of labour, could lead to socialism. This conclusion ultimately derives from Marx's epistemological essentialism.

III

Up to this stage Marx's own view of his essentialist procedure has been taken at its face-value, and without discussion or dispute his aspiration to the estate of science has been allowed to stand as he asserted it. The claim that Marx's work is scientific has been accepted by Bertell Ollman and Paul Thomas, for example, but with the qualification that it is scientific in Marx's own sense of the term only.³ We will now consider whether this qualification is necessary. Three general features of science which are often held to ban Marx from its province are

¹MESW, III, 20.

²This is argued from a non-Marxist position in Richard Titmuss, Income Distribution and Social Change, and in Frank Parkin, Class Inequality and Political Order, especially Chapter 4.

³Bertell Ollman, Alienation, p. 66; Paul Thomas, 'Marx and Science', p. 14.

its formulation of permanent, universally valid general laws, its adherence to the fact-value distinction and its rejection of essentialism; all of which are contrary to Marx's own position. This has led to the suggestion, made by Thomas, but by no means confined to him, that Marx described his work as scientific "for the sake of the favourable connotations of the word science".¹ An appraisal of the general features of science as they affect Marx will clarify whether Marx's profession of science has a basis stronger than one of self-acclamation and propaganda.

Marx explicitly rejected the building of general universally valid laws on a number of occasions; he regarded it as the pursuit of "formulas" belonging to "historico-philosophical theory" rather than to science.² His reason for rejecting such laws, though, was not because of an in principle objection to laws as such, but to laws which spanned historical epochs, as did the laws of 'science' proposed by Comte and Proudhon, for example, who drew adverse comment from Marx for this reason. Marx's point against universal laws is that they ignore the fact that fundamentally different laws are to be deduced from the workings of different historical societies. We have already seen that he regards his essentialist method as one which uncovers "the inner mechanism" of capitalist society and discovers the "law[s] which regulate and explain" phenomena.³ Marx did not feel inhibited, therefore, in describing as his "ultimate aim" in Capital "to lay bare the economic law of motion of modern society".⁴ Indeed, a number of economic laws are positively stated in Capital. Marx describes the theory of surplus-value, for example, as the "absolute law of this [capitalist] mode of production", and refers to

¹Thomas, op. cit., p. 18.

²The Poverty of Philosophy, p. 110; Selected Correspondence, p. 313. Cf. also Thomas, op. cit., pp. 7, 8, 10-11.

³Cf. pp. 87 (note 1) and 85 (note 2) above.

⁴Capital, I, p. 20.

"the general law of capitalist accumulation".¹ The third part of the third volume of Capital elucidates what Marx calls "The Law of the Tendency of the Rate of Profit to Fall". This is a tendential law because the conditions of its working may not be present under certain circumstances and under others may function as off-setting factors. Many biological laws, for instance, are couched with similar qualifications. Marx's laws of capitalism, like scientific law as it is ordinarily understood, can be expressed algebraically and may be true or false. That the former are not universal but applicable only to a particular society, is a reflection of Marx's conception of the subject matter referred to by the laws and not a scientific default of the laws themselves. Marx's rejection of universal laws points to his disagreement with others who claim to be developing a science of society, on the question of the scope of laws and the considerations going into their formulation. It is difficult to see why a rejection of universal laws on these grounds could itself lead to a disqualification from the scientific community.

If a necessary condition of science is the discovery of regular patterns of relations which can be expressed in such a way as to indicate the necessary factors and variables, their causal linkages and the outcome of their operation, then Marx's work is scientific on this criterion. However, the view that scientific laws operate independently of human will, that is, objectively, could be regarded as a sufficient condition of science which is absent in Marx's work; for Marx's view of the role of human agency in social change could be held to undermine the importance he appears to give to scientific laws. A fair statement both of Marx's position and of the nature of scientific law will show that such an objection to Marx's claim of engaging in a scientific enterprise is without foundation.

¹Ibid., p. 580, Chapter 25.

It is true, as Thomas says, that the "scientistic view of...a world with its own immutable laws which merely human agency is powerless to deflect...has no place in Marx's writings".¹ However, the significance of this observation for our discussion can be evaluated only if two further points are considered. Firstly, most people do experience the world as one governed by external and immutable laws. Marx was aware of this and his own formulation of the laws of capitalism took account of the fact and explained it. Secondly, it is arguable that a well constructed science of society – and not merely Marx's social theory – has no place for the view that social change results from the working of scientific laws independent of human agency. The regulation of human behaviour by the operation of scientifically discovered economic laws imposes a strict conformity on the actions of men, according to Marx. He talks of the "immanent laws of capitalist production" which are "felt by each individual capitalist, as external coercive laws", and says that the "advance of capitalist production develops a working-class, which by education, tradition, habit, looks upon the conditions of that mode of production as self-evident laws of Nature".² This is quite compatible with the fact that none of the laws he describes are immutable, for any single law of capitalism "is modified in its working by many circumstances".³ Human action might modify the working of an economic law; but in recognising this Marx makes it quite clear that he has only certain types of action in mind. He reminds us that men can not make history "just as they please", although they may mistake the imperatives of law-bound social relations for their own private motives.⁴ And certain

¹Thomas, op. cit., p. 14.

²Capital, I, pp. 555, 689.

³Ibid., p. 603.

⁴'The Eighteenth Brumaire of Louis Bonaparte', MESW, I, 389, 421.

endeavours are condemned to failure because the economic form of society allows no possibility of success.¹ Actions which change economic laws, in Marx's view, are those which make use of the opportunities made available to them by the working of those laws.² So that while Marx conceives economic laws as subject to modification through human intervention, he also maintains that they function independently of the will or intention of individuals, who are, indeed, subject to the working of these laws.³

The proposition that historical and social change, according to Marx, is the result of human action rather than the unfolding of scientific laws is misunderstood if it is interpreted to imply that Marx thereby denies the veracity of scientific laws and the validity of formulating them. No scientific law — on any acceptable account of science — ever directs the subject matter it refers to, and can only explain the forces of which it takes cognisance. Marx's rejection of evolutionary laws which entail a necessary inevitability of sequences of events is the rejection of a false 'science', which can quite appropriately be regarded as metaphysical.⁴ Scientific laws never have an inevitability of their own. Physical laws, it is true, do appear to have an autonomous and irrefutable determination, and because physical laws are often regarded as the archetypical scientific law, it is sometimes assumed that a necessary feature of scientific law is that it specify an inevitable course of

¹Capital, I, p. 86, note.

²Cf., for instance, the passage from Herr Vogt in Boris Nicolaievsky and Otto Maenchen-Helfen, Karl Marx: Man and Fighter, p. 129.

³It should be said that Marx's law construction was primarily for the economic realm, not social. Karl Korsch notes that for Marx there is "a scale of phenomena which become in proportion to their increasing distance from the economic foundation, less and less accessible to a strictly scientific investigation". Karl Marx, p. 234. Marx is, though, able to use economic knowledge in making penetrating remarks concerning religion (Capital, I, pp. 83-84), French peasant conservatism (MESW, I, 478-480) and so forth.

⁴Cf. Thomas, op. cit., p. 11; George Lichtheim, 'On the Interpretation of Marx's Thought', pp. 14-15.

events. But the apparent inevitability of physical laws is a consequence of the remarkable stability of matter and its invariant properties. This is a quality of the subject dealt with by physical laws, not a feature of scientific law as such. The inevitability of matter is merely represented by the laws which explain physical qualities and forces.

Like physical laws, Marx's economic laws are designed to morphologically represent the things they explain. As the subject of these laws is the economic relations and forces of material production engaged in by human actors, any statement of the laws of capitalism can say no more than is the case. In Marx's view it is the case that economic relations are the result of relations between social classes and the laws of capitalism he outlines merely explain these relations as they work themselves out in the process of production and capital formation. The outcome of the struggle between the classes is a matter for the future, in Marx's view. Prophecy, not science, divines the future; and prophetic claims are beyond the scope of Marx's intentions.¹ That Marx perceived social and historical change as a consequence of human action and agency can not, therefore, be construed as a reluctance or inability on his part to develop scientific laws which explain the economic structure of capitalism and its relations.

The question of objectivity in science, which has now been answered so far as Marx's appreciation of the role of human agency in social development is concerned, is related to what has too often been regarded as another necessary element of science, namely the fact-value distinction; a distinction which is denied by Marx.²

¹The more secular property of prediction is sometimes held to be a necessary feature of scientific laws. For an interesting argument to the contrary, cf. N.R. Hanson, 'On the Symmetry Between Explanation and Prediction'.

²Cf. Thomas, op. cit., p. 9.

Marx's position on this issue actually serves to put him in line with current views of science, rather than disqualify him from its realm. Although the distinction between facts and values is, of course, a useful one, their radical separation is currently acknowledged to be unfeasible. It is not only now generally admitted that the social sciences are not and perhaps can not be entirely value-free, but it is increasingly being accepted as tenable to argue that values enter into the 'objectivity' of science, including physical science.¹ Marx's rejection of the fact-value distinction need not, therefore, be conceived as a barrier to his work being described as scientific.

It is, though, in its critical dimension that the legitimacy of Marx's science qua science has been most strongly questioned by the distinction between fact and value. This is because Marx's critique of capitalism and his advocacy of communism are ethico-political and not scientific interests, it has been claimed. It is not to be denied that Marx's work was largely inspired by political motives. Any view of him which does not take stock of the importance to his writings of his participation in the labour and revolutionary movements will be grossly misleading. But Marx's socialist politics are quite distinct from his critical analysis of capitalism², which is not to say that they are separated from it in practice. It has already been shown that in his critique of political economy and the categories of phenomenal forms Marx constructs concepts of the essential or real relations of capitalism. Marx uses these discoveries in his critique of capitalism and in his

¹For a succinct argument to this effect, cf. G.J. Stack, 'Value and Facts'. On value in social science, cf. I.L. Horowitz (ed.), The New Sociology, Chapters 13 and 14.

²Thorstein Veblin, 'The Socialist Economics of Karl Marx', p. 285, note. This is similar to Marx's own protest, 'Marginal Notes on Wagner', p. 42. Cf. also the general discussion of the concept 'scientific socialism' in Z.A. Jordan, Evolution of Dialectical Materialism, Chapter 13.

endeavours to guide the political movement against capitalism, but, to paraphrase David Hume, it can not be said that Marx's work is not scientific because it is of anti-capitalist consequence.¹ One can not help feeling that those hostile to the political content of Marx's thought feel compelled, on that basis, to deny that it has also a scientific element.² We can not ignore that Marx's critique of capitalist society gives a characteristic stamp to his science, but it in no way detracts from the genuinely scientific flavour of his work. The instrumentalist vein is fairly strong in the history of science, and the early scientists were no less scientific for feeling themselves to be engaged in a struggle with nature in their discovery of its laws. Similarly, Marx's commitment to the value of communism can not be used to show that his work is less than scientific.

What, then, of essentialism and science. To the extent that 'essence' has a place in the positivist and empiricist vocabulary, it refers to summary statements of accumulated sense-experience. The notion of an essence — indeed, any concept — which can not be defined in terms of perceptual categories, is unacceptable to the positivist-empiricist tradition. It was shown above that Marx rejected this tradition and worked with essentialist categories which 'go beyond appearances', in Capital. On this basis it could be argued that Marx has rejected legitimate science and that his own version of science is spurious. Zbigniew Jordan, for one, suggests that Marx's mature essentialism is not

¹"There is no method of reasoning more common, and yet more blameable, than, in philosophical disputes, to endeavour the refutation of any hypothesis, by a pretence of its dangerous consequences to religion and morality. When an opinion leads to absurdities, it is certainly false; but it is not certain that an opinion is false, because of its dangerous consequence", David Hume, Enquiries Concerning Human Understanding, p. 96.

²Cf. Louis Boudin, Theoretical System of Karl Marx, p. 11. This is not to say that some friendly to Marx's thought also want to deny its scientific nature, cf. Tom Bottomore, Marxist Sociology, Chapter 3.

scientific. He argues that "it is clearly a metaphysical rather than a methodological doctrine...[which explains] the social and historical process...by the operation of reified concepts".¹ The reified concepts are those Marx uses when referring to what he calls the essential or real relations of capitalism, concepts such as 'productive forces', 'relations of production' and so on.

Marx's essentialist categories are metaphysical, according to Jordan, in so far as "they are distinguishable from each other in thought only, not in fact. Consequently, they have no distinct denotata in social reality which can be found separate from one another and which provide the concepts with an empirical significance."² Jordan's own characterisation of science is any theory containing statements which do not "go beyond what can be observed or empirically ascertained" and which are "based on observable facts".³ An empirical statement is, therefore, understood as an observation statement. And yet the test which Jordan applies to Marx's mature essentialism is precisely one which science, including physical science, is itself bound to fail. The 'mass' of matter and its 'specific gravity', for instance, can not be observed, any more than can the 'bonds' of atoms or molecular 'valency'. These are 'abstract' categories constructed by physicists and chemists for understanding the reality of matter which can not be directly observed, and which are "distinguishable from each other in thought only". The most powerful empirical statements of science, in terms of what they explain, are not observation statements.⁴ Enough has already been said about

¹Jordan, *op. cit.*, p. 309.

²*Ibid.*, p. 310.

³*Ibid.*, pp. 301, 302.

⁴For an argument that Jordan's type of positivism retards the development of social science, cf. David Willer and Murray Webster, 'Theoretical Concepts and Observables'.

Marx's essentialism to obviate a rehearsal of the argument that it both goes beyond experience, sensation and the directly observable and yet remains empirical. The function of 'relations of production', for instance, in Marx's theory, is analogous to, say, 'molecular valency' in chemistry.

It is not the intention of this argument to propose that essentialism per se is not metaphysical, but that Marx's mature essentialism is not. The difference between metaphysical and naturalist essentialism was outlined early in this chapter. It will also be obvious that there is a fundamental difference between a positivist essentialism — permitting summary observation statements — and Marx's. The fact that science employs non-observation empirical statements, which bear a strong resemblance to Marx's categories for the essential relations of capitalism, encourages the view that Marx's version of essentialism is quite consistent with science and may be a part of it. The contrast between "everyday conceptions" and the essentialist conceptions of science drawn by Marx, has been similarly made by John Passmore.¹ Passmore approvingly paraphrases Karl Popper when he says that "scientific explanation proceeds from the familiar to the unfamiliar"², and to make his point gives the example of an everyday account of a vase being broken, an account which refers to the vase's being made of fragile porcelain and the hardness of the floor. This is contrasted with a scientific explanation of the same event, which talks of molecular structure and forces. In terms of the everyday account the breaking of the vase is perfectly intelligible; but science, Passmore says, begins by taking as unintelligible what seems already to be satisfactorily clear. It is the scientific

¹E.g. Capital, III, p. 830; MESW, II, 54. The Passmore article is 'Explanation in Everyday Life, in Science and in History'.

²Passmore, op. cit., p. 26.

account which appears unintelligible to the standards of everyday concepts.¹ The similarity between this statement of scientific explanation and the account it renders of events and the description of Marx's essentialist procedure given above will require no further comment. Passmore recognises that Marx does for history what the physicist does for the vase.²

While the positivist statement of what constitutes science has the effect of invalidating the claim that Marx's work is scientific, a more general and accurate account of science presents no such barrier. What is unacceptable to a scientific view of the world is the essentialism of Marx's early thought which denies the status of 'reality' to certain existences. Marx's mature epistemology accepts no such stricture, although his use of terms such as 'essence' do carry connotations which may give rise to confusion concerning his intentions and the significance of his analysis. In accepting that Marx's mature essentialism is scientific, and scientific not merely in his own terms, two factors which are responsible for the unique character of his science need to be kept in focus. The first is that it is an intentionally critical science. With the discovery of the real relations of capitalist production Marx discovers the material conditions which engender the ideology of the age, that is, the phenomenal categories which in everyday parlance account for the direct experience of life and labour and render innocuous what Marx shows to be unequal relations of exploitation. In Marx's science of society is his critique of capitalism. Secondly, Marx was not primarily a scientist, he was above all a revolutionary intellectual and leader of a European-wide labour movement. Marx's science was developed in the service of his revolutionary aspirations; in order to change the world he

¹Ibid., p. 25.

²Ibid., p. 30.

had to interpret it operatively, understand it scientifically. Thus one can not say merely that Marx's work is scientific. While it is scientific in the full sense of the word it is more than that, for it is a critical science which is an integral part of a wider revolutionary framework.

The course of this chapter has ranged wide. Beginning with an examination of the epistemology of Marx's 1843 Critique and concluding with the scientific nature of his essentialism in Capital, we have discussed the different conceptions of the conditions of knowledge held by Marx at different times in his writings. By examining the different conceptions of essence employed in his writing of the 1830s on the one hand and the 1860s on the other, it has been possible to show that Marx's epistemology in the former period is quite distinct from, indeed contradictory to that of the latter. An early idealist epistemology was replaced with a materialist epistemology; the one metaphysical, the other scientific. To conclude on a negative note it can be said that Marx's early writing does not provide the epistemological foundation of his mature thought; more positively, Marx's epistemology developed from an internal critique of German idealism to an expression of empirical science recruited to revolutionary ends.

Chapter 3

DIALECTIC

Any consideration of method in Marx inevitably leads to the question of 'dialectics', and thus to the relation between Marx and Hegel. The purpose of this chapter is to investigate Marx's methodological debt to Hegel.

A number of views concerning the relation between Marx and Hegel have been expressed in the scholarly literature. Robert Tucker, for instance, has argued that Marx was an Hegelian in the strongest sense:

Marx founded Marxism in an outburst of Hegelizing. He considered himself to be engaged in no more than a momentous act of translation of the already discovered truth about the world from the language of idealism into that of materialism.¹

According to this account the only difference between Marx and Hegel is that the former merely translated into another language the thought of the latter. Karl Korsch, on the other hand, has claimed that the linguistic similarities between Marx and Hegel constitute only an "apparent 'Hegelianism'", and that apart from certain modes of expression Hegel is absent in Marx.² A third view, more widely held than others, claims that Marx and Hegel employ what is virtually the same method, that while Marx was not an Hegelian doctrinally nor philosophically his method is nevertheless essentially the same as Hegel's. A typical statement of this view is Bertell Ollman's, which claims both that it is doubtful whether Marx "ever agreed with any of Hegel's theories" and also that Marx never made a "break with Hegel". This is because Marx's method — "the form in which...subject matter is considered" — was "bequeathed to him by Hegel".³

¹Robert Tucker, Philosophy and Myth in Karl Marx, p. 123.

²Karl Korsch, Karl Marx, pp. 64-65.

³Bertell Ollman, Alienation, pp. 36-37.

This last argument, which was first formulated by Marx's collaborator Frederick Engels, is the most meaningful and influential form of Hegelising Marx. It not only contains an implicit critique of the view that Marx was in some substantial sense an Hegelian and accounts for any linguistic similarity between Marx and Hegel — in particular the former's use of the term 'dialectics', but is also suggestive for an historical understanding of Marx's thought. In claiming that Marx owes a methodological debt to Hegel the dialectical method in Marx can be seen as a consequence of Marx's early contact with Hegelian thought and the source of a continuing Hegelian influence.¹

While the argument, that Marx developed a 'dialectical' method in the 1840s from Hegel and continued to employ it thereafter, has wide currency in the literature and an obvious appeal it fails on two fundamental grounds. If it is to be a meaningful concept 'method' will entail a procedure through which knowledge is attained. On this understanding the claim that Marx's method is Hegel's can not be sustained. What is often regarded as a methodological similarity between Marx and Hegel is no more than a facet of Marx's intellectual history, namely that in developing his method Marx confronted Hegel, was inspired by him and reacted against him. It will be argued in this chapter that Marx and Hegel employ dissimilar methodologies and that claims to the contrary are based firstly upon an inadequate conception of method which, secondly, leads to the false inference that Hegel's influence on Marx's intellectual development is at the core of methodological similarities between them.

¹Louis Dupré, The Philosophical Foundations of Marxism, p. 87, for instance, says that "the Critique is one of the most important writings in the development of Marx's thought. In this first personal confrontation with Hegelianism, Marx decided to accept its method and to reject its content. This decision was to determine the entire future of Marxist philosophy." Cf. also A. James Gregor, 'Marx, Feuerbach and the Reform of the Hegelian Dialectic', p. 66.

Through a discussion of the origins in Engels of the view that Marx rescued the dialectical method from Hegel, an examination of Marx's alleged appropriation of the Hegelian dialectic in 1844, an inquiry into Marx's own views on his supposed inversion of Hegel and, finally, a brief account of the relation between the dialectical methods of Marx and Hegel, it will be shown that there is no support for the proposition that Marx's method, in Ollman's phrase, was "bequeathed to him by Hegel".

I

The argument that Marxism has a significant Hegelian element is not a new one, of course.¹ In its methodological version it was first clearly formulated by Engels, and its acceptance by Lenin ensured that it became axiomatic to the thought of the Communist political movement. Broadly, Engels and Lenin claim firstly, that Marxism is a consequence of Hegelian thought², and secondly, that the dialectical method of Marx is Hegel's method stripped of its mysticism. It was Engels' opinion, for instance, that not only did Hegel's method "serve as a point of origin"³ for Marxism, nor merely that Hegelian philosophy pointed "the way out of the labyrinth of systems to real positive knowledge of the world"⁴, but that

¹Cf., e.g., Engels' critical comments on Paul Barth, Hegel's Philosophy of History and the Hegelians up to Marx and Hartmann, in correspondence to Schmidt, August 5, 1890, October 27, 1890, November 1, 1891; and to Mehring, July 14, 1893, in Selected Correspondence, pp. 415, 424, 438-439, 459.

²This view is also represented in the scholarly literature. Shlomo Avineri, for instance, says that "Marx's materialist Weltanschauung can ...be called one of the dialectical consequences of Hegel's speculative philosophy", The Social and Political Thought of Karl Marx, p. 6.

³Frederick Engels, 'Karl Marx, A Contribution to the Critique of Political Economy', in Karl Marx, A Contribution..., p. 224. In Anti-Dühring Engels comments that the "perception of the fundamental contradiction in German idealism led necessarily back to materialism", Anti-Dühring, p. 35.

⁴Frederick Engels, 'Ludwig Feuerbach and the End of Classical German Philosophy', MESW, III, 342.

Hegel's "conception of history was a direct theoretical pre-condition of the new materialist outlook".¹ Similarly, Lenin's well known formula describes Marxism as "the legitimate successor of the best that was created by humanity in the nineteenth century in the shape of German Philosophy, English Political Economy and French Socialism". Lenin goes on to say that not only are these the "sources of Marxism", but that they are "at the same time its component parts".² Elsewhere Lenin has written that Marx's dialectical treatment in Capital "has taken everything valuable in Hegel and developed it further".³

The analysis in Engels and Lenin of the relation between Marx and Hegel can be seen as a precursor to the argument of modern scholars who perceive Marx's method in terms of its alleged Hegelian origins and nature. It will be useful, therefore, to briefly state Engels' position, as his authoritative claims on the matter have probably encouraged scholars to be less penetrating in their commentary on Marx's method than might have been the case had Engels' views not coincided with their own opinions. Indeed, the bare bones of Engels' argument has hardly been added to by recent proponents of the view that Marx's method is Hegelian.

Engels summarised what he saw as Hegel's strength and weakness in his pamphlet Socialism: Utopian and Scientific when he wrote that "Hegel had freed history from metaphysics — he had made it dialectic; but his

¹Engels, 'Karl Marx, A Contribution...', p. 224. Engels similarly says that "Without German philosophy...particularly that of Hegel, German scientific socialism...would never have come into being", The Peasant War in Germany, p. 32. Compare with Marx's comment that "Materialism is the natural-born son of Great Britain", The Holy Family, p. 150; emphasis in original.

²V.I. Lenin, Selected Works in Three Volumes, Vol. 1, p. 66.

³V.I. Lenin, Philosophical Notebooks (being Collected Works, Vol. 38), p. 319. Lenin urges "the systematic study of Hegelian dialectics from a materialist standpoint", Selected Works in Three Volumes, Vol. 3, p. 672.

conception of history was essentially idealistic".¹ This was repeated by Engels on numerous occasions. It is his contention that while "the exceptional historical sense underlying Hegel's manner of reasoning"² meant that "Truth...was in the hands of Hegel no longer an aggregate of finished dogmatic statements...[as] all successive historical systems are only transitory stages in the endless course of development of human society"³, Hegel was not able to say as much himself "with such explicitness", even though these points "are a necessary conclusion from his method".⁴ This is because in its "existing form"⁵ the Hegelian method is encased in an idealist shroud which inhibits it from being any more than "the self-development of the concept".⁶ This is to say that while the Hegelian system appreciated "for the first time the whole world, natural, historical, intellectual...[as] a continuous whole"⁷, the contents of the world and its processes were for Hegel "only the realized picture of the 'Idea', existing somewhere from eternity before the world was"⁸, rather than the idea or conception of the world merely thought images of actual things and processes. Engels immediately adds that this "way of thinking turned everything upside down, and completely reversed the actual connection of things in the world".

The dialectical method which Hegel developed was not in itself flawed, according to Engels, for dialectics "comprehends things and their representations, in their essential connection, concatenation, motion,

¹MESW, III, 132.

²'Karl Marx, A Contribution...', p. 224.

³MESW, III, 339.

⁴Ibid., p. 340.

⁵'Karl Marx, A Contribution...', p. 223; emphasis in original.

⁶MEWS, III, 361.

⁷Anti-Dühring, p. 34.

⁸Ibid., pp. 34-35.

origin, and ending"¹; and this, he argues, Hegel's dialectic does. However, the form in which Hegel's dialectic appears is conditioned by the system in which it operates, and the Hegelian system, being idealist, impinges on the method so as to render it impotent.² From this perspective, then, the need is "to rescue conscious dialectics from German idealist philosophy and apply it in the materialist conception of nature and history".³ It was Marx who saved the essence of Hegel's dialectic, according to Engels, by

extracting from the Hegelian logic the nucleus containing Hegel's real discoveries in this field, and of establishing the dialectical method, divested of its idealist wrappings, in the simple form in which it became the only correct mode of conceptual evolution.⁴

In removing its idealist wrappings Marx was able to change the form of the Hegelian dialectic, in Engels' account, and liberate this method from the contradictions imposed upon it and from which it suffered within Hegel's system.

In summary, the Engelian view offers three propositions: Firstly, the dialectical method is one which comprehends the essential connection and movement of things; secondly, this method reaches its highest development in Hegel, although the idealist nature of Hegel's system prevented the method from achieving its full potential. Finally, Marx stood Hegel 'on his feet' as it were, by extracting the nucleus of Hegel's

¹Ibid., p. 33.

²Engels says that "the whole dogmatic content of the Hegelian system is declared to be an absolute truth, in contradiction to his dialectical method, which dissolves all dogmatism. Thus the revolutionary side is smothered beneath the overgrowth of the conservative side." Later Engels goes on to say that "Hegel was not simply put aside. On the contrary, one started from his revolutionary side, ...from the dialectical method", 'Ludwig Feuerbach...', MESW, III, pp. 340, 361.

³Anti-Dühring, p. 15.

⁴'Karl Marx, A Contribution...', pp. 224-225.

method, freeing it of its idealist incumbency and establishing it in a materialist framework. Engels does not seem to say when Marx performed his rescue operation, but it is suggested in Ludwig Feuerbach and the End of Classical German Philosophy that it took place in the 1840s.

II

Marx's Economic and Philosophic Manuscripts — which were written in 1844, first published in Russian and then in their original German in 1927 and 1932 respectively, and discussed only since the 1950s — provide the Hegelisation of Marx with what is generally seen as a sustaining text. In an extensive section of the third manuscript Marx seems to discuss the Hegelian dialectic and philosophy in a manner which largely conforms to the treatment Engels later outlined, described above. Louis Dupré's comments summarise the position nicely:

In the Manuscripts, Marx has entirely abandoned Hegel's speculative Logic...At the same time, the Manuscripts show a definite return to Hegel...Marx has finally discerned what can be retained from Hegel's philosophy: henceforth he confidently employs the dialectical method without being inhibited by Hegel's idealism.¹

This is different from Engels' earlier statement only in that it clearly gives a specific date for Marx's first rescue of 'Hegel's real discoveries'.

It will be argued here that while Marx does pay a debt of gratitude to Hegel in the Economic and Philosophic Manuscripts he owes nothing to Hegel's method. The importance of Hegel to Marx's argument of the Manuscripts is that the historical development of man, first outlined by English political economy and repeated by Hegel, but in an inverted form, is enriched by the notion of transcendence developed by Hegel but absent

¹Dupré, The Philosophical Foundations of Marxism, p. 134.

in political economy. Also, Hegel's concepts, because they are alienated conceptions, provide Marx with an insight into the alienating process itself. Rather than modify in the Manuscripts Hegel's dialectic Marx pronounces that it is irretrievably bound to Hegel's idealist philosophy, which he rejects. In recognising that Marx rejects Hegel's dialectic in the 1844 Manuscripts, we are led to reappraise the particular character of his debt to Hegel.

It is perhaps Marx's core argument in the Manuscripts, that man's essential nature is revealed in his activity, in producing, in labour, which has led some scholars to the view that Marx adapted Hegel's dialectic. For Marx says that it is Hegel who "grasps labour as the essence of man", even though he does so in a limited and one-sided way, for the "only labour which Hegel knows and recognises is abstractly mental labour".¹ Thus Marx sees in Hegel both positive and negative aspects. While Hegel shows real insight, according to Marx, in appreciating the basis of man's condition, and also, therefore, the basis of history, the abstract and inverted form of Hegel's revelation depreciates its true value. Thus Marx says that Hegel "has only found the abstract, logical, speculative expression for the movement of history; and this historical process is not yet the real history of man".² Nevertheless, Marx accepts that Hegel has conceptualised the movement of history, even though this movement in its Hegelian representation is inverted and abstract.

It is the concept of the movement of history in Hegel's dialectic of negativity which has been at the basis of the opinion that Marx owes a methodological debt to Hegel, a view encouraged by Marx's statement that

¹Karl Marx, Economic and Philosophic Manuscripts, pp. 140, 141. Marx's reading of Hegel's view of labour is contested by McLellan, Marx Before Marxism, p. 254, and Dupré, op. cit., pp. 135-136.

²Economic and Philosophic Manuscripts, p. 136.

The outstanding thing in Hegel's Phenomenology and its final outcome — that is, the dialectic of negativity as the moving and generating principle — is thus first that Hegel conceives the self-genesis of man as a process, conceives objectification as loss of the object, as alienation and as transcendence of this alienation; that he thus grasps the essence of labour and comprehends objective man — true, because real man — as the outcome of man's own labour.¹

Here Marx pays homage to Hegel for the two conceptions which are conventionally seen as the key elements of Marx's theoretical framework — the self-genesis of man through his own labour and the historical process as developing out of and generated through a dialectical process.

The interpretation is inadequate which sees the discussion of Hegel's dialectic of negativity quoted above as proof of Marx's apprehension of the Hegelian method. Such an interpretation fails to pay serious attention to the fact that the content of the alleged debt to Hegel had in the Manuscripts already been developed in Marx's discussion of the English political economists in general and Adam Smith in particular. This suggests that Marx's historical model does not rely on a reading of Hegel, although it may have been confirmed by such a reading.² Also, a close examination of the text reveals that Marx has little regard for Hegel's method — inverted or otherwise — but that he saw, rather, some importance in an element of Hegel's teleology. A development of these considerations tends to undermine the view that Marx inverted and rescued Hegel's dialectical method in 1844.

It is important to remember that in the first, second and early sections of the third Manuscripts Marx developed the 'inverted Hegelian'

¹Ibid., p. 140.

²George Lichtheim, Marxism, p. 41, has claimed that while the notion of a logic of social development can be found in the Scottish historians, the notion that history is the self creation of man came only from Hegel.

notions of the self-genesis of man in labour, and history as the process of such a development, through a discussion not of Hegel, but of English political economy. Marx relies on the analysis outlined by political economy for the formulation of these propositions and constructs his argument without recourse to Hegel.

In the opening section of the first manuscript, 'Wages of Labour', which is virtually a paraphrase of passages from Smith's Wealth of Nations, Marx says that the "political economist tells us that everything is bought with labour and that capital is nothing but accumulated labour; but at the same time he tells us that the worker, far from being able to buy anything, must sell himself and his human identity".¹ Political economy, therefore, "conceives objectification as loss of the object".² Still basing his discussion on an explication of English political economy Marx develops the notion of the dialectic of negativity as the moving and generating principle — the comprehension of objective man as the outcome of man's own labour: "The worker produces capital, capital produces him — hence he produces himself, and man as worker, as a commodity, is the product of this entire cycle".³ And history is precisely the development of man in these terms:

The distinction between capital and land, between profit and rent, and between both and wages, and industry, and agriculture, and immovable and movable private property — this distinction is not an inherently essential one, but a historical distinction, a fixed moment in the formation and development of the antithesis between capital and labour.⁴

¹Economic and Philosophic Manuscripts, p. 29.

²Ibid., p. 140.

³Ibid., p. 79.

⁴Ibid., p. 82.

Well might Marx remark that "Hegel's standpoint is that of modern political economy"¹, for what he celebrates later in the Manuscripts as Hegel's discoveries, are earlier shown to be found in a political economy which predates Hegel.

Marx's comments on the relations of labour and capital, drawn from political economy, suggest that the conception of history as class struggle finds its expression already in the 1844 Manuscripts.² Some scholars have argued that this conception of historical development is itself evidence of Hegel's influence on Marx. By maintaining that Hegel's doctrine of contradiction is part of a view of the development of history through the struggle of opposites Max Eastman, for instance, has claimed that Marx's notion of history as class struggle and conflict is but a version of Hegel's dialectic of negativity, or, as G.D.H. Cole has put it, Marx's method is "built...upon Hegel's".³ The appearance of an early form of Marx's class conflict model in the Economic and Philosophic Manuscripts might be taken as corroboration of such an interpretation of Hegel's influence on Marx. However, Marx's discussion of class and the conflict between classes derives wholly from a discussion and critique of political economy. This is not totally unrelated to Hegel, though, as Marx's critique of political economy's conception of the antagonism between classes bears some relation to Hegel's philosophy.

The "antagonistic struggle between capitalist and worker"⁴ is brought to our attention in the very first sentence of the Manuscripts, where Marx discusses the determination of wages. There are at least

¹Ibid., p. 140.

²This proposition will be critically appraised in Chapter 5 below.

³Eastman cited in Irving Zeitlin, Marxism: A Re-Examination, p. 11; G.D.H. Cole, The Meaning of Marxism, p. 272.

⁴Economic and Philosophic Manuscripts, p. 23.

twenty other references in the text to classes, their emergence and development, and the struggle between them. We should note that the conception of class employed here by Marx is Smithian, and the class struggle is conceived only as a consequence of historical development, rather than as a source of historical change, as it is in Marx's later thought. Marx's single objection to political economy's treatment of class is that the latter, while recognising the fact of class struggle, has an inadequate view of its basis or nature and no conception of its transcendence.

Marx argues that "labour, the subjective essence of private property as exclusion of property, and capital, objective labour as exclusion of labour, constitute private property as its developed state of contradiction — hence a dynamic relationship moving inexorably to its resolution".¹ Contrary to this prognosis is that of political economy, where "the way in which these two aspects [of private property] in the form of two persons [labourer and capitalist] leap at each other's throats is... a contingent event, and hence only to be explained by reference to external factors".² Marx believes that political economy's inability to comprehend the contradiction inherent in private property and to foresee the resolution or transcendence of this contradiction derives from its uncritical attitude to private property. Marx's own critique of private property is taken from the Hegelian concept of 'estrangement'.

While political economy endowed Marx with the theoretical framework of his model of history, it had no conception of man's future. Political economy satisfactorily developed the theme of man's self-genesis through labour, but in lacking a conception of man's essential or species nature

¹Ibid., p. 92. The antagonism described here has little resemblance to Marx's later model of class struggle, and is resolved not by one class defeating the other but by the development of the property form.

²Ibid., p. 114.

it has no understanding of the "estrangement inherent in the nature of labour"¹, and therefore no comprehension of the annulment of labour's estrangement in transcending private property.² It is in his critique of private property, his contemplation of man's future in the transcendence of estrangement that Marx turned from political economy to Hegel.

We have already seen that Marx believes that the "outstanding thing in Hegel's Phenomenology...is the dialectic of negativity as the moving and generating principle...[which] Hegel conceives...as alienation and as transcendence of alienation".³ This is crucial to Marx precisely because Hegel postulates that the estrangement of man's essence — which is how Marx, though not Hegel, conceived private property⁴ — is merely the stage of history prior to the transcendence of man's estrangement. Political economy, being devoid of such a vision, is thereby deficient in Marx's view. This is not to say that the critique of private property which Marx employs is already developed in Hegel, on the contrary, but that the Hegelian system has at least a concept of transcendence which is lacking in political economy.

What then is the precise nature of 'Hegel's real discoveries' which Marx rescued in the 1844 Manuscripts? Firstly, it is important to repeat that Marx has little sympathy for the actual content of Hegel's critical thought. Hegel's conception of man, man's estrangement and its transcendence are fraught with serious difficulties, according to Marx, largely because concepts are regarded by Hegel as ultimate realities. Thus the "annulment of alienation" in Hegel's account is regarded by Marx as

¹Ibid., p. 68.

²The theory of alienation and man's essential nature will be discussed in later chapters.

³Economic and Philosophic Manuscripts, p. 140.

⁴Only in the 1844 Manuscripts, not in his later writings.

"nothing but an abstract, empty annulment of that empty abstraction — the negation of the negation".¹ Similarly, Marx thought that "the settling of accounts with [the] Hegelian dialectic"² was important not primarily because of any hidden value in the method. He believed, rather, that the old dialectic had to be overthrown in order to avoid remaining "wholly within the confines of the Hegelian Logic".³

Marx's own critique of Hegel's dialectic begins with Feuerbach's achievements, which he highly regards. Feuerbach, however, erroneously "conceives the negation of the negation only as a contradiction of philosophy with itself — as the philosophy which affirms theology (the transcendence, etc.) after having denied it, and which it therefore affirms in opposition to itself".⁴ This is a reference to Hegel's account of religion as the estrangement of the human essence and the transcendence of this alienation as the critique of religion, i.e. theology. Later in the manuscript Marx amplifies his remark on Feuerbach's inadequate criticism when he says that Hegel's merely apparent criticism "has to be grasped in more general terms".⁵ Marx means by this that if one generalises the form of man's estrangement to include, say, the state and private property, an application of Hegel's method would reveal its weakness by showing that it merely resulted in a critique of the state and a critique of private property as the annulment of aliena-

¹Economic and Philosophic Manuscripts, p. 153.

²Ibid., p. 20.

³Ibid., p. 133. On the previous page Marx comments that German criticism suffers from "a completely uncritical attitude to the method of criticizing" and has failed to pose for itself the "really vital question: how do we now stand as regards the Hegelian dialectic?" It has mistakenly been suggested that this is Marx's question; cf. Herbert Marcuse, 'The Foundation of Historical Materialism', Studies in Critical Philosophy, p. 41.

⁴Economic and Philosophic Manuscripts, p. 135; emphasis in original.

⁵Ibid., p. 149.

tion, as the transcendence of man's estrangement in the state and private property. This is a contradiction not simply of philosophy with itself, but one of a wider significance.

In effect Marx makes three charges against Hegel's dialectic: it does not work, or at least it does not do what it claims it can do; it is idealist; and, it is apologetic. First, Hegel's dialectic of negativity does not achieve a genuine transcendence of alienation, for it is no more than "a superseding in thought, which leaves its object standing in the real world".¹ Second, in postulating the transcendence of alienation in the critique of the object of alienation, Hegel's method takes as the object of alienation not the genuine object of alienation itself, but the thought of that object, what Marx calls the "thought entity" — which, of course, is transcended with its critique.² In demonstrating that Hegel's dialectic of negativity is operable only if it takes the 'thought entity' as the object of alienation, Marx has shown that Hegel's method itself — and not merely Hegel's system — generates idealist conceptions. It is for this reason that Hegel therefore "stands in opposition both to the real thing and to...the unphilosophical conceptions of this thing"³, which is to say that Hegel's dialectic is not merely in contradiction with itself, but also in contradiction with reality and knowledge of reality. Finally, in creating the illusion of transcending alienation, while leaving the object of estrangement standing in the real world, Hegel is effecting an accommodation with the object of estrangement. This, Marx says, is "the lie" of Hegel's principle, the root of "his merely apparent

¹Ibid., p. 151.

²Ibid.

³Ibid.

criticism".¹ Thus, with Hegel's dialectic the act of superseding also entails a preservation and affirmation of what is allegedly transcended.

It will be abundantly clear from this that Marx has little regard for Hegel's 'critical' method. This does not contradict conventional expectations, of course, but is a part of them. What is particularly important though, is Marx's argument that the dialectic of negativity in Hegel necessarily conceives the object of alienation as the 'thought object', for this indicates that Marx regards the Hegelian method as inherently idealist — a view contrary to Engels'.² Marx makes this quite explicit in The Holy Family, written during the following year, when he says that the generation of idealist conceptions "constitutes the essential character of Hegel's method".³ When Marx says in the Manuscripts, therefore, that he will "lay hold of the positive aspects of the Hegelian dialectic"⁴ he is not referring to an inversion and rescue of Hegel's dialectical method, which is without evidence in the work. Marx's debt to Hegel is of an entirely different order.

Marx does not 'invert' Hegel's method so that he might apply a reworked form of it himself, rather Hegel's dialectic is a particular datum about the world which Marx draws on in constructing his own picture of reality and the possibilities he sees that reality implying. The two uses of Hegel could not be more different. Marx's position is that Hegel's concepts, in being subject to alienation thereby reveal something of its nature. He says that "Hegel's positive achievement here, in his speculative logic, is that the determinate concepts, the universal fixed

¹Ibid., p. 149; emphasis in original.

²This difference between Marx and Engels can be detected in their respective writings from as early as 1842; cf. the discussion in Lucio Colletti, From Rousseau to Lenin, pp. 115-117.

³The Holy Family, p. 71.

⁴Economic and Philosophic Manuscripts, p. 151.

thought-forms...are a necessary result of the general estrangement of the human essence and therefore also of human thought".¹ The discussion in the few remaining pages of the manuscript which follow this passage is rather more obscure than anything else in the work. What is clear, however, is that Marx sees Hegel's dialectic as a consequence of estrangement and also, because of a peculiarity in Hegel's concepts, a consequence which itself indicates something about estrangement as a real historical process. Hegel's dialectic, therefore, "is the estranged insight into the real objectification of man"; but Marx emphasises that it is an "insight expressed within the estrangement"² as opposed to a well formed representation freely expressed.

Marx's account of Hegel's concept formation is almost incomprehensibly obscure except for a short passage in which he feels the need "to talk a human language" and desist from Teutonic philosophising. He says there that

the abstract thinker learns in his intuition of nature that the entities which he thought to create from nothing, from pure abstraction — the entities he believed he was producing in the divine dialectic as pure products of the labour of thought forever weaving in itself and never looking outward — are nothing else but abstractions from characteristics of nature.³

Marx's expression here is both technical and allusive. 'Intuition' means to be aware through the senses⁴, the 'abstract thinker' in general is Hegel in particular, and 'nature' — as it is used in the Manuscripts — is the external condition of reality for man, the fact of his objectivity. Nature, in Marx's parlance, satisfies man's needs and therefore both

¹Ibid., pp. 153-154.

²Ibid., p. 151.

³Ibid., p. 156.

⁴Ibid., p. 154, editorial note.

confirms his essential powers and is the condition of their development.¹ Man's relation with nature is therefore correlative with the estrangement of his essential powers. The importance Marx places on Hegel's concepts as "abstractions from characteristics of nature" is the same as the importance a meteorologist places on weather vanes.

Marx's interest in Hegel in the Economic and Philosophic Manuscripts is not primarily methodological. He objects to Hegel's method for being a merely apparent criticism and argues that the idealist operation of the method prevents genuine criticism in Hegel. What Marx does celebrate in Hegel is the latter's recognition of the positive side of labour, the return of man to himself, although in Hegel this is upside down. But because Hegel's concepts are themselves products of alienation a study of Hegel, like a study of alienated labour, allows Marx to draw conclusions about the real process of estrangement and its transcendence. This is neither a point of method nor a utilisation of Hegel's treatment. Marx had earlier in the Manuscripts made similar claims with regard to political economy, namely that it is an intellectual consequence of the movement of private property and thereby informative on the nature of private property.²

III

Even if it can be shown that Marx did not adopt an inversion of Hegel's method in 1844, that is no proof that he did not do so at a later date. Scholars have been able to support a case that Marx did extract a rational kernel from Hegel's dialectic in the development of his own method by drawing on certain phrases from his correspondence and from the famous 'Afterword to the Second German Edition of Capital'. They have,

¹Ibid., pp. 144-145.

²Ibid., p. 87.

no doubt, been encouraged to argue that the essential characteristics of Marx's method are the same as Hegel's by Marx's own description of his method as 'dialectic', and by claims such as the one in the 'Afterword' that Hegel was "the first to present its [the dialectic's] general form of working in a comprehensive and conscious manner".¹ Statements like this do strongly suggest a common method in Hegel and Marx. This view of their relation, however, is not supported by the numerous but brief comments scattered through Marx's work when they are read in their full context. His remarks do, though, shed some light on the nature of Marx's alleged Hegelism. Zbigniew Jordan has commented that the consensus communis that Marx derived his dialectic from Hegel includes Marx himself.² The burden of the next few pages will be to show that Marx's position is not that straightforward.

In three separate pieces of correspondence covering eighteen years Marx comments favourably, but with serious qualification, on Hegel's dialectic in much the same vein as we have already seen him do in the 'Afterword'. In a letter to Engels he refers to "what is rational in the method which Hegel discovered but at the same time enveloped in mysticism", to Kugelmann he writes that "Hegel's dialectics is the basic form of all dialectics, but only after it has been stripped of its mystical form", and to Dietzgen that the "correct laws of the dialectic are already included in Hegel albeit in mystical form".³ In the first and last of these letters Marx also says that he would like to write a treatise on dialectics based on Hegel's discoveries. In the absence of

¹Capital, I, p. 29. Marx's praise is not without qualification, for immediately prior to this statement he talks of the "mystification which dialectic suffers in Hegel's hands".

²Z.A. Jordan, The Evolution of Dialectical Materialism, p. 91.

³Marx and Engels, Selected Correspondence, pp. 100, 199; quotation in Hook, From Hegel to Marx, p. 61. The letters are dated January 14, 1858, March 6, 1868 and 1876 respectively.

this work, which was never written¹, we have to rely on Marx's less than precise summary comments to reconstruct the general form of the dialectic, developed but mystified by Hegel. One might reasonably expect that the 'Afterword', which was written in 1873, would have provided Marx with an opportunity to at least sketch an outline of his dialectics, especially as he there claims to be discussing his difference with Hegel on the matter. What he left, however, in the only discussion of the subject published in his lifetime, is very incomplete and unsatisfactory.

Marx differentiates between the 'mystified form' of the dialectic and its 'rational form' on two basic grounds. In a manner which resembles his treatment in the Economic and Philosophic Manuscripts and also in The Critique of Hegel's Philosophy of Right of 1843, Marx makes the political point that in Hegel the dialectic "seemed to transfigure and to glorify the existing state of things". In its rational form, he continues, the dialectic is "in its essence critical and revolutionary".² It is also clear that Marx regards the two different forms of dialectic as presenting two different versions of "the existing state of things". In its mystified form the dialectic presents the human thought process as "the demiurgos of the real world", whereas in Marx the material historical conditions of social existence are primarily responsible for the 'state of things'. The mystified and rational forms of the dialectic are thus polar opposites, although it is not clear from this what is its 'general form', which, Marx says, is "standing on its head" in Hegel.³ Marx's reference to the fact that dialectics "regards every historically

¹Jordan, op. cit., p. 79, says for lack of interest at least as much as lack of time.

²Capital, I, p. 29. The rest of the quotations in this paragraph are from the same source.

³The 'general form' of dialectics can not be seen to include both the 'mystical' and the 'rational' forms because Marx says that the 'mystical' form is an inversion of the 'general' form.

developed social form as in fluid movement, and therefore takes into account its transient nature not less than its momentary existence", although incomplete, can be interpreted as a statement of his conception of the general form of dialectics. On this account the general form of the dialectic is on its head in Hegel because the causal chain is from ideas to material conditions rather than the other way around. All of this affords poor evidence for the claim that there is a significant similarity in method between Marx and Hegel.

The proposition that things have to be understood in their connection and movement, which we take to be a summary statement of the general form of dialectics, is rather less than a method. A method, being the manner in which subject matter is considered, must at least imply a procedure through which knowledge is attained. The notion of connection and movement is itself too imprecise to be described as a method, although it clearly has methodological relevance. At this level it could be argued that Marx's method bore some relation to Hegel's in that they share a common element, the notion of connection and movement. But this would be merely drawing attention to a fact of Marx's intellectual history¹, rather than pointing to a significant methodological similarity between Marx and Hegel. The methodological relevance of the notion of connection and movement is that a method could be founded upon it; it is an idea that could be developed into a method. The actual development Hegel gave this notion was, of course, wholly unsatisfactory to Marx. Marx's comment on the dissimilarity between his own method and Hegel's in the 1857 'Introduction to A Contribution to the Critique of Political Economy' is quite illuminating. When explaining that production and consumption generate one another and that production, from the standpoint

¹There is no need to doubt that Marx might have been subjectively 'fired' by Hegel, as he was by many thinkers.

of the raw material is consumption and that consumption, from the standpoint of need is production, Marx derisively says that "[a]fter this, nothing is simpler for an Hegelian than to assume that production and consumption are identical".¹ Marx is here not referring to the difference between his and Hegel's ontology, metaphysics or theory of causation, but to precisely the application of the general form of dialectics – the connection and movement of things. This reference is doubly interesting because it was written when Marx, according to some scholars², was most influenced by Hegel's method.

It has already been mentioned above that the argument for the Hegelisation of Marx's method at least partly depends on the type of separation between the Hegelian system and its dialectical method which Engels draws in his Ludwig Feuerbach and the End of Classical German Philosophy.³ Such a separation is necessary if Marx is to be able to rescue the method from the system, for an extraction of the method would only be possible if method and system were fundamentally discrete theoretical entities. Marx's own discussion, however, suggests that he sees no easy separation between system and method, but assumes that a method and its application is intricately bound to the system in which it is employed. Why else would Marx follow the claim that his "dialectical method is not only different from the Hegelian, but is its direct opposite"⁴ with a brief outline of what he regards as Hegel's system, which is contrasted with a summary of his own view of the causal relation

¹A Contribution..., p. 199. This is light stuff compared with Marx's comments in The Poverty of Philosophy where he also discusses Hegel's method in relation to political economy. See, for example, the comments on The Poverty of Philosophy, p. 93.

²See, for example, David McLellan, 'Introduction' to D. McLellan (ed.), Karl Marx: The Grundrisse, pp. 12-13.

³MESW, III, p. 342.

⁴Capital, I, p. 29.

between world and mind, showing that they are direct opposites. It is because Marx's and Hegel's 'systems' are opposites that their methods are not only different but direct opposites. We will return to the question of the relation between method and system below and so will not dwell on it here. What has been shown at this point is that in the 'Afterword', as in the 1844 Manuscripts and The Holy Family, Marx strongly implies that method and system are bound in a way that Engels denies.

The argument so far makes it clear that the general form of the dialectic, which is mystified and inverted in Hegel, is actually less than a method and that its application in Marx — showing the connection and movement of things — is actually different than it is in Hegel.¹ It has also been shown that Marx believes that his dialectical method is intricately tied to his theory of social conditions and social change and therefore not only different from Hegel's but its opposite. In reviewing French, German and Russian notices of his work — again in the 'Afterword' — Marx further discusses his dialectical method, notes that "the method employed in 'Das Kapital' has been little understood"², and clarifies its nature and implicitly points to his view of its relation with Hegel.

It is the Russian notice which most pleases Marx as an able appreciation of his method and subject. Whereas the other two are summarily dismissed he discusses the Russian review seriously and quotes from it at length in doing so. The review differentiates between the method of inquiry and the method of

¹Jordan, op. cit., p. 91, says that when Marx spoke of the mystifying side of Hegel's dialectic he "did not necessarily mean its idealistic presuppositions but simply the fact that one really does not know to what it applies, which elements it relates, and, consequently, how it operates".

²Capital, I, p. 26.

presentation, a distinction Marx himself accepts.¹ Marx's method of inquiry, according to the unnamed Russian reviewer, is "severely realistic" while his method of presentation is "German-dialectical...[in] the bad sense of the word".² Marx does not dissent from this assessment, he merely apologises for his method of presentation and insists that his method of inquiry is dialectical in the good sense of the word.

Marx says that the apparently idealistic presentation in Capital results from the particular description of the subject-matter, through which it "may appear as if we had before us a mere a priori construction".³ He does not elaborate at this point but immediately goes on to make the famous statement, discussed above, that his "dialectical method is not only different from the Hegelian, but is its direct opposite". At the very beginning of the 'Afterword', however, Marx comments that the major difficulty with Capital has been that of style. The alterations for the second edition had largely been "the clearer arrangement of the book", and, Marx adds, the textual changes "were often purely stylistic. They occur throughout the book. Nevertheless I find now...that several parts of the German original stand in need of rather thorough remoulding, other parts require rather heavy stylistic editing...But there was no time for that."⁴ The method of presentation of the first edition of Capital was unsatisfactory to Marx, and it is still in need of improvement in the second edition. It is the German-dialectical presentation in the bad sense of the word that Marx wanted to eliminate from Capital.

¹"Of course the method of presentation must differ in form from that of inquiry." Capital, I, p. 28.

²Capital, I, p. 27.

³Ibid., p. 28.

⁴Ibid., pp. 22, 22-23.

As to his method of inquiry, Marx is satisfied to quote the Russian review as an adequate summary of that:

Marx only troubles himself about one thing: to show, by rigid scientific investigation, the necessity of successive determinate orders of social conditions, and to establish, as impartially as possible, the facts that serve him for fundamental starting points.¹

For Marx every social order has its own laws of development, which must be discovered by "the confrontation and the comparison of a fact, not with ideas, but with another fact".² On the basis of this procedure and the discovery of these laws Marx is able to prove "both the necessity of the present order of things, and the necessity of another order into which the first must inevitably pass over".³ According to this review, then, Marx employs an empirically based scientific method with which he is able to show the nature of capitalist development and its ultimate breakup. Of this description Marx asks "what else is he picturing but the dialectic method?"⁴ Sidney Hook has commented that Marx "made no distinction between the dialectic method, as he understood it, and scientific method as applied to the historical and cultural sciences".⁵ It is the dialectic method, as Marx understood it, which Hegel had contemptuously called "the abstract, non-philosophical method of the sciences".⁶ We should note that in the 'Preface' to the first edition of Capital Marx discusses questions of method without once needing to employ the term 'dialectic', he prefers instead the word 'scientific'.

¹Ibid., p. 27.

²Ibid.

³Ibid.

⁴Ibid., p. 28.

⁵Sidney Hook, Reason, Social Myths and Democracy, p. 256, note 1.

⁶Cited Jordan, op. cit., p. 89.

While Marx chooses to call his method of inquiry dialectic he shows that it bears no relation to Hegel's method of the same name, although we have seen that he also wanted to say that he was 'inspired' in some way by Hegel's general form of dialectics — but even in this Marx's manner of applying the general form is quite at odds with Hegel.¹ Marx's method of inquiry is scientific, in his own account and in the assessment of others. The difference between Marx's science and bourgeois science is the former's critical thrust, pretensions of which do appear in Hegel but their abject failure was the subject of Marx's devastating condemnation in his works from 1843 to 1846.² It will be clear by now that the conventional view of the relation between Marx's method and Hegel's is not supported by Marx himself. We will see that Marx's sympathy for Hegel lies in an altogether different direction.

Hegel is referred to at least eleven times in the first and third volumes of Capital. Most of these are what might be called 'drawing room' references; paraphrases and quotations which support or illustrate a point which is essentially independent of Hegel's general outlook, or could have been made by Marx without recourse to Hegel. A footnote paraphrasing Hegel's statement that even bad and crazy things can be supported by reason following Marx's comment on the subterfuge and rationalisation of an English businessman is a fairly typical example of this type of reference.³ Marx also refers to Hegel disapprovingly — in order to make a satirical comment against his obscure style, or to ridicule his

¹Korsch, op. cit., p. 64, says that Marx started "from Hegel's idealistic philosophy and even preserved the term 'Dialectic' as a comprehensive name for the several new principles which [he] worked out and applied in the process of [his] scientific investigation".

²These include the 1843 Critique, Economic and Philosophic Manuscripts, The Holy Family and The German Ideology.

³Capital, I, p. 250, note 2.

account of the development of private landed property.¹ Indeed, Benedetto Croce has suggested that Marx's Hegelian phraseology is not evidence of Hegel's influence on Marx, but rather evidence of Marx's irony against Hegel.² Of the references to Hegel which have any methodological or theoretical relevance one is a quotation in a series of quotations from other authors all making the same point, another is a quotation from Hegel on property rights concerning the product of labour, and another states that it was Hegel who discovered the law "that merely quantitative differences beyond a certain point pass into qualitative changes".³ Only the last of these could remotely be used to support Engels' position on the source of Marx's method, and in the context it does not.

The significance of Marx's references to Hegel is only indirectly related to the relevance of Hegel to Marx. The frequent citation of Hegel in the pages of Capital means little in itself and is similar, in fact, to the almost as frequent reference to Aristotle, for example, who is also subject to drawing room, critical and methodologico-theoretical comment. Actually, Marx mentions and discusses countless thinkers. His profound scholarship and erudition come across very strongly in Capital, a work which draws on innumerable sources.⁴ Marx's synthesising

¹Capital, III, pp. 48, 615-616, note 26.

²"There is the Hegelian phraseology beloved of Marx, of which the tradition is now lost, and which, even within that tradition he adapted with a freedom that at times seems not to lack an element of mockery", Benedetto Croce, Historical Materialism and the Economics of Karl Marx, p. 49.

³Capital, I, pp. 94, note 1; 165, note 2; 292. Cf. also Marx's almost hyperbolic statement against one of Hegel's dialectical laws in 'Revolution in China and Europe', On Colonialism, p. 15.

⁴This is partly the result of Marx's keenness to pay tribute to and acknowledge those thinkers, no matter how obscure, who first stated a position which he went on to develop and integrate into a larger economic and social theory. See Engels' comments in the 'Preface to the Third German Edition of Capital', Capital, I, pp. 33-34.

intellect and encyclopaedic knowledge lend themselves to a style of discourse which is undoubtedly at least a part of his 'method of presentation' in Capital suggestive of Hegel. It is precisely this quality which Marx resembles in Hegel that the former so strongly admires in the latter.¹ And it is this aspect of Hegel, the exemplar of learning and intellectual culture, for which Marx is prepared to break a lance.

In the 'Afterword' Marx says that

just as I was working at the first volume of 'Das Kapital', it was the good pleasure of the peevish, arrogant, mediocre EPIGONE who now talk large in cultured Germany, to treat Hegel...as a 'dead dog'. I therefore openly avowed myself the pupil of that mighty thinker, and even here and there, in the chapter on the theory of value, coquetted with modes of expression peculiar to him.²

It is clear from this that Marx's commitment to Hegel derives not from any sympathy with his ideas or method, but from a pique against German philistinism which treats Hegel with disdain. The passage quoted above is full of irony. Marx talks of 'cultured Germany' after describing, a few pages earlier, German professors of political economy as "prudent, practical business folk", "most superficial", and "mere schoolboys, imitators and followers, petty retailers and hawkers in the service of the great foreign wholesale concern".³ When Hegel was still popular in Germany Marx heaped scorn on him, when he is derided or ignored by the inferior German thinkers of the day Marx "openly avowed" himself "the pupil of that mighty thinker". This is the first time that Marx makes a direct reference to Hegel since he wrote The Poverty of Philosophy twenty-six years before, when he treated "that mighty thinker" with open ridicule.

¹See Marx's letter to Engels, July 7, 1866; Selected Correspondence, p. 180.

²Capital, I, p. 29.

³Ibid., p. 25.

He can now, in 1873, praise Hegel at no cost to himself: it is made clear that he accepts nothing from Hegel, that he criticised the mystifying side of Hegelian dialectic nearly thirty years before¹, and is sufficiently imprecise about the general form of dialectic and its rational kernel to avoid any methodological commitment to Hegel.

IV

It has been suggested above that Marx's dialectical method is intricately bound up in his theory of social conditions and social change, and it is this that makes his method not only different from Hegel's but its direct opposite. It was also suggested that the tight relation between system and method means that the proposition claiming an essential similarity in the methods of Marx and Hegel is unintelligible. While these views do not enjoy a wide currency in the literature they are not without some support. Louis Althusser, for instance, has recently argued that the celebrated 'inversion' of the Hegelian dialectic by Marx in the construction of the latter's own method is only metaphorically meaningful.² Althusser goes on to show that not only are the terms employed by the Hegelian dialectic different "in nature and sense" from

¹Ibid., p. 29. It is unlikely that this is a reference to Marx's essay on Hegel's dialectic in the 1844 Manuscripts, as David McLellan, Marx Before Marxism, p. 276, suggests; nor to the draft notes of the Critique of Hegel's Philosophy of Right, as Avineri, The Social and Political Thought of Karl Marx, p. 40, claims. This last suggestion is shared with David Riazanov, although he is not quoted by Avineri; cf. Joseph O'Malley, 'Editor's Introduction' to Marx's Critique, pp. xi-xii and footnotes. In referring to the work of thirty years before Marx is probably thinking of The Holy Family, written with Engels and published in February 1845. Marx made use of the 1844 Manuscripts in drafting his part of the joint work. Hegel is caustically criticised in The Holy Family and a Young Hegelian reaction against Marx and Engels was strong; cf. the editor's notes, The Holy Family, pp. 249-250. According to Nicolaievsky and Maenchen-Helfen, Karl Marx: Man and Fighter, p. 102, and David McLellan, Karl Marx, p. 135, the work did not attract a wide readership.

²Louis Althusser, For Marx, pp. 89-94.

the Marxian, but that the relation between the terms in the different dialectic is similarly different.¹ Although Althusser acknowledges no precursors, the position for which he argues has been ably stated by Herbert Marcuse and Z.A. Jordan. In Reason and Revolution, Marcuse points out that Marxian theory moves in a different totality than Hegel's philosophy and that "this difference indicates the decisive difference between Hegel's and Marx's dialectics". He goes on to explain that

For Hegel, the totality was the totality of reason, a closed ontological system, finally identical with the rational system of history. Hegel's dialectical process was thus a universal ontological one in which history was patterned on the metaphysical process of being. Marx, on the other hand, detached dialectic from this ontological base. In his work, the negativity of reality becomes a historical condition which cannot be hypostatized as a metaphysical state of affairs. In other words, it becomes a social condition, associated with a particular historical form of society.²

In much the same vein Jordan argues that the "theories of Hegel and Marx differ entirely in their universe of discourse and the relations obtaining among the individuals which make up their respective universe", and in moving specifically on to the question of method says that they "also differ widely in their procedure of discovering regularities and of testing their hypotheses".³ Because Marx's theory of history and society is quite different from Hegel's philosophy of universal absolutes the

¹Ibid., pp. 109-113. Althusser says that "Marx did not retain the terms of the Hegelian model of society and 'invert' them. He substituted other, only distantly related terms for them. Furthermore, he overhauled the connexion which had previously ruled over the terms. For Marx, both terms and relations changed in nature and sense." Ibid., p. 109.

²Herbert Marcuse, Reason and Revolution, p. 314.

³Jordan, op. cit., p. 89. Jordan goes on to say "Their respective theoretical frameworks are entirely dissimilar; they are constructed on the basis of mutually exclusive assumptions and by means of utterly different rules of procedure".

dialectic method in each is also quite different. Indeed, it could not be otherwise.

Not only is it a mistake to assume that there is some essential similarity in the methods of Marx and Hegel, an error in coming to grips with the facts of the matter; it is also unintelligible to do so, a failure of reason. The dissimilarity of dialectics in Marx and Hegel confirms the truth of Sidney Hook's commonplace, but all too often ignored recognition that the "life of a method lies in its application. Only in application can its meaning be truly grasped."¹ As the application of a method is the unfolding of a theory², then it would indeed be odd if two theories as different in conception, construction and purpose as those of Marx and Hegel had any important methodological points in common.

¹From Hegel to Marx, p. 61. This is similar to A. Koyré's claim that "one is tempted to apply to methodology Napoleon's famous comment on strategy: its principles are very simple; it is the application that counts", cited in Barry Hindess, 'Models and Masks', p. 238.

²Simply stated, methodology is a constituent feature of any theoretical standpoint. Different statements of this position have been defended by Bernard Crick, In Defence of Politics, pp. 190-198, and Charles Taylor, 'Neutrality in Political Science'.

PART II

SOCIETY

Several key issues concerning the development of Marx's theory of society are dealt with in the chapters of Part II. The theory of alienation in Marx, his analysis of capitalist society and his conception of communism may be mentioned as important questions which are discussed over the following chapters. The three chapters below deal respectively with the influence of Feuerbach's thought on Marx's work, his critique of liberal social atomism and his analysis of the capitalist labour process and cognate issues.

It is shown in Chapter 4 that the theory of alienation in the Economic and Philosophic Manuscripts significantly derives from Feuerbach's general theory of alienation, and also that this is subjected to a serious critique in The German Ideology. Marx's early theory of alienation, it is argued in Chapter 5, shares with liberal theory some fundamental presuppositions concerning the asocial character of civil society. In Chapter 6 it is demonstrated that the empirical content of Marx's early alienation theory is adequate to the explanation of an early stage of capitalist development only, and can not properly be regarded as an analysis and critique of the capitalist mode of production in general. It is also shown in this chapter that in Capital Marx developed an alternative theory of alienation which replaced the earlier theory. The mature theory of alienation provides an analysis of capitalist exploitation and dehumanisation in general.

The analysis of capitalist society in Marx's early writings is based on a philosophico-anthropological conception of society as man's essential being, which contrasts sharply with his more directly sociological conception of society, found in the mature writings. The Feuerbachian origins of Marx's early social theory are discussed in Chapter 4, and its formal content is outlined in Chapter 5. The early

theory of society assumes that as man's essential social nature is alienated from him in civil society, the individual relations of persons are asocial, and that man becomes a social being only with the transcendence of civil society, with the advent of communism. It is argued in Chapter 5 that while Marx's early social theory is devoid of sociological content, he develops in Capital a sociological analysis of alienated individual relations which also furnishes a sociological critique of liberal social atomism. Marx's earlier social theory is predominantly a normative critique of liberalism.

The conception of society in Marx's early writings entails that social relations are possible only in communism, and that before the attainment of communism man is a merely asocial being. In a discussion in Chapter 5 of Marx's early theory of communist society it is argued that in his early writings Marx does not regard the attainment of communism as a consequence of the social process of class struggle, but argues instead that it is achieved through the resolution of an ontological contradiction internal to private property. The Feuerbachian background of this position is hinted at in Chapter 4, where Marx's later repudiation of it, and the emergence of his class analysis is discussed. The conception of communism in Marx's mature thought is briefly outlined in Chapter 6, where the different accounts of the transcendence of alienation in the early and mature theories are outlined.

The conception of class in Marx's early and mature thought, his theoretical relation to Adam Smith, and other themes also recur through the three chapters below.

It is argued in Chapter 4 that in his writings up to and including the Theses on Feuerbach, Marx's critique of Feuerbach took the form of an attempt to make consistent Feuerbachian naturalism, which formed the core

of his own thought up to The German Ideology. Marx developed in The German Ideology a total critique of Feuerbach, based on his awareness of the contradictions inherent in Feuerbachian naturalism, which had been made clear to him in his elaboration and advocacy of it. In his repudiation of Feuerbachian materialism Marx outlines for the first time a statement of historical materialism.

The different critiques of liberal individualism in Marx's early and mature social thought are discussed in Chapter 5. It is argued that in his early writings Marx's model of civil society is similar to the liberal view that society is external to the individual. Marx's early critique of liberalism takes the form of a normative argument which claims that while man's existence in civil society is atomistic, man will attain a fully social being in communism. In his mature writings, on the other hand, the individualism of capitalist society is shown to operate through social causes and that even in his alienation man's relations with others are essentially social. A different critique of liberal individualism follows from Marx's mature social theory.

Marx's theory of exploitation and dehumanisation is discussed in Chapter 6. It is argued that while the concept of alienation continues to play an important role throughout Marx's intellectual development, the theoretical framework in which it functions in the early writings is entirely different to that elaborated in the mature works. The early theory of alienation is not merely limited to an empirical explanation of an early stage of capitalist development only, but from the point of view of the mature theory it presents a false analysis of capitalist exploitation and of the production of commodities in the labour process.

Chapter 4

FEUERBACH

In tracing the development of Marx's social and political theory up to 1846, when his materialist theory of history was clearly stated for the first time in The German Ideology, the ambiguous importance of Ludwig Feuerbach presents itself. The Feuerbachian influence on Marx during the period 1843 to 1845 is self evident. Its significance, however, is entirely subject to interpretation.

The importance to Marx of Feuerbach's 'transformative method' in the former's Critique of Hegel's Philosophy of Right, which was discussed in an earlier chapter, enjoys almost universal recognition in the literature. The Feuerbachism of the Critique is continued in the Introduction to that work published in 1844. There are also numerous acknowledgments by Marx and much secondary documentation of Feuerbach's importance to the terminology and formulations of the Economic and Philosophic Manuscripts.¹ The influence of Feuerbach on Marx's thought seems to end with The German Ideology, a work in which Marx and Engels subject Feuerbach to an extensive theoretical attack and develop their own revolutionary "practical materialism" which is at once a critique of and an alternative to Feuerbach's "contemplative materialism".²

Several questions are posed by this sketch of Marx's relation to Feuerbach. Initially it must be asked whether Marx's use of Feuerbach is merely political, as claimed by István Mészáros and Karl Korsch³, for instance, or theoretical. If Marx was in some sense a theoretical Feuerbachian his repudiation of Feuerbach in The German Ideology raises

¹Cf., e.g., A. James Gregor, 'Marx, Feuerbach and the Reform of the Hegelian Dialectic', pp. 72-74, and David McLellan, The Young Hegelians and Karl Marx, pp. 107-110.

²The German Ideology, p. 57.

³István Mészáros, Marx's Theory of Alienation, p. 234; Karl Korsch, Karl Marx, pp. 173-174.

another question. Louis Althusser¹, for instance, has argued that The German Ideology constitutes a significantly new theoretical departure in Marx's thought in contradistinction to a prior Feuerbachian position. David McLellan, on the other hand, says that it was through an adaptation of Feuerbach's materialism that Marx formulated his own historical materialism.² Similarly, Eugene Kamenka has said that throughout his life Marx employed a conception of man which is "entirely in the Feuerbachian spirit and consciously derived from his work".³ On these accounts the critique of Feuerbach in The German Ideology can be interpreted as a quasi-political matter internal to the Young Hegelian movement which did not significantly affect an enduring theoretical influence of Feuerbach on Marx.

In addition to the Feuerbachian influence a further unifying feature on Marx's work up to 1845 is the continuing elaboration of a theory of alienation in the writings from the Critique up to The Holy Family. Although the term 'alienation' is not used in the Critique, the description of the dualism between state and civil society to which modern man is allegedly subjected is clearly an account of the alienated condition, one which is evocatively developed in On the Jewish Question, where it is explicitly described in terms of alienation. Marx's analysis of the alienated condition is elaborated further in the Introduction, and a more sophisticated version still is developed in the 1844 Manuscripts. Whether Marx continued to employ the theory of alienation after 1845 is a

¹Louis Althusser, For Marx.

²Op. cit., p. 112.

³Eugene Kamenka, The Philosophy of Ludwig Feuerbach, p. 119. Cf. also Sidney Hook, From Hegel to Marx, p. 272.

matter of interpretation, but he does seem to disclaim it in The German Ideology.¹

The question of alienation theory in Marx, indeed, the question of his theoretical development in the widest sense up to at least 1846, can not be fully considered without reference to Feuerbach. Not only is Marx's concept of alienation and his Feuerbachism contemporaneously developed and renounced, but a theoretical relation between Marx and Feuerbach is sufficiently apparent to invite exploration. Marx's critique of Hegel and his nascent materialism, which are developed in this period, as well as his theory of alienation, can be traced back to Feuerbach's writing on the same themes. His contact with Feuerbach and various acknowledgments of appreciation leave no doubt as to Feuerbach's influence on Marx. The present chapter will attempt to ascertain the nature of that influence and its significance in Marx's development.

It will be argued below that in his writing up to 1846 Marx finds Feuerbach to be both an important political ally against those Young Hegelians who attempt to elaborate a 'left' Hegelian position and also that Marx's own theorising during this period leans heavily on the intellectual content of Feuerbach's thought. In using Feuerbach's theories for his own purposes, it will be argued, Marx carries Feuerbachian thought to its limits, and in confronting it with tasks to which it is not equal, he is led to resolve certain tensions in Feuerbach's conception of man and nature in such a way as to construct a critique of Feuerbach and is led to the development of an alternative theory. In examining Marx's use

¹These take the form of sarcastic allusions to the Young Hegelian usage. In the Communist Manifesto, written in the following year, the repudiation is more explicit, cf. MESW, I, p. 131. But see also the novel interpretation of this by Shlomo Avineri, The Social and Political Thought of Karl Marx, p. 123.

of Feuerbach's materialism and related theory we will be able to trace the genesis and development of Marx's own theory of historical materialism.

I

The argument, that Marx's relation to Feuerbach is predominantly political rather than theoretical, has some currency in the literature. Karl Korsch, for instance, supports such a position by saying that Marx, unlike Engels, arrived at his materialism independently of Feuerbach's critique of philosophical and theological idealism "by a much longer road through a study of Democritus and Epicurus, of the materialists of the 17th and 18th centuries, and finally through a detailed critical revision of the whole idealist philosophy of Hegel".¹ On this account Marx's relation with Feuerbach must have been political, for the development of Marx's materialist theory had begun prior to the time of Feuerbach's influence on him. Whilst Korsch is mistaken in dating Marx's materialism from the period of his doctoral thesis, as we argued in Chapter 1 above, he does in effect correct Engels' suggestion that Marx fell under Feuerbach's spell in 1841 with the publication of the latter's The Essence of Christianity.² Although some writers³ still claim that Feuerbach's influence on Marx began in that year or with that book, Franz Mehring's classic biography corrected "the trick which Engels' memory played him"⁴, and David McLellan has shown that it was Bruno Bauer rather than Feuerbach who exercised an intellectual influence on Marx during

¹Korsch, op. cit., p. 172.

²Frederick Engels, 'Ludwig Feuerbach and the End of Classical German Philosophy', MESW, III, p. 344.

³E.G. Gregor, op. cit., p. 68; Robert Tucker, Philosophy and Myth in Karl Marx, pp. 80, 95.

⁴Franz Mehring, Karl Marx, p. 52. Cf. also Zbigniew Jordan, The Evolution of Historical Materialism, pp. 18-19.

this early period.¹ However, Korsch fails to acknowledge that Marx's "detailed critical revision of the whole idealistic philosophy of Hegel" was not attempted until after he had read Feuerbach's Preliminary Theses for the Reform of Philosophy. Marx makes extensive use of this work in his Critique of Hegel's Philosophy of Right. It is also from about this time that Marx's political alliance with Feuerbach begins. The political and theoretical relations between Marx and Feuerbach are not so easily separated, as we will demonstrate below.

Marx's relation with Feuerbach has its pre-history in the relation between Marx and Bauer. Marx's career in political journalism began in early 1842 when the prospect of a university post was closed to him through Bauer's dismissal from Bonn University.² Marx had finished his doctorate on Bauer's insistence with the hope that he would join Bauer at Bonn University where they would collaborate on atheistic writing. After Bauer's dismissal the two did in fact work together briefly until Bauer moved to Berlin. From July 1842 Marx was drawn into the organisation of the Rheinische Zeitung, a journal of liberal reform, and was appointed its editor in mid-October. From the time of his first involvement with the paper Marx found himself to be in increasing disagreement with the Berlin Young Hegelians, known as the Freien, led by Bauer's brother, Edgar. And by the end of November Marx's break with the Berliners was complete. Marx's differences with the Bauer brothers and their group were both political and theoretical. The outlandish behaviour of the Berliners and their uncompromising attacks on liberal initiatives for reform were inimical to good relations with the progressive movement being mounted by the Rhineland bourgeoisie, which Marx supported.

¹McLellan, op. cit., p. 72.

²For a detailed treatment of this period see David McLellan, Karl Marx, pp. 40-61.

Theoretically, the Berliners were attempting to work out 'revolutionary' principles derived from Hegel, to further develop Hegel's ideas; Marx, on the other hand, regarded such projects poorly and was himself attempting to develop a total critique of Hegel.¹ The articles which Marx wrote for the Rheinische Zeitung show no trace of Feuerbach's influence, and the unsigned article which appeared in the Anekdoten proclaiming that "there is no other road...to truth and freedom except that leading through the stream of fire [the Feuer-bach]. Feuerbach is the purgatory of the present times"², which has been widely attributed to Marx, was probably not written by him.³

The absence of Feuerbach's influence on Marx at this time does not mean that they had nothing in common. Marx shared with Feuerbach an interest in criticising Hegel and Hegelism. As early as 1839 Feuerbach published Towards a Critique of Hegel's Philosophy in the Hallische Jahrbücher für Wissenschaft und Kunst, which argued, among other things, that Hegel's philosophy is tautological to the extent that it assumes the conclusion it claims to prove, namely, an identity of ideality and reality, an identity which eliminates reality in favour of the ideal.⁴ Also, the hostility between Marx and the Berliners has its parallel in the hostility of the Berliners to Feuerbach's attack on speculative philosophy.⁵ This is all the more interesting for the fact that in 1841 Marx, Bauer and Feuerbach had together planned to found a theological-

¹For a contrary view cf. Tucker, op. cit., p. 96.

²'Luther as Arbiter between Strauss and Feuerbach', in Loyd Easton and Kurt Guddat (ed.), Writings of the Young Marx on Philosophy and Society, p. 95.

³Cf. McLellan, Karl Marx, p. 67, note 3. This same statement is made, but with a little reservation, in his earlier Marx Before Marxism, p. 142, note 18.

⁴English translation in Zawar Hanfi (ed.), The Fiery Brook: Selected Writings of Ludwig Feuerbach, pp. 53-96.

⁵John Maguire, Marx's Paris Writings, p. 3.

philosophical review.¹ Feuerbach went through the same change in his relation with Bauer as did Marx. The basis for an alliance between Marx and Feuerbach, therefore, was well established during 1842. It was consolidated in early 1843. Marx had intended to write a systematic critique of Hegel's political philosophy for about a year before he drafted the Critique between March and August 1843, but it was not until he had read Feuerbach's Preliminary Theses on the Reform of Philosophy, published in February 1843, that he was able to do so.² The lynch-pin of the Critique is the method developed in Feuerbach's Preliminary Theses.

Feuerbach's Theses can be summarised in four basic points which find expression in Marx's writing of the time. Firstly, Feuerbach corrects Hegel's speculative idealism by "turn[ing] the predicate into the subject", thus establishing "the true relationship of thought to being... Being is the subject, thought the predicate."³ He advocates the negation or transcendence of philosophy, for the "philosopher must take into the text of philosophy that aspect of man which does not philosophise, but, rather, is opposed to philosophy...Philosophy has to begin...with its own antithesis; i.e., with non-philosophy."⁴ This second point is a necessary precondition to a third, which is an assertion of the primacy of man: "All speculation...outside of or even above man, is speculation without unity, necessity, substance, ground, and reality".⁵ Finally, Feuerbach argues that the transcendence of philosophy and the realisation of man can be accomplished only through a Franco-German unity. "The true

¹McLellan, Karl Marx, p. 42.

²Ibid., pp. 67-68; Louis Dupré, The Philosophical Foundations of Marxism, p. 85.

³Feuerbach, 'Preliminary Theses on the Reform of Philosophy', in Hanfi (ed.), op. cit., pp. 154, 168.

⁴Ibid., p. 164.

⁵Ibid., p. 172.

philosopher who is identical with life and man must be of Franco-German parentage."¹ While Marx's Critique emphasises only Feuerbach's method of criticising Hegel's logic, his Introduction, written but months later, proposes the entire Feuerbachian programme summarised in these four points.

The Introduction is not without its criticisms of Feuerbach, as we shall see shortly, but in posing an alternative programme to the Berlin Young Hegelians and their attempts to propagate a 'revolutionary' elaboration of Hegel — they fail "to realise that previous philosophy itself belongs to this world and is its complement"² — Marx mobilises a set of notions against them derived from Feuerbach. Marx's attack on Bauer and his group is repeated in The Holy Family. Here the themes of negating philosophy, Feuerbachian humanism and the need for a Franco-German unity, which first appeared in the Introduction³, are again asserted.⁴ The Bauer group is subjected to criticism again in The German Ideology, but this time Feuerbach does not provide the battering rams; he is viewed from across the battle field and counted as merely another representative of modern German philosophy along with Bauer and Max Stirner.⁵ Marx's political use of Feuerbach, therefore, ranges from 1843 to 1845⁶, and abruptly ends with a theoretical critique of him the following year.

Actually, Marx's political and theoretical differences with Feuerbach pre-date the critique mounted in The German Ideology, but up to 1845

¹Ibid., p. 165.

²Marx, 'Critique of Hegel's Philosophy of Right. Introduction', Early Writings, p. 250.

³Ibid., pp. 250, 251, 257.

⁴The Holy Family, pp. 109-110, 147.

⁵The German Ideology, p. 19. It should be said that even here Feuerbach is defended against Bauer.

⁶Mészáros, op. cit., pp. 234-237, says that Marx had only a verbal debt to Feuerbach by 1844 and had no political use for him thereafter.

Marx's critical development of Feuerbach's theory forms the basis of his opposition to the Young Hegelians. While Marx was never a mere follower of Feuerbach¹, he did share with him a common starting point, utilised his critique of Hegel and adopted the programme outlined in the Preliminary Theses. The major difference between Marx's Introduction and Feuerbach's Theses is already suggested in an acclamatory letter Marx wrote immediately after his first reading of Feuerbach's essay:

I approve of Feuerbach's aphorisms, except for one point: he directs himself too much to nature and too little to politics. But it is politics which happens to be the only link through which contemporary philosophy can become true.²

To Feuerbach's humanism, to his pleas for a transcendence of philosophy and a Franco-German alliance, Marx adds the political dimension when he identifies the proletariat as the agent of social revolution. Marx attempts to bring Feuerbach himself round to accept the necessity of a critique of politics, but fails to do so.³ This did not lead Marx to believe that the Feuerbachian programme should be abandoned, however, for in the Introduction it is described as "the prerequisite of all criticism"⁴, and is similarly depicted in The Holy Family.⁵

While Marx and Feuerbach disagreed on the question of political action, Marx's political use of Feuerbach was premised on the assumption that in Feuerbach's writings are "given — I do not know whether consciously or not — a philosophical foundation to socialism, and we

¹George Plekhanov, Fundamental Problems of Marxism, pp. 26-43, argues that Marx was a mere follower of Feuerbach.

²Marx to Arnold Ruge, March 13, 1843; quoted in Avineri, op. cit., p. 10.

³Cf. Mészáros, op. cit., pp. 234ff; McLellan, Karl Marx, p. 78.

⁴Op. cit., p. 243.

⁵The Holy Family, pp. 109-110, 147.

communists at once have understood your works in this sense".¹ It is, therefore, difficult to sustain the claim that in using Feuerbach in his struggle against the Bauer group Marx owed no intellectual debt to Feuerbach, for the political use of Feuerbach is based on an appreciation of the theoretical content of his thought. Marx's Feuerbachian references, then, can not properly be summarised as no more than terminological, for the political weapons which Marx used against the Young Hegelians were at this time based on a particularly sympathetic understanding of Feuerbach's theory. Nor can the influence of Feuerbach's thought on Marx be said to end in 1844, when it was made clear to Marx that Feuerbach would not contribute to the Deutsch-Französische Jahrbücher², for the main Feuerbachian elements of the Introduction are rehearsed in The Holy Family of 1845.

After recognising that Marx's political use of Feuerbach in his polemic against Bauer and his group entails an apprehension of Feuerbach's humanist programme, albeit supplemented with the political dimension of proletarian practice, it is crucial to also recognise that during this same period Marx develops some positive criticisms of Feuerbach. To avoid confusion and paradox in attempting to understand what is clearly a complex theoretical relationship between Marx and Feuerbach, it is essential that the precise nature of Marx's criticisms of Feuerbach be identified. Precision here is also important for an understanding of the development of historical materialism. The difficulty arises because the criticisms in the aphoristic Theses on Feuerbach, written in the spring

¹Marx to Feuerbach, August 1844; quoted in Mészáros, op. cit., p. 235, and a slightly different version in McLellan, Karl Marx, p. 124.

²Feuerbach regarded Marx and Ruge too impatient for action and held that "the time was not yet ripe for a transition from theory to practice, for the theory had still to be perfected", McLellan, Karl Marx, p. 78.

of 1845, are often regarded as a drawing together and summary of points made against Feuerbach during the period from 1843, and also as the basis of the argument which when elaborated becomes the first part of The German Ideology. In this latter work Marx's full length critique of Feuerbach is the obverse side of his theory of historical materialism. If both of these views of the Theses are true it follows that the theory of historical materialism was merely enunciated in The German Ideology but developed in the writings of 1843 to 1845. This interpretation of the Theses generates a serious paradox, however. It maintains that Marx's historical materialist repudiation of Feuerbach, elaborated in The German Ideology, but already formulated in the Theses which draw on earlier criticisms of Feuerbach, was developed at the same time as and co-existed with Marx's incorporation of Feuerbach's theory when polemically engaging the Young Hegelians. This paradox is resolved when it is demonstrated that, firstly, Marx's critique of Feuerbach during the period of his accepting Feuerbach's programme, which is indeed summarised in the Theses on Feuerbach, is a critique of Feuerbach only in so far as it attempts to make Feuerbachism consistent with itself. Secondly, the main points against Feuerbach which when positively stated amount to the exposition of historical materialism found in The German Ideology are absent in the Theses on Feuerbach.¹

II

The eleven Theses on Feuerbach make three broad criticisms of Feuerbach which can also be found variously in the Introduction, in the Economic and Philosophic Manuscripts and, to a lesser degree, in The Holy

¹For a contrary view, cf. Althusser, op. cit., p. 34; Maurice Godelier, Rationality and Irrationality in Economics, pp. 115, 118, note 18; McLellan, Karl Marx, p. 140.

Family. The first three Theses make the point that materialism up to and including Feuerbach has ignored the practical side of man. Marx very briefly indicates how materialism is better able to account for knowledge and historical change by incorporating into its system the concept of 'practice'. The second general point relates to the social nature of man. In the Theses IV to VII various aspects of Feuerbach's default in this area are noted. These two points, of practice and society, are brought together in a third criticism which faces materialism with the consequences of realising that social life is itself practical. The details and ramifications of this are rendered in the Theses VIII to XI. The particulars of these criticisms of Feuerbach can be made clear by examining Marx's comments on these matters in his writing up to the Theses on Feuerbach.

The factor of practice or praxis, which remained an essential part of Marx's mature theory of history, was noted to be crucial in itself and absent in Feuerbach when Marx first read the Preliminary Theses on the Reform of Philosophy.¹ The need for praxis is affirmed in the Introduction, man is described as essentially a consciously active being in the Economic and Philosophic Manuscripts, and in The Holy Family it is observed that ideas "cannot carry out anything at all. In order to carry out ideas men are needed who can exert practical force."² And yet, when Marx paraphrases Feuerbach in the Introduction by saying that "Man makes religion, religion does not make man"³, he acknowledges that Feuerbach does indeed appreciate, in a sense, that man is not merely a product of circumstances but also active in making them. More significantly, Marx

¹Marx's letter to Ruge, quoted in Avineri, op. cit., p. 10.

²Early Writings, p. 251; Economic and Philosophic Manuscripts, p. 71; The Holy Family, p. 140.

³Early Writings, p. 244.

seems to suggest that Feuerbach's humanism, and especially his demand for the negation of philosophy, implies that man has an active side.

Although Feuerbach is not specifically mentioned in this context in the Introduction, Marx's comments on what he ironically calls the "practical political party" are pertinent. The practical party, says Marx, is "right to demand the negation of philosophy", but such a demand can be achieved only when philosophy is first realised, and the realisation of philosophy is possible only "through practice [Praxis]".¹ Marx's criticism that Feuerbach's materialism is defective in failing to recognise that man's sensuousness exists as "human sensuous activity, practice"² is not primarily concerned to chide him for ignoring practice. Marx's complaint, rather, is that Feuerbach has not sufficiently drawn out the implications of his theory of man as a sensuous being, a theory which leads, Marx claims, to the recognition that man is an active, practical being.

Marx's argument that Feuerbach's humanism, and especially the observation that man is a sensuous being, implies that man has a practical nature, takes three different but related forms or stages. One of these is that there is a practical imperative in intention. We have already seen Marx argue that the intention to negate philosophy can be approximated only through practice. Marx returns to this question in the Economic and Philosophic Manuscripts when he says that "the resolution of the theoretical antitheses is only possible in a practical way".³ The view that Feuerbach's programme engenders or requires a practical imperative is not a consequence of Marx attempting to apply a moral and external

¹Ibid., pp. 249, 250, 251.

²'Theses on Feuerbach, I', MESW, I, p. 13.

³Economic and Philosophic Manuscripts, p. 102.

principle to Feuerbach's humanism, such as one claiming that a person must act upon what he believes. On the contrary, it follows from a principle internal to Feuerbach's anthropology. The practical resolution of theoretical antitheses is possible, Marx continues, only "by virtue of the practical energy of man".¹ This is the second form of the argument that man is an active being, the sensuous nature of man anthropologically entails that man is by nature active.

The argument that it is in man's nature to be practical because it is in man's nature to be sensuous is taken directly from Feuerbach. Marx says that

Man as an objective, sensuous being is therefore a suffering being – and because he feels what he suffers, a passionate being. Passion is the essential force of man energetically bent on its object.²

It is because man suffers that he is active. The idea that suffering is a middle link in a chain of sensuous man and his activeness had already been suggested in the Introduction, where religious suffering is discussed.³ In the Economic and Philosophic Manuscripts the argument is much more general when it is explained that man's capacity for suffering is directly related to his sensuous nature.⁴ "To be sensuous is to suffer"⁵ because the objects and forces external to man in nature which stimulate his senses also provide for the satisfaction of his needs. This sentiment is Feuerbach's: "A being without suffering is nothing but a being without sensuousness, without matter".⁶ While suffering, and especially

¹Ibid.

²Ibid., p. 146.

³Early Writings, p. 244.

⁴Cf. Economic and Philosophic Manuscripts, pp. 99, 144-145.

⁵Economic and Philosophic Manuscripts, p. 146.

⁶'Preliminary Theses on the Reform of Philosophy', in Hanfi (ed.), op. cit., p. 163.

suffering through attempting to satisfy needs, somehow proves man's sensuousness, it is in the satisfaction of man's needs, and especially his species needs, that man is active.¹ Marx develops this point by rigorously applying Feuerbach's notion of man as an essentially natural and sensuous being. The principle of praxis is not unknown to Feuerbach, and he argues that it is a consequence of sensuous existence when he says that all reality exists in space and time, "the primary criteria of praxis".² Feuerbach, however, does not so closely tie his concept of praxis to human sensuousness. Marx, on the other hand, holds that Feuerbach's conception of man's sensuousness entails human praxis, that a developed Feuerbachian anthropology is an anthropology of praxis.

There is a third form of argument employed by Marx which criticises Feuerbach for not developing the notion of man as a practical being but at the same time suggests that this notion is inherent in Feuerbachism. Marx's position is that it is in uniting the materialist doctrine of objective sensuousness with the idealist doctrine of man's mental activity that the concept of man as a sensuously active or practical being emerges. Marx's treatment of Feuerbach in relation to this issue is on the surface contradictory. In The Holy Family he says that "the old antithesis between spiritualism and materialism has been...overcome once and for all by Feuerbach"³, whereas it is denied in the first Thesis on Feuerbach that Feuerbach's materialism has incorporated idealism's discovery of man's "active side".⁴ The resolution of this paradox is found in the Economic and Philosophic Manuscripts where Marx concludes that man "is an active natural being" after developing the Feuerbachian themes

¹Economic and Philosophic Manuscripts, pp. 102-104.

²'Preliminary Theses...', op. cit., p. 162.

³The Holy Family, p. 111.

⁴'Theses on Feuerbach, I', MESW, I, p. 13.

of man as a species through his consciousness of others and of man as an objective sensuous being.¹ "Here we see how consistent naturalism or humanism distinguishes itself both from idealism and materialism, constituting at the same time the unifying truth of both."² It is "consistent naturalism" which, in unifying the truth of materialism and idealism, shows man to be a practical being. Feuerbach himself is inconsistent, according to Marx, in so far as there remains in his writing a vestige of idealism.³ The neglect in Feuerbach of man's practical activity as a constituent part of sensuous reality is not merely criticised by Marx. He argues that it is only through the further development of the programme of humanist naturalism, which Feuerbach established, that such a concept can be advanced. Marx's comments, in effect, amount to the claim that while Feuerbach himself does not grasp the relevance of man's practical activity, the concept is nevertheless integral to Feuerbachian theory.

In his third Thesis on Feuerbach Marx employs what is the revised, corrected and consistent Feuerbachian principle of man as a practically active being to show that society is a unified whole rather than a dualist arrangement in which the source of historical change would be external to the circumstances of men.⁴ This consideration raises the question of man's social nature, and this issue is central to Marx's second general criticism of Feuerbach.

The criticisms of Feuerbach in the Theses IV to VII are widely regarded as an attempt to confront Feuerbach's philosophical anthropology

¹Economic and Philosophic Manuscripts, p. 144.

²Ibid.; emphasis added.

³Cf. Hook, op. cit., pp. 279-281.

⁴'Theses on Feuerbach, III', MESW, I, pp. 13-14. Cf. also The Holy Family, p. 153.

with a materialist sociology.¹ The evidence for this view in the Theses themselves is rather slender, however. Apart from the general impression created by the claims that Feuerbach's treatment of man is deficient in that it does not sufficiently recognise that he is a social being, there is little indication in the Theses that Marx has a 'sociological' vision of man. Marx does, of course, assert that man's human essence "is the ensemble of social relations"², and that religious alienation must "be explained by the self-cleavage and self-contradictoriness of [its] secular basis".³ It will become obvious, though, that these propositions are not equivalent to Marx's conception of social man developed in The German Ideology, where it is argued that man's social nature is explicable in terms of his material production.⁴ This is a qualitatively different category from that of "practical, human-sensuous activity"⁵, announced in the fifth Thesis on Feuerbach and apparently invoked to serve the same function as the former, namely, to account for the basis of man's social relations. While the discussion in the fourth Thesis, of what is required to explain religion, can be regarded as parallel to the account in The German Ideology, stating that the "phantoms formed in the human brain are also, necessarily, sublimates of [man's] material life-process, which is empirically verifiable and bound to material premises"⁶, the absence of anything but the general and non-empirical categories of self-cleavage and self-contradiction prevent us from seeing the two as anything like equivalents. The argument that the Theses do not comprise a summary

¹Cf., e.g., Hook, op. cit., p. 293; Joachim Israel, Alienation, p. 56; George Lichtheim, Marxism, p. 42.

²'Theses on Feuerbach, VI', MESW, I, p. 14.

³'Theses on Feuerbach, IV', MESW, I, p. 14.

⁴Cf., e.g., The German Ideology, p. 32.

⁵'Theses on Feuerbach, V', MESW, I, p. 14.

⁶The German Ideology, p. 38.

of The German Ideology will be taken up later in the chapter, at this point it is intended to indicate no more than that the materialist sociology, first developed in the latter work, is not particularly indicated in the former.

The argument that Marx's discussion of man's social nature in his criticisms of Feuerbach in the Theses is devoid of a 'materialist' content does not itself deny that he develops a sociological critique of philosophical anthropology. But an ambiguity in the term 'society' and the special meaning Marx gives to the concept in his writings prior to The German Ideology, a discussion of which is developed more fully in the next chapter, does raise the question of whether there is anything that can be regarded as sociological in these Theses. What will be argued here is that Marx's criticisms of Feuerbach's conception of man do not constitute a radical departure from philosophical anthropology, but, like the criticisms of the first three Theses, attempt to make consistent and develop further an essentially Feuerbachian notion of man's 'social' essence.

A prima facie case that Marx not only developed a sociological critique of Feuerbach in his Theses, but also that this critique was begun soon after his reading Feuerbach's Preliminary Theses on the Reform of Philosophy, could be argued by showing the similarity between Marx's seventh Thesis and certain passages in the Introduction. Marx claims in his Theses that Feuerbach "does not see that the 'religious sentiment' is itself a social product, and that the abstract individual whom he analyses belongs in reality to a particular form of society".¹ A similar passage in the Introduction stating that "man is no abstract being

¹'Theses on Feuerbach, VII', MESW, I, p. 14.

squatting outside the world. Man is the world of man, state, society"¹, has also been regarded in the secondary literature as a sociological critique of Feuerbach's anthropology of religion.² And yet it is probable that Marx was not criticising Feuerbach at all in this latter passage. A little later in the Introduction, when Marx returns to the question of abstracted treatments of man, his target is explicitly Hegel, not Feuerbach. The discussion there of "the German conception of the modern state, which abstracts from the real man, was only possible because and in so far as the modern state itself abstracts from real man"³ is reminiscent of the Critique. Before going further into Marx's criticisms in the Critique of Hegel's abstraction of man, in order to show its relevance for an understanding of the Theses, let us briefly consider the notion of 'society' as it is used by Marx in his writings of this period.

One meaning of the term 'society' is the anthropological notion of society as man's "species-life itself"⁴, as Marx expresses it in his essay On the Jewish Question, written just before the Introduction and published with it. This conception is not part of a sociological argument about man's condition, but one concerned with the question of the nature of man's human essence. It is precisely this anthropological meaning which is ascribed to Feuerbach when his great achievements are listed by Marx in the Economic and Philosophic Manuscripts: "Feuerbach also makes the social relationship 'of man to man' the basic principle of the theory".⁵ This social relationship is that derived from man's

¹Early Writings, p. 244.

²Cf., e.g., Dupré, op. cit., p. 113; Israel, op. cit., p. 32.

³Early Writings, p. 250.

⁴Easton and Guddat (eds.), op. cit., p. 237.

⁵Economic and Philosophic Manuscripts, p. 135.

'species-being' in which self-consciousness is the source of man's natural communicative sociality. It is possible, therefore, to see the assertion of the Introduction, that man is not an abstract being outside the world but a social being, as an affirmation of the Feuerbachian critique of Hegel's conception of man as a predicate of mind. There is no need to assume that Marx's considerations of society in the seventh Thesis on Feuerbach departs from this conception of man's social nature in the anthropological sense.

As we saw in Chapter 2 above Marx criticises Hegel in the Critique for not regarding man as a being of essential sociality in an anthropological sense, for the social qualities of man's nature are expressed, even though in an alienated form, in the political state, according to Marx. Whereas Hegel regards the state as an entity quite external to man's nature, Marx contends that the political offices of the state, whilst not an expression of man's full universality, for the political state is not rational, are nonetheless a function of human sociality under particular conditions. It is this critique of Hegel which seems to inform the discussion in the Introduction, referred to above, of the abstraction of real man in the German conception of the modern state. A perfectly coherent interpretation of the seventh Thesis on Feuerbach can show that Marx is there making comments against Feuerbach which are similar to those he made against Hegel in the Critique. While in the Critique the state is regarded as a "mode of man's social existence as the realisation and objectification of his essence"¹, the religious sentiment is analogously conceived as a social product in the Thesis. This is to say that not only is religion an aspect of man's alienated condition, as Feuerbach correctly shows, but, as Marx maintains, that religion is a

¹Early Writings, p. 99. Marx no doubt got this notion from Feuerbach, compare ibid., p. 78, with 'Preliminary Theses...', p. 172.

phenomenon which reveals something of the state of man's essential nature in a wider sense. Feuerbach, in seeing the alienation of individual men, ignores the fact, stressed by Marx, that the general condition of man's species-nature under religious alienation implies that all men "belong in reality to a particular form of society"¹, or, as he more graphically puts it in the Critique, the "modern age...isolates the objective essence of man, treating it as something purely external and material".²

These comments of Marx relate to two points, namely that the alienation of essence is not a merely individual predicament and that in the alienation of essence man's species-nature is given a limited and particular expression. Feuerbach's conception of man's anthropologically social essence and its alienation is such that individuals may lose their essence under adverse circumstances. Marx's criticism of Feuerbach's individualised essentialism amounts to the assertion that as the social essence of man is a faculty of his species-being or species-nature — which is also Feuerbach's point of departure — any factor which interferes with the full expression of that nature, such as the state or religion, affects the species as a whole and determines a general condition of man, not merely the individual condition of particular men. For Marx man remains a species-being under religious or political alienation, even though his essential nature is without full expression. This is because Marx regards religion and the state as being themselves a consequence of man's species-being in a limited and incomplete sense. Feuerbach, on the other hand, sees religious alienation as a complete denial of man's species-being. These points are developed in the sixth Thesis on Feuerbach where Marx argues that "the human essence is no abstraction

¹'Theses on Feuerbach, VII', MESW, I, p. 14.

²Early Writings, p. 148.

inherent in each single individual. In its reality it is the ensemble of the social relations."¹ In this Marx again attempts to introduce consistency into Feuerbachian thought.

Marx does not charge Feuerbach with denying that the human essence "is the ensemble of the social relations", but with failing to "enter upon a criticism of this real essence".² Feuerbach's own general view, summarised in §59 of Principles of the Philosophy of the Future, is remarkably similar to Marx's critical formulation:

The single man in isolation possesses in himself the essence of man neither as a moral nor as a thinking being. The essence of man is contained only in the community, in the unity of man with man.³

However, in not criticising or understanding fully this real essence Feuerbach, according to Marx, perpetrates the double mistake of abstracting from the historical process and thereby presupposes an abstract, isolated individual and, secondly, of assuming that the human essence naturally unites these individuals.⁴ The introduction of 'history' as a counter to what appears to be a manifestation of methodological individualism on Feuerbach's part, and the condemnation of Feuerbach's alleged claim that man is united naturally, a condemnation usually associated with the sociological repudiation of the view that man has a pre-social nature, gives the impression that Marx is sociologically criticising Feuerbach's anthropologism. And yet these criticisms can be shown to be quite consistent with the anthropological concept of man outlined by Marx in his Critique of Hegel's Philosophy of Right.

¹'Theses on Feuerbach, VI', MESW, I, p. 14.

²Ibid.

³Hanfi (ed.), op. cit., p. 244.

⁴'Theses on Feuerbach, VI', MESW, I, p. 14.

According to Marx's early evolutionary ontology, which was described in Chapter 2 above, man's essential nature of universal and rational sociality attains its full potential through an historical process of development. Prior to man's full apprehension of his essence, when man is isolated from the full sociality of his species-being, his essence is nonetheless immanent in his being and determinate in his institutions and their development. In these early stages of his human development man is isolated or alienated from the universal or rational form of his essence even though it exists empirically in a partial form as the political state or even as religion. The point that man exists as a species-being even in his alienation is very important to Marx's analysis and has often been misunderstood in the literature¹: it is crucial to Marx's argument that although man may be isolated from his objective essence, from his essence in its fully developed form, his essence exists empirically in the partial form of alienated institutions. The historical process of man's essential development described by Marx assumes that man's essence is ever present but in different forms at different times. It is in the culmination and conclusion of this historical process that man's full essence is realised "in the community, in the unity of man with man", to use Feuerbach's words which Marx paraphrases throughout the Economic and Philosophic Manuscripts. It is probable that it is this historical process to which Marx refers in the sixth Thesis on Feuerbach. An interpretation based on this assumption shows that on the one hand Marx shares Feuerbach's notion of the human essence as the ensemble of social relations and, on the other, that he criticises Feuerbach's misunderstanding of this concept of social man.

¹E.g., Bertell Ollman, Alienation, p. 116.

Marx's argument is that Feuerbach abstracts from the historical process in two senses, in an ahistorical naturalism and in an individualisation of man. He posits the social essence of man's species-being ahistorically by considering that it unites men naturally without consideration of the historical development which leads to the full realisation of man's species-being in a universal form. For Feuerbach the datum of man's essential sociality, his species-being, is the self-consciousness of man which exists here and now. Marx implies that Feuerbach holds to a more or less idealised view of man's social essence in so far as Feuerbach suggests that essential species-being exists only in its full form as man's community with man, even though man is demonstrably without full community in religion and the political state. His conception of man's essence as species-being in communicative sociality has no regard for the fact, postulated by Marx, that its empirical rupture through religion is not a mere loss of essence, but itself an alienated form of man's essential nature which will be surmounted in man's historical development. Thus for Feuerbach the human essence is "comprehended only as a 'genus'"¹ whereas Marx comprehends it as a developing and evolutionary form. Because Feuerbach regards man's essence as an idealised reality of man rather than as an aspect of his historical development, he regards the loss of essence as a misery which befalls unfortunate individuals rather than as a general condition of the human species under specific conditions:

Only in human life does it happen, but even here only in abnormal and unfortunate cases, that being is separated from essence; only here does it happen that a man's essence is not where his being is.²

¹'Theses on Feuerbach, VI', MESW, I, p. 14.

²'Principles of the Philosophy of the Future', Hanfi (ed.), op. cit., p. 215.

This is the second sense in which Feuerbach abstracts from the historical process.

What Marx appears to be doing in those Theses on Feuerbach which argue his case for man's social nature is to reveal an inconsistency in Feuerbach's treatment of man and correct that inconsistency by developing the Feuerbachian presuppositions which he regards as fundamentally correct. His discussion in the Theses of man's practical nature and man's social nature is a criticism of Feuerbach's actual formulations from the point of view of Feuerbachian premises. Marx thereby develops a consistent Feuerbachism in a way that Feuerbach failed to do. We know that Marx at this time regarded Feuerbach as "one who has made genuine discoveries" and as "the representative of materialism coinciding with humanism in the theoretical domain".¹ In breaking new ground for the first time it is quite explicable that Feuerbach would have retained vestiges of the old system of thought he overthrew and would not have been able to follow his original discoveries to all their ramifications. In those Theses on Feuerbach discussed above Marx attempts to complete the task Feuerbach began. This certainly constitutes a critique of Feuerbach, but the content of the critique is decidedly Feuerbachian.

The third general criticism which Marx raises in the Theses on Feuerbach VIII to XI, signifying that social life is itself practical and that in being practical it is subject to change, brings together his previous discussion of the practically active and the social nature of man. In this criticism of Feuerbach Marx again, in effect, attempts to strengthen the Feuerbachian programme, but in doing so introduces into it an element of inconsistency which, when more fully developed, leads him

¹Economic and Philosophic Manuscripts, p. 134; The Holy Family, p. 147.

to abandon Feuerbachism itself. In arguing that "Social life is essentially practical" and that "the point...is to change" the world¹, Marx introduces into his Feuerbachian anthropology a new concept which it can not bear. In developing a fully consistent Feuerbachism he paradoxically brings out a fundamental contradiction internal to it.

The aphoristic nature of the Theses gives them a somewhat cryptic quality, but we may be reasonably sure that when Marx refers to the "human practice" which gives the "rational solution" to all the "mysteries which mislead theory to mysticism"² he is discussing the practice which is part of the historical process leading to the full sociality of man's essence described above, the practice in which men engage in order to overcome their mystifying alienation. This interpretation is borne out in the tenth Thesis where the standpoint of Marx's new materialism is said to be that of "human society, or socialised humanity".³ "Human society" in this context can only be the condition of unalienated man, the condition in which his fully social essence is completely realised, especially as it is contrasted with the standpoint of "contemplative materialism" or the "old materialism", which is that of "civil society".⁴ Civil society is the association of men who exist for each other through their intrinsically individual needs and interests and is by its nature, therefore, alienated society in which men can not exist as full species-beings. Human society or socialised humanity, then, is what Marx elsewhere describes as communism.

Feuerbach, too, develops the notion that man is a species-being in communism, for he says that

¹'Theses on Feuerbach, VIII and XI', MESW, I, p. 15.

²'Theses on Feuerbach, VIII', ibid.

³'Theses on Feuerbach, X', ibid.

⁴'Theses on Feuerbach, IX and X', ibid.

in essence what he is in the senses — he is Man or, rather — since Feuerbach transports the essence of Man only into his community — he is social Man, communist.¹

We have already seen that Feuerbach's appreciation of man's essential sociality is based on the assumption that there is an existing common human condition of self-consciousness which constitutes this essence. The condition of essential being, for Feuerbach, is achieved through love, which is its content.² Feuerbach, therefore, sees the achievement of communism, the social unity of man with man, as coming about through love. Marx, on the other hand, argues that it is achieved with practice; an argument he develops from Feuerbachian premises. This is the point of the eleventh Thesis, which requires that the world be changed, and this itself is an extension of the postulation that man's alienation is a condition of partial sociality suffered by the species as a whole, an alienation which is within the spectrum of man's historical evolution. Although Marx does not specify the class nature of practice and change in the Theses, his introduction elsewhere in writings of the period of political class action as the agent of change brings with it the political role of the proletariat as a class which is inevitably led to confront other classes in achieving change. From the point of view of Feuerbach's insistence that full species-being is achieved with love the class aspect of change is inhuman; it is also inconsistent with the Feuerbachian view of man as a species-being with a common and uniform nature, for class conflict is both unlovely and contrary to the concept of a shared and common human nature. It is at this point that the Feuerbachian system refined by Marx must begin to break down.

¹'On the "Essence of Christianity" in Relation to "The Unique and His Property"', quoted in MESW, I, p. 536, note 22.

²Cf. §33 of 'Principles of the Philosophy of the Future', Hanfi (ed.), op. cit., pp. 225-226.

It would be a mistake, however, to gain the impression that in the last four Theses Marx undermines Feuerbachian thought while he attempts to elaborate and develop it in the others. The last four Theses really do no more than draw out the implications of those that went before them, and the contradiction inherent in his extended Feuerbachism is not here manifest. Neither do we want to suggest that Marx is aware of the contradiction in his development of Feuerbachian thought in the Theses. In The Holy Family, for instance, Marx says that the concept of man's consciousness in English and French materialism is one in which the development of consciousness is the result of forces external to it, and, therefore, is a concept of passive rather than of practical consciousness.¹ He then immediately goes on to argue that this form of materialism can be used to support the case for communism.² The first point of this argument is in the ninth Thesis on Feuerbach. What we have deduced of the meaning of the other Theses might suggest that the second part of the argument would still be acceptable to Marx at the time of his writing the Theses some five months later, namely, that although the position as stated by Feuerbach is inadequate there is in it a germ of truth accessible to a fuller development. Such a development is to be found in the tenth and eleventh Theses.

It is clear from writings of the period that Marx entertains both sides of the contradiction inherent in his extended Feuerbachism without being aware of the antagonism between them. With class political action coexists the principles of love and a common human nature. Although Marx does not elevate love to the determining position Feuerbach gives to it, love is listed with the five senses and other faculties as essentially

¹The Holy Family, pp. 152-153.

²Ibid., p. 154.

"human relations" in the Economic and Philosophic Manuscripts.¹ Similarly, his description of fully developed humanism and naturalism as communism in "the genuine resolution of the conflict between man and nature and between man and man"², while wider than Feuerbach's notion of love, clearly contains this Feuerbachian element.³ To cite a third example, Marx's expression of distaste for the political economists who strip "the individual...of all determinateness so as to class him as capitalist or worker"⁴, while not a little odd in a book which discusses class and the class condition at some length, can be explained by the fact that Marx shares Feuerbach's disquiet at attempts to divide men and thereby obstruct the possibility of love between fellow men. Here we see the class concept and the concept of love coexisting nonetheless. Although class struggle is described in this work⁵, it is not yet conceived as the motor of communist revolution.⁶

In The Holy Family class struggle does appear as the mechanism for attaining communism, or at least as the means of abolishing private property, but even then Marx maintains the assumption of a common, a-class or non-class human nature. The proletariat and the so-called class of wealth suffer "the same human self-estrangement", according to Marx, even though they experience it differently.⁷ There is in this the notion of a singular, universal and essential human nature which is fundamental to

¹Economic and Philosophic Manuscripts, p. 99. The role of love in sociality is more directly Feuerbachian in Marx's manuscript notes on James Mills' Elements of Political Economy, cf. Early Writings, p. 277.

²Economic and Philosophic Manuscripts, p. 95; emphasis in original.

³Cf. ibid., p. 131.

⁴Ibid., p. 119.

⁵Cf., e.g., ibid., pp. 92, 114.

⁶Marx talks vaguely and not a little obscurely of "communist action" which will arise out of history in the form of a developing need. Cf. ibid., pp. 106, 115.

⁷The Holy Family, p. 43.

the anthropological view of man. In The German Ideology and the writings thereafter, where communism is fully understood as a consequence of class upheaval, the concept of an essentialist human nature is removed. In these writings man is defined basically in terms of his relation to the production process and the means of production. In fact Marx now describes the class nature of man in a manner similar to that of the political economists who were criticised in the Economic and Philosophic Manuscripts for precisely this reason.¹ For it is largely unintelligible to talk of an essential human species-being common to all men in the context of a situation in which the individual condition is determined by one's class location and where the major classes are mutually antagonistic.²

III

The most complete statement of Marx's early alienation theory is elaborated in his Economic and Philosophic Manuscripts, which fall in the middle of what might be described as his Feuerbachian period.³ A Feuerbachian influence is fairly self-evident in the Manuscripts; but as there is also in them concepts absent in Feuerbach's own writing, as Marx goes beyond Feuerbach's own formulations and as he outlines criticisms of Feuerbach, some scholars regard the theoretical content of the work as non-Feuerbachian.⁴ Such a position gains support in the fact that many of the themes discussed in the Manuscripts can be traced through all of

¹The German Ideology, pp. 69-70.

²Cf. the discussion concerning the consequence of the rise of the political working class movement on the liberal theory of human nature in C.B. Macpherson, Democratic Theory, p. 202.

³It will be argued in Chapter 6 that while there is a theory of alienation in Marx's mature work it is fundamentally different from the theory of alienation developed in the Manuscripts.

⁴Lucio Colletti, 'Introduction' to Marx, Early Writings, pp. 48, 56; Mészáros, op. cit.

Marx's writings subsequent to his theoretical repudiation of Feuerbach. A concern with the labour process, class relations, private property, political economy, the emancipation of labour and communism, which strongly emerges in the Economic and Philosophic Manuscripts, is both absent in Feuerbach and characteristic of Marx's later work.¹ It will be shown, however, that the Feuerbachian influence in the Manuscripts is not merely verbal and apparent but theoretical and central, and that while many of the themes discussed in the work are continuous with the content of Marx's later writing they are accounted for with significantly different theories.

It may appear precipitous to claim that the Manuscripts are Feuerbachian when the intellectual sources on which Marx drew in writing them are numerous and varied, as Ernest Mandel reminds us.² The French economists Eugène Buret, Constantin Pecqueur and Jean Baptiste Say and the Swiss-German economist Wilhelm Schulz contribute to Marx's discussion of the wretchedness of the workers' condition, for instance. The British Classical Economists Adam Smith and David Ricardo are fundamental to Marx's account of the relation between capital and labour. The importance of Engels' Outlines of a Critique of Political Economy³ to Marx's own critique of political economy should not be forgotten. In his 'Preface' Marx describes Engels and Moses Hess as the authors of the "only original

¹It is for this reason that the Manuscripts are often seen as a 'bridge' between Marx's earlier philosophical writings and his later economic works, and also as the starting point of the later thought; cf., e.g., Daniel Bell, 'The Debate on Alienation', p. 201; McLellan, Karl Marx, p. 128.

²Ernest Mandel, The Formation of the Economic Thought of Karl Marx, p. 158.

³Published in the Deutsch-Französische Jahrbücher of 1844 and appears as an appendix to the Moscow edition of the Manuscripts. For a discussion of the importance of Engels' essay in Marx's writing of the Economic and Philosophic Manuscripts, cf. Maguire, op. cit., pp. 55-58.

German works of substance in this science".¹ And yet Marx suggests that although he has made use of many writers in drafting the Manuscripts, their theoretical core is largely Feuerbachian, for he goes on to say that "positive criticism as a whole...owes its true foundation to the discoveries of Feuerbach".² While Marx crossed out this line it was not because he wanted to revise his opinion, for the subsequent claim that it "is only with Feuerbach that positive, humanistic and naturalistic criticism beings" is left intact³, and repeated in the body of the text.⁴ Feuerbach is subjected to criticism in the Economic and Philosophic Manuscripts for the limited nature of his critique of Hegel⁵, but these are internal criticisms, similar in form to those of the Theses on Feuerbach, and do not interfere, as we will see, with Marx's appropriation of Feuerbach's theory of alienation in the Manuscripts.

The theory of alienation in Feuerbach is qualitatively different from Marx's theory in so far as one accounts for religious alienation and the other for the alienation of labour. But while Marx addresses himself to an area of life ignored by Feuerbach he nevertheless seems to regard the theory he develops in the Economic and Philosophic Manuscripts as an application of Feuerbach's theory.⁶ We have already seen Marx comment in the Introduction that the "criticism of religion is the prerequisite of all criticism"; he goes on to say that

¹Economic and Philosophic Manuscripts, p. 19; emphasis in original.

²Ibid., p. 19; emphasis added.

³Ibid., p. 20.

⁴Ibid., pp. 133, 134.

⁵Ibid., pp. 135, 149.

⁶Cf. also Dirk Struik, 'Marx's Economic-Philosophical Manuscripts', pp. 292-293; Murray Wolfson, A Reappraisal of Marxian Economics, p. 27.

It is the immediate task of philosophy...to unmask self-estrangement in its unholy forms once the holy form...has been unmasked. Thus the criticism of heaven turns into the criticism of earth, the criticism of religion into the criticism of law and the criticism of theology into the criticism of politics.¹

In the Economic and Philosophic Manuscripts this programme is extended, partly under Engels' influence, to include the criticism of the political economy, for Marx now regards alienated labour as the key to all human servitude.² This does not nullify Feuerbach's critique of religion, but builds upon it. Marx does argue that man's alienation in religion is different in content from his alienation in labour and that the latter is causally primary in so far as "its transcendence...embraces both aspects".³ He also says, however, that formally they operate in much "the same way".⁴ As religious and economic alienation are formally the same the same formal aspects of the theory which deals with each of them need not be different, the difference lies in the subject to which the theory is applied.

The Feuerbachian context of the Manuscripts' theory of alienation is evident in the particular nature of its philosophical framework. The Economic and Philosophic Manuscripts has been described as both a "philosophical critique of the economy" and an "empirically based criticism".⁵ Ernest Mandel argues that the work is neither one nor the other, but both.⁶ While this is in a sense true it is also unsatisfactory, for it fails to make clear the function of empirical data in Marx's

¹Early Writings, pp. 243, 244-245.

²Economic and Philosophic Manuscripts, p. 77.

³Ibid., p. 96.

⁴Ibid., pp. 69, 75.

⁵Dupré, op. cit., p. 121; Maguire, op. cit., p. 7.

⁶Mandel, op. cit., p. 158; but cf. also Ibid., p. 154.

critique of political economy and the particular nature of that critique. Herbert Marcuse' formulation, quoted by Mandel, which states that

all the philosophical concepts of Marxian theory are social and economic categories...Even Marx's early writings are not philosophical. They express the negation of philosophy, though they still do so in philosophical language¹

offers a merely verbal solution to the question of the nature of the Manuscripts, even though it does appear to accord with Marx's own description of them as a negation of philosophy, "the settling of accounts with Hegelian dialectic and Hegelian philosophy as a whole".² Marx's claim that his "results have been won by means of a wholly empirical analysis based on a conscientious critical study of political economy"³ also seems to be a denial of philosophy. But it is in the details of his "critical study" that Marx's Feuerbachian philosophy is to be found.

On one level Marx's analysis is fully empirical, indeed he begins with the facts analysed by political economy and says that he accepts its language and laws. He does not dispute the description of empirical reality presented by political economy, but argues that its explanation of these facts is inadequate.⁴ As we saw in Chapter 2 above Marx later rejected outright the empiricism of political economy, but here he merely criticises it and explains its facts from the point of view of a "science of man" which stresses man's "true anthropological nature".⁵ Marx's

¹Herbert Marcuse, Reason and Revolution, p. 258. Marx makes a similar claim in The German Ideology, p. 259. The philosophical nature of the Manuscripts is stressed in Marcuse's earlier 'The Foundations of Historical Materialism', pp. 3-10.

²Economic and Philosophic Manuscripts, p. 20.

³Ibid., p. 18.

⁴Ibid., pp. 64-65.

⁵Ibid., pp. 104, 103. Cf. also Feuerbach, 'Preliminary Theses...', op. cit., p. 172.

empiricism and his naturalistic "science" in the Economic and Philosophical Manuscripts are directly related in being equal parts of the Feuerbachian philosophical anthropology. For Feuerbach philosophy begins with an empirical reality indicated by the senses, its procedure is to organise that reality by subjecting it to 'criticism', a criticism or philosophy premised on the proposition that man is a natural being.¹ The critique of political economy in the Manuscripts, like the critique of politics in the Introduction, is still a "task of philosophy". Not the speculative philosophy of Hegel, certainly, which is an autonomous and autonomously confirming reality, but rather the naturalistic philosophy of Ludwig Feuerbach.

To briefly recapitulate: In elaborating further the Feuerbachian notion of man as a species-being Marx was able to argue that man is an active and social being historically tending toward the full realisation of his essence in communism. The function of the theory of alienation in this schema is to account for the human condition in the pre-communist stage of the evolutionary unfolding of his essence. With Feuerbach's transformative method Marx is able to prove that man is the subject of history. With the Feuerbachian notion of species-being he is able to specify what is man's essential nature. The concept of 'alienation', for both Feuerbach and Marx, is a derivative of the concept 'species-being' in so far as the meaning of alienation can be understood only in terms of man's devested species-being. Feuerbach had shown that religion is an intellectual and emotional creation of man which comes to operate independently of its creators and stand over them as an oppressive force. Stated generally, it is in alienation that man's own products acquire an independence from him and become agents of his oppression.

¹Kamenka, op. cit., pp. 71, 76; Marcuse, Reason and Revolution, pp. 269-270.

Religious alienation, which became alienation par excellence for the Young Hegelians, is the alienation of consciousness. Marx argues that man is not merely a conscious being but a practically active being. The basic form of alienation for Marx, therefore, is the alienation of his activity, of his labour. The difference between Marx and Feuerbach in this is parallel to the way they each differentiate man from the animals. In his 'Introduction' to the Essence of Christianity Feuerbach says that "the essential difference between man and the animal...is consciousness".¹ Although animals do possess consciousness in the sense that "the animal experiences itself as an individual...it does not do so as a species".² It is consciousness of species which Feuerbach regards as consciousness in the full sense, for "Where there is consciousness in this sense, there is also the capacity to produce systematic knowledge or science. Science is the consciousness of species."³ Marx accepts this view when he says in the Economic and Philosophic Manuscripts that it is "in his knowing" that man proves himself to be "not merely a natural being...[but] a human natural being".⁴ But Marx also adds to Feuerbach's position when he employs an extended Feuerbachism similar to that summarised in the Theses on Feuerbach. He says that

Conscious life-activity directly distinguishes man from animal life-activity. It is just because of this that he is a species being.⁵

As Feuerbach admits that animals in a sense possess consciousness Marx admits that they too produce, but they produce one-sidedly, under the

¹Hanfi (ed.), op. cit., p. 97.

²Ibid., pp. 97-98.

³Ibid., p. 98.

⁴Economic and Philosophic Manuscripts, p. 146; emphasis in original.

⁵Ibid., p. 71.

compulsion of immediate physical need. Man, on the other hand, produces universally and in freedom, and it is in this type of production, directed by conscious life-activity, that man is proved to be a species-being, according to Marx.¹

Using a Feuerbachism largely drawn from the Preliminary Theses on the Reform of Philosophy and the Principles of the Philosophy of the Future Marx develops an alternative to the definition of man outlined in Feuerbach's earlier Essence of Christianity to show that production as conscious life-activity rather than mere consciousness is the essence of man's species-being. It is important to notice that in the Economic and Philosophic Manuscripts labour and production are equivalent to praxis in the full sense as it emerges in Marx's revised Feuerbachism and that the terms have a wider meaning than they do in Marx's later writing. In the Manuscripts Marx says that man's involvement in institutions such as religion, the family and the state and in cultural areas such as law, morality, science and art is each a manner of production, and even in being sensuous, in exercising the five senses, man labours.² While labour and production are not narrowly confined to material objectification in Capital, for instance, any more than they are in the Manuscripts, in the former work labour is specifically understood as an activity which augments capital.³ In the Economic and Philosophic Manuscripts the concept 'labour' goes beyond this precise economic criterion in covering the exercise of all human faculties. Any activity engendering a consequence which may become independent of man and oppress him is a labour which may be alienated.

¹Ibid., pp. 71-72.

²Ibid., pp. 96, 101.

³Cf., e.g., Capital, I, p. 477.

In the section of the first Manuscript, however, where 'Estranged Labour' is most thoroughly and continuously dealt with, the labour with which Marx is concerned is the labour of material production.¹ For in his critique of political economy Marx must first confine himself to the industrial form of labour as that is the subject of political economy. Marx begins his discussion of alienated labour and his critique of political economy by stating a paradox which he deduces from the premises of political economy. He says that on the one hand

The product of labour is labour which has been congealed in an object, which has become material: it is the objectification of labour. Labour's realisation is its objectification,

while on the other hand,

In the conditions dealt with by political economy this realisation of labour appears as loss of reality for the workers; objectification as loss of the object and object-bondage; appropriation as estrangement, as alienation.²

Marx is not contending that labour is inherently oppressive; there should be no confusion between "objectification" and "alienation". Objectification is merely the creation of objects, that is, production. It is central to Marx's theory of alienation that objectification be expressive of man's species-nature. Marx's point is that in certain circumstances, those dealt with by political economy, the realisation of labour takes the form of a loss of reality for the labourer. In production under these conditions "the life which [the worker] has conferred on the object confronts him as something hostile and alien".³ Marx says that political economy does not explain this paradox and that it actually "conceals the

¹Economic and Philosophic Manuscripts, pp. 64-78.

²Ibid., p. 66.

³Ibid., p. 67.

estrangement inherent in the nature of labour by not considering the direct relationship between the worker (labour) and production".¹

Marx identifies four basic aspects of the alienation of labour which indicate what he regards to be the content of the relationship between labour and production concealed by political economy. The first two aspects relate to the loss of labour as a product and as an activity. Marx says that in alienation neither the fruits of labour nor the activity of labour belong to the labourer, the one appears "as an alien object exercising power" over the labourer, while the other appears "as an alien activity not belonging to him".² From this statically conceived loss of objects and this dynamically conceived loss of activity in alienation Marx deduces a third aspect of estranged labour which he conceives as a total loss. Man's "species character" is "free, conscious activity".³ In losing the object of his production and the freedom of his activity in production man is estranged from his own species-being, from his "human being".⁴ Finally, and as a consequence of his loss of human essence in alienation, "one man is estranged from the other"⁵, that is to say, each man regards every other by the criteria of his own alienation, man is alienated from his fellows who appear as mere means. In these different aspects of estranged labour is the source of man's alienation.

Marx argues that not only does political economy have no familiarity with the direct relationship between the worker and production, but that it is also incapable of revealing the source of estranged labour. The fact of estranged labour is known to political economy and Marx suggests

¹Ibid., p. 68.

²Ibid., pp. 69-70.

³Ibid., p. 71.

⁴Ibid., p. 72; emphasis in original.

⁵Ibid., p. 73.

that for political economy alienated labour has its basis in the movement of private property. Political economy is mistaken, however, for although "private property appears...[as] the cause of alienated labour, it is really its consequence".¹ Political economy's error is in its ignoring the whole man, for it sees man as having "no other need either of activity or of enjoyment" than those available to the wage-labourer.² Because it understands estranged labour as "human life and existence"³, it is similarly led to see the division of labour as the "social character of labour", which it is not.⁴ "The examination of the division of labour... is of extreme interest" to Marx "because [it is a] perceptibly alienated expression of human activity and of essential human power as a species activity and power".⁵ In failing to perceive the division of labour as an expression of estranged labour political economy fails to perceive the source of estranged labour. The key fact in the relationship of the worker to production, for Marx, is that it is an incomplete relationship, it is divided. It is in the division of labour that man's labour is estranged. It is in estranged labour that man is divided from nature and it is in this division of labour, which separates man from nature, that Marx finds the source of man's alienation.

The first and third aspects of alienation mentioned above account for man's alienation explicitly in terms of his separation from nature. The relation of the worker to the product of his labour is his "relation to the sensuous external world, to the objects of nature as an alien world antagonistically opposed to him".⁶ And in being estranged from his

¹Ibid., p. 76.

²Ibid., pp. 109-110; cf. also ibid., p. 80.

³Ibid., p. 110; emphasis in original.

⁴Ibid., p. 120.

⁵Ibid., p. 124.

⁶Ibid., p. 70.

species-life man's "inorganic body, nature, is taken from him".¹ Marx's argument for this general position moves through two stages. He universalises from the specific instance of the appropriation of some objects, those produced on the production line, to the appropriation of all objects, the universe of nature. He argues thus because he maintains that nothing can be created without the sensuous external world of nature; to have labour's products appropriated is to deprive man, therefore, of the sensuous external world.² In losing nature in this sense, in losing the natural objects with which man produces, man loses nature in a more fundamental sense. As man's own species-nature is free and universal activity in production, the appropriation of natural objects and the consequent loss of nature means that his life is no longer a species-life, for production under such circumstances can be no more than a means to individual existence and species-life is turned, therefore, into individual life.³ Man's estranged production "transforms his advantage over animals into the disadvantage that his inorganic body, nature, is taken from him".⁴ In losing the product of his labour man loses his direct nexus with external nature and in losing his direct nexus with external nature man loses his species-nature.

In the Economic and Philosophic Manuscripts Marx understands the term 'nature' in three senses.⁵ External nature is the sensuous world external to man, nature as opposed to man, what Marx calls "man's inorganic body". There is also nature in the sense of human nature, man's "species-being", his "true anthropological nature". The content of

¹Ibid., p. 72.

²Ibid., p. 67.

³Ibid., p. 71.

⁴Ibid., p. 72.

⁵Cf. Israel, op. cit., p. 77.

nature in these two senses are connected in a third notion of nature, which is nature in general, external nature united with human nature, for Marx says that the link between man and nature "means simply that nature is linked to itself, for man is a part of nature".¹ Man and nature are consummated into a single unity, however, only when man exists as full species-being. It is in the breaking of this nexus with nature that man is alienated.

The notion of alienation in the Economic and Philosophic Manuscripts is dependent, therefore, upon a prior notion of man's fundamental unity with nature under the 'social' conditions obtaining in communism.

...the human essence of nature first exists only for social man; for only here does nature exist for him as a bond with man...only here does nature exist as the foundation of his own human existence. Only here has what is to him his natural existence become his human existence, and nature become man for him. Thus society is the consummated oneness in substance of man and nature — the true resurrection of nature — the naturalism of man and the humanism of nature both brought to fulfilment.²

Marx is encouraged by his analysis of man in nature and nature in man to comment that with communism the natural and human sciences will both subsume into a single unified science, "there will be one science" only.³ What is significant about this, apart from its bearing on Marx's theory of alienation, is its Feuerbachian origin.

Feuerbach's conception of man entails that man is a part of nature in a way which is similar to that described by Marx:

¹Economic and Philosophic Manuscripts, p. 71.

²Ibid., p. 97; cf. also ibid., p. 95.

³Ibid., p. 103; emphasis in original.

Nature is being that is not distinguished from existence; man is being that distinguishes itself from existence. The being that does not distinguish is the ground of the being that distinguishes; nature is, therefore, the ground of man...the thinking man [i.e., man at one with his essence]...knows himself as the self-conscious essence of nature...¹

Feuerbach also argues for a unified science "grounded in nature".² We might add that Marx follows Feuerbach in his criticism of Hegel's 'defective' appreciation of nature.³ Typically Feuerbach's position is not as clearly worked out as Marx's, but equally typical is the obvious inspiration of Feuerbach in Marx. The parallels between the two are uncontested. Not only is Marx's theory of alienation formally the same as Feuerbach's, Marx's explanation of the basis of alienation in the separation of man from nature derives from a Feuerbachian notion which holds that man in essence is a part of nature.

Earlier it was shown that Marx's development of the Feuerbachian conception of man as a practically-active being led him to develop the notion of class struggle in opposition to Feuerbach's programme of human love. Marx's development of Feuerbach's notion of nature in terms of productive life activity similarly leads Marx to expose an inherent weakness and contradiction in Feuerbach's thought. From essentially Feuerbachian premises Marx initiates the formation of his own conception of historical materialism. An extension of Feuerbach's naturalism into the sphere of economic activity and the definition of nature in terms of production leads Marx to initiate the transition from a Feuerbachian materialism to his own historical materialism. We should be aware,

¹'Preliminary Theses...', op. cit., p. 169. Cf. also Kamenka, op. cit., p. 86.

²'Preliminary Theses...', op. cit., p. 172. Cf. also §54 of the 'Principles of the Philosophy of the Future', op. cit., p. 243.

³Economic and Philosophic Manuscripts, p. 137; 'Preliminary Theses ...', op. cit., p. 164.

however, that while the ground work for this transition is prepared in the Economic and Philosophic Manuscripts, it is not yet completed. The theory of alienation in that work remains Feuerbachian rather than historical materialist.

IV

The assumption that in his objective essence man is united with nature, an assumption which permits Marx to explain alienation in the 1844 Manuscripts as the result of man's estrangement from nature, is rejected in 1846. In his criticism of Feuerbach's contemplative materialism in The German Ideology Marx illustrates his argument by saying that

the important question of the relation of man to nature...out of which all the 'unfathomably lofty works' on 'substance' and 'self-consciousness' were born, crumbles of itself when we understand that the celebrated 'unity of man with nature' has always existed in industry and has existed in varying forms in every epoch according to the lesser or greater development of industry...¹

These comments must be read as a criticism not only of Feuerbach but also of Marx's own earlier account of the celebrated unity of man with nature. According to the Economic and Philosophic Manuscripts man's nexus with nature is broken in industrial production, whereas according to The German Ideology there exists in industry a unity of man and nature, a unity which the Manuscripts claim is attained only when man returns to his objective essence in communism, when he is "social man". Two views could not be more opposed.

In his discussion in the Economic and Philosophic Manuscripts Marx says that industry "is the actual, historical relation of nature...to

¹The German Ideology, p. 58.

man".¹ But in man's alienation it is a relation of estrangement not unity, for

the history of industry and the established objective existence of industry are the open book of man's essential powers

only in the sense that

...the objectified essential powers of man in the form of sensuous, alien, useful objects, in the form of estrangement, displayed in ordinary material industry...can be conceived as...activity estranged from itself.²

The relation, then, between nature and man in industry under pre-communist conditions is not one of unity, but the negation of unity, the relation is one in which man loses nature. Industry proves man's essential powers, his natural powers, but only by removing them from him. This is similar to Marx's earlier proof of man's essential being in the political state which exists as a partial and, therefore, alienated expression of man's species-being. We saw in the Critique of Hegel's Philosophy of Right the historical development of man in the movement from the political to the rational state. In the Economic and Philosophic Manuscripts man's historical development in industry is the movement from man's relation of estrangement from nature to man's relation of unity with nature. But while industry is conducted with estranged labour man's relation to nature remains estranged.

The different relations in industry between man and nature, of separation and unity, which correlate with the alienated and 'social' conditions of man's species-being, have no place in Capital, for instance.

¹Economic and Philosophic Manuscripts, p. 103.

²Ibid., p. 102.

The question of man being estranged from nature does not arise in that work any more than it does in The German Ideology. While man "opposes himself to nature" in labour, he does so "as one of her own forces".¹ Labour's unity with nature in changing nature to "a form adapted to his own wants" is "not changed by the fact that the labourer works for the capitalist instead of for himself".² Man's relation with nature in production is, therefore, unaffected by the form of man's own essential nature. Indeed, Marx says in Capital that by "acting on the external world and changing it, [man] at the same time changes his own nature".³ The fundamental differences indicated here between the analysis of man's relationship with nature in industry found in the Economic and Philosophic Manuscripts on the one hand, and in The German Ideology and Capital on the other, must prevent us from accepting David McLellan's view that Marx's sketch of industry in the Manuscripts "anticipated his later and more detailed accounts of historical materialism".⁴ In fact the account of industry in historical materialism removes from the theory of alienation outlined in the Manuscripts Marx's explanation of alienation as the separation of man from nature in industrial production, removes from it its Feuerbachian content.

It is not only the Feuerbachian inspired assumption concerning man's relation with nature that is undermined in The German Ideology. The largely Feuerbachian essentialist anthropological conception of man, which is correlative with the conception of nature outlined in the 1844 Manuscripts, is also repudiated in The German Ideology. Marx argues in the latter work that his approach methodologically entails the need to

¹Capital, I, p. 173.

²Ibid., pp. 173, 180.

³Ibid., p. 173.

⁴McLellan, Karl Marx, p. 122.

apprehend the empirical and factual reality of man's circumstances, and needs to posit the primacy of man's productive activities in shaping that reality. Marx says that he begins from the premise of men in their productive "activity and the material conditions under which they live", premises which can be "verified in a purely empirical way".¹ This is not entirely new in Marx. The role of empiricism and the concept of 'praxis' in the consistent Feuerbachism he had developed earlier has already been discussed. What is new, and absent in the Theses on Feuerbach, is his outright rejection of any essentialist conception of man. Rather than refer to the 'species' of man Marx confines his discussion to "the real individuals", to "living human individuals".² He says that it is "definite individuals who are productively active in a definite way [who] enter into...definite social and political relations", relations which are predominantly of a class nature.³ Marx's point is that what the philosophers have mistakenly conceived as the 'essence of man' is really the "sum of productive forces, capital funds and social forms of intercourse, which every individual and generation finds in existence as something given".⁴ These social forces are not here regarded as the consequence of man's alienation, as they are in his Feuerbachian writings, but the cause of estrangement.⁵ This reversal of the causal chain, more than anything else, indicates that Marx has abandoned his previous essentialist notion of man in The German Ideology, and replaced it with a materialist sociology.

¹The German Ideology, p. 31.

²Ibid.

³Ibid., pp. 36, 96-97.

⁴Ibid., p. 51.

⁵Ibid., pp. 43-44, 46, 49.

The conception of 'history' in The German Ideology is quite different from the one found in his writings prior to The German Ideology, including the Theses on Feuerbach. It was argued above that Marx had previously regarded history as an evolutionary unfolding or development of man's essential species-nature. In The German Ideology historical development is conceived as a process in which the development of productive forces shift the social power held by one social class to another, previously subordinate social class.¹ The discussion of class action in historical change is completely absent of any account of an alliance between philosophy and the proletariat, the realisation of the philosophy of man or the transcendence of philosophy with its realisation. In the Theses on Feuerbach and elsewhere Marx postulated the empirical social relations and their historical development within a framework of the development of man's essential nature, and social relations and history were categorically rather than materially conceived. In The German Ideology historical development is relative to the development of social forces. The social forces are not seen as expressions of the form of man's essential nature, as they are in Marx's Feuerbachian writing, but themselves determine the conditions of relations between men.

Marx's critique of Hegel and the importance he gave to the imperative for social change were derived from or sustained by the revised Feuerbachian programme he developed. What is not available in Feuerbachism, and what Marx's political interpretation of Feuerbach required, is a theory of social and historical change. The theory of social change in Feuerbachism, to the extent that one exists, affords no possibility of an approach which could develop a concrete and material analysis of social forces and factors which initiate and realise historical change.

¹Ibid., pp. 86-87.

The notion of man as a species-being, while sufficient for the critique of Hegel, inhibits the development of a positive and programmatic theory of class action in historical change. The class reality, which Marx first began to conceptualise in his Feuerbachian writing, could have no genuinely positive explanatory role while it was part of a Feuerbachian theory of history. And while Feuerbachism entails a conception of social relations, it does not lend itself to empirical investigation.¹ It was only by developing a critique of Feuerbachism, and therefore his own earlier position, a critique which fully repudiated its theoretical core, that Marx could begin to develop a theory of history and society which could be recruited to the service of a political programme of proletarian revolution. It is for this reason that Marx describes himself as a "practical materialist"² in sharp contrast to Feuerbach and the theory of Feuerbach which Marx had adopted and then rejected.

Marx was initially attracted to Feuerbach's thought because of its political utility in criticising the Young Hegelians who attempted to develop the 'revolutionary' side of Hegelian philosophy and who depreciated the role of 'the masses' in political change. The strength of Feuerbachism was demonstrated to Marx through its critique of Hegel. In using Feuerbach for his own purposes Marx extended the competence of Feuerbachian thought, but in developing it to its limits its inadequacies were revealed to him. Marx's early acceptance of Feuerbach's programme, which he sympathetically developed, had an enduring influence upon his work in so far as it provided him with the concept 'praxis'. The notion of man as a practically active being was taken from Feuerbach. But the meaning the concept acquired in Marx's mature historical materialism, while deriving from Feuerbach and his own extended Feuerbachism of the

¹Ibid., pp. 54, 102, 105.

²Ibid., p. 57.

1840s, is not identical with nor does it operate in the same theoretical framework as that of the earlier materialism. Nevertheless, the importance of Marx's development of Feuerbachian materialism to the development of his own theory of historical materialism should be appreciated, although David McLellan's claim that historical materialism in general and the base/superstructure model in particular was directly derived from Feuerbach¹, has been shown above to be true only in the sense of a literary allusion. The importance of Feuerbachism to Marx's theoretical development is partly in the form of a negative example to which he reacted and which provided him with the opportunity to resolve important questions of social analysis.

Marx's critical development of Feuerbachian theory during the period of 1843 to 1845, while of relatively short duration, amounts to a genuine intellectual accomplishment. His subsequent critique of 'consistent' Feuerbachism in The German Ideology, a critique which forms the basis of historical materialism, is a significant theoretical achievement. Our understanding of Marx's thought during this period can be adequate only when we appreciate the nature of his relationship to Feuerbachian thought.

¹McLellan, The Young Hegelians and Karl Marx, p. 112.

Chapter 5

SOCIETY

The consequences of European capitalist development can not be underestimated. Not only did it profoundly affect the human landscape of habitation and labour, it also provided the impetus for socialism and liberalism to emerge as movements of change. In sharing this common historical beginning both socialism and liberalism drew their inspiration and ideas from a common inheritance of the thought and experience of the Enlightenment, the English Industrial Revolution and the French political Revolution. To the extent that there is a common theme in the movements and their doctrines it can be said that each addresses itself to the problem of the relation of the individual to the wider society. This question necessarily arose with the collapse of stable and definite feudal relations wrought in the advance of capitalism. Socialism and liberalism diverge, as different reactions to political and economic change, in their quite different visions of man's place and role in the social world.

In its Marxist form socialism¹ developed a thorough epistemological and theoretical alternative to the liberal conception of the relation between the individual and society. Society, according to liberal thought, is an aggregation of autonomous individual beings for whom 'the other' is essentially external. Society, for liberalism, therefore, exists as an abstraction external to the individual. Marx is generally seen to have rejected this liberal duality of the individual and society by arguing that the individual has no attributes which are independent of the social conditions of his existence. According to this view Marx claims that the individual is inseparable from society, he is both socially determined and in his activity generates social consequences. Marx's thought has been readily characterised, then, as a 'sociological' critique of liberal individualism.

¹For a discussion of Marx's use of the terms 'socialist' and 'communist' cf. Paul Thomas, 'Marx and Science', pp. 4-7, and Engels, MESW, I, pp. 103-104.

The adequacy or otherwise of this summary statement of classical Marxism aside, it can be noted that a number of writers have recognised that a major component of Marx's thought is his sociological critique of atomistic liberalism. It is of particular interest that the passage frequently quoted in support of this observation is the one from the Economic and Philosophic Manuscripts which reads

What is to be avoided above all is the re-establishing of 'Society' as an abstraction vis-à-vis the individual. The individual is the social being. His life, even if it may not appear in the direct form of a communal life carried out together with others — is therefore an expression and confirmation of social life. Man's individual and species life are not different, however much — and this is inevitable — the mode of existence of the individual is a more particular, or more general mode of life of the species, or the life of the species is a more particular or more general individual life.¹

Not every interpretation of this passage which assumes its sociological content sees it as a critique of liberalism. Irving Zeitlin, for instance, and also Tom Bottomore and Maximilien Rubel, suggest that this passage demonstrates that Marx's sociology is a critique of the Comtean or Durkheimian notion of society as a reality sui generis above the individual.² Another interpretation of the quotation, superior to the others in that it conveys Marx's intended meaning, is advanced by Shlomo Avineri, who says it shows that Marx believed the full sociality of man is attainable only in communism.³ Through this meaning the quotation is devoid of

¹Economic and Philosophic Manuscripts, p. 98; emphasis in original. This passage is read as a sociological critique of liberalism by Isaac Balbus, 'The Concept of Interest in Pluralist and Marxian Analysis', p. 167; Joseph O'Malley, 'Introduction' to Marx's Critique of Hegel's Philosophy of Right, pp. xliii-xliv; Paul Walton and Andrew Gamble, From Alienation to Surplus Value, pp. 2-3.

²Irving Zeitlin, Marxism, p. 34; T.B. Bottomore and M. Rubel, 'Introduction' to Marx's Selected Writings, p. 33.

³Shlomo Avineri, The Social and Political Thought of Karl Marx, p. 88.

sociological content. But the frequency with which this passage is quoted for its sociological interpretation highlights the assumption held by many scholars that Marx had developed a sociological theory of civil society in his Paris Writings of the 1840s.

In his early critique of Hegel Marx implicitly challenges the liberal view of man when he argues that man is essentially a social being. This becomes explicit by 1844 when Marx criticises classical political economy, a discipline which founds the architecture of the liberal tradition by advancing the general doctrine that the relations between individuals are purely external relations, market relations. In his manuscript notes on James Mill's Elements of Political Economy Marx compares his own position with that of political economy. He says that economics conceives the relations between men as commercial relations. Adam Smith, for instance, sees "Society...[as] a commercial society. Each of its members is a merchant." Man's essence, according to economics, says Marx, is conceived as "the mutuality of men, in terms of exchange and trade", so that each man is distinguished from the other in his autonomy and they relate through an external medium of the market.¹ Against this Marx says that "the essence of man is the true community of man" and that "by activating their own essence [men] produce, create this human community, this social being which is no abstract, universal power standing over against the solitary individual".² In contrast to the liberal conception of man as an individual trader Marx postulates that man is essentially a social producer. In contrast to the liberal conception of society as a faculty external to the individual, which he enters for

¹Excerpts from James Mill's Elements of Political Economy, Early Writings, p. 266.

²Ibid., p. 265.

purposes of trade, Marx conceives society as the creation and community of men.

There are two possible responses to liberal doctrine. One is to argue that liberal theory fails to recognise that society can not be reduced to its individual members and that the web of social relationships is greater than the market relations of individuals. This we might call the sociological critique of liberal individualism. Another response might argue that liberal theory adequately describes civil society, but refuse to accept it as a description of a necessary situation. Things may be like this now, but need not always be thus, nor will they be. This we can call the normative critique of liberal individualism. While the theory of historical materialism at least includes the first of these, it seems that Marx's early critique of liberalism is largely of the second type. Marx says in his notes on Mill, for instance, that political economy's conception of individual relations corresponds to "the process of reality itself".¹ He goes on to say that

exchange or barter is the social species-activity, the community, social commerce and integration of man within private property, and for that reason it is external, alienated species-activity...By the same token it is the very antithesis of a social relationship.

Thus the more developed and important is the power of society within private property, the more man is egoistic, un-social and estranged from his own essence.²

Thus Marx holds that in alienation man's relationships are not social and that the power of society, based on private property, confronts man as an external force with which he has no community save that of commerce.

¹Ibid., p. 266.

²Ibid., pp. 267, 269; emphasis in original.

Marx therefore shares with liberal political economy the description of man in civil society as a being isolated from society.

It can be seen from the above comments that Marx's early notion of man as a social being is not a direct sociological challenge to the image of asocial man described by liberal political economy. Rather it assumes that given "human" conditions, conditions in which man can realise his "human, communal nature", man will live as a fully social being, but that in his alienation society is lost to man and in his individuality he exists in isolation from others.¹ In his writings after 1846, with the development of the theory of historical materialism, Marx broadens his critique of liberalism to include the sociological dimension. Familiarity with Marx's later sociological critique of liberal individualism and the superficially similar early assertion that man is essentially a social being has led some scholars to gloss over the dominantly normative nature of Marx's early discussion. The transposition of Marx's later sociological vision to his early writings amounts to a backward reading of Marx which prevents him from speaking for himself in his formative period. What he says is interpreted in terms of a pre-formed expectation of what he might mean based on a reading of his later work. The actual sense of his early writing is thereby misunderstood. The concept 'society' in Marx's 1844 writings is not equivalent to the concept 'society' employed in the theory of historical materialism, and the early meaning is particularly interesting for what it conveys of Marx's pre-sociological thought.

The content of Marx's early concept of 'society' will be examined in the present chapter. It will be shown that in 1844 Marx had not developed a theory of man which operates through purely social terms, but that he sees civil society as merely an aggregate of isolated individuals.

¹Ibid., pp. 277-278.

It will be shown that Marx concurs with liberal political economy that the relations between individuals are basically exchange relations between isolated monads. There is no sociological alternative in the early writings to the liberal image of man in society. Marx's early critique of liberal atomism, it will be argued, operates through a philosophico-anthropological concept of 'society'. 'Society' in this sense is conceived as man's species-life, so that Marx regards society as an attribute of human nature, an attribute which is lost in the alienation of man's essence. This particular conception of society, therefore, functions as a normative principle against which civil society is measured. The truly social situation, according to Marx, is the human community of communism which is attained only when the power of private property, which determines the nature of civil society, ceases to estrange man from his real social essence. This early concept of 'society' will be contrasted in the discussion with the sociological concept developed in historical materialism by Marx after rejecting the earlier notion. The significantly different critiques of liberal individualism advanced by Marx at different times indicates the danger inherent in assuming that Marx's theoretical development followed a linear progression of elaboration and revision. Marx's writings of 1844 must be appreciated in their own terms to be fully understood.

I

In his writings of 1844 Marx develops an empirical account of civil society which largely corresponds to that developed by liberal writers. In his essay On the Jewish Question¹ Marx says that the conditions of civil society and its constituent members are founded on the principles

¹Actually written in late 1843, but published in 1844.

of juridical liberty and the right of property. These are described by Marx as the right of man to be separate from his fellows and the right of self-interest.¹ The implementation of these rights constitutes the full substance of civil society, according to Marx, in that through them civil society "appears as a framework extraneous to the individuals".² Marx, therefore, does not challenge the empirical description of man in civil society as a "self-sufficient monad", and in fact agrees with political economy when he says that in civil society the "only bond which holds [men] together is natural necessity, need and private interest, the conservation of their property and their egoistic persons".³ He differs with political economy, though, on the question of how civil society is to be regarded, and disagrees that the bonds of private interest are social bonds. Marx rejects the view, held by political economy, that man's individual existence in civil society is the condition of man's essential existence, for he maintains that it is in the alienation of his essentially social being that man's existence is individual⁴, for according to Marx man is unnaturally "separated from his fellow men and from the community"⁵ in civil society.

While man is regarded by both Marx and liberal writers as a private individual who confronts civil society externally Marx goes beyond liberal thought in arguing that commercial society is no society, it is the alienation of society from man. The liberal argument that individual relations in civil society are social relations is contested by Marx.

¹Early Writings, p. 229.

²Ibid., p. 230.

³Ibid. The notion that in civil society the individual is a "self-sufficient monad" corresponds to Robert Paul Wolff's description of the liberal theory of society as "a system of independent centres of consciousness", 'Beyond Tolerance', p. 37.

⁴Economic and Philosophic Manuscripts, pp. 71, 73.

⁵Early Writings, p. 230.

Adam Smith, for instance, says that society exists in the social reciprocity of exchange and in the social bond of sympathy. In a passage from The Wealth of Nations, quoted by Marx in the Economic and Philosophic Manuscripts, Smith argues that self-interest, or self-love, as he calls it, is the basis of society, the basis of man's social reciprocity in exchange.¹ Marx argues that, on the contrary, Smith's claim is itself contradictory in that it attempts to establish "society through unsocial, particular interests".² This position is sustained by Marx's argument that the means of exchange, money, is essentially the currency of self-interest, and is therefore inherently unsocial. Exchange itself can not be other than an unsocial relationship. Marx's discussion of money as the agency of man's estrangement from society is developed in On the Jewish Question, in his notes on Mill's Elements and in the Economic and Philosophic Manuscripts.³ He argues that money facilitates individual possession in such a way as to preclude the possibility of human social relations. Money, says Marx, actually creates a "world of atomistic individuals confronting each other in enmity".⁴ Money, and through it exchange, is not the basis of society, but the basis of society's dissolution.

Smith's argument concerning the social bond of sympathy is not directly discussed by Marx. It is argued in the former's The Theory of Moral Sentiments, a work to which Marx does not refer. Sympathy is the social sentiment in man which is responsible for the fellow feeling

¹Economic and Philosophic Manuscripts, p. 120.

²Ibid., p. 124.

³Early Writings, pp. 236-241, 259-265; Economic and Philosophic Manuscripts, pp. 126-131.

⁴Early Writings, p. 240.

between individuals.¹ Sympathy, at the core of liberal man's social morality, prevents injury to others in the pursuit of individual ends by subjecting such actions to social restraint, or at least the sanction of public opinion.² In his discussion of self-interest in civil society Marx implicitly reasons that self-interested action would be entirely corrosive of sentiments such as sympathy. For it is precisely the natural and human qualities, on which sympathy is based, which are confounded in the money relation.³ Marx might argue academically that even if sympathy remained intact in civil society it would be irrelevant to and overruled by the relations of civil society. Money creates a situation in which individual relations operate "beyond and above man"⁴, man's sentiments are extraneous to his relations so that sympathy would be without a medium through which it could function. Marx does describe something like sympathy when he sketches a picture of communist workmen, who, in their association, acquire a need for society.⁵ But the circumstances created in their common enterprise, where this social sentiment is exhibited, is so removed from the relations of civil society that it is an example of sympathy which is the exception proving Marx's rule of its impossibility in the atomistic relations of commercially dominated intercourse.

For Marx, as for liberal political economy, civil society is reducible to the relations of individuals, reducible to exchange relations

¹After Smith the concept of 'sympathy' became integrated into liberal thought generally; cf., e.g., John Stuart Mill, Utilitarianism, Liberty, Representative Government, pp. 29, 31.

²Adam Smith, The Theory of Moral Sentiments, p. 120. It is interesting to note that from the 1890s liberal theory has paradoxically held that such naturally social sanctions require state support.

³Economic and Philosophic Manuscripts, p. 130.

⁴Early Writings, p. 260.

⁵Economic and Philosophic Manuscripts, p. 115.

between what are empirically egoistic individual beings. In his early writings, then, Marx completely endorsed the eighteenth century view of civil society as a conglomeration of individuals defined by their particular and personal interests, by their 'needs'. Marx goes beyond classical liberalism in his contention that the relations of need are non-social relations which exclude social relations. There is no place for social man in the empirical world Marx describes, for the basis of civil society, individual self-interest, can not be the foundation of society but is its negation. This theoretical proposition is given an historical dimension in the argument that the centralisation of the state, according to On the Jewish Question, and the growth of industry according to the Economic and Philosophic Manuscripts, in bringing about the collapse of feudalism, were responsible for the destruction of society.

In his writings of 1844 Marx developed separately these two different but related accounts of the historical emergence of the individual bereft of social bonds. In On the Jewish Question the dissolution of feudalism is described as a consequence of the political revolution in which the modern, centralised state comes to monopolise the authority and power which had been vested in the autonomous feudal institutions of estate, corporation and guild. Feudal society was itself "directly political", says Marx, in that the relations of individuals were hierarchically structured on a system of authority and privilege which denoted directly social relationships.¹ The political revolution, by destroying the feudal institutions which supported these relations, allowed the "political spirit" to be "gathered together" into a single, central state structure.² Marx described the same process eight years later when he said that

¹Early Writings, p. 232.

²Ibid., p. 233.

The seignoral privileges of the landowners and towns became transformed into so many attributes of the state power, the feudal dignitaries into paid officials and the motley pattern of conflicting mediaeval plenary powers into the regulated plan of a state authority.¹

The consequence of this political revolution was not merely to draw the political aspects of the separate feudal institutions into a single political institution of the modern state. The political revolution also dissolved feudal society "into its foundation...into egoistic man".² In destroying the political relationships of feudalism the political revolution had at the same time deprived the individual of the social bonds of the hierarchical relationships.

An economic event parallel to the political revolution, and which had the same consequence in the generation of asocial individuals, is described in the Economic and Philosophic Manuscripts where Marx says that in the historical development of the economy movable private property, or capital, came to replace the landed property which had dominated feudalism. The effect of this development, continues Marx, is that "the slave of the soil" becomes the "free worker", the hireling of capital.³ In similar terms the abolition of the "privileged exclusivity" of feudalism, through the development of trade and industry free of the feudal strictures, a process outlined in The Holy Family, is seen to be responsible for the fact that the individual is "no longer bound to other men even by the semblance of a common bond".⁴ This general argument, that the directly social and dependent relations of feudal production become unstuck in the development of capitalism and the individual emerged as a

¹'The Eighteenth Brumaire of Louis Bonaparte', MESW, I, p. 477.

²Early Writings, p. 233.

³Economic and Philosophic Manuscripts, p. 82; cf. also ibid., p. 60.

⁴The Holy Family, p. 137; emphasis in original.

free, independent and isolated being, is central to Marx's later discussion of the transition from feudalism to capitalism. In Marx's mature writings, however, this argument does not carry the extra baggage of the claim that this process is one of social dissolution. We will return to this below. In his 1844 writings the demise of feudalism entailed that man's existence was to become individual and asocial in the strong sense. While the political revolution, the advent of the modern state, and the economic revolution, the preponderance of capital over land, are different causes they converge in their consequence — they dissolve society into a confusion of isolated individuals and simultaneously deprive the individual of any meaningful social contact.

Although we are arguing that Marx's Paris Writings maintain that in commercial society the individual is an asocial being — Marx insists on the "asocial nature of civil life"¹ — and that historically this is the result of man's loss of feudal social relations, it is important for an understanding of Marx's early concept of 'society' to recognise that feudalism is not regarded as fully social in his early use of the term. He says in On the Jewish Question that property and labour are not elevated "to the level of social elements" in the feudal order, rather they are compartmentalised into "separate societies within society".² This separation of the individual of labour from the individual of property through relations of servility obstructs the full realisation of man's social nature. But while Marx says that the individual is not a fully social being in feudalism he makes it clear that the individual is not entirely without social determination. In contrast to the relations of commerce the feudal relations of individuals are social in being direct

¹Critical Notes on the Article "The King of Prussia and Social Reform", Early Writings, p. 412.

²Early Writings, p. 232; emphasis in original.

and close. What is important for Marx is that the relations of feudalism "held in check the egoistic spirit of civil society".¹ In so far as feudal relations prevent the dominance of self interest in the intercourse of individuals they are social relations. The interdependence of rights and privilege and the functional relationship between political and economic factors which did not regard the individual interest as conclusive meant that for Marx the relations between feudal individuals were social relations.² The feudal rein on self interest was its social endowment, according to Marx, and when this went so too did society. This theme will be developed below.

Marx's argument that the loosening of the feudal restraint on self interest leads to the individual's loss of social relations is evident in the contrast he draws between the feudal character of labour, with its "seemingly social significance", and free labour, which has the mark "of indifference to its content, of complete being-for-itself".³ Feudal labour is directed by its significance for the community, labour for commerce has no determination but the individual end. With the eclipse of feudalism Marx saw that the individual's "particular activity and situation in life sank to the level of a purely individual significance".⁴ Marx is quite explicit that the unfettered weight of individual interest and significance, made possible through the annulment of feudal restraints, extinguishes all meaningful social relations.

¹Ibid., p. 233.

²For a discussion of the exclusion of self interest from feudal relations, cf. Harold Laski, The Rise of European Liberalism, pp. 25-26 and passim; R.H. Tawney, Religion and the Rise of Capitalism, Chapter 1, Part ii.

³Economic and Philosophic Manuscripts, p. 82.

⁴Early Writings, p. 233.

The relations of private property contain latent within them the relations of private property as labour, the same relations as capital, and the mutual relation of these two to one another. There is the production of human activity as labour...the abstract existence of man as a mere workman who may therefore daily fall from his filled void into the absolute void — into his social, and therefore actual, non-existence. On the other hand there is the production of the object of human activity as capital — in which all the natural and social determinateness of the object is extinguished; in which private property has lost its natural and social quality.¹

Here Marx claims that with the collapse of feudalism labour, capital and the relations between them become expressions of merely private interest and as such are devoid of social content and effect. Without communal significance labour and capital have no social quality. This assertion is particularly interesting because the same objective situation is described in the Grundrisse, but with a contrary evaluation. Marx says that "private interest is itself already a socially determined interest, which can be achieved only within the conditions laid down by society and with the means provided by society".² Not only does private interest here have social determinateness, but the relations of self interest are seen to take place in society. The objective situation described in these two quotations is the same, the meaning of the term 'society' is different.

When Marx says in the Paris Writings that the relations of individuals in civil society are unsocial and that the individual is without a social existence he is reserving the term 'society' to indicate a network of organic or communal relations which imply a reciprocal nexus of social partnership. This he contrasts to commercial relations in which

¹Economic and Philosophic Manuscripts, p. 81; emphasis added.

²Grundrisse, p. 156.

the social bonds, in this sense, are absent. Historians might write in this fashion to differentiate pre-industrial from industrial societies.¹ Karl Polanyi, for instance, forcefully employs this usage when he says that the dominance of the "market mechanism...result[s] in the demolition of society", and complains that in the market economy man suffers a "lethal injury to the institutions in which his social existence is embodied".² Society in this sense is the community of human individuals whose relations are intentional, visible and reciprocal. It is certainly true, and this is Polanyi's point, that capitalist development does not take existing social organisation for granted, but subverts customary society by establishing the impersonal power of the market. If the term 'society' is confined to the description of what capitalism destroys, as with Polanyi, or of what capitalism denies, as with Marx in his early writing, then 'society' can be only a normative concept demonstrating that in a market environment man is alienated from society.

When describing market society or 'civil society' Marx regards society as a power which exists independently of the individual and outside him, society exists as an alien force to which the individual is subjected. The relations of individuals under the conditions of civil society are therefore non-social relations. Marx says in On the Jewish Question that "in civil society...[man] is active as a private individual, regards other men as means, [and] debases himself to a means".³ He goes on to say that man becomes a social being only when

¹Cf., e.g., David Thomson, England in the Nineteenth Century, p. 57, and Eric Hobsbawm, The Age of Revolution, p. 27.

²Karl Polanyi, The Great Transformation, pp. 73, 157.

³Early Writings, p. 220; cf. also Economic and Philosophic Manuscripts, p. 73.

as an individual man has become a species-being in his empirical life, his individual work and his individual relationships, only when man has recognised and organised his forces propres as social forces so that social force is no longer separated from him.¹

Man has a social existence, according to this account, when he ceases to be separated from society, and this occurs only when man's species-being is empirically manifest, genuinely realised, rather than merely immanent in man's nature. Man as a species-being in this sense is man in free, reciprocal activity with others. It was noted above that Marx regarded the individual in feudal society as only a partially social being. This is because the relations of feudalism are servile relations and therefore unfree, a point well made in the Critique of Hegel's Philosophy of Right where the Middle Ages are said to be "a democracy of unfreedom".² But in restraining private interest feudal relations retain for the individual a social dimension.

It can be seen that there are two distinct concepts 'society' employed in Marx's early writing. One implies that society is external to the individual and that individual relations are therefore unsocial relations. The other meaning of the term 'society' is 'human society', implying that individual relations are social relations and that man is a social being. In Marx's early linguistic usage the individual is a social being only when he has transcended his self-estrangement. On this criterion the social man of 'human society' is communist man.

This argument is most clearly expressed in the Economic and Philosophic Manuscripts. Alienation is conceived as the process through which the individual is divorced from society, the transcendence of

¹Early Writings, p. 234.

²Ibid., p. 90.

alienation is "the return of man...to his human, i.e., social mode of existence".¹ The individual attains his social being in communism, for communism is

the positive transcendence of private property, or human self-estrangement...the complete return to himself as a social (i.e., human) being.²

This postulation of man's social being is teleological rather than sociological, it assumes that the individual will ultimately become a social being after he has surpassed his non-social existence in civil society. It is based on the premise that social relations are attributable to human nature and explicable in philosophico-anthropological terms rather than in empirical sociological terms.

II

Marx's discussion of the individual's social relations in human society is conducted in the manuscript where he outlines the development of communist theory. After describing earlier and archaic conceptions of communism, which he criticises, Marx says that it is "easy to see" that "the entire revolutionary movement necessarily finds both its empirical and its theoretical basis in the movement of private property - in that of the economy, to be precise".³ The argument which follows this claim explains why it is so. It is mounted in decidedly non-economic and non-sociological terms.

The account of communism's empirical basis in the movement of private property is designed to show that early utopian conceptions of communism in the thought of Fourierian publicists such as Etienne Cabet and

¹Economic and Philosophic Manuscripts, p. 96.

²Ibid., p. 95.

³Ibid., p. 96.

Francois Villegardelle are false. They argued that communism could be established by setting up communist settlements in opposition to an existing reign of private property. Marx criticises such programmes for attempting to "[tear] single phases from the historical process".¹ Communism can not be founded, contends Marx, on the formation of utopian pockets in the stream of history, as it were. He says that private property pervades an entire historical period of man's development as it is the material expression of alienated human life. Marx's point is that communism can be founded only after the transcendence of private property as an historical phase of man's development. The overcoming of private property through communism, therefore, has its empirical basis in the historical transcendence of private property, not in the disengagement by particularly motivated individuals from existing private property. These 'empirical' comments are given significance and meaning in Marx's discussion of the theoretical basis of the "revolutionary movement".

Marx reminds us that in the non-alienated situation the basic and primary nature of production is in the social character of labour, for under these conditions a person's products are "the direct embodiment of his individuality"², and hence man produces himself and his fellow man in being socially productive. While this is obscurely stated in the Economic and Philosophic Manuscripts, the same point is made with more clarity in the notes on Mill's Elements.³ The text of the Manuscripts goes on to say that

Likewise, however, both the material of labour and man as the subject, are the point of departure as well as the result of the movement (and precisely in

¹ Ibid.

² Ibid.

³ Early Writings, pp. 277-278.

this fact, that they must constitute the point of departure, lies the historical necessity of private property).¹

Again the sense of this statement is partly concealed, but it seems to indicate that although the social character of labour is realised in communism — it is "the result of the movement" — it is also connected with the genesis of the movement — it is its "point of departure". To claim both that social labour is the achievement of the movement towards communism and that it is the point of departure of the movement is prima facie paradoxical. The corollary of the statement that social labour is realised in communism would seem to be that social labour is unavailable to the process of attaining communism. Indeed, Marx says that in civil society, the historical stage prior to communism, labour is unsocial. However, the theoretical basis of the revolutionary movement developed by Marx contains an account of its logic and locomotion which shows that the paradox is merely apparent.

Firstly, the logic of the theory. Marx ties the claim that the social character of labour is the point of departure for the movement towards communism to the claim that private property is historically necessary to this movement. The necessity of private property to the attainment of communism lies in the fact that the latter is the transcendence of private property only. The sequence of stages in historical development assumed by Marx is such that communism is the historical phase of man's human history which necessarily follows the historical phase of private property. It can logically follow no other historical stage. This is because in private property social labour is most fully alienated. Private property is the material expression of alienated

¹Economic and Philosophic Manuscripts, p. 97; emphasis in original.

human life; the alienation of man in religion, the state and so forth are merely particular aspects of the total alienation of man in material production. In the transcendence of private property, of alienated social labour, man has returned to him his social labour.¹ This is what Marx means when he says that communism is

the negation of the negation, and is hence the actual phase necessary for the next stage of historical development in the process of human emancipation and recovery. Communism is the necessary pattern and the dynamic principle of the immediate future.²

Logically, then, social labour is the point of departure for the movement towards communism because communism is the obverse of private property and private property is the denial of social labour. The negation of social labour as an empirical absence is the logical prerequisite of communism and in this sense social labour as the negation of private property is the point of departure for the movement towards communism.

If social labour as a negative principle, as the alienation of social labour, is at the beginning of the historical movement towards communism, through what process is the negation negated? This is the question of locomotion, of dynamic. In his later writing Marx is explicit that communism is the consequence of a proletarian victory in the class struggle. The discussion of communism in the Manuscripts, however, is devoid of a reference to class struggle. When Marx does mention something like the victory of one class over another, as in his account of the "victory of the capitalist over the landowner" in the movement from feudalism to capitalism, it is regarded as the result rather than the cause of the "real course of development". What Marx holds to be

¹Ibid., p. 96.

²Ibid., p. 106.

responsible for this historical movement is the suppression of a previously dominant form of property by another form of property.¹ We have already seen that in his explanation of the revolutionary movement towards communism the basic term is property, not class. Here too the historical movement is conceived as a consequence of the movement of property, the transcendence of private property, rather than as a consequence of the class struggle.

According to Marx's argument the importance of property, and the basis of its efficacy for historical change, is its relation to labour. It is important to remember that for Marx private property is alienated social labour. In his discussion of the theoretical basis of the movement towards communism Marx gives no more than a hint of this dynamic mechanism when he says that

the social character [of human labour] is the general character of the whole movement [towards communism]: just as society [communism] itself produces man as man, so is society [communism] produced by him.²

We interpret Marx to mean that man's social character, even when alienated in civil society, plays a dynamic and not a merely logical role in the revolutionary movement. The reference to "the whole movement" is to the period which includes the historical phase of man's unsocial being in civil society as well as his social existence in communism. When Marx says that "society [is] produced by" man he means that the social character of labour, although empirically absent in civil society, ultimately produces man as a social being, ultimately produces communism. Basically Marx is here claiming that man's social nature, his essential sociality, even when estranged from him, is the motor of the movement towards

¹Ibid., p. 85.

²Ibid., p. 97; emphasis in original.

communism. There is slender basis for this elaboration of the above quotation in the passage itself, but such an interpretation is supported by various other comments made by Marx in the Manuscripts.

Marx opens his discussion of communism with an attempt to show that there is an internal relation of antithesis between labour and capital. He identifies labour as "the subjective essence of private property as exclusion of property" and capital as "objective labour as exclusion of labour". On this basis private property is seen to be in a "developed state of contradiction" and hence, the argument continues, there is a "dynamic relationship moving inexorably to its resolution".¹ There are several things to notice here. Firstly, capital is defined in terms of labour and labour in terms of private property, so that the basic units of explanation are labour and private property. Secondly, the contradiction described here is not a class contradiction between labour and capital, but an ontological contradiction internal to private property. Indeed, Marx says that the "active connection" is not grasped by those comprehending only "the antithesis of labour and capital".² Thirdly, the dynamic relationship moving inexorably to its resolution is the dynamic of the contradiction within private property. As private property is estranged social labour the dynamic of the movement must derive from alienated social labour.

The picture becomes even clearer some pages later when Marx says that

The nature which comes to be in human history —
the genesis of human society — is man's real nature;

¹Ibid., p. 92. Cf. also ibid., p. 88.

²Ibid., p. 92.

hence nature as it comes to be through industry, even though in an estranged form, is true anthropological nature.¹

In other words, even when man's essential nature is alienated from him it is his true anthropological nature nonetheless. Earlier Marx had said that "the history of industry and the established objective existence of industry are the open book of man's essential powers", and earlier still, that "[in] creating an objective world by his practical activity...man proves himself a conscious species-being".² Industry, and mutatis mutandis property, demonstrate man's social nature even though it might take an unsocial form in them. Marx's statements that it "takes actual communist [social] action to abolish actual private property" and that the process will be "a very severe and protracted one"³, which, from the perspective of his later thought, appear to be references to class struggle, are in this context references to man's productive activity as a species-being. Thus man's essential nature is productive of particular consequences in its estranged form as well as in its realised form. What is produced is human society, and this through the resolution of the contradiction inherent in labour's unsocial form as it exists in private property. For the contradiction within private property is fundamentally the contradiction of the unsocial form of man's essential sociality.

As Marx argues that the contradiction within private property furnishes its own dynamic and resolution he envisages a sort of entropic process in reverse in which the tendency of the system is to attain a state of society. At the centre of the system is man's social nature. The system is dynamic when labour takes an unsocial form in private

¹Ibid., p. 103; emphasis in original.

²Ibid., pp. 102, 71.

³Economic and Philosophic Manuscripts, p. 115.

property. The telos of the system is man's species existence as a social being. The movement toward this end is a consequence of the inherent propensity in the nature of man's labour to realise its social form.

In summary then, the concept of 'society' as human society in Marx's early writings entails that social man is in a state of becoming in civil society. Man is an unsocial individual in civil society and his relationships are unsocial. Inherent in man's nature, though, is an essential sociality. In its unsocial form the individual's labour is manifest in private property, but within private property the empirical unsocial form of labour is in contradiction with its essentially social form. The resolution of this contradiction is the realisation of man's true anthropological nature as social man. Society and social relations are, therefore, available to the individual at the end of an historical process and ultimately attributable to the essential faculty of human nature postulated by Marx and explicable in philosophico-anthropological terms. This conception of social man is clearly non-sociological. It does function as a critical element in Marx's account of civil society and provides a critique of the liberal conception of the relation between the individual and society. But because it equates social man with communist man and argues that man's sociality is a function of human nature it can not be regarded as a sociological alternative to the liberal image of man in society.

III

What is perhaps surprising in Marx's early conception of society is the degree to which it shares a common formal ground with liberal thought, even in its critique of the latter. Social man as a conceptual entity is premised on a notion of human nature and a notion of harmonised

community in both Marx's early thought and liberal theory. There is no need to restate Marx's position here as it has already been adequately outlined above. Adam Smith, as a typical representative of theoretical liberalism, argues that the structure of society has a pre-social origin when he accounts for the division of labour in terms of a disposition in human nature to truck, barter and exchange.¹ In a more general vein John Stuart Mill has written that "Human beings in society have no properties but those which are derived from, and may be resolved into, the laws of the nature of individual men".² This tendency of thought is inherent in the liberal conception of society as an aggregation of individuals, for if society is a conglomeration of individual beings it must be reducible to its individual members.³ As society is deduced from the individual in liberal theory, the nature of society is deduced from human nature. Marx's own account of civil society is precisely in terms of the objective condition of human nature in its self-estrangement, and his account of human society is in terms of the full realisation of man's essential sociality.

Analogous to Marx's premise of the social nature of communism is the liberal premise of a harmonised community of social interest. According to Adam Smith, for example, human action is a consequence of self-love. The same concept, although under a range of different names, is found in all liberal writing where individual motivation derives from individual interests and needs. According to liberal theory the individual is the sole source and proprietor of his faculties and powers. As society is understood as an aggregation of such discrete units, the basis of human action in liberal theory is the endeavour of self to satisfy its

¹Quoted in ibid., pp. 120-121.

²John Stuart Mill, A System of Logic, p. 573.

³Cf. L.T. Hobhouse, Liberalism, pp. 125-127.

needs. The social relations described by liberalism are, therefore, the set of external relations between the individual members of civil society. As these social relations are external to the social individuals they can be accounted for only in terms of metaphor, such as the 'invisible hand' of the market, or through natural law metaphysics or some other basically non-social factor. Marx writes with a measured irony in Capital that "in accordance with the pre-established harmony of things, or under the auspices of an all-shrewd providence" the self-interested individuals of liberal theory "work together to their mutual advantage, for the common weal and in the interest of all".¹ As the social community of liberal theory is external to the allegedly social relations of individual interaction, it is actually a non-social phenomenon. The common interest of civil society is a hypothesised capacity standing above the relations of civil society which brings order to them. It is only by introducing the concept of a common interest into its model of society that the liberal image of social relations between self-interested individuals can be maintained; such a concept is no more than what has been called a "communist fiction".² The 'common interest' as a harmonised community of social interest functions in the liberal explanation of civil society in much the same way that Marx's 'social relations of communism' functions to explain human society.

Marx, of course, argues against the claim in liberal political economy that self interest gives rise to social relations by showing that, on the contrary, self interest is responsible for the unsocial relations of antagonism between competitors. Marx's critique of the liberal affirmation of the harmony of interests in civil society is contained in the

¹Capital, I, p. 172.

²Hannah Arendt, The Human Condition, pp. 43-44; cf. also Ellen Wood, Mind and Politics, pp. 152-154.

statement, made in another context, that "[s]ociety is then conceived as an abstract capitalist".¹ Marx's alternative to the liberal position is not, however, a sociology of conflict but an alternative conception of the harmonised community of social interest. The communist fiction of liberalism is replaced with Marx's communist fact, "the first real coming-to-be, the realisation become real for man, of man's essence".² The absence in liberal political economy of this type of dialectic appreciation of man's immanent social essence is criticised by Marx³, but his own 'communist fact' contains a 'social fiction' analogous to that in liberalism. Man's essential sociality, as it is conceived by Marx, does not derive from the individual's communal participation, it is merely precipitated in communism while remaining a factor inherent in the individual's human nature.⁴ Marx's social community of communism is a conception of realised human nature, it describes the situation in which man "submit[s] himself to his true essence".⁵ Thus human society is explicable in terms of the properties of human nature, of the human species and its individual members. Marx's account of human society therefore functions through a concept which is ontologically and methodologically prior to social relations. From the sociological point of view Marx's communism, like liberalism's social interest, is non-social, for it is an attribute of the individual rather than of inter-individual social relations.

The model of social man developed in Marx's early writing is more consistent than the liberal model it criticises in so far as its premises

¹Economic and Philosophic Manuscripts, p. 77.

²Ibid., p. 152.

³Ibid., pp. 109-110, 119.

⁴Ibid., p. 98.

⁵The phrase is from Maurice Godelier, Rationality and Irrationality in Economics, p. 123.

of human nature and human society are conceptually related. The liberal premises of human nature and social harmony are not internally connected. The critique of the liberal position found in Marx's alternative vision of human nature and the community of social man acquires a compelling force in the fact of its consistency alone. But while Marx's version of social man is more successful than that of the political economists on one level, they both share a common flaw. There is developed in each a sub-social or pre-social conception of human nature; man's nature is prior to his social being and devolves on the individual essence. In liberal theory man's social nature is explained through the psychological concept of a propensity to truck, barter and exchange, whereas in Marx the philosophico-anthropological concept of an essential trans-subjective reciprocity in man's nature accounts for the individual's social being. Both of these concepts have a narrower range than the social concept of an ordered interaction of individual actors, neither postulate the social faculty as something intrinsic to social relations themselves.

The conception of society in liberalism and in Marx's early writings, as they presuppose a human nature prior to social relations, a human nature which accounts for the social existence of the individual, must be regarded as defective from the sociological perspective. A more adequate depiction of society than that of either liberal theory or Marx's early writings would recognise that society exists in its own terms, as it were, and must be accounted for in something other than individual terms. The properties of society, as Marx demonstrated in his mature writings, are quite different from the properties of its individual members. Society is irreducible to its individual members, and must, therefore, be explained in social and not individual terms. The locus of society is in the ordered pattern of interaction between the individual members of society

and the social relations thereby constituted. It has been argued by Alan Dawe, however, that our preferred conception of society is only one of two possible sociologies.¹ As well as the 'social system' perspective, in which society is ontologically and methodologically prior to its participants, there is the 'social action' perspective, in which the individual social actors create society and the operative element of social action is the subjective dimension of the participants. On this second conception of sociology it is arguable that the liberal and early Marxian concepts of society are indeed sociological and that Marx's early critique of liberalism is mutatis mutandis a sociological critique of liberalism and not, as it was suggested above, a merely philosophic-anthropological critique.

Indeed, Adam Smith, for instance, while arguing that society is ultimately reducible to the individual, goes on to show that the "difference of natural talents in different individuals is not so much the cause as the effect of the division of labour".² Thus in their interaction individuals create a social world which, in turn, has a causal effect on the individuals and their relationships. This constitutes an account of the individual condition in terms of social causation. A general statement of the sociology of social action derived from liberal premises is enunciated by John Stuart Mill:

In social phenomena the elementary facts are feelings and actions, and the laws of these are the laws of human nature, social facts being the results of human acts and situations...The human beings themselves, on the laws of whose nature the facts of history depend, are not abstract or universal but historical human beings, already shaped, and made what they are, by human society.³

¹Alan Dawe, 'The Two Sociologies'.

²Quoted in Economic and Philosophic Manuscripts, p. 120.

³John Stuart Mill, Auguste Comte and Positivism, p. 84.

A theory of society constituted along the lines suggested by Mill does not resolve the difficulties of developing a liberal sociology, which can not be gone into here¹, but the pretensions of such a sociology are clearly set out.

Marx's early model of human society can similarly be seen as an instance of social action sociology in which the subjective and objective elements are mediated through action, the consequence of which is "the social fabric":

my own existence is social activity, and therefore that which I make of myself, I make of myself for society and with the consciousness of myself as a social being.

My general consciousness is only the theoretical shape of that of which the living shape is the real community, the social fabric.²

Perhaps even more important to our discussion than an arguable social action sociology of human society is the concept of social causation which some scholars have found in Marx's early discussion of civil society.

Ernest Mandel has argued that in the Paris Manuscripts Marx explains alienated labour as "the product of a particular form of society", namely class society in which the commodities produced by one class are appropriated by another.³ He continues, however, that the manuscript then goes on to attribute the origin of alienated labour to human nature, and this, he says, is an "anthropological concept of alienation...[which]

¹Cf., e.g., Leon Bramson, The Political Context of Sociology.

²Economic and Philosophic Manuscripts, p. 97.

³Ernest Mandel, The Formation of the Economic Thought of Karl Marx, p. 160; emphasis in original. Mandel refers specifically to Economic and Philosophic Manuscripts, pp. 65-66.

remains largely philosophical and speculative".¹ The conclusion which Mandel draws is that there is a "contradiction within the Economic and Philosophic Manuscripts" in so far as Marx ascribes the cause of alienation to both social and philosophico-anthropological determination. This contradiction is resolved in The German Ideology, where the former mode of causation only informs Marx's discussion.² The important point, though, is that a sociological account of alienation is already developed in the Economic and Philosophic Manuscripts. Marx's argument that the class appropriation of the products of labour is generative of alienation is a sociological account of the alienation of labour. Another facet of the social cause of alienation is suggested by John Maguire when he says the Economic and Philosophic Manuscripts show that the wealth created in industrial production is the product "of human co-operation, of intelligent organisation of the capacity of the species, rather than of each individual acting in isolation".³ The causal role of the division of labour in man's alienation is also an explanation of the individual's condition in social terms.⁴ Even before writing the Economic and Philosophic Manuscripts Marx had stated an apparently sociological proposition in On the Jewish Question with the claim that the unsocial aspect of the individual in civil society is a consequence of "the entire organisation of our society".⁵ There is ample textual evidence, therefore, to support a sociological reading of Marx's early writings, even if it does run parallel to a philosophico-anthropological interpretation.

¹Mandel, op. cit., p. 161.

²Ibid., p. 162.

³John Maguire, Marx's Paris Writings, p. 125. Maguire refers to Economic and Philosophic Manuscripts, pp. 70-74.

⁴Cf., e.g., Anthony Giddens, Capitalism and Modern Social Theory, pp. 19, 23, 229.

⁵Early Writings, p. 226.

A sociological reading of Marx's early writings has been used to show not only that alienation is a consequence of social causes, but that the route to human society is also explained by Marx through the social interaction between alienated individuals. In his discussion of Marx's early naturalism Zbigniew Jordan, for instance, interprets "the hypothesis that man 'develops his true nature only in society'" to mean that "men acquire the means of cultivating their gifts in all directions and of becoming ultimately free individuals" only in the social context.¹ In their social relations prior to the attainment of communism men begin to develop the faculties which, when fully realised, constitute the advent of human society. This is similar to Maguire's claim that the operative capacity of the species for co-operation in production, under conditions of alienation, demonstrates the "potential for the creation of new wealth", presumably in communism, which amounts to an argument for "an empirical basis for the notion of species-being" in Marx's 1844 Manuscripts.² The difficulty with this general account of a social process which leads to communism is that it is inconsistent with the social explanation of alienation.

As the alienated individual is man robbed of his social gifts, the argument that alienated labour is the consequence of social causes is one which proposes that there are social obstacles to the development of species capacities. Thus a sociological account of the movement to communism which focuses on the development of social capacities in man is inconsistent with a sociological account of alienation, for the latter explains the impossibility of the former, not its veracity. A sociological account of the revolutionary movement, which Marx describes as

¹Z.A. Jordan, The Evolution of Dialectical Materialism, p. 43.

²Maguire, op. cit., p. 125.

the negation of the negation¹, would have to interpret this dialectic in class terms such that communism was the outcome of class struggle rather than the incremental development of the capacity in individuals for free interaction between men. But this understanding of the movement toward communism does not furnish evidence, empirical or otherwise, of man's species being.² It does not necessarily deny the notion of a human species nature, it functions independently of such a notion or its denial, but it removes from the explanation of the movement towards communism any supposition concerning the development of social capacities in civil society. In our earlier discussion of the movement towards communism we interpreted Marx's claims regarding the necessity for the transcendence of private property to imply that the contradiction which, when resolved, gave rise to human society, was a contradiction internal to private property itself, the content of which was the contradiction between alienated labour's empirical unsocial form and its essentially social nature. It was argued that Marx did not regard this contradiction as fundamentally one between labour and capital, and that his argument constituted a philosophical rather than a social prognosis of man's movement towards communism. The significance of this philosophical interpretation is that it is consistent with the sociological explanation of alienation in so far as it proposes that alienated labour is labour which has become estranged through private property.

¹Economic and Philosophic Manuscripts, pp. 106, 114.

²Jordan, op. cit., p. 405, note 87, offers an ingenious explanation of Marx's use of the term 'species' when referring to social life. He says that Marx probably acquired the expression from Saint-Simon, who wished to establish sociology as a generalised physiology. This account ignores the fact that Marx's terminology is self-consciously Feuerbachian. A physiologisation of Marx's notion of 'society' would make it no more sociological than does its philosophical anthropology.

Rather than there being a contradiction in the Economic and Philosophic Manuscripts between the sociological and philosophico-anthropological explanations of alienation, the two are quite compatible. The basis of their consistency lies in the fact that the sociological explanation is reducible to the explanation of alienation in philosophical terms. The passage in the Manuscripts which Mandel had quoted to show that alienation is a consequence of social causes, the consequence of the appropriation of the products of labour by the non-labourer, must be supplemented with Marx's comments a little later in the same manuscript that the relation between worker and capitalist is the result of alienated labour and that private property, which appears as the source of alienation, is really its consequence.¹ In anticipation of this point and in answer to it Mandel says that Marx "is not dealing here with the problem of the historical origin of private property but rather with the problem of its nature, of how it reappears daily in a mode of production based on alienated labour".² Actually the passage in question can be interpreted as a statement concerning both the historical and everyday genesis of private property. But the important thing, which renders Mandel's objection redundant, is that it is an account of alienation which is based on the assumption that what is alienated is human nature. The anthropological interpretation is reinforced by Marx's discussion of the division of labour. While the division of labour empirically functions as a social cause of alienation, it is primarily, Marx says, the alienated form of the social character of labour.³ In both of these examples the social cause of alienated labour is itself a consequence of human nature in its alienated form.

¹Economic and Philosophic Manuscripts, pp. 75-76.

²Mandel, op. cit., p. 161, note 19.

³Economic and Philosophic Manuscripts, p. 120.

The apparent antinomy between Mandel's identification of two distinct explanations of alienation in the Economic and Philosophic Manuscripts and our argument that one reduces to the other, can be resolved by a few words about historical causation in general. It is important, in any causal explanation of historical or social events, to differentiate between what have been called 'internal' causes or 'pre-conditions' on the one hand, and 'external' causes or 'precipitants' on the other.¹ Roughly speaking, the precipitants or external causes are the agents which actually give rise to the empirical occurrence of an event or condition. The pre-conditions or internal causes, on the other hand, are responsible for the effect, for the precise nature of the event or condition. Applying this model of causation to Marx's explanation of alienation in the Manuscripts it can be seen that the references to a social cause of alienation are those which describe the precipitation of alienation. The effectivity of the social precipitant derives from the philosophico-anthropological pre-condition of man's species-nature. What Mandel has isolated are merely two levels of a single explanatory model. The social action sociology of the Manuscripts is the derivative of a philosophical anthropology. The identification of social causes in the Manuscripts which account for man's alienation should not lead us to depart from the view that Marx regards the individual in civil society as an unsocial being alienated from his social nature.

It has been argued, though, that in a description of civil society written some four or five months after the Economic and Philosophic Manuscripts, Marx did acknowledge that alienated individuals engage in social relations, and therefore that in 1844 Marx disagreed with the

¹Mao Tse-tung, Four Essays on Philosophy, pp. 26-28; Harry Eckstein, 'On the Etiology of Internal War', p. 124. Cf. also Quinton Hoare and Geoffrey Nowell Smith (eds.), Selections from the Prison Notebooks of Antonio Gramsci, p. 178.

liberal position that the individual was external to society. Zbigniew Jordan says that for Marx civil society is not merely an aggregation of unrelated individuals, but rather "the totality of various social bonds" through which individuals mutually interrelate.¹ Jordan substantiates this with a quotation from The Holy Family:

it is natural necessity, the essential human properties however estranged they may seem to be, and interest that hold the members of civil society together.²

The sentence immediately preceding the one quoted here shows, however, that Marx is actually reaffirming the liberal position rather than repudiating it, as Jordan maintains. It states that

since the need of one individual has no self-evident meaning for another egoistic individual capable of satisfying that need, and therefore no direct connection with its satisfaction, each individual has to create this connection; it thus becomes the intermediary between the need of another and the objects of this need.³

This passage, of course, does not deny that individuals relate to one another in civil society, but it does demonstrate that Marx believed that the relations were not the result of social bonds. It is a restatement of the liberal position that civil society is a net of relationships between individuals defined by their personal interests and particular needs. The point is, and Marx has not gone beyond it here, that the relations of civil society are entirely reducible to the relations of discrete individuals, exchange relations between egoistic individual beings. The passage can be read as a paraphrase of Adam Smith's discussion of the functional division of trades in the satisfaction of

¹Jordan, op. cit., p. 39; cf. also Avineri, op. cit., p. 88.

²The Holy Family, p. 142, quoted by Jordan, op. cit.

³The Holy Family, p. 142.

individual needs¹, and certainly does not advance on the depiction of civil society in On the Jewish Question which argues that civil society

appears as a framework extraneous to the individuals
...The only bond which holds them together is natural necessity, need and private interest.²

What Marx is describing in both works is the unsocial nature of man's relations in civil society.

IV

The two concepts 'civil society' and 'human society' are co-existent in Marx's early writings. The latter is society in a condition of becoming, an as yet unrealised reality in which man's relations are fully social. The notion of human society is the critical measure against which is held the unsocial man of civil society. The anthropological essence of man's species-being, according to Marx's argument, is alienated from him in civil society, the corollary of which is that it is only through the transcendence of his alienation that man's species-nature is realised. Only then does the individual exist as the social being. Marx's account of man's anthropologically immanent social nature is absent from The German Ideology, where it is argued that the market economy is not the result of man's alienation, but that man's alienation is the consequence of the market economy.³ Rather than an explanation of society based on an anthropology of species being, we now find an account of the condition of man in terms of social structure.

Marx introduces a new meaning of the concept 'society' into his work when he says

¹Adam Smith, The Wealth of Nations, p. 481.

²Early Writings, p. 230.

³The German Ideology, p. 49.

By social we understand the co-operation of several individuals, no matter under what conditions, in what manner and to what end. It follows from this that a certain mode of production, or industrial stage, is always combined with a certain mode of co-operation, or social stage, and this mode of co-operation is itself a 'productive force'. Further, that the multitude of productive forces accessible to men determines the nature of society.¹

According to this definition all relations between individuals which effect a common end are social relations. The relations between individuals who meet to satisfy merely their private interests and individual needs through exchange are thus also social relations. Secondly, this definition contains the proposition that the form of society is a consequence of the manner in which production is conducted. This entails that under all conditions of production, alienated or otherwise, the relations between individual operatives are social relations; although the form of the social relations will vary with the mode of production. Society in this sense, with the corresponding notion of the causal primacy on the nature of society of the mode of production, remains at the core of Marx's methodology in all of his research after The German Ideology.² It stands in stark contrast to the earlier philosophico-anthropological conception of 'society'.

It was stated earlier in this chapter that historical materialism, and what has just been outlined is a summary statement of historical materialism, includes a sociological critique of liberal individualism. That is to say historical materialism demonstrates that society can not be reduced to its individual members and that the web of social relationships is greater than the market relations of individuals. The question of

¹Ibid., p. 41.

²Similar statements making the same points can be found in The Poverty of Philosophy, p. 95, and Capital, III, pp. 791-792.

whether the theory of historical materialism can be regarded as a sociological theory is in many ways controversial.

The relationship between historical materialism and sociology has been evaluated on many levels, although they all seem to resolve into either political or methodological considerations. Historical materialism has often been regarded by its advocates and detractors alike as providing an alternative scheme of interpretation to that of sociology; the one depicted as a revolutionary ideology, the other a bourgeois ideology.¹ This political squabble is almost entirely fruitless for even polemical purposes. Joan Robinson's point, that the best defence of capitalism can be made on the basis of Marx's analysis and that Alfred Marshall's attempts to represent capitalism favourably can be used to show the necessity of socialism, demonstrates the irrelevance of superficial political asides to the resolution of theoretical questions.² This example from economics has a parallel in Lenin's debate with the 'legal Marxists', showing that Marx's social theory can not be adequately described in merely political terms. It follows that it can not be adequately differentiated from other theories of society on political grounds, either.

On the methodological plane, it has been argued that whereas historical materialism has 'the mode of production' as a fundamental category and assumes the primacy of economic structures in its analysis of society, sociology necessarily holds the assumption that 'society' must be distinguished from 'economy', and that only the former is its

¹Cf. Karl Korsch, Karl Marx, pp. 17-18.

²Joan Robinson, 'Marx, Marshall and Keynes', pp. 8, 10. Cf. also Engels' comments in Capital, III, p. 10, and E. Preobrazhensky, The New Economics, p. 49.

legitimate province.¹ The disjunction between historical materialism and sociology on this basis has been resolved in a number of ways. Eric Hobsbawm has said that it is erroneous to think of historical materialism as a sociological interpretation of history, but goes on to suggest that historical materialism subsumes sociology.² Another view, which recognises the importance of the economic factor in historical materialism, but is equally cognisant of the possibility of understanding the term 'sociology' to mean 'empirical social theory', holds that historical materialism is part of a particular field of sociology, namely economic sociology.³ While it would concede too much to eclecticism to say that historical materialism is merely a sociological theory⁴, it would be no more than sectarian to deny that its social theory is a general sociology, not merely an economic sociology, for it has important things to say about the sociology of knowledge, stratification theory, political sociology and so forth.⁵ The most intelligent consideration, then, and certainly the fairest intellectually, is to accept that the theory of historical materialism, while methodologically distinct from most current schools of sociology, includes in its domain what can be generally understood as a sociological theory.⁶ It then remains to identify the specific character of an historical materialist sociology.

¹Louis Dupré, The Philosophical Foundations of Marxism, pp. 177-178; Herbert Marcuse, Reason and Revolution, p. 375.

²Eric Hobsbawm, 'Introduction' to Marx's Pre-Capitalist Economic Formations, p. 17.

³Donald Clark Hodges, 'On Marx's Contribution to Economic Sociology'.

⁴John Goldthorpe, 'Class, Status and Party in Great Britain', p. 371, remarks that Marxism loses its particular character in being treated "as no more than an intellectual public utility".

⁵It should not be understood that Hodges, op. cit., denies this last point, for he does not.

⁶Cf. Bottomore and Rubel, op. cit., and references therein.

It should be said at this point that not all post-classical Marxism, i.e. self-designated Marxist interpretations of Marxism, concedes that historical materialism contains a sociological theory.¹ However, that which does, more or less follows the perspective of Lenin's statement that

Marx put an end to the view that society is a mechanical aggregation of individuals...and was the first to put sociology on a scientific basis by establishing the concept of the economic formation of society as the sum-total of given relations of production.²

The principle distinguishing feature of Marx's sociology is the emphasis it places on the fundamental role of the production process for an understanding of the structure, and, one might add, dynamic, of society.³ As the process of production is fundamentally the labour process, and as labour is the value-creating activity, there is a sense in which Marx's sociology can be said to gravitate around the concept of labour-value. Marx himself has written that

It is always the direct relationship of the owners of the conditions of production to the direct producers — a relation always naturally corresponding to a definite stage in the development of the methods of labour and thereby its social productivity — which reveals the innermost secret, the hidden basis of the entire social structure.⁴

The social structure, therefore, is understood through the relations of production, and these are essentially value relations, the relations of

¹Cf. the discussion in Bottomore, Marxist Sociology, Chapter 3.

²V.I. Lenin, 'What the "Friends of the People" Are and How They Fight the Social-Democrats', p. 84.

³Cf., e.g., Ljubomir Zivković, 'The Structure of Marxist Sociology', pp. 108-112.

⁴Capital, III, p. 791.

the creation and appropriation of value.¹ It is on this foundation that Marx, in his mature writings, differentiates between feudalism and capitalism, explains the emergency of individualistic society and develops a sociological critique of liberal individualism. He shows that the individual of commercial or capitalist society is a social being whose social bonds are not in the relations of the market place, in human sympathy or in species being, but in the social relations of social production.

It was shown above that in his early writings Marx conceived the difference between feudal and capitalist labour as a difference between labour which was directed by its significance for the community and labour which was directed by its significance for the individual. In capitalism labour and capital were held to be devoid of social content and meaning, and the relations between individuals were regarded as unsocial relations. The asociality of civil society was explained in terms of the individual's untrammelled egoism, and this was seen as a consequence of the alienation of man's social species being. In his later writings Marx differentiates between feudalism and capitalism in terms of the nature of social production, and rather than regarding the relations of man in civil society as unsocial, he now says that they are merely a particular form of social relation, different in content from the relations of feudal society. The difference between these two types of society, Marx argues, is the difference between a society in which production is predominantly for use and a society in which production is for exchange. In Marx's later work the relationship of individuals is explained in terms of the social

¹"Marx...starts from labour in its significance as the constitutive element in human society, as the element whose development determines in the final analysis the development of society. In his principle of value he thus grasps the factor by whose quality and quantity, by whose organisation and productive energy, social life is causally controlled", Rudolf Hilferding, 'Böhm-Bawerk's Criticism of Marx', p. 133.

structure within which production takes place, rather than through a teleological concept of human nature. Human nature and the individual's social relations are now seen as dependent upon the structure of social production, whereas in the early writings human nature is an independent variable, itself consequential upon the relations between individuals.

The distinction between feudal and capitalist society is succinctly expressed in the Grundrisse when Marx says that "the dissolution of the servile relationship which binds the labourer to the soil, and to the lord of the soil" is essentially the dissolution of "relations of production in which use-value predominates".¹ Under feudal conditions the labour of the serf and its products is divided into that which is directly provided to the lord of the land, and that consumed by the serf and his family.² In neither case is production separated from consumption by a commercial intervention and labour, therefore, produces only use-values. Such production requires that labour be combined with the means of labour, "the instrument of labour is...intimately merged with living labour"³, and that the social relations through which it operates be close and direct. The dissolution of labour relations productive of use-value is therefore firstly "the historical process of divorcing the producer from the means of production".⁴ The labourer is thus freed from the close and servile relations of manor and guild and from his means of production: he emerges as the free individual of capitalist society.⁵ The newly free labourer is available to be freely hired and set to work for a

¹Pre-Capitalist Economic Formations, pp. 104, 105; Grundrisse, p. 502. The former is a translated section of the latter. References to both will be given, but the quotation will be from the former only.

²Capital, I, pp. 82-83.

³Pre-Capitalist Economic Formations, p. 108; Grundrisse, p. 505.

⁴Capital, I, p. 668.

⁵Ibid.; cf. also Pre-Capitalist Economic Formations, p. 111; Grundrisse, p. 507.

wage by an independent owner of means of production. What is produced under these new conditions is physically the same as what had previously been produced, but, Marx says, "a new social soul has popped into its body"¹, for it is a commodity, produced not for immediate consumption by either the labourer nor the owner of the means of labour, but a product which exists solely to be placed on the market for sale. What is produced by free labour is not a use-value but an exchange-value.

As the basis of capitalist production is the production of exchange-values rather than use-values², so its relations are spatial rather than direct. The production of an exchange-value or commodity is separated from its use or consumption by the exchange relation. Exchange is a relation between private and mutually independent proprietors who meet solely to fulfil a particular transaction.³ Production for exchange is similarly conducted between mutually independent persons.⁴ Not only is exchange itself an interaction between independent individuals, but it "is a major agent of this individualisation"⁵, so that the process is self-reinforcing. Thus the image of the isolated atom of commercial society, the individual bereft of social relations, does appear to be an apposite description. But in his Introduction of 1857 Marx criticises such a suggestion in liberal political economy, and, incidentally, his own former view, when he says that

the epoch which produces this standpoint, namely that of the solitary individual, is precisely the epoch of the (as yet) most highly developed social...relations.

¹Capital, I, p. 698.

²Ibid., p. 477.

³Ibid., pp. 88-89, 550.

⁴Ibid., pp. 165, 166, 172.

⁵Pre-Capitalist Economic Formations, p. 96; Grundrisse, p. 496.

Man is...not only a social animal, but an animal that can be individualised only within society.¹

Marx argues, therefore, for a very strong correspondence between the degree of individualisation and the advanced state of social relations. The connection between the two is implicit in the nature of exchange-value.

Before looking at the social context let us begin with the individual particle. The basic unit of the capitalist mode of production is not the individual labourer, according to Marx, but the single commodity.² The commodity is both a private thing, in so far as it is always in the possession of a particular individual; and a social thing, it is produced for another's consumption. Private labour, in the production of commodities, bestows upon them an exchange-value. In the realisation of that value in the market place, in the sale of the commodity, the social character of private labour is confirmed. Engels catches these complex interrelations nicely:

What are commodities? Products made in a society of more or less separate private producers, and therefore in the first place private products. These private products, however, become commodities only when they are made, not for consumption by their producers, but for consumption by others, that is, for social consumption; they enter into social consumption through exchange. The private producers are therefore socially interconnected, constitute a society.³

Thus the private production of commodities by individual labourers is the social production of exchange-values for social consumption.

¹A Contribution to the Critique of Political Economy, p. 189.

²Capital, I, p. 43.

³Anti-Dühring, pp. 363-364.

The social character of exchange-value lies in the fact that it registers the quantity of social labour allocated to the production of a commodity. The value relation is not a natural property pertaining to material objects, but "something purely social".¹ As Marx explains in his pamphlet on Wages, Price and Profit, the production of a commodity is not merely the production of "an article satisfying some social want", for the labour expended in the production of commodities "must form part and parcel of the total sum of labour expended by society".² And herein is the advanced nature of the social relations of society based on exchange-value, for the social relations of exchange-value function independently of the will of the social actors themselves. Marx comments that "the behaviour of men in the social process of [commodity] production is purely atomic" and goes on to say that "their relations to each other in production assume a material character independent of their control and conscious individual action".³ Thus exchange-value "develops a whole network of social relations spontaneous in their growth and entirely beyond the control of the actors".⁴ This spatial society contrasts sharply with the directness of feudal social relations in which individual labour is the consciously applied labour of the community in the production of use-values. While commodity society is individualised it "does not consist of individuals, but expresses the sum of interrelations, the relations within which these individuals stand".⁵ The structure of production corresponds to a particular form of interrelations, which are essentially and wholly social relations, even though they are not

¹Capital, I, p. 63.

²MESW, II, p. 49; emphasis in original.

³Capital, I, p. 96.

⁴Capital, I, p. 114.

⁵Grundrisse, p. 265. Cf. also The Poverty of Philosophy, p. 87.

relationships willed by the individuals themselves. Here is Marx's sociological analysis of individualised society. What of his critique of liberal individualism in social terms?

A crucial feature of commodity production, and a consequence of the separation of production from consumption through exchange, is that commodities exist independently of men and assume a life of their own. Exchange-values, Marx says, "vary continually, independently of the will, foresight and action of the producers. To them, their own social action takes the form of the action of objects".¹ Thus "production relations are converted into entities and rendered independent in relation to the agents of production".² A phenomenal effect of commodity production, therefore, is that "the relations connecting the labour of one individual with that of the rest appear, not as direct social relations between individuals at work, but as...material relations between persons".³ Thus the commodity form is not only the basis of individualised society, it is also at the root of the view that the individual is without social relations. Marx calls this the fetishism of commodities, which was discussed in Chapter 2 above.

It is through the fallacy of commodity fetishism that the liberal political economists, and Marx in his early writings, reduce the social relations of individuals to the external relations of independent and unsocial beings. With his theory of commodity fetishism Marx sociologically demonstrates that social relations only appear as things under the conditions of commodity production, in the production of exchange-values.

¹Capital, I, p. 79.

²Capital, III, p. 831.

³Capital, I, p. 78.

Chapter 6

CAPITALISM

More than any other single topic of 'marxological' interest the problem of alienation in Marx's writing has occupied a central place in discussion and scholarship since the late 1950s. In the elucidation of other matters in previous chapters it has been necessary to refer to Marx's early theory of alienation a number of times. The present chapter is wholly concerned with Marx's theory of alienation as a theory of man in capitalist society. The focus of the chapter will be the economic aspects of alienation. Political alienation will be discussed in the following chapter.

Two broad and mutually exclusive positions on the concept of alienation in Marx can be identified within the critical literature. Some have argued that although Marx developed the concept of alienation in his early works, he abandoned it in his mature writings.¹ Others have held that the concept of alienation is not only developed in the early writings, but is also central to Marx's later thought, and hence constitutes the common thread which unifies his work.² This chapter will attempt to resolve the controversy of whether Marx abandoned or continued to employ the concept of alienation. It will be shown that the concept of alienation, while employed by Marx throughout his work, is part of a theoretical framework in his early work which is significantly different from the one in which it functions in the mature writings.

It will also be shown in this chapter that the theory of alienation in the Economic and Philosophic Manuscripts is empirically verifiable for a particular stage of capitalist development, but inadequate — indeed implausible — as a theory of capitalism in general. Marx's own mature

¹Louis Althusser, For Marx; Sidney Hook, From Hegel to Marx, New Introduction.

²Shlomo Avineri, The Social and Political Thought of Karl Marx; István Mészáros, Marx's Theory of Alienation; Bertell Ollman, Alienation.

analysis of the differences in the conditions of labour and the division of labour for different phases of capitalist development shows the limitations of his early theory of alienation as an empirical theory of capitalism.

The following comments, which are of necessity brief, will largely be confined to a discussion of primary sources rather than an examination and critique of the enormous secondary literature. Any discussion of the latter in the space of a single chapter would be inadequate. In any case such a discussion would be irrelevant to an attempt to demonstrate the existence of different theories of alienation in Marx, and to show that in his later writings Marx outlines the grounds on which the early theory can be shown to suffer limitations.

Although Marx began to advance his early theory of alienation in the Critique of Hegel's Philosophy of Right it is most highly developed and most clearly outlined in the 1844 Manuscripts. Unlike other early writings the statement of the theory of alienation in the Economic and Philosophic Manuscripts is more directly commensurate with the mature theory of alienation as it provides an account of the alienation of labour. Thus in the discussion below the Manuscripts will be taken as representative of Marx's early theory of alienation. Representative of the mature theory of alienation will be that found in Capital. Most accounts of Marx's mature theory of alienation have focussed on the Grundrisse, where the term 'alienation' appears with much frequency.¹ The reasons for virtually ignoring the Grundrisse in our argument are two-fold. Firstly, we agree with Michael Evans who argued in a review of David McLellan's work that whatever is of interest in the Grundrisse can

¹David McLellan, 'Introduction' to The Grundrisse, and 'The Grundrisse in the Context of Marx's Work as a Whole'; Martin Nicolaus, 'The Unknown Marx'; Iring Fetscher, 'The Young and the Old Marx'.

be found in Capital¹; secondly, it is clearly more important to show that the theory of alienation appears in a work which Marx wrote for publication, rather than in working notes which he left in a drawer.

Four basic propositions will be advanced below. It will be shown that the concept of alienation is current throughout the entirety of Marx's thought. Any argument for an 'epistemological break' based on an alleged absence of the concept of alienation in Marx's mature writings can therefore be regarded as untenable. Secondly, it will be shown that the concept of alienation in the Economic and Philosophic Manuscripts is part of a theory which is quite different from the theory of alienation developed in Capital. Thus the argument of theoretical continuity errs in failing to notice that there are two theories of alienation in Marx's writings, one of which supersedes the other. Thirdly, it will be shown that the empirical content of the early theory of alienation is limited to a particular phase of capitalist development. The theory of the Manuscripts is not a general theory of capitalism. Finally, it will be shown that from the perspective of the mature theory of alienation the early theory is false.

I

Not only is Marx's interest in the theme of alienation manifest throughout his intellectual career. He also continued to employ the word 'alienation' after writing the Manuscripts. It appears in the Grundrisse, as we have already noted, and also in The Poverty of Philosophy, in A Contribution to the Critique of Political Economy, in Capital and in the

¹Michael Evans, 'Two Translations of Marx'.

Theories of Surplus Value.¹ It is used in all of these works as part of Marx's explanation of the conditions of labour in commodity production.

Two basic facets of alienation can be differentiated in Marx's mature usage, what Daniel Bell calls "dehumanisation" and "exploitation".² Bell believes that Marx "glossed over" the first of these in Capital because he was concerned with the consequence of capitalist social relations, and therefore exploitation, rather than with technology in general, which Bell says Marx saw as the basis of dehumanisation. Actually, Marx regards the capitalist application of technology rather than technology neutrally conceived to be the cause of dehumanisation³, and his treatment of the problem in the rather lengthy chapter on 'Machinery and Modern Industry' in Capital indicates that he accorded the matter some importance. Perhaps mindful of this fact Fredy Perlman distinguishes in Marx not dehumanisation and exploitation, but qualitative and quantitative aspects of exploitation:

Thus when Marx speaks of the capitalist's appropriation of 'surplus value' or 'surplus labour', he refers to the quantitative aspect of exploitation, not the qualitative aspect. Qualitatively, the labourer alienates the entirety of his creative power, his power to participate consciously in shaping his material environment.⁴

This conveys the sense of Marx's explanation, lost in Bell's account, of both dehumanisation and exploitation in terms of capitalist production, rather than in terms of technological development on the one hand and capitalist development on the other.

¹The Poverty of Philosophy, p. 29; A Contribution to the Critique of Political Economy, pp. 42-52; Capital, I, pp. 91-92, 110, 115, 170, 535-536, 547; Theories of Surplus Value, Part III, pp. 259, 276, 466-467, 502-503.

²Daniel Bell, 'The Debate on Alienation', p. 204.

³Capital, I, pp. 398, 407, 455.

⁴Fredy Perlman, 'Essay on Commodity Fetishism', p. 260 and 'Introduction' to Isaak Rubin, Essays on Marx's Theory of Value, p. xxv.

It is convenient to deal here with the general question of the distinction between 'alienation' and 'exploitation', as the comments above may have been read to suggest that the two can be treated as equivalents, which they can not. According to Marx alienation occurs in commodity production only. Under such conditions the exchange relations of market society separate production from consumption, and the product acquires a life of its own, independent of the producer, and comes to oppress him as an alien force. Exploitation, on the other hand, is not confined to situations of commodity production, in Marx's account. The serf is exploited by the feudal lord, even though he produces only use-values. Similarly, the slave owner exploits his slave and the Oriental Despot his peasants when no commodity is appropriated. Exploitation, for Marx, is the appropriation of the surplus labour of one class by another class. Only in commodity production does surplus labour take the value form.¹ Thus exploitation is a category with a wider scope than the category of alienation. All alienating relations are relations of exploitation, but not all exploitation is alienating. A description of the relations of commodity production — which is a description of the alienating relationship — is found in both the Manuscripts and Capital, as was shown in the previous chapter.

Marx seldom uses the term 'alienation' in Capital when he refers to man's dehumanisation, to his loss of creative power, to the situation in which man is mutilated, crippled, becomes a mere appendage to the machine.² The use of the word is generally confined in the mature writing to refer to the situation in which things, including the many

¹Capital, I, pp. 482-483.

²Ibid., pp. 340-341, 344, 604.

attributes of labour, become objects of exchange.¹ But when he describes the "sine qua non of capitalist production"² Marx shows how the two aspects of alienation, that of capitalist exploitation and dehumanisation, are related to a single process. Marx says that before entering the production process the worker's "own labour has already been alienated" in the sale of his labour-power to the capitalist.³ The labour power thus appropriated by the capitalist is realised in a product belonging to the capitalist, not the labourer. Here is the process of quantitative alienation. But, Marx continues, not only is the product of labour consumed by the capitalist converted into commodities, it is also converted into capital, "into means of production that command the producers".⁴ Here is the alienation of the worker's creative powers, for the "labourer therefore constantly produces material, objective wealth, but in the form of capital, of an alien power that dominates and exploits him".⁵ In making available his labour power to the capitalist, in alienating his labour power, the worker creates the means of his further alienation by creating a force which does not belong to him but which, by taking from him his power to control production, becomes an agent in his exploitation. For capital is not merely a physical and technical relation, according to Marx, it is a coercive social relation which dictates the regularity, intensity and magnitude of labour.⁶ Here in Capital is described the condition of alienation first outlined by Marx in the Economic and Philosophic Manuscripts which corresponds to Feuerbach's

¹The Poverty of Philosophy, p. 29; A Contribution to the Critique of Political Economy, pp. 42-43, 56-57.

²Capital, I, p. 536.

³Ibid., p. 535.

⁴Ibid.

⁵Ibid.

⁶Capital, III, pp. 814-815; 'Wage Labour and Capital', MESW, I, p. 161.

account of alienation, discussed in Chapter 4 above, in which alienation is the consequence of man producing an effect which, in becoming independent of him, comes to be a force in his oppression.

Two things have been established so far: that Marx uses the term 'alienation' in Capital as well as in the Economic and Philosophic Manuscripts, and furthermore, that he uses it to describe those processes to which he refers when applying the same term in the Manuscripts. However, the appearance of the concept 'alienation' in a description of labour's objectification as hostile phenomena can not itself prove that the theory of alienation developed in the Manuscripts is continued in Capital. There is no doubt that the idea of alienation is enduring in Marx's thought. But the mere statement of a common theme in the two works and the fact that they share a description of man's condition as alienated, does not entail nor constitute the statement of a single theory. What this shows, rather, is that they both account for a common empirical situation. The question which remains is whether there is a theoretical explanation of alienation which is common to both works. In order to prove theoretical continuity it must be shown that the concept of alienation is part of a common system of concepts in the two works, and that the role of the concept of alienation in the structure of explanation has not changed between the Economic and Philosophic Manuscripts and Capital.

II

There is, in fact, a large disjuncture between the theoretical accounts of alienation in the two works. There are significantly different conceptions in the Manuscripts on the one hand, and in Capital on the other, of the workers' impoverishment in alienation, of the nature of the

loss incurred in alienation and of the process by which alienation is transcended. These differences indicate that there are two quite different theories of alienation in Marx's work.

The first of these differences between the two works relates to the quantitative aspect of alienation. The theory of alienation in Capital is derived from the labour theory of value and the concomitant theory of surplus value. In summary, these claim firstly, that the value of all commodities, including labour power, is determined by the socially necessary labour time required for their production; secondly, that the worker is paid the full value of his labour power when he sells it to the capitalist; and thirdly, that when the already purchased labour power is consumed in production by the capitalist it creates, in addition to its own value, a surplus value which constitutes a nett gain to the capitalist. While Marx had explicitly rejected the classical labour theory of value at about the time he wrote the Economic and Philosophic Manuscripts¹, some scholars have found a germ of the labour theory of value in the alienation theory of the Manuscripts.² Nevertheless Marx's explanation of quantitative alienation in the Manuscripts is based on a different theoretical foundation than that of Capital, and it carries with it different implications.

On the assumptions of the labour theory of value, that labour power, like all commodities, is sold at its value, and that its value is determined by the labour time required for its production, it follows that an increase in labour productivity, that is, a decrease in the labour time necessary to produce a commodity, decreases the share of income going

¹'Excerpts from James Mill's Elements of Political Economy', Early Writings, p. 260.

²Perlman, 'Introduction' to Rubin, op. cit., p. xxiv; Paul Walton and Andrew Gamble, From Alienation to Surplus Value, pp. 39-43.

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to labour and increases the part appropriated by the capitalist. In other words the labour theory of value implies a relative impoverishment of the working class. Relative impoverishment is a decrease in the share of the national income going

to the working class as opposed to an absolute decrease in the income of labour. Relative impoverishment may occur when the real income of labour rises. Marx had already arrived at this conclusion by 1847.¹ The proposition that under conditions of capitalist development the working class suffers a relative impoverishment is assimilated into Marx's 'General Law of Capitalist Accumulation' in Capital.² The concept of alienation in its quantitative form in Capital implies the concept of the relative impoverishment of labour.

The alienation theory of the Manuscripts entails not a relative but an absolute impoverishment of labour. Marx argues here that an increasing appropriation of labour's products requires an increasing absolute loss to labour, for

the greater this [productive] activity, the greater is the worker's lack of objects. Whatever the product of his labour is, he is not...Therefore the greater the product, the less is he himself

and,

The worker becomes all the poorer the more wealth he produces, the more his production increases in power and range...With the increasing value of the world of things proceeds in direct proportion the devaluation of the world of men.³

Marx arrives at this general conclusion through two routes. The early alienation theory has no conception of an increase in labour productivity which results from an application of less labour time to more technology.⁴

¹'Wage Labour and Capital', MESW, I, pp. 163-167.

²Capital, I, Chapter 25, Sections 1 and 2.

³Economic and Philosophic Manuscripts, pp. 67, 66.

⁴Although the notion is not entirely foreign to the Manuscripts, as we will see below.

An increase of productivity is seen in the Manuscripts only as a consequence of more labour being consumed in production. Marx says that

The product of labour is labour which has been congealed in an object...So much does labour's realisation appear as loss of reality that the worker loses reality to the point of starving to death...the more objects the worker produces the fewer can he possess ...[These] consequences are contained in the definition that the worker is related to the product of his labour as to an alien object.¹

As the product of labour is congealed labour, it follows that an increase in the volume of products created increases the loss of labour to the labourer himself. This is an absolute, not a relative loss of labour and, therefore, an absolute loss of the products of labour.

The second route to the concept of absolute impoverishment is in an explanation of the price of labour. Whereas in Capital wages are more or less equivalent to the value of labour power expressed in the money form, in the Economic and Philosophic Manuscripts the price of labour is accounted for purely in terms of the laws of supply and demand. This comes out in Marx's discussion of the conditions which he says give rise to the growth of capitals and revenue. The first condition states that as capital is accumulated labour the growth of capital is in "the accumulation of much labour".² This is the argument claiming that the greater the product the less the labourer. The other two conditions of capital accumulation are an increase in the division of labour and an increase in the concentration of capital, both of which are held to result in an increase in the size of the working class.³ Marx says that an intensification of the division of labour increases the number of labourers in

¹Economic and Philosophic Manuscripts, p. 66.

²Ibid., p. 26.

³Ibid., pp. 26-27.

production and that an increase in the number of labourers intensifies the division of labour. The concentration of capital, which is seen as an outcome of the competition between capitals, is regarded as having the consequence of swelling the ranks of the working class with ruined capitalists. What is important for our argument in all of this is that Marx says that an increase in the size of the working class intensifies the competition between workers and this has the effect of depressing wages — which is tantamount to an absolute impoverishment of the working class.

The position is not quite as simple as it has been described above, although in introducing the complicating details there will be no need to amend our conclusions. We have already mentioned Marx's discussion of relative impoverishment in Capital. Marx also shows that the process of capital accumulation leads to an absolute impoverishment of the reserve army of labour, unemployed workers who can be called upon by capital when it requires them in production.¹ There is in the Manuscripts an analogous concept of "a section of the working class [which] falls into the ranks of beggary or starvation".² The argument of Capital is that while the reserve army of labour is forced into an absolute impoverishment through the accumulation of capital, productive labourers are only relatively impoverished. This latter concept is not entirely unknown to the Manuscripts. Marx does mention the possibility of wage rises, but says that "for every wage that rises, one remains stationary and one falls".³ More significantly Marx says that "the capitalist is more than compensated for the raising of wages by the reduction in the amount of labour-time"⁴, which is clearly a reference to increases in labour productivity

¹Capital, I, Chapter 25, Sections 3 and 4.

²Economic and Philosophic Manuscripts, p. 27.

³Ibid., p. 25.

⁴Ibid., p. 29.

offsetting a rise in the price of labour by decreasing its value. Such a proposition is part of the argument of relative impoverishment. A little further in the same manuscript Marx quotes Wilhelm Schulz on the relative impoverishment of labour.¹ Marx seems not to grasp the significance of Schulz's remarks, however, and from them observes only that "political economy knows the worker only as a working-animal – as a beast reduced to the strictest bodily needs"², thereby demonstrating that the point has escaped him. His own comment on the reduction of labour time in production is not even an "intuition", as Mandel had put it³, but an idea paraphrased from Schulz, the meaning of which Marx had not grasped in 1844 and which he failed to integrate into the theory of wages or alienation developed in the Manuscripts.

The general thrust of the discussion of capital accumulation in the Economic and Philosophic Manuscripts is clearly biased toward the view that an absolute impoverishment of the working class is a necessary consequence of the accumulation process. This is quite contrary to the view expressed in Capital. The relation between the theory of wages and the theory of alienation in the Manuscripts is not direct. But given that all wage labour is estranged labour and that "the more objects the [estranged labourer] produces the fewer he can possess"⁴, it seems quite conclusive that the Manuscripts in general and the theory of alienation in particular imply the concept of an absolute impoverishment of labour.

Related to different treatments of the quantitative aspect of alienation in the two works is a fundamentally different conception of

¹Ibid., p. 32.

²Ibid.

³Ernest Mandel, The Formation of the Economic Thought of Karl Marx, p. 32.

⁴Economic and Philosophic Manuscripts, p. 66.

its qualitative aspect, the loss of labour's creative power in alienated production. A dual consequence of capitalist exploitation, according to Marx in Capital, is the advent of an authority function of capital itself and the fact that in increasing the efficiency of labour, the capitalist division of labour and industrial form robs labour of its creativity. Marx argues that the organisation of labour within a factory context has its precondition in the capitalist property relation of private ownership. Labour is necessarily subjected to the authority and rule of capital, which dictates the actions of labour in production. That this is a direct effect of capitalist exploitation is made quite clear by Marx when he says that

The control exercised by the capitalist is not only a special function, due to the nature of the social labour-process, and peculiar to that process, but is, at the same time, a function of the exploitation of a social labour-process, and is consequently rooted in the unavoidable antagonism between the exploiter and the living and labouring raw material he exploits.¹

Under this "autocracy"² of capital the labourer is prevented from exercising any control over his productive tasks. The loss of power in labour activity is intensified by virtue of the industrial division of labour which, in increasing the labourer's efficiency, removes totally the creativity of his labour and deforms him into a mere adjunct of the machine.³ Thus in Capital the qualitative alienation of labour is the loss of labour's power for creative activity, the exercise of which the labourer is capable but prevented by social restraints. This concept of qualitative alienation therefore implies the alienation or loss of labour's potential for creative activity.

¹Capital, I, p. 313.

²Ibid., p. 400.

³Ibid., pp. 336, 341.

In the Economic and Philosophic Manuscripts qualitative alienation is also conceived as a loss of potential for creative activity. In alienated production man loses his capacity for creative activity, for it "does not develop freely his physical and mental energy but mortifies his body and ruins his mind".¹ The more the needs of wealth are satisfied the more must life and human needs be denied.² Daniel Bell is perfectly correct, therefore, to say that alienation in the Manuscripts is the "failure to realise one's potential as a self".³ While the Economic and Philosophic Manuscripts share with Capital the view that in alienation man loses his potential for creative activity, there is in the former a further dimension of qualitative alienation which has no part of the conception of the latter. In the Manuscripts Marx argues that man's loss in alienation is not only a loss of potential creativity but also an ontological loss of self.⁴

Marx says that the object of labour is

the objectification of man's species life: for he duplicates himself not only, as in consciousness, intellectually, but also actively, in reality... In tearing away from man the object of his production, therefore, estranged labour tears from him his species life, his real species objectivity.⁵

The alienation of labour, in being the alienation of man's "real species objectivity", is therefore an objective loss rather than merely a loss of the potential for creative activity. It is true that there is a sense in which this objective alienation relates to the question of man's potential,

¹Economic and Philosophic Manuscripts, p. 69.

²Ibid., p. 110.

³Bell, op. cit., p. 203. Cf. also George Lichtheim, Marxism, p. 43.

⁴This is denied by John O'Neill, 'The Concept of Estrangement in the Early and Later Writings of Karl Marx', p. 77.

⁵Economic and Philosophic Manuscripts, p. 72.

for even in alienation man has the potential to attain his full species being in the historical development of his essential nature. But against this merely 'potentialist' interpretation Marx suggests that the condition in which man's full essence is only a potential (rather than an actual) reality is the condition in which the alienation of labour "appears as a loss of reality for the workers".¹ Under these circumstances man's objective essence itself is lost to him. It is not the potential for creativity which man especially loses in alienation, but rather that in alienation man has the historical possibility or potential of acquiring his objective nature which is lost in alienation. Ernest Mandel accepts this interpretation of the concept of alienation in the Manuscripts, but adds that it is contradicted by another conception developed by Marx in the same work.² Rather than being contradictory on this point the Manuscripts are quite consistent in so far as the concept of qualitative alienation, which entails the concept of an objective loss to man's anthropological nature, is implied by the notion of quantitative alienation developed at the same time by Marx.

We have already seen that the theory of exploitation or quantitative alienation, in the Economic and Philosophic Manuscripts postulates that the appropriation of products is the appropriation of objectified labour. The more man produces the less he has. The alienation of labour in exploitation is, therefore, a devastation of the labourer because the "product of labour is labour which has been congealed in an object, which has become material: it is the objectification of labour".³ As labour is "congealed" in the product of labour the labourer and his product are objectively, indeed, ontologically linked. Marx says that the "worker

¹Ibid., p. 66.

²Mandel, op. cit., pp. 161-162.

³Economic and Philosophic Manuscripts, p. 66.

puts his life into the object; but now his life no longer belongs to him but to the object".¹ The appropriation of the fruits of labour is, therefore, the appropriation of the labourer's life, that is, his objective species life. It is for this reason that Marx says that the labourer's products are torn from him when they are appropriated. It is in the argument concerning the exploitation of labour, therefore, that Marx first demonstrates that the concept of alienation in the Manuscripts implies a concept of objective loss rather than a loss of potential.

The theory of exploitation which is part of Marx's mature theory of alienation has a conception of appropriation which is different from the one of the Manuscripts and which implies an entirely different conception of what is lost to labour in qualitative estrangement. The value theory of exploitation maintains that in production the labourer does not merely congeal his labour in the product appropriated by the capitalist, but rather sells his labour power, his capacity for labour, to the capitalist. As Marx says in Wages, Price and Profit,

What the working man sells is not directly his labour, but his labouring power, the temporary disposal of which he makes over to the capitalist.²

This account is similar to the one of the Manuscripts in so far as both maintain that the product of labour is appropriated from the worker and that labour goes into the production of objects, or commodities. The labourer loses control over his activity and time and is subjected to the rule of capital in both Marx's account of the worker selling his labour power to the capitalist and in the account of the capitalist appropriating labour. According to both the early and later theories work is not a means of self expression and it does not directly satisfy the labourer's

¹Ibid., pp. 66-67.

²MESW, II, p. 55.

needs. But in conceiving the worker's relation to production as a temporary disposal of his capacity for labour to the capitalist, it follows that the labourer has forsaken not his labour, which is inextricably connected with the labourer, but only his potentialities for human development.

It is through their different conceptions of the worker's relation to production that the 1844 theory of alienation and the mature theory differently conceive the nature of the qualitative loss to labour in alienation. According to the Manuscripts man's creative capacity is inherent in his objective nature, and in production man objectifies his species life. Appropriation of the product is therefore the estrangement of his "real species objectivity". His loss is ontological. According to Capital and other mature writings, on the other hand, man's capacity for labour is alienated in appropriation and what he loses, therefore, is his potential for free creative development. The basic difference between the two works in this is that whereas in the Manuscripts the "worker...[is] a commodity"¹, in Capital it is labour power which is the commodity.² The appropriation of the commodity in the former is the objective loss of the worker himself rather than the loss of his capacity or potential for labour.

All theories of alienation entail a concept of the transcendence of alienation, of the negation of alienation, for all theories contain negatable propositions. The concept of alienation's transcendence, or communism, implied by the theory of the Economic and Philosophic Manuscripts is again quite different from that contained in Marx's mature theory of alienation. In the Manuscripts Marx describes communism "as the real

¹Economic and Philosophic Manuscripts, p. 24; cf. ibid., p. 66.

²Capital, I, pp. 164-165.

appropriation of the human essence by and for man". He goes on to say that communism is "the complete return of man to himself as a social (i.e. human) being", and that it is

the true resolution of the strife between existence and essence, between objectification and self-confirmation, between freedom and necessity, between the individual and the species.¹

In overcoming alienation man's nature or species character, which, after all, is what he is alienated from, is fully and objectively realised; he is returned to his own free and conscious activity.² Communism is "the first real coming-to-be, the realisation become real for man, of man's essence".³ Thus the concept of objective loss in qualitative alienation implies a concept of a resurrectionary transcendence of alienation in the realisation of man's true essence.

In his mature writings Marx is, regrettably, reticent in describing communist society as it might be. As he quips in Capital, he prefers to confine himself to "critical analysis of actual facts, instead of writing receipts (Comtist ones?) for the cook-shops of the future".⁴ But as the concept of the transcendence of alienation is the concept of the negation of alienation, the one can be inferred from the other and checked against the obiter dicta on communism in the mature writings. Marx's mature theory of alienation holds that a surplus created in production is appropriated from the labourer and that the conditions of production dominate labour and detract from the freedom and creativity of which the labourer is potentially capable. In the transcendence of alienation,

¹Economic and Philosophic Manuscripts, p. 95.

²Ibid., p. 71.

³Ibid., p. 152.

⁴Capital, I, p. 26. Engels explains why in 'The Housing Question', cf. especially MESW, II, p. 373.

therefore, labour controls the surplus it creates and controls the conditions under which it produces it. This is roughly Marx's meaning in the Communist Manifesto when he says that

In bourgeois society, living labour is but a means to increase accumulated labour. In Communist society, accumulated labour is but a means to widen, to enrich, to promote the existence of the labourer. In bourgeois society, therefore, the past dominates the present; in Communist society, the present dominates the past.¹

Under communism labour's control of the surplus it produces and of its conditions of production is attained by "socialised man, the associated producers, rationally regulating their interchange with nature, bringing it under their common control, instead of being ruled by it".² This is similar to Marx's depiction of communism in the Manuscripts. But whereas man attains total freedom in his attainment of essence in the early conception of transcended alienation, here the strife between freedom and necessity is not truly resolved, for socialised production "nonetheless still remains a realm of necessity".³ While man is able to realise his potential in creative activity after transcending his alienation, according to Capital, his freedom is not complete in the manner of the Manuscripts.

The mature conception of transcended alienation does not imply a total freedom, the full termination of necessity. The realisation of man's full potential, in his control of the surplus he produces and the conditions of production, is a diminution of necessity, the minimisation of its domination over man. But it is not a situation of entirely "free

¹MESW, I, p. 121.

²Capital, III, p. 820. Cf. also The German Ideology, p. 93.

³Capital, III, p. 820.

conscious activity" in production, as it is in the Manuscripts¹, it is rather "a greater reduction of time devoted to material labour in general".² According to Capital the transcendence of alienation is not itself the negation of necessity, but it is the necessary condition of such a negation. Marx says that "the true realm of freedom...can blossom forth only with this realm of necessity as its basis".³ Whereas in the Manuscripts the act of transcending alienation is itself the negation of necessity and the realisation of freedom, in Capital total freedom is not realised through the mere transcendence of alienation, although the material basis for the attainment of total freedom is achieved with the transcendence of alienation. The difference between the two works is not merely in the different conceptions of the transcendence of alienation, but also in their different accounts of the process of attaining total freedom. In the Manuscripts the attainment of total freedom is identical with the transcendence of alienation. It is only the drastic reduction of necessity rather than its negation which is equivalent to the transcendence of alienation according to Capital, although the transcendence of alienation is seen as the basis of the process through which "the true realm of freedom" can be obtained.

The mature concept of alienation implies, therefore, a concept of transcended alienation which is a large increment of freedom, but not the total abrogation of necessity. This latter, according to Marx's mature theory, is a goal attained by a process which can be set in motion only after the transcendence of alienation has itself occurred. The early concept of alienation, on the other hand, as it postulates an alienation of man's essence, entails a concept of transcended alienation which, in

¹Economic and Philosophic Manuscripts, p. 71.

²Capital, III, p. 819.

³Ibid., p. 820.

being the return of man to his essential nature, is a full reversal of his loss of freedom in alienation.

The foregoing discussion has shown that Marx's early concept of alienation belongs to a system of concepts which is markedly different from the system of concepts entailed by the mature theory of alienation. We saw that the concept of quantitative alienation in the Economic and Philosophic Manuscripts implies a conception of worker's impoverishment in alienation which is contrary to that developed in Capital.¹ Similarly, the concepts of qualitative estrangement and transcended alienation entailed by the early concept of alienation are contrary to the analogous concepts entailed by the mature concept of alienation. Not only does the concept of alienation belong to different system of concepts which explain the alienated condition differently, but the role of the concept of alienation in the structure of explanation is also different in the two theories.

In the Manuscripts private property and the division of labour are seen as a consequence of man's alienation², whereas in Marx's mature theory of alienation they are the causes of alienation.³ This reversal of the chain of causation is strictly deducible from differences in the conception of alienation. In the Manuscripts the division of labour and private property, as partial expressions of man's essence, as expressions of the alienation of his essence, are necessarily the result of alienation. In the mature account of alienation man's loss of his capacities result from dominating social relations, which when absent allow man to realise

¹Lichtheim, op. cit., p. 197, is aware of this fact but not its significance.

²Economic and Philosophic Manuscripts, pp. 75-76, 120.

³The German Ideology, p. 49; A Contribution to the Critique of Political Economy, pp. 51-52; Capital, I, pp. 108, 340-341, 407.

his full potential. We must conclude, then, that while Marx's early and mature writings both make use of a theory of alienation, the same theory is not found throughout his work. There are, in fact, two different and contrary theories of alienation in Marx's writing, the basic contours of which have been outlined above.

III

The theory of alienation developed in the Economic and Philosophic Manuscripts was displaced by a different theory of alienation in Marx's mature writings, most completely elaborated in Capital, although not in a compact and easily discernible form in the manner of the Manuscripts. The reasons for Marx's theoretical change of course can be traced to various sources. In Chapter 4 above the Feuerbachian background of the early theory and Marx's repudiation of Feuerbach in The German Ideology was examined. These factors provide part of the explanation. Another important consideration which led to the development of a second theory of alienation is in the empirical limitations of the early theory as a theory of capitalism.

Marx identifies the historical advent of capitalism with the process of 'primitive accumulation', "an accumulation not the result of the capitalist mode of production, but its starting point".¹ This development began, he says, with the usurpation of feudal property by the feudal lord and the expropriation of the serf from the soil, thus giving rise to private property and free labour.² The historical starting point of this is the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries.³ By the sixteenth century, with

¹Capital, I, p. 667.

²Ibid., p. 685.

³Ibid., p. 671.

"the creation...of a world-embracing commerce and a world-embracing market", Marx says that the "modern history of capital" had begun.¹ The capitalistic labour process, which is uniform for the entire capitalist epoch, has two basic characteristics; firstly, "the labourer works under the control of the capitalist" and secondly, "the product is the property of the capitalist and not that of the labourer, its immediate producer".² This model of the labour process is assimilated into the early theory of alienation as well as into the mature theory. The only difference being that in the Manuscripts Marx splits the first of these characteristics into two aspects, the externality of labour and its forced nature.³ While these characteristics of the labour process are uniform for the whole of capitalism, Marx says in Capital that the method of production, of which the labour process is only a single part, is historically variable within the capitalist mode of production. The theory of the Manuscripts has no such conception.

Marx divided capitalism into the historical periods of manufacture, on the one hand, and machinofacture or modern industry, on the other; the watershed separating them is the industrial revolution. Marx says that the first period, "roughly speaking, extends from the middle of the 16th to the last third of the 18th century"⁴, while the second became established "only during the decade preceding 1866".⁵ Although this may appear to be an all too precise periodisation, Marx does say that manufacture and machinofacture are "[not] separated from each other by hard

¹Ibid., p. 145.

²Ibid., p. 180.

³Economic and Philosophic Manuscripts, p. 69.

⁴Capital, I, p. 318.

⁵Ibid., p. 363.

and fast lines of demarcation".¹ What is important, though, is that the method of production in the two periods is qualitatively different. "In manufacture, the revolution in the mode of production begins with the labour-power, in modern industry it begins with the instruments of labour."² According to Marx's own periodisation he wrote Capital, published in 1867, just inside the period of modern industry, a theory of which is developed in that work. The theory of the Manuscripts, on the other hand, takes no cognisance of modern industry. Three elements of the early theory of alienation are the claims of an absolute impoverishment of labour, that labour is the essence of the historical subject and that labour productivity is increased through an intensification of the social division of labour. While each of these propositions is true, or implies another proposition which is true³, for the period of manufacture, they are each false for the period of modern industry, as Marx's discussion in Capital demonstrates. In what follows these will be dealt with in turn.

The majority of accounts dealing with Marx's early writings explain his theoretical development in terms of his reaction to and relation with other theorists, most notably Hegel and Feuerbach, in the way that previous chapters of this thesis have attempted. The theoretical climate in which he worked obviously has some importance for the content of Marx's own theoretical development. But the empirical nature of Marx's theorising must also be given an important place in any explanation of his intellectual development. Running throughout Marx's early writings is an

¹Ibid., p. 351.

²Ibid.

³The proposition that the essence of man is labour is an anthropological rather than an economic claim, but it implies that the labour process is dominated by the activities of the labourer rather than by the instruments of labour which he uses in production.

attempt to explain poverty theoretically, and the philosophical aspects of his theoretical apprenticeship must be tempered, therefore, with the recognition that Marx's initial problematic was the problem of poverty, as Heinz Lubasz's important paper argues.¹ As well as the articles from the Rheinische Zeitung, discussed by Lubasz, Marx's Paris writings largely concern themselves with the problem of poverty. The entire thrust of the Economic and Philosophic Manuscripts is in its attempt to explain the absolute poverty of capitalist labour.

The discussion of alienation in the Manuscripts begins with the contradiction between the growing wealth of society and the growing poverty of the immediate producers of this wealth.² The facts of the matter are uncontestable, accepted by contemporary political economy -- the Malthusians as well as their opponents -- and by modern historians. The French historian Jacques Droz opens a chapter of his book dealing with the period in a strikingly similar fashion to Marx:

Seen from an economic point of view, society during the first half of the nineteenth century was afflicted with a terrible contradiction. Taken as a whole it grew richer; the value of agricultural production, and above all of industrial production, rose. And yet the majority of the population grew poorer: wages fell, and at certain times dropped steeply.³

David McLellan notes that between 1830 and 1847 the wages of the German factory worker dropped by forty-odd percent and that "most industrial workers lived at well below subsistence level".⁴ Droz provides statistics which show an overall decrease in the incomes of French, German and

¹Heinz Lubasz, 'Marx's Initial Problematic: The Problem of Poverty'.

²Economic and Philosophic Manuscripts, p. 64.

³Jacques Droz, Europe Between Revolutions, p. 62.

⁴David McLellan, Marx Before Marxism, p. 17.

English workers between 1820 and 1850.¹ It is Marx's intention in the Manuscripts to explain this poverty with the theory of alienation.

The poverty of the early nineteenth century can be explained from various points of view. It has been attributed to circumstances external to industrialisation, such as agrarian failure. Eric Hobsbawm echoes this position when he says that the first industrial crisis occurred only in 1857², although Marx puts the date as early as 1825 in Capital.³ Another external cause held to be responsible for the poverty of labour is the growth of population. Marx explicitly rejects this view in the Manuscripts when he says that the "demand for men necessarily governs the production of men, as of every other commodity".⁴ Rather than in adverse external circumstances Marx identifies the source of industrial poverty as one internal to the industrial system:

when society is in a state of progress, the ruin and impoverishment of the worker is the product of his labour and of the wealth produced by him. The misery results, therefore, from the essence of present-day labour itself.⁵

This is an improvement on the diagnosis proposed in the Introduction to the Critique of Hegel's Philosophy of Right, written just a few months before the Manuscripts, where the poverty of the proletariat is seen as a result, not of the structure of society, but of its "acute disintegration".⁶ In the Manuscripts the proletariat's poverty is a result of the method of labour employed by society in creating its wealth.

¹Droz, op. cit., pp. 64-65. Cf. also Eric Hobsbawm, The Age of Revolution, pp. 205-208.

²Hobsbawm, ibid., p. 168.

³Capital, I, p. 24.

⁴Economic and Philosophic Manuscripts, p. 24.

⁵Ibid., p. 30.

⁶Early Writings, p. 256.

The issue of poverty is related to a number of different factors. In stating that there is a direct relationship between the ruin, impoverishment and misery of the worker and "the essence of present-day labour", Marx confines his argument to the nature of the labour process. We shall move onto a full discussion of the Manuscripts' conception of the labour process shortly, but before we do it can be pointed out that the nature of the workers' ruin discussed in the Manuscripts is a consequence of a particular form of the labour process, pertaining to a particular phase of capitalist development rather than to the capitalist mode of production as such. The situation described in the Manuscripts is one in which the "worker becomes all the poorer the more wealth he produces...[and] loses reality to the point of starving to death".¹ There are two issues here, the absolute impoverishment of labour and its mortality. The question of absolute and relative impoverishment has been considered above, and there is no need to go over it again here. But there is another factor, germane to the physical exhaustion and death of the labourer, which has not yet been touched upon, and which shows that the dimensions of the workers' misery outlined in the Manuscripts are empirically confined to a limited historical period of capitalist development.

In Capital Marx differentiates between absolute and relative surplus value, the one is surplus value which results from an increase in the length of the working day, the other from an increase in the productivity of labour within a fixed working day.² The moral consequences of absolute surplus value are "not only the deterioration of human labour-power...[but] also the premature exhaustion and death of this labour-power itself".³ Its historical context is largely confined to the period

¹Economic and Philosophic Manuscripts, p. 66.

²Capital, I, p. 299; cf. ibid., pp. 478-479.

³Ibid., p. 253.

prior to the second half of the nineteenth century, when statutory limitations on the length of the working day were enacted. The regulation of the working day did not decrease the exploitation of labour, in fact alienation was intensified with the introduction of machinery¹ — which went hand in hand with the move from the appropriation of absolute to relative surplus value — but it did remove the abject misery of industrial life. Before this Parliamentary action, which coincided with the transition from manufacture to machinofacture, when modern machinery was available to only a few capitalists, the conditions of labour deteriorated where the new methods of production were employed. The "exceptional" profits available to the capitalist led him to "[prolong] the working day as much as possible"², thus proportionately increasing the misery of labour. But this began to cease as the use of modern machinery became more widespread. Indeed, with the development of capitalism in the historic phase of modern industry, and as a consequence of the increasing productiveness of capital, the "natural necessity [of labour] in its direct form has disappeared; because a historically created need has taken the place of the natural one".³ In the period of modern industry the worker is not forced to a subsistence existence and premature death, the value of his labour power is measured in historical and socially relative terms, rather than in terms of basic and physiological needs.

The total poverty which Marx explains in the Manuscripts is that of the period of manufacture and the transition from manufacture to modern industry, that is a condition of poverty and misery empirically confined to labour in a particular phase only of capitalist development. When in 1892 Engels wrote the 'Preface to the English Edition' of his The

¹Ibid., pp. 398-399.

²Ibid., p. 383.

³Grundrisse, p. 325.

Condition of the Working-Class in England, originally published in 1845, he felt compelled to inform his readers that the impoverishment and wretchedness of labour described in the book was a consequence of "the juvenile state of capitalist exploitation"¹, and that civic and welfare conditions had improved since 1844. Similarly, in the Economic and Philosophic Manuscripts, Marx discusses an abject poverty and physical extinction of labour, which in the early theory of alienation he conceives as the natural state of labour under capitalist production, which is historically specific to a limited period of capitalist production. As a general analysis of the condition of labour within the capitalist mode of production the discussion of the Manuscripts is inadequate. The analysis of labour's poverty in the Manuscripts is false for the period of capitalist development which is called in Capital the period of modern industry.

The poverty of labour discussed in the Manuscripts is conceived as a result of the capitalist labour process. The role of labour in the production of private property is regarded by Marx as the key to human alienation, and the labourer's misery is seen as a direct consequence of his alienation. It has been noted above that the difference between absolute and relative surplus value — which marks the different qualities of labour's poverty — can partly be attributed to whether there is an absence of presence of machinery in the production process. The difference between the periods of manufacture and machinofacture is also related to this aspect of the labour process. Marx's discussion of the labour process in the Manuscripts indicates further that his analysis is relevant for the period of manufacture, but inadequate for the period of modern industry.

¹Frederick Engels, The Condition of the Working-Class in England, p. 28.

The major premise of the theory of alienation in the Economic and Philosophic Manuscripts is the proposition that labour is the essence of the historical subject, man. Marx celebrates Adam Smith as the Luther of Political Economy for bringing man "within the orbit of private property, just as in Luther he is brought within the orbit of religion"¹; political economy does this by "elevating labour to the position of its sole principle".² Hegel is praised for accepting the standpoint of modern political economy, for he too "grasps labour as the essence of man — as man's essence in the act of proving itself".³ Marx's apprehension of the idea that man is not merely a conscious being but a consciously active being in production allowed him to make more profound the Feuerbachian conception of alienation, by arguing that the alienation of man's essence is the alienation of his activity, of his labour. Man's estrangement in production, therefore, "is that of real life", and when it is transcended man's alienation in religion, in the state and so forth, is also remedied.⁴ Thus labour and the alienation of labour is at the centre of Marx's analysis of man's condition in capitalism. By incorporating the concept of labour as the "sole principle" into his philosophical anthropology, Marx also took from Smith a particular model of the labour process.

In Capital Marx says that the basic factors of the labour process are three-fold: man's labour itself, the subject of labour on which he works, and the instruments of labour with which he works.⁵ The importance of the last of these is that they "not only supply a standard of the degree of development to which human labour has attained, but they are

¹Economic and Philosophic Manuscripts, p. 88.

²Ibid., p. 81; emphasis in original.

³Ibid., p. 140; emphasis in original.

⁴Ibid., p. 96.

⁵Capital, I, p. 174.

also indicators of the social conditions under which that labour is carried on".¹ According to the Manuscripts man's alienation in production has its basis in "the essential relationship of labour", which is "the relationship of the worker to production".² This is a depiction of the alienating labour process: "The direct relationship of labour to its produce is the relationship of the worker to the objects of his production".³ It is significant that Marx here reduces the labour process to an application of labour to the subject of labour, there is no mention of the instruments of labour. Actually, this omission is not terribly serious if what is described is taken to be a summary of production within the context of manufacture, for there the workman is predominant in the labour process, the instruments of labour are subject to the labourer and production is "dependent on the strength, skill, quickness, and sureness of the individual workman in handling his tools".⁴ In this sense labour is the "sole principle" of production, for the labourer is the dominant factor in the production process. Under different social conditions, however, the instruments of labour assume a different role and the labour process takes on a different configuration. In manufacture the instruments of labour dominate the labourer⁵, and the Smithian model of the labour process as it is understood by Marx in his early theory of alienation is thereby shown to have no application for this stage of capitalist development.

The economic component of Marx's philosophical anthropology which relates to the labour process indicates that Marx, following Smith — whom

¹Ibid., pp. 175-176.

²Economic and Philosophic Manuscripts, p. 68; emphasis in original.

³Ibid.

⁴Capital, I, p. 320.

⁵Ibid., p. 398.

he later describes as "the political economist par excellence of the period of Manufacture"¹ – was working from an empirical assumption valid for the stage of capitalist development in which variable capital – or living labour – was significantly dominant over constant capital – or the instruments of production – in the labour process.² The predominance of labour over its instruments in production is a consequence of the organisation of labour typical of the formative period of capitalist development, prior to the introduction of machinery as the instrument of labour. Marx says in Capital that the organisation of co-operating labour "is the machinery specially characteristic of the manufacturing period".³ Any mention of machinery in the description of the labour process in the Manuscripts would have been redundant, therefore, if we understand Marx to have been discussing the manufacturing labour process. In the period of modern industry, on the other hand, the machine "supersedes the workman" in the labour process⁴, and its productiveness is "measured by the human labour-power it replaces".⁵ Under these conditions "machinery really plays a far more important part in the business of production than the labour and skill of the operative".⁶ In failing to include the instruments of labour as a separate category in his model of the labour process in the Manuscripts, and by insisting on the primacy of labour in the process of production, Marx's account of production in the early

¹Ibid., p. 329, note 4.

²Marx had not developed the concepts 'constant' and 'variable' capital in the Manuscripts, but working from the vocabulary of classical political economy refers to 'fixed' and 'circulating' capital, Economic and Philosophic Manuscripts, p. 44. Cf. Maguire, Marx's Paris Writings, p. 55, for a discussion of the important difference between the two sets of categories.

³Capital, I, pp. 329-330.

⁴Ibid., p. 355.

⁵Ibid., p. 369.

⁶Ibid., p. 399.

theory of alienation is too narrow to adequately explain the capitalist process of labour as such. Basing his analysis on the experience of an early stage of capitalist development Marx fallaciously reduces production to labour and fails to develop a theoretical comprehension of the instruments of labour and the historical variability of their importance in the labour process. These flaws of the early theory are corrected in the later writings.

Marx does not entirely ignore machinery in the Manuscripts, however. He observes that

the division of labour renders [the worker] ever more one-sided and dependent, bringing with it the competition not only of men but of machines. Since the worker has sunk to the level of a machine, he can be confronted by the machine as a competitor.¹

Marx was made especially aware of this type of situation by the Silesian weavers' rebellion of 1844, an advanced Luddite-type movement against machines which, Marx says in his Vorwärts! article of that year, are the "competitors of the workers".² The competition between labour and machinery is a recurring theme in Marx's writing thereafter, the replacement of labour with machines being described by him as the weapon of the capitalist in the class struggle against the worker.³ In the Manuscripts, though, the confrontation between labour and the machine is a function of the division of labour, a topic to which we shall move shortly.

Marx also refers to machinery when describing the degradation of life in the early industrial towns:

¹Economic and Philosophic Manuscripts, pp. 27-28.

²Early Writings, p. 415.

³Cf., e.g., The Poverty of Philosophy, p. 122; Capital, I, Chapter 15, Section 5, especially pp. 407, 410-411. Cf. also Engels, Anti-Dühring, pp. 324-325.

Machine labour is simplified in order to make a worker out of the human being still in the making, the completely immature human being, the child – whilst the worker has become a neglected child. The machine accommodates itself to the weakness of the human being in order to make the weak human being into a machine.¹

Again, this is not a general account of machinery in the labour process of capitalist production, but a description of the introduction of machinery for the employment of child labour in the early phase of the industrial revolution. It is likely that a reading of Wilhelm Schulz, Die Bewegung der Produktion and other literature informed Marx of this English practice, for a description of it quoted from Schulz is included in the first of the Manuscripts.²

Marx also quotes other lengthy passages on machinery from Schulz's book. Schulz in fact anticipates Marx's own developments; he distinguishes between men working through machines and men working as machines³, a metaphor which summarises Marx's discussion in Capital.⁴ Schulz also notes that changes in the method of production, as a result of the introduction of machinery, changes the capacity of production, which in its train carries a new prospect of stagnation and crisis.⁵ This is a precursor of Marx's discussion of the industrial cycle.⁶ It is perhaps against this background that Auguste Cornu says that Schulz provided Marx with the primary elements of historical materialism.⁷ It is true that Marx quotes from Die Bewegung der Produktion in Capital, where he warmly

¹Economic and Philosophic Manuscripts, p. 109; emphasis in original.

²Ibid., p. 33.

³Quoted in Economic and Philosophic Manuscripts, p. 33.

⁴Capital, I, Chapter 15, Section 1.

⁵Quoted in Economic and Philosophic Manuscripts, p. 46.

⁶Capital, I, pp. 425-427.

⁷Cited in Maurice Godelier, Rationality and Irrationality in Economics, p. 114, note 12.

recommends the book to his readers.¹ But no further reference is made to Schulz in Capital nor in any other of Marx's writings except the Manuscripts. There is no evidence that Schulz's discussion of machinery had a theoretical influence on Marx at the time of his writing the Manuscripts. Marx's discussion of the dehumanising effect on labour of machinery is clearly derived from Schulz, but, as David McLellan has said, the analysis "inspired" Marx's "moral judgements".² The theoretical analysis of the Manuscripts was not taken from Schulz, but from the classical political economists.

While Marx says that "the worker has sunk to the level of the machine"³ the reduction of the worker is explained primarily in terms of the appropriation of labour under conditions of private property, rather than in terms of machine production. The theoretical account of the worker's impoverishment through production of wealth by his labour is devoid of a reference to machinery. It is relevant to mention here, though, that when discussing the theory of the political economists Marx says that the "[d]ivision of labour and use of machinery promote wealth of production".⁴ It is not clear from the context whether Marx accepts this idea as his own or whether he is merely paraphrasing James Mill. On the same page, in a paraphrase of Jean Baptiste Say, Marx drops the reference to machinery when he says that "[w]ealth — production — is explained by division of labour and exchange". What is interesting in this is that here and elsewhere in the Manuscripts Marx accepts the view of early political economy that the production of wealth and increases in productivity can be accounted for strictly in terms of the division of

¹Capital, I, p. 352, note. 1.

²David McLellan, Karl Marx, p. 116.

³Economic and Philosophic Manuscripts, p. 27.

⁴Ibid., p. 124.

labour. It is evident from this that Marx's economic model of 1844 is strictly confined to the period of manufacture rather than to the capitalist mode of production in general.

The concept 'division of labour' has an extremely important function in the theory of alienation in the Manuscripts. Basically Marx argues that man is alienated through the production of wealth which is appropriated from him. As it is the alienation of man's labour which produces private wealth, human labour is therefore the essence of private property. Once this had been recognised, says Marx, "the division of labour had to be conceived as a major driving force in the production of wealth", for the "division of labour is the expression in political economy of the social character of labour within the estrangement".¹ Here the philosophico-anthropological notion of man's alienation and the economic notion of labour productivity are united in the concept 'division of labour'. An increase in the division of labour increases man's alienation by increasing the wealth he produces:

Whilst the division of labour raises the productive power of labour and increases the wealth and refinement of society, it impoverishes the worker and reduces him to a machine.²

It can be seen from this that the concept of the division of labour is central to Marx's account of the mechanism of alienation and also his analysis of the productivity of labour. The two are directly related in that an intensification of the division of labour, which raises the productive power of labour and therefore the quantity of wealth appropriated from it, intensifies labour's alienation.

¹Ibid., p. 120.

²Ibid., p. 30.

The theory of alienation in the Manuscripts entails, therefore, the economic proposition that labour productivity is raised through an intensification of the division of labour. The economic argument is not original to Marx, of course, and he acknowledges Adam Smith as its source.¹ But Marx's analysis is not merely taken over from political economy as such, it is drawn from classical economy's explanation of manufacture.² Marx says in Capital that the division of labour is "the distinguishing principle of manufacture".³ He explains that this is because in manufacture

[t]he quantity of [raw material] consumed in a given time, by a given amount of labour, increases in the same ratio as does the productive power of that labour in consequence of its division.⁴

The productive consumption of raw material, and, therefore, the volume of production, is proportionate to the intensity of the division of labour. While this is true for manufacture, when the organisation of labour is the 'machinery' of production⁵, it does not hold for production under the conditions of modern industry. When machinery is introduced into the labour process it "sweeps away by technical means the manufacturing division of labour".⁶ The manufacturing division of labour becomes redundant under these new conditions because machinery itself is the "most powerful means for increasing the productiveness of labour".⁷ The theory of alienation advanced in the Economic and Philosophic Manuscripts, which is

¹Ibid., p. 123.

²Capital, I, p. 329, note 4.

³Ibid., p. 325.

⁴Ibid., p. 340.

⁵Ibid., pp. 329-330.

⁶Ibid., p. 454.

⁷Ibid., p. 380.

incompetent to deal with modern industry, is unable to explain labour's productivity and alienation for the stage of capitalist development subsequent to the period of manufacture.

In proclaiming the demise of the manufacturing division of labour with the advent of modern industry Marx does not propose that the division of labour disappears, for "the capitalist form of that industry reproduces this same division of labour in a still more monstrous shape".¹ But the function of the division of labour is now altered. Rather than directly affecting the productivity of labour, the division of labour in modern industry merely deploys the operatives within the factory to where they are subjected to the machines which increase their productivity.² The division of labour remains, in Marx's analysis, an important feature of the social structure. In fact Marx develops in Capital a characterisation of the division of labour which corrects a confusion in Adam Smith's writings on the subject and implicitly demonstrates the implausibility of his own early theory of alienation.

Marx differentiates between the division of labour in general, or the social division of labour on the one hand, and the division of labour in particular, or the detail division of labour on the other.³ While the former "arises from the exchange between spheres of production"⁴, the latter results from the organisation within the workshop which distributes the operatives to their separate tasks in production.⁵ Marx says that the two forms of the division of labour, while practically linked and similar in many ways, are nevertheless different "not only in degree,

¹Ibid., p. 455.

²Ibid., p. 396.

³Ibid., pp. 331-332.

⁴Ibid., p. 332.

⁵Ibid., pp. 332, 336.

but also in kind".¹ The differences which Marx identifies are many-fold, relating to the nature of the object exchanged, the deployment of the means of production, and the authority relations of exchange, each of which presents itself differently in the different types of division of labour.² Adam Smith's discussion of the division of labour does not recognise the differences in kind between its social and detail forms. Marx points out that this is quite plausible. During the period of manufacture the detail division of labour does appear to be a replication, in miniature and within one location, of the social division of labour which occurs between the various industries in society at large. While Smith was mistaken to regard the differences between the social and the detail divisions of labour as subjective, in the mind of the observer rather than in reality, Marx says that this is an understandable mistake.³ The plausibility of an error is no corrective, however, and a failure to be aware of the distinction he makes in Capital has serious ramifications for Marx's early theory of alienation.

In the Manuscripts Marx follows Smith to a fault when he too fails to distinguish between the social and detail divisions of labour. In his discussion of the concept 'division of labour' in the writings of political economists Marx moves from a consideration of the social division of labour, in which the products of divided labour are exchanged socially in the market, to a consideration of the division of labour within production, which impoverishes the labourer, without being aware that he is dealing with two different kinds of divisions of labour.⁴ The fault primarily lies with political economy, of course, and Marx had not yet

¹Ibid., p. 334.

²Ibid., p. 336.

³Ibid., p. 335.

⁴Economic and Philosophic Manuscripts, pp. 123-124.

picked it up in 1844. But in duplicating Smith's lack of discrimination in this matter the early theory of alienation is nullified from the point of view of Marx's later correction of Smith on the division of labour.

In the Manuscripts Marx discusses the class experience in terms of its individual members: alienating production is "the relationship of the worker to production", "the product of labour...belongs to some other man than the worker".¹ So that when he says that the worker produces commodities and himself as a commodity², Marx is referring to the individual activity of labour under the conditions of alienation. It has already been shown above that at the centre of the Manuscripts' argument is the claim that each worker, in producing a commodity with his labour, is alienated from his labour through the appropriation of the commodity. This is the claim that in the manufacturing division of labour the individual's alienation is a consequence of the appropriation of a commodity he has produced with his labour. The difference between the social division of labour and the detail division of labour described in Capital is primarily in the fact that while products of the former are commodities, in the latter "the detail labourer produces no commodities".³ Thus according to Marx's position in Capital, the explanation of alienation provided in the Manuscripts is meaningless.

As we saw above, in Capital the worker's alienation is a consequence of the sale of his labour-power to the capitalist, rather than a result of his labour — in the form of a commodity — being appropriated by the capitalist, as it is in the Manuscripts. By focussing on the alienation of labour-power as opposed to congealed labour the theory of

¹Ibid., pp. 68, 74; emphasis in original.

²Ibid., p. 66.

³Capital, I, p. 335.

alienation in Capital is concerned with commodities only at a second remove. Labour's alienation is the alienation of the capacity to labour, it is not directly the alienation of labour itself. This is not to say that Marx's mature theory of alienation is unconcerned with commodity production, but that the process is much more complex than the theory of the Manuscripts assumes. In his discussion of the detail division of labour in manufacture Marx says that

the connexion between the detail operators in a workshop is due to the sale of the labour-power of several workmen to one capitalist, who applies it as combined labour-power.¹

Here is the process of alienation. It is posterior to the labourer's initial alienation that commodities are produced. For it is "the common product of all the detail labourers that becomes a commodity".² While the individual's alienation is a consequence of commodity production, according to Capital, it is not the individual's own production of commodities which accounts for his alienation, for the individual labourer does not produce commodities. The individual's alienation is located in the alienation of his labour-power. This latter, in conjunction with the labour power of others in manufacture, is productive of commodities.

The proposition that labour's productivity is raised by an intensification of the division of labour, which Marx adapts from Smith and incorporates into his early theory of alienation, demonstrates that the Manuscripts contains a theory relevant for the period of manufacture only, which is inadequate for an analysis of the capitalist mode of production as such. In failing to differentiate between the social and detail divisions of labour, and erroneously accepting that the latter is

¹Ibid., p. 336.

²Ibid., p. 335.

merely a version of the former, Marx operates from an assumption concerning the manufacturing labour process which he shows in Capital is without foundation. The function of the division of labour in labour productivity aside, this last point raises a further question concerning the theory of alienation in the Manuscripts.

The argument of Capital, that the individual labourer is not himself the producer of commodities, but that commodities are the product of a collective labour power, does not relate to the question of whether the theory of alienation in the Manuscripts is empirically valid for one phase of capitalist development but not another. It shows, rather, that from the perspective of Marx's later theory the early theory of alienation is formally false, irrespective of any historical difference between the stages of capitalist development.

It has been shown in this chapter that although the concept of alienation is current throughout Marx's writings his mature account of alienation can be regarded as belonging to a theoretical framework which is different from that of the Economic and Philosophic Manuscripts. The theory of alienation presented in Capital superseded the early theory for basically two reasons. Not only is the alienation theory of the 1844 Manuscripts limited in the scope of its empirical explanation, but from the perspective of the mature theory its formal content is false. The conclusion to be drawn from the argument of this chapter is that while the claim of an epistemological break around the concept of alienation in Marx's work fails to take account of his continuing endeavour from the 1840s to the 1860s to explain alienation empirically, the presence of two utterly different theories of alienation in the Economic and Philosophic Manuscripts on the one hand and Capital on the other, points to an absence of theoretical continuity in Marx's work.

PART III

POLITICS

Many of the themes dealt with in earlier chapters continue to occupy the attention of the argument of Part III. There is a continuation below of the discussion initiated in earlier chapters of alienation theory, the development of the class concept in Marx, the relation between Marx's early theory and liberal democratic theory, and the influence of Adam Smith's thought on Marx's early writing. Some new questions also are broached in the discussion of Marx's political theory and its development, which is the central focus of the two final chapters of the dissertation.

It was shown earlier that there is a marked distinction between Marx's early and mature theories of alienation. In Chapter 7 it is argued that the early theory of alienation itself underwent several stages of development from the Critique of Hegel's Philosophy of Right to the Economic and Philosophic Manuscripts. During this period the conception of the cause of alienation and the process of emancipation from it were modified by Marx, although the theory of the state as alienated social power is common to all of his early writings irrespective of variations on these other matters. A dimension of alienation not discussed in earlier chapters is outlined and evaluated in Chapter 7. It is shown that Marx's early conception of man's alienation in the state resembles the early liberal democratic theory of state sovereignty. The argument that there is a connection between Marx's early theory of alienation and classical liberalism is enhanced by the claim that the theory of the state as alienated social power is sustained by Marx's adaptation of a notion of social class drawn from Adam Smith. When he rejected Smith's class model, Marx rejected also the early theory of the state and developed an alternative to it.

As it was shown in Chapter 6 that the economic dimension of the early theory of alienation is not absorbed by the later theory, but is transcended by it, so it is shown in Chapter 8 that Marx's theory of the state as alienated social power has no place in his mature theory of the state as a class instrument. The chapter goes on to argue that as Marx's analysis of class relations became more sophisticated so too did his mature theory of the state. Whereas in its first expression in The German Ideology the mature state theory tends to assume that the capitalist state is the capitalist class in politics, he argues in later writings that social classes and the political state occupy different fields of operation. The later development of Marx's mature theory also demonstrates that the state, as part of the social formation, plays a role in the development of social classes, a factor which escapes his early formulation of the mature political theory.

The final chapter concludes where the first chapter began, on the influence of revolutionary theory on Marx's intellectual development. It is shown that his political and social thought derive from conceptions of political and social reality which are formed in the experience of, or through a study of revolutionary upheaval. The intellectual origins in Enlightenment and later revolutionary democratic thought of Marx's mature theory of the state is discussed briefly and his original contributions to the revolutionary tradition of political theory are noted.

Chapter 7

DEMOCRACY

In the Critique of Hegel's Philosophy of Right Marx first clearly formulated the view that man is alienated in civil society and that his alienated social power constitutes the political state. This theory of the state, as an alienated social power which is fundamentally separated from civil society, continued to inform Marx's discussion until it was significantly modified in The German Ideology, written three years later between 1845 and 1846. In the latter work the state is described as an instrument of class rule. The political theory of The German Ideology will be discussed in the next chapter. The present chapter is concerned with Marx's earlier political theory.

Marx's discussion of the political state in all of his writings prior to 1845 is largely a re-affirmation of the position first outlined in the Critique of 1843. This fact is perhaps responsible for the tendency on the part of some scholars to ignore or underplay significant differences in other aspects of Marx's political theory which emerge between the works of the period 1843 to 1845. A number of writers¹ have regarded the Critique as a work which furnished Marx with a political theory which continued to be the stable core of his later reflections on political matters. Such a position ignores the exploratory and tentative nature of Marx's thought at the time. During this early period Marx's ideas were held with some uncertainty², and his research should be seen as the endeavour to discover an adequate theoretical foundation on which he could build a critical and revolutionary analysis of society and politics.

¹Shlomo Avineri, The Social and Political Thought of Karl Marx; Jean Hyppolite, Studies in Marx and Hegel; Tom Kemp, 'Aspects of the Marxist Theory of the State'; Henri Lefebvre, The Sociology of Marx; Joseph O'Malley, 'Editor's Introduction' to Marx, Critique of Hegel's Philosophy of Right.

²Louis Dupré, The Philosophical Foundations of Marxism, p. 87.

It will be shown in what follows that despite some verbal similarities between certain passages of the Critique of Hegel's Philosophy of Right and formulations in Marx's subsequent works, in a number of respects the Critique is a far from reliable guide to the political theory which emerges in Marx's writings immediately after the Critique. The analysis of democracy, for instance, and also the means and process of emancipation from alienation presented in the Critique are immediately revised in On the Jewish Question and the Introduction to a Critique of Hegel's Philosophy of Right. Similarly, different accounts of the cause of alienation are offered in the different works of the period 1843 to 1845. At the same time, however, the theory of the state as alienated social power is continuous in all of the writings of the same period.

After discussing the development of Marx's political theory of alienation in the writings from the Critique to the Economic and Philosophic Manuscripts, the chapter presents an argument concerning the theory of the state as alienated social power. This begins with a full exposition of the theory as it is stated in Marx's writings, and then proceeds to an evaluation of the theory in terms of its democratic affinities. Finally, an explanation of Marx's transition from this theory of the state to the theory that the state is a class instrument is advanced through a brief discussion of the evolution of the class concept in Marx's early writings.

I

The Critique can be differentiated from the works which follow it in a number of ways, some more insightful than others. It has been said, for instance, that whereas the Critique attempts to "refute philosophy with philosophy", Marx's later writings bring out that "the main question

is not how to understand reality, but how to bring it to its own perfection".¹ This is an inadequate appreciation of the particular nature of the Critique vis-à-vis the later works, and also a misunderstanding of "the main question" to which Marx later addressed himself. While it is true that the Critique, as an internal discussion of Hegelian philosophy, is in that sense philosophical, Marx's other writings up to and including The German Ideology could similarly be described as philosophical. For they too lack the detailed concrete analysis of, say, The Poverty of Philosophy, Wage Labour and Capital and the Communist Manifesto. In these later pamphlets the social and economic development of capitalism is analysed and systematised without recourse to 'philosophical' argument in the manner of Marx's Deutsch-Französische Jahrbücher contributions and the Economic and Philosophic Manuscripts. Marx's 'philosophical' discourse continues after the Critique.

The distinction between understanding reality, which is the alleged focus of the Critique, and changing reality, is also less than a satisfactory summary of the difference between the Critique and what followed. While the subsequently written Introduction is a strongly programmatic work, it should not be forgotten that the Critique also offers a programme for change in its advocacy of true democracy as a means to realise human freedom. It should be added that when Marx wrote in 1845 that the point is to change the world, whereas philosophers have only interpreted it², he was not committing himself to the view that interpretation should cease. The necessity of an adequate and correct interpretation of the social world is the basic premise of Marx's injunction that the world be changed. The works after the Critique, such as the essay On the Jewish

¹Ibid., p. 93.

²Thesis on Feuerbach, XI, MESW, I, p. 15.

Question, the Economic and Philosophic Manuscripts and especially Capital, would be seriously misunderstood if it is not recognised that they are before all else attempts to understand reality. It is Marx's later estimation of the inadequacy of the Critique's understanding of reality which led him to abandon the idea of publishing it.

Rather than a difference of intention it is a difference in theoretical content which separates the Critique from Marx's later writings. It is significant that these differences predominantly lie in the realm of political theory. The Critique's central categories, for instance, are freedom and democracy, rather than the concepts of community and socialism¹, which are essential to his later thought. As a pre-communist statement the Critique advocates neither the abolition of the state nor private property²; the rejection of both is at the basis of Marx's later normative politics. It has been suggested, though, that while the abolition of the state and private property are "explicitly formulated in subsequent writings", the groundwork for this position is "prepared in the Critique".³ The Critique can be interpreted in this way, but such a backward reading of Marx interrupts any serious comprehension of the development of his political thought and tends to misconstrue the theoretical importance of the Critique to his later thought. Before turning to a discussion of the differences in Marx's political thought between the Critique and the works which directly follow it, we will briefly consider the status of the Critique in Marx's intellectual development.

The intellectual autobiography outlined in the 'Preface' to A Contribution to the Critique of Political Economy explains that as a

¹John Maguire, Marx's Paris Writings, p. 12.

²Dupré, op. cit., p. 106.

³O'Malley, op. cit., p. lii; cf. also Avineri, op. cit., p. 34.

result of the collapse of the Rheinische Zeitung, of which he was editor, Marx took the opportunity provided by unemployment to return to the study. The Critique is clearly identified as the "first work which I undertook to dispel the doubts assailing me".¹ Its importance to Marx therefore lies in the fact that it was the chronological beginning of his systematic criticism of prevailing contemporary doctrine. The manuscript available to us today is a very rough first draft in which passages from Hegel's Philosophy of Right are followed by Marx's commentary. The Critique's American editor has described the draft as being uneven in style, shifting in tone and spontaneous in its statement.² This is not to underrate the quality of Marx's thought in the piece, but it does indicate the rudimentary and undeveloped nature of the work.

Marx had originally intended immediately to redraft the manuscript for publication, but this did not occur. Instead, he used some ideas of the draft for his essay On the Jewish Question and wrote an Introduction to the proposed revised draft. These were both published in the Deutsch-Französische Jahrbücher in 1844 after Marx had moved from Kreuznach, where he wrote the Critique, to Paris. In many respects these essays do summarise parts of the earlier work. However, as we shall see below, aspects of On the Jewish Question are quite different to the rough manuscript from which it was drawn, and the tenor of the Introduction is totally different from that of the Critique. Marx explains in his 'Preface' to the Economic and Philosophic Manuscripts that the style of the draft Critique of Hegel's Philosophy of Right made it "utterly unsuitable" for publication.³ He goes on to say that he intends to

¹Marx, A Contribution to the Critique of Political Economy, p. 20.

²O'Malley, op. cit., p. x.

³Economic and Philosophic Manuscripts, p. 18.

issue instead a series of pamphlets on the critique of law, ethics, politics and so forth. The series is to conclude with a work which was to draw the threads of the earlier pieces together and present an overview of all the material.¹ This project, too, lapsed. It is likely that with his residence in Paris, where he moved in socialist circles and read a literature largely new to him — including Engels' Outlines of a Critique of Political Economy, published in the Jahrbücher — Marx began to settle some of the uncertainty which had initially led him to write the Critique and he began to rethink various positions stated in that work. This suggests that Marx did not publish a version of the Critique because his ideas took a new turn of development almost immediately after he had drafted it. This rendered the Critique an inadequate, indeed, an impossible basis for the elaboration of his later ideas.

The tentative nature of Marx's thought during the period 1843 to 1845 is indicated in his reluctance to publish his research. In early 1845, before moving to Brussels in February, Marx signed a publisher's contract and received an advance of 1,500 francs to produce a book entitled A Critique of Economics and Politics, for which the Economic and Philosophic Manuscripts was a first draft.² At about the same time he drew up a plan of a work on the modern state which suggests that he intended to rework the themes of the Critique of Hegel's Philosophy of Right and On the Jewish Question.³ Neither project was carried out. In spite of strong encouragement from Engels, Marx abandoned the contracted book because of his dissatisfaction with the proposed rewritten Manuscripts of 1844.⁴ Instead of completing work already begun he embarked

¹Ibid.

²David McLellan, Karl Marx, pp. 138-139.

³The German Ideology, p. 669.

⁴Boris Nicolaievsky and Otto Maenchen-Helfen, Karl Marx, p. 108.

upon an entirely new project with Engels which was, he explained in a letter to his publisher, "to prepare the public for the point of view of my Economics which is diametrically opposed to the previous German intellectual approach".¹ Whereas he had deemed his earlier writings, for one reason or another, to be inadequate foundations on which to develop his ideas, Marx believed that he had found his intellectual feet with The German Ideology. When recalling this work some years later he cavalierly dismissed the fact that it remained unpublished with the remark that he had willingly "abandoned the manuscript to the gnawing criticisms of the mice" as its main purpose — "self-clarification" — had been achieved.² But in fact Marx and Engels tried very hard to get the book to press. They recruited friends to negotiate on their behalf and sent the manuscript to at least eight publishers, but fear of the censor and of financial risk prevented any of them from publishing it.³ Marx's keenness to have The German Ideology published clearly distinguishes it from the Critique of 1843 and the Economic and Philosophic Manuscripts. It also reveals something of the respective status of each work in his theoretical development.

It has been argued above that Marx did not publish the Critique of Hegel's Philosophy of Right because his ideas continued to develop immediately after it had been drafted. It could be said that the Critique, more than The German Ideology, was written for its author's self-clarification, for it showed Marx what he had yet to do. The value of the Critique is that it allowed Marx to develop for the first time the

¹Quoted in McLellan, op. cit., p. 143.

²A Contribution to the Critique of Political Economy, p. 22. Cf. also Engels' reminiscence in 'On the History of the Communist League', MESW, III, p. 179.

³McLellan, op. cit., p. 151; Nicolaievsky and Maenchen-Helfen, op. cit., p. 112.

Feuerbachian insight that man is the subject rather than the predicate of history. In his elaboration of this notion Marx saw that the history of the state must be understood in terms of the history of man. This is a remarkable discovery which became, as Marx said in another context, "the guiding principle" of his later studies.¹ Marx's apprehension of this insight and the particular interpretation he gave to it was without precedent in the Hegelian context from which it emerged. The implications of the discovery made in the Critique could be expected, therefore, to be quite different from the other ideas which surrounded it at the time of its first statement. The many changes which Marx's thought underwent during this early period between 1843 and 1845 can be seen, therefore, as his endeavour to remove the heritage of old conceptions from his new formulation, to develop an original idea into an entirely new theory of history and politics.

II

The theory of alienation in Marx's early writings has been discussed in previous chapters of this thesis. In Chapter 4 the Feuerbachian background to the theory was indicated and in Chapter 6 its economic dimension and the differences between it and the mature theory of alienation were discussed. It may have been assumed from a reading of these accounts that Marx took over the Feuerbachian conception of alienation and merely elaborated it to serve his own polemical and theoretical purposes. What emerges from a close study of Marx's thought of the period 1843 to 1845 is that the theory of alienation, which is the critical core of these writings, undergoes significant development in the short period of time between the Critique of Hegel's Philosophy of Right and the

¹A Contribution to the Critique of Political Economy, p. 20.

Economic and Philosophic Manuscripts. As the theory of alienation changes in these writings so does Marx's evaluation both of the state's potential as a liberating factor and of the nature of democracy. Marx's understanding of the agency and process of human emancipation also changes significantly during this period.

(a)

Although the concept of alienation is seldom referred to by name in the Critique, the work constitutes Marx's first full treatment of the problem of estrangement. The question of man's alienation pervades the work as a whole, is fully defined in it¹, and a proposal is outlined for the rectification of the alienated condition. According to the Critique man's alienation is a consequence of the division between the state and civil society:

Civil society is separated from the state. It follows, therefore, that the citizen of the state is separated from the citizen as a member of civil society. He must therefore divide up his own essence...The separation of civil and political society appears necessarily as the separation of the political citizen, the citizen of the state, from civil society and from his own empirical reality.²

Marx argues against Hegel's claim that there is no tension between the private sphere of civil society and the public or social sphere of the state by maintaining that man is indeed estranged from the state in his private or individual life. The substance of the individual's alienation is constituted in political representation, according to Marx, in the representation of the legislative function by particular bodies, for

¹Dupré, op. cit., p. 108, agrees that the Critique "turns on" the concept of alienation, but goes on to say that the concept "remains undefined" in the work. But the Critique as a whole is an attempt to define the concept of alienation in use.

²Early Writings, pp. 143-144; emphasis in original.

the fact that civil society takes part in the political state through its deputies is the expression of the separation and of the merely dualistic unity.¹

On this basis Marx is able to propose that alienation can be overcome through the abolition of the representative function, in the institution of full or direct democracy in which "all as individuals...take part in the legislature".² Marx differentiates, therefore, between the political state, in which man is alienated, and the democratic state, in which he is not.

Marx's basic complaint against the political state in the Critique is concerned with its failure to allow man to achieve his full nature. The political state is not able to carry its social or communal content beyond the merely political sphere and can not infuse itself through the whole of society and of man's life.³ The individual is deserted by the political state, and left to an atomistic existence in civil society.⁴ On the other hand the democratic state, according to Marx's argument in the Critique, is the condition of man's fully human existence. Democracy, Marx says, is founded on "real human beings and the real people; not merely implicitly and in essence, but in existence and in reality".⁵ Rather than suffer a divided life and a divided essence, as with the political state, all of man's aspects are realised in unity within the democratic state. The democratic state embraces all spheres of life. Marx warns against confusing the Republican state, in which democracy is merely formal, with the democratic state, in which the form and content

¹Ibid., p. 189; emphasis in original.

²Ibid.

³Ibid., pp. 88-89.

⁴Ibid., p. 145.

⁵Ibid., p. 87.

of democracy are unified.¹ Only in the democratic state is man's alienation overcome.

Marx argues, therefore, that the attainment of full human freedom ultimately rests on the development of the state. The division between the political state and civil society, and the alienating division in man's own essence, is overcome only through the radical democratisation of the political state, in which all of the separate spheres of civil society are absorbed into a single rational organism. In the Critique, then, Marx offers a political solution to the problem of alienation, and the mechanism of this solution is electoral reform.

Only when civil society has achieved unrestricted active and passive suffrage has it really raised itself to the point of abstraction from itself, to the political existence which constitutes its true, universal, essential existence. But the perfection of this abstraction is also its transcendence. By really establishing its political existence as its authentic existence, civil society ensures that its civil existence, in so far as it is distinct from its political existence, is inessential. And with the demise of the one, the other, its opposite, collapses also. Therefore, electoral reform in the abstract political state is the equivalent to a demand for its dissolution and this in turn implies the dissolution of civil society.²

The politicisation of civil society, through electoral reform — the universal suffrage, breaks down the separation of political and civil life. In doing both civil society and the political state are transcended and the differences between them become united into a single whole which is the democratic state.

It will be clear from the above discussion that in the Critique Marx conceives of alienation primarily as political rather than economic

¹Ibid., pp. 89-90. Maurice Godelier, Rationality and Irrationality in Economics, p. 108, does confuse them.

²Early Writings, p. 191; emphasis in original.

alienation, as in the Economic and Philosophic Manuscripts. The resolution to man's alienation, as we have seen, is in the democratic state, which comes into being through the democratisation and therefore politicisation of civil society. It was shown in the first two chapters of this thesis that Marx's arguments in the Critique, regarding man's de-alienation, bear some resemblance to Hegel's position. Both Marx and Hegel regard the state as the agency of human emancipation. This is not to say that their positions are identical, of course. Hegel sees the state as subject to the moving force of universality in the Idea, whereas Marx maintains that the rational state, in achieving its true social nature, brings man to the perfection of his essence. But Marx's insistence upon a political solution to alienation (in) unique to the Critique. Two features of Marx's consideration in the Critique which distinguish that work from those immediately following it are that while he is opposed to the separation of politics from the rest of life¹, he is not opposed to politics as such. In the later works he is. Secondly, unlike his later writings the Critique does not argue for the abolition of the state, but only for the abolition of the non-democratic state. Marx regards the democratic state to be very much a state.

In the Critique Marx understands the concept 'the state', like Hegel, to refer to an organic state, the state in this sense is politically organised society. The claim that "Marx's call for democracy and universal suffrage...is equivalent to his demand for the abolition of the state"² fails to appreciate that democracy in Marx's sense is not the abolition of the state as such, but the universalisation of the state. The political state, although claiming universality for itself - it

¹Ibid., pp. 88-89.

²O'Malley, op. cit., p. lxiii.

"assumes the significance of the universal"¹ — exists as a particular institution separate from civil society. Man's existence in the political state is divided from his existence in civil society, and his essence is therefore similarly divided. This is the basis of man's alienation, according to the Critique. Democracy, on the other hand, says Marx, "is the first true unity of the particular and the universal". He goes on to say that

In democracy the state as particular is only particular, and as universal it is really universal; i.e. it is not something determinate set off against other contents.²

That is, in democracy the state is the whole, it is really universal, embracing all of society and therefore all of man.

It is not even clear that Marx saw the advent of the democratic state as implying the abolition of the political state. When commenting on the French revolutionary view that the universality of democracy means that the political state disappears he says that "[this] is correct in the sense that the political state, the constitution, is no longer equivalent to the whole".³ When this is taken in conjunction with the statement quoted above, that "[in] democracy the state as particular is only particular", Marx appears to be saying that while the political state is no longer the whole of the state in democracy, it may remain as a particular institution.⁴ In so being, of course, it is no longer the political state that it was. We saw Marx argue above that unrestricted suffrage, in politicising civil society, leads to the dissolution of both civil

¹Early Writings, p. 88.

²Ibid.

³Ibid.

⁴For another interpretation cf. McLellan, Marx Before Marxism, p. 151.

society and the political state. But the dissolution of the political state seems to imply, in this context, no more than the abolition of its pretension to a false universality, not its institutional abolition. The reference is obscure, however, and Marx does not return to this theme again. But what is clear is that Marx's call for democracy is a call for the democratic state, which he considers to be the real state.

The political solution to alienation, in the call for universal suffrage, assumes that man's essential nature is realised in the full development of the state. Immediately after writing this in the Critique the notion is rejected in the Introduction, where Marx describes as a "utopian dream...the partial, merely political revolution, the revolution which leaves the pillars of the house standing".¹ The rejection of the position of the Critique is even more thorough in Marx's 1844 polemic against Arnold Ruge, 'Critical Notes on "The King of Prussia and Social Reform"', published in Vorwärts! In this piece Marx describes the organic conception of the state, in which "the state and the organisation of society are not two different things. The state is the organisation of society", as "a political point of view".² He goes on to assert the epistemological and practical limitations of politics when he says that "political understanding is [inadequate] to the task of discovering the source of social need"³, and that

[the] more developed and the more comprehensive is the political understanding of a nation, the more the proletariat will squander its energies...in senseless, futile uprisings that will be drowned in blood.⁴

¹Early Writings, p. 253.

²Ibid., p. 411.

³Ibid., p. 417.

⁴Ibid., p. 418.

Marx's break with the solution of universal suffrage after the Critique is total. After 1843 he saw it only as a Republican and not a revolutionary instrument.¹ Marx's attitude to politics in his later thought is more complex, though. In the Communist Manifesto his major criticism of utopian socialists is their rejection of political action.² In the Inaugural Address of the Workingmen's International Association Marx says that "the great duty of the working classes" is to "conquer political power".³ But the proletariat's engagement in legal politics is important for its educative value, it raises the class to a social force. Marx never again proposes a political solution to the liberation of the proletariat. Even the educative role of political action has the dangerous possibility of leading to opportunism and reformism.⁴ In the Critique Marx not only begins a new search for revolutionary theory, he concludes an earlier development to which he does not return.

The difference between the democratic road to de-alienation described in the Critique, and the communist road first fully outlined in the Economic and Philosophic Manuscripts, is far-reaching.⁵ The differences between the two can be simply enumerated: democracy overcomes political alienation, communism overcomes economic alienation; democracy is the realisation of the authentic state, communism is not the full universalisation of the state but its negation; democracy amounts to the citizenry, as opposed to the bureaucracy, becoming the universal class, in communism

¹Cf. the remarks in 'The Class Struggles in France', MESW, I, pp. 222-223, 291.

²MESW, I, pp. 135, 136.

³MESW, II, p. 17.

⁴Cf. Marx's letter to Wilhelm Liebknecht, February 11, 1878, Selected Correspondence, p. 314.

⁵The contrary is asserted by Avineri, op. cit., p. 34; cf. also McLellan, op. cit., pp. 150-151.

the proletariat is the universal class which liberates mankind through its transcendence of economic alienation. But Marx's later position is not reached in a quantum leap. While still in Kreuznach he wrote a criticism of Bruno Bauer's articles on Jewish emancipation and published it in the Jahrbücher as On the Jewish Question. This work can be seen as a summary of the Critique, for it restates the discussion of the dichotomy between state and civil society, and carries the argument further. However, to say this alone inadequately describes the relation between the two works.

(b)

The ideas elaborated in On the Jewish Question which are taken from the Critique are easily traced. Marx explores the abstract nature of the political state and the consequent dualism which it generates in the lives of its citizens in a way that is clearly a development of the analysis begun in the Critique.¹ The historical beginning of the political state is in the political revolution, according to Marx, a revolution which led to the dissolution of feudalism, an "organisation of the life of the people... [in which] property [and] labour... [were separated] from the state as a whole and constituted... as separate societies within society".² The political state was to restore a unity denied in feudalism by gathering up "the political spirit which had, as it were, been dissolved, dissected and dispersed in the various cul-de-sacs of feudal society... and constitute it as the sphere of the community".³ But the political revolution which brought about the political community of the state also freed "egoistic man", who is without community, from the

¹Early Writings, pp. 219-222, 225-226.

²Ibid., p. 232.

³Ibid., p. 233.

fetters of feudalism, and made him the foundation of the civil society on which the political state rested: "The constitution of the political state and the dissolution of civil society into independent individuals ...are achieved in one and the same act".¹ Because the political state is separated from civil society it in fact failed to unify society, and its universality remained a merely theoretical phenomenon: "Political emancipation was at the same time the emancipation of civil society from politics, from even the appearance of a universal content".² All of this can be found in one form or another in the Critique³, but the implications Marx now draws are new ones.

The politicisation of civil society in the movement from the political to the democratic state, which in the Critique is seen to lead to the emancipation of man from his alienation, is regarded to be impossible in On the Jewish Question. Marx's reasons for this are three-fold: the politicisation of civil society is unable to lead to its dissolution, there is no difference between the political and democratic states, and political emancipation is a limited form of emancipation, which is not able to overcome man's alienation. It will be seen that each of these propositions logically follows from the preceding one. In On the Jewish Question Marx says that the equality of man in the political state derives from the fact that each person "is an equal participant in popular sovereignty".⁴ It is on this basis that the political state can lay claim to its supposed universality, for it is an equal community of all citizens. But Marx points out that the political state creates the equality between citizens by declaring the real inequalities of civil

¹Ibid.

²Ibid.; emphasis in original.

³Cf. ibid., pp. 145-148, 158.

⁴Ibid., p. 219.

society "to be non-political distinctions"; indeed, its existence presupposes them.¹ The universalisation of the suffrage is not sufficient to abolish private property, and therefore private interest, on which civil inequality and the political state rest. Marx does cite a situation in which "political life attempts to suppress its presupposition, civil society and its elements, and to constitute itself as the real, harmonious species-life of man".² But it does so "in violent contradiction to the conditions of its own existence" and "the political drama necessarily ends up with the restoration of religion, private property and all the elements of civil society".³ Marx holds this view because is recognising that "the political annulment of private property does not mean the abolition of private property"⁴, he recognises that an extension of politics into civil society could not lead to the dissolution of civil society, it must remain essentially the realm of private interest. It follows from this that the political state and the democratic state are not fundamentally different.

In the Critique the democratic state is the organic unified state in which man's essence is whole rather than divided, as it is in the political state. In On the Jewish Question Marx continues to describe the democratic state as "the true state"⁵, but he also says that it is "the state which relegates religion to the level of other elements of civil society"⁶, which is to say that it recognises religion as non-political, but has no interest in abolishing it any more than it has an

¹Ibid.

²Ibid., p. 222.

³Ibid.

⁴Ibid., p. 219.

⁵Ibid., p. 223.

⁶Ibid., p. 222.

interest in abolishing private interest. Thus the democratic state is the political state. In the Critique Marx differentiates between the form and the content of democracy. The Republic, for instance, has a democratic form, but in lacking the democratic content it remains a political state, and on this basis is distinguished from the true democratic state. In On the Jewish Question the democratic content of the state is the same as its democratic form, both are merely political and founded upon the dualism of civil society and political life.¹ Thus according to On the Jewish Question, and in contradistinction to the Critique, political emancipation in democracy is not able to overcome man's alienation, which is the third point.

The key to the political theory of the Critique is the proposition that man attains his freedom in political emancipation through the full development of the democratic state. In On the Jewish Question Marx argues that human freedom is not identified with the fully developed state, and that political emancipation is an incomplete form of liberation for man:

The limitations of political emancipation are immediately apparent from the fact that the state can liberate itself from a restriction without man himself being truly free of it, that a state can be a free state without man himself being a free man.²

Marx does not deny the importance of political emancipation, for he says that it "is certainly a big step forward"³, but he does argue that it is of an intrinsically limited nature. It is especially relevant to his later thought that Marx regards political emancipation as "the last form

¹Ibid., pp. 225-226.

²Ibid., p. 218.

³Ibid., p. 221.

of human emancipation within the prevailing scheme of things"¹, for this implies that full human emancipation requires the overthrow of "the prevailing scheme of things", the overthrow of an order partly characterised by the existence of the state itself.

Marx makes it clear in On the Jewish Question that nothing less than a fundamental re-organisation of civil society is the necessary precondition of human emancipation, and that the full abolition of the state is part of such a re-organisation. In calling for "[an] organisation of society that abolishes the basis" upon which money and commerce exist², Marx calls for an abolition of the preconditions of egoistic man, the individual dominated by his private needs and by private interest. As the state finds its own precondition in egoistic man, human emancipation requires the abolition of the state.

Only when real, individual man resumes the abstract citizen into himself and as an individual has become a species-being in his empirical life, his individual work and his individual relationships, only when man has recognised and organised his forces propres as social forces so that social force is no longer separated from him in the form of political force, only then will human emancipation be completed.³

This is precisely the reverse of the process described in the Critique. It is not the democratic state's absorption of civil society, but rather the absorption of the state by society. It is the resumption of the abstract citizen into the individual person, rather than an extension of citizenship to all areas of civil society. The liberation of man is realised in the annulment of the state; it is not a consequence of the highest form of the state, as it is in the Critique, but the abolition of

¹Ibid.

²Ibid., p. 236.

³Ibid., p. 234.

the highest form of the state. But it is not the abolition of the state itself which liberates man.

In the Economic and Philosophic Manuscripts, when describing early theories of communism, Marx criticises communism "of a political nature still – democratic or despotic" and communism based upon "the annulment of the state".¹ On the Jewish Question repudiates the first of these and avoids the second, for although it assumes that in his liberation man must abolish the state, as Marx does in the Manuscripts², man's emancipation is not the result of the state's abolition, but a consequence of social emancipation. It is this latter which leads to the abolition of the state. Marx's first full account of the agency of social emancipation is to be found in the Introduction rather than in On the Jewish Question, but the need for social emancipation as opposed to political emancipation is sufficiently clear in On the Jewish Question to distinguish the theory of alienation outlined in that work from the one of the Critique.

(c)

It has been shown above that in the Critique Marx explains that man's alienation is a result of the division between state and civil society. The programme for de-alienation in the Critique is based on this diagnosis. As well as arguing that the democratisation of civil society leads to its ultimate dissolution, he also says that a mere politicisation of civil society can not achieve democracy. Marx says that for civil society to be politicised in order that it be receptive to democracy, it is necessary that it first be changed. But Marx only

¹Economic and Philosophic Manuscripts, p. 95.

²Ibid., p. 96.

vaguely points to the need for changes in civil society without saying specifically what they might be.¹ Overall, and irrespective of changes in civil society prior to its politicisation, the Critique maintains that the full universalisation of the state is fundamentally responsible for the emancipation of man from his alienation. The dichotomy between state and civil society is central to the discussion of On the Jewish Question also, but this does not mean that Marx proposes in this work that man's alienation is a result of the bifurcation between civil and political life.² Marx now takes the argument that the state is a consequence of civil society to imply that the agency of man's alienation is in the nature of civil society itself. In On the Jewish Question the dualism of state and civil society is regarded as a consequence or manifestation of man's alienation, rather than its cause, as it is in the Critique.

According to On the Jewish Question man's alienation is a consequence of the nature of civil society, and emancipation from alienation therefore requires the total transformation of civil society, which its democratisation is incapable of achieving. On the Jewish Question differs from the Critique in the way that it identifies specific features of civil society in its explication of the alienating condition. In the Critique man is alienated in his particular existence and emancipated when his essential nature becomes universal. The philosophical categories 'particular' and 'universal', while not wholly absent from On the Jewish Question, are replaced in the explanation of alienation by concrete categories. Marx says that "[m]oney is the estranged essence of man's work and existence; this alien essence dominates him and he worships it".³ It follows, therefore, that "[e]mancipation from haggling

¹Early Writings, p. 188.

²Avineri, op. cit., p. 18, maintains the contrary.

³Early Writings, p. 239.

[commerce] and from money...would be the self-emancipation of our age".¹ The identification of money as the cause of alienation is, in a sense, a refinement of the position adopted in the Critique. It could be argued that the root of alienation identified by each work is the same, only the language has changed in becoming more concrete.

While the basis of alienation in each work bears some relation to the other, the difference between the Critique and On the Jewish Question is greater than their similarity in so far as the account of emancipation, based on the conception of alienation, is in On the Jewish Question contrary to that of the Critique. The similarities in the concept of alienation does not prevent the theory of alienation, which includes propositions concerning man's emancipation from alienation, from being significantly different in the two works. This is analogous to the differences between the theory of alienation in the Economic and Philosophic Manuscripts and that of Capital, discussed in Chapter 6 above. It was shown there that although the concept of alienation in each work is similar, the system of concepts in which it operates is quite different in each work.

Marx's account of the basis of alienation in the Critique, which is generally similar to, but not specifically the same as that of On the Jewish Question, changes again, but more significantly, in the Economic and Philosophic Manuscripts. In a manner similar to On the Jewish Question, Marx points to the need to appreciate "the connection between this whole estrangement and the money-system".² In the third Manuscript he says that "money transforms the real essential powers of man and

¹Ibid., p. 236.

²Economic and Philosophic Manuscripts, p. 65.

nature into what are merely abstract conceits"¹, for what a person is "is by no means determined by [his] individuality"², but by his possession of money. In man's alienation money becomes the universal bond of society, and it alone possesses "truly creative power".³ In its operation money supersedes man's own faculties, and becomes for him "the other person".⁴ Marx shows, then, that in his alienation man is dominated by money, which substitutes for him. All of this has previously been stated in On the Jewish Question.⁵

The difference between the two works is that whereas in On the Jewish Question money is the cause of alienation, in the Economic and Philosophic Manuscripts it is the phenomenal form of alienation. While money is the "object of eminent possession"⁶, and exalted by man in his alienation when he himself is humbled, it is itself a consequence of alienation. In the Manuscripts the basis of man's alienation is not in commerce, but in labour. "Private property is thus the product, the result, the necessary consequence, of alienated labour, of the external relation of the worker to nature and to himself."⁷ Thus the causal chain of alienation described in On the Jewish Question is reversed in the Manuscripts.⁸ The discussion of money is similar in the two works, but its role in the explanation of man's alienation is quite different.

¹Ibid., p. 130.

²Ibid., p. 128.

³Ibid., p. 129.

⁴Ibid., p. 127.

⁵Early Writings, pp. 239-241.

⁶Economic and Philosophic Manuscripts, p. 127.

⁷Ibid., p. 76; emphasis added.

⁸Dupré, op. cit., p. 129, says that this "signals a new departure in [Marx's] thought".

It can be seen that during a short period of time Marx advanced in the Critique, On the Jewish Question and the Economic and Philosophic Manuscripts three different specific causes of alienation; the division of man's essence between the state and civil society, money and labour respectively. In a sense each explanation is a refinement of the one which precedes it, but it is also clear that with each modification in the account of the basis of alienation, the theoretical formulation of the alienated condition also changes significantly. The different conceptions of the root of alienation in each work is designed to not merely strengthen the preceding conception, but to replace it with another. This indicates the degree to which Marx was dissatisfied with the conclusions of his inquiries during this period and the relentless nature of his research in attempting to develop the foundation of an explanation of the human condition and of a programme of emancipation from alienation. It has been shown above that in the Introduction to the proposed redrafted Critique Marx forcefully rejects the political solution to alienation proposed in the Critique. He introduces the proletariat into a theory of human emancipation for the first time in the Introduction, and gives it a key role in bringing about the emancipating social revolution intimated in On the Jewish Question. Some writers have argued that apart from the new emphasis on the proletariat, all of the elements of the Introduction "are already contained" in the Critique.¹ Others have seen the formulations of the Introduction as demonstrating that Marx's ideas have evolved in a new direction.² Certain features of the Introduction can be found in the Critique, but the new emphasis on the proletariat carries with it a political theory which is fundamentally different from that of the earlier work.

¹McLellan, op. cit., p. 185.

²Dupré, op. cit., p. 112.

(d)

A discussion of the concept 'proletariat' in the Introduction and its difference from the concept in Marx's later writings can be found in Chapter 1 of this thesis. Although there is no need to raise this issue here, some related matters already discussed will be mentioned in the brief outline of the political theory of the Introduction which follows.

In the Critique Marx introduces the concept of the proletariat, although not the word, when arguing that a consequence of the French Revolution was to complete the transformation of feudal estates into social classes. The former, he says, are characterised by their political significance, whereas the latter are distinguished by the "criteria ...of money and education".¹ A person's civil and political positions do not coincide in modern society, therefore, as they do in feudalism, save for members of the executive.² The principle underlying civil society, and the division of society into classes, is fundamentally arbitrary.³ The only determinate factor which Marx can identify is that the class which satisfies the material needs of society is constituted through its absence of property:

The only noteworthy feature [of the fluid division of masses] is that the absence of property and the class of immediate labour, of concrete labour, do not so much constitute a class of civil society as provide the ground on which the circles of civil society move and have their being.⁴

This is clearly the proletariat which Marx is to later name in the Introduction.⁵ But in the Introduction it is seen to not merely exist,

¹Early Writings, p. 146.

²Ibid., p. 147.

³Ibid., p. 146.

⁴Ibid., pp. 146-147.

⁵Cf. O'Malley, op. cit., pp. li-lii, liii; Avineri, op. cit., p. 57. But see also the discussion in Chapter 1 above.

it exists to actualise philosophy in the attainment of full human emancipation.¹ The anticipated emancipation of man has a very different agency in the Critique.

Shlomo Avineri has argued that in the Introduction the concept 'proletariat' takes on the Hegelian identity of the universal class.² The proletariat is the class which in overcoming its particular sufferings represents the general interests of society by abolishing suffering per se and in toto. This is a position quite dissimilar to the one adopted in the Critique, where Marx identifies the whole of civil society as the class of private citizens which has the capacity to become the universal class in the democratic state. Marx's argument is directed against Hegel's assumption that "the universal class is the class of civil servants".³ The civil service, which Marx pejoratively calls the bureaucracy, a word not used by Hegel⁴, is shown in the Critique to be a particular class with particular interests which uses the state as its own private property.⁵ Thus the universal class must be found elsewhere. As the state and civil society are separate and as the individual's civil and political positions are distinct, in order to attain political significance in the political state the individual "must discard his class, civil society, the class of private citizens; for it is precisely this class that stands between the individual and the political state".⁶ This highlights the absence of universality in the political state, but

¹Early Writings, pp. 251-252, 256-257.

²Avineri, op. cit., pp. 57-59; Avineri, 'Hegelian Origins of Marx's Political Philosophy'. This position had been argued earlier by Bertrand de Jouvenel, On Power, pp. 50-51.

³Early Writings, p. 136.

⁴Pierre Naville, Le Nouveau Leviathan, cited in Martin Albrow, Bureaucracy, p. 69.

⁵Early Writings, pp. 107-109.

⁶Ibid., p. 144.

in the democratic state it is precisely in the class of citizens that universality resides. "What is crucial in the true state is...the capacity of the universal class to be really universal, i.e. to be the class of every citizen."¹ In place of Hegel's bureaucracy, Marx identifies in the Critique the democratic state's real universality in the class of the citizenry, not in the proletariat as he does in the Introduction.

The notion of the universality of the class of citizens described in the Critique does not appear in any of Marx's later works. First, the claim that the citizenry constitutes a class, which is uncritically taken from Hegel, is quite foreign to Marx's later usage of the term 'class'. Second, it is a wholly different class, the proletariat, which is the universal class in the Introduction. But much more important still is the fact that the universality of the citizenry is meaningful only in an etatist solution to alienation, in which the development of the state is responsible for man's emancipation. The alienation suffered by the proletariat described in the Introduction can not be comprehended by an account of alienation in terms of the division between state and civil society, between citizen and bourgeois, for the proletariat is outside of this systemic division. Marx hints at this last point in the Critique when he says that the class of labour "do[es] not so much constitute a class of civil society"², but it has no place in his explanation of man's alienation and emancipation. In the Introduction the revolutionary nature of the proletariat derives from the fact that it is not a class of civil society and is a class without even political citizenship. Its universality can not be a consequence of the universalisation of civil society nor the state. It is the exclusion of the proletariat from civil society and the political state which gives it its insurrectionary

¹Ibid., p. 112.

²Ibid., pp. 146-147.

potential. The proletariat strives neither to enter civil society nor democratise the state, but to emancipate man from both. The difference between the Critique and the Introduction is not merely that the universal class is different in each. The whole approach of the Critique to the foundation of universality in the analysis of alienation and emancipation is replaced by a significantly different series of generalisations in the Introduction.

The notion of a universal class of citizens loses all meaning for Marx when in On the Jewish Question he realises that the democratic state is still the state and that a political solution to alienation is no solution at all. But while the universality of citizenship is no more than an illusion after the Critique of Hegel's Philosophy of Right, Marx is aware of the political importance of citizenship and of its denial. During the nineteenth century much political writing was motivated by the dual fear that exclusion from the political community of the state would lead the proletariat to rise up, and that an extension of the suffrage to the working class would destroy liberal democracy. What was a frightful dilemma for liberal writers was cause for Marx's optimism. He accepted that the proletariat would "strive to obtain" citizenship where it did not have it, and use it to advantage where it did.¹ In the Vorwärts! article Marx says that isolation from the community is the root of all rebellions², and in the draft plan for a work on the modern state, written a few months later, he identifies the suffrage with "the fight for the abolition of the state and of bourgeois society".³ But Marx also maintains that such a fight would not lead to the emancipation of the proletariat. In the Vorwärts! article he says that the community from

¹The German Ideology, p. 237.

²Early Writings, p. 418.

³The German Ideology, p. 669.

which the proletariat is isolated, and toward which it is led in revolution — in attaining its emancipation — is not the political community, but the community of human nature.¹ The attainment of citizenship, according to Marx, can provide no more than membership of the political state. In achieving citizenship man does not achieve emancipation from alienation, for citizenship is itself a manifestation of alienation, of political alienation. After the Critique Marx rejected the notion that alienation results from the representative function of political suffrage, but he continued to argue in subsequent writings that political alienation is manifest in citizenship. This forms the basis of the conception of the state as alienated social power.

III

While Marx constantly revised his explanation of the cause of alienation and of its transcendence, the analysis of political democracy remained more or less the same during the period 1843 to 1845. Marx perceives that in civil society, where man leads an atomic existence as an egoistic being, isolated from his fellows in the pursuit of private interests and the satisfaction of particular needs, man loses his essential sociality, his natural faculties and powers. The theory of alienation which attempts to explain how man loses his essential nature, and how he might regain it, takes various forms in the different writings of the period. They all acknowledge, however, that the political state is an expression of man's alienation, that it is the political form of his alienation. Political alienation is a special form of alienation. Whereas the alienation of labour in its economic dimension robs man of his true community in creating objects which are wholly independent of him, in his political alienation man creates the state in which his

¹Early Writings, pp. 418-419.

alienated social power resides and where he exists in some form of community. In being a political community the state is only a partial community, an alienated community, but nonetheless man's existence in the state is quite distinct from his existence in civil society where he is devoid of community. The state as alienated social power can be characterised by three fundamental features, then. As a consequence of alienation it derives from or is based upon civil society. The distinct nature of political alienation means that the state is strictly separated from civil society. And as man's social power, which is alienated in civil society, comes to form the political state, man's political life takes the form of a communal life. In what follows the conception of the state as alienated social power will be elaborated and examined.

Marx took from Feuerbach the notion that man's alienation is a consequence of those things produced by men which become independent of them. This is very clearly expressed in the Economic and Philosophic Manuscripts when Marx says that

The alienation of the worker in his product means not only that his labour becomes an object, an external existence, but that it exists outside him, independently, as something alien to him, and that it becomes a power of its own confronting him.¹

It is Marx's intention that the products of alienation be understood as not only material objects, but also the institutional consequences of the alienated relation. On the page before the one on which the above sentence appears Marx describes religion as one such product, and he might have added there, as he did later in the Manuscripts, that the state is another consequence of man's alienated situation. This view is also expressed in the Critique when Marx says that the state is a function

¹Economic and Philosophic Manuscripts, p. 67.

of the individual's social capacity and that this capacity is alienated in the state.¹ Like all products of man's alienation the state is a consequence of his situation in civil society and comes to be a factor in his oppression.

As an alienated phenomenon the political state is conceived by Marx as the negation of man, that is, the negation of man's human social being. The argument that the state is both the result of alienation and an instrument of alienation is analogous to the discussion of private property in the Manuscripts where it is held that although private property appears to be the cause of alienation it is really its effect, but that once actualised it comes to be a supporting cause of man's alienation.² However, unlike private property the alienating magnitude of the state is two-fold and it is in this that its special nature lies. The state functions to preserve the egoism of civil society, and therefore reinforces the economic and social alienation of man. In its form, on the other hand, as the political community of man, the state itself constitutes a second, different type of alienation, political alienation per se.

In the Economic and Philosophic Manuscripts Marx describes the state as one of a number of "particular modes of production" which fall under the general law of man's self-alienation.³ 'Mode of production' is not understood here, as in Marx's later works, as the general form of social production, but rather as the facility productive of a particular function. The specific characteristic of the state is that it produces the means of preserving man's alienation in civil society. This is stated more directly and broadly when the function of the state is outlined in On the Jewish Question. Marx says that the political community

¹Early Writings, pp. 78, 143.

²Economic and Philosophic Manuscripts, p. 76.

³Ibid., p. 96.

is a "means for the conservation of [the] so-called rights of man".¹ The rights of man are distinguished from the rights of the citizen in so far as the former are the rights of the member of civil society only, thus strongly differentiating them from political rights.² The rights extended to civil man by the state are predominantly the rights of property, of self interest, the right to be without community.³ The state therefore functions to preserve the primary basis of man's egoism and alienation, according to Marx's argument. In summary, the state is an alienating institution in the sense that it provides juridical support to the economic and social alienation which characterises man's existence in civil society. The state functions to maintain primary alienation, and thus contributes to it.

In its function the political state is not the cause of primary alienation, its contribution to man's estrangement in this respect is the degree to which it supports alienation by legally sustaining private interest. But in conjunction with its function, the form of the state directly produces a secondary alienation, political alienation. Before examining fully the nature of man's political alienation in the state it will be necessary to consider the alienating dualism of the division between the state and civil society.

Marx argues that alienated man suffers a fundamental division in his life and being because as a member of civil society on the one hand, and of the state on the other, he is forced into two distinct and conflicting identities which must be held simultaneously. Man's political life, in which he exercises political rights, is conducted "in community

¹Early Writings, p. 231.

²Ibid., p. 228.

³Ibid., pp. 229-230.

with others".¹ Indeed, Marx adds that "participation in the community, in the political community or state" is the very content of political rights. The political community exists in conjunction with civil society, so that while man is and regards himself to be "a communal being" in the state, he is at the same time, as a member of civil society, "active as a private individual".² These are not merely different spheres of man's being, but in vital respects contradictory spheres. Civil society is the sphere of "egoistic man, separated from his fellow men and from the community"³, whereas the state is itself community, the political community, in which man "is considered to be a species-being".⁴ Thus Marx regards alienated man as a being rendered into two contradictory parts which exists side by side in the one person. But the political community and civil society are not simply parallel in Marx's account, for the state functions to serve civil society: "political life...[is] a mere means whose goal is the life of civil society".⁵ Man's communal life in the state is not only in contradiction with his life in civil society, but subordinate to it.

The alienation of man is evidenced in and partly constituted by the dualism of the state and civil society, the division between the citizen and the bourgeois in the single person. Not only does the state directly function to preserve civil society in safeguarding the rights of property and private interest, but the form of the state itself perpetuates the dualism. Marx explains that in the modern state man achieves political emancipation, for the modern state is sufficiently powerful to free

¹Ibid., p. 227.

²Ibid., p. 220.

³Ibid., p. 230.

⁴Ibid., p. 220.

⁵Ibid., p. 231.

itself from religion, private property and so forth. Man is not impeded, therefore, by his station or individual endowments from participating in the business of the state. The modern political state, unlike the feudal state, is the business of all the people, for the political state is "constituted...as a concern of the whole people".¹ But this is precisely the point that Marx wishes to emphasise. The state "only experiences itself as a political state and asserts its universality in opposition to these elements".² Rather than liberate man from the forces which oppress him the political state merely declares them to be non-political. In this way it is able to provide a form of universality for all its citizens which must exist outside, indeed, in opposition to the tethers on man's freedom which confront him in civil society. It is the political form of the state, which establishes itself after stepping aside, as it were, from civil society, in which man's communal life takes an alienated form. For the political state is incapable of fulfilling its promise of universality. It gives man a universal existence, but only on the basis of an atomic, isolated and non-communal existence in civil society, which contradicts and dominates the political community. It is the merely political form of man's community in the state that constitutes his political alienation.

It has been shown that the state and civil society are not merely separate and distinct phenomena to Marx, but opposites: the "political state is by its nature the species-life of man in opposition to his material life".³ Because the state can not carry into effect its promise of universality the opposition between the state and civil society is not simply institutional but ontological. Man's real life, says Marx, is

¹Ibid., p. 232.

²Ibid., p. 219.

³Ibid., p. 220.

conducted in civil society, in the state his political life is airy and unactual. This view is expressed in all of his early discussions of the state. In amplifying Marx's conception of the state as alienated social power, it specifies what he regards to be the content of the political state. In the Critique of Hegel's Philosophy of Right Marx says that the political state exists "alongside the real life of the people", that in civil society man "stands in material opposition to the state", and that "political life is the airy life, the aetherial region of civil society".¹ In On the Jewish Question it is similarly claimed that in civil society man is "in his immediate reality"², and that

man as he is a member of civil society is taken to be the real man, man as distinct from citizen, since he is man in his sensuous, individual and immediate existence, whereas politically man is simply abstract, artificial man, man as an allegorical, moral person.³

The proof of man's reality in civil society is precisely in the fact that civil society is the foundation of the political state, its material presupposition.⁴ And the unreality of man in the political state is a consequence of the incomplete universality of the political community.⁵ The content of the political state, therefore, is man as "the imaginary member of a fictitious sovereignty, [man] divested of his real individual life and filled with an unreal universality".⁶

¹Ibid., pp. 91, 143, 146.

²Ibid., p. 220.

³Ibid., p. 234.

⁴Ibid., p. 233.

⁵Ibid., p. 220. In the 'Critical Notes on "The King of Prussia and Social Reform"' Marx comments that "the state [is] an abstract totality which exists only through its separation from real life and which is unthinkable in the absence of an organised antithesis between the universal idea and the individual existence of man", ibid., p. 419.

⁶Ibid., p. 220.

While man's individual existence in civil society has a material reality, in matters of public or general concern, as opposed to individual concern, each individual serves "the political function [which is] his universal function".¹ Because the political state can not affect the material reality of man's alienation, which leads to his individual existence, his universality in the state must be illusive. So that in community with others, in performing the general or political function, in the state, man is an "imaginary member of a fictitious sovereignty". The substance of political alienation derives from the nature of this sovereignty.

Marx describes the quality of sovereignty in the state when he says in On the Jewish Question that

Political democracy...regards man — not just one man but all men — as a sovereign and supreme being; but man in his uncultivated, unsocial aspect, man in his contingent existence, man just as he is, man as he has been corrupted, lost to himself, sold, and exposed to the rule of inhuman conditions and elements by the entire organisation of our society — in a word, man who is not yet his true species-being.²

This statement serves to differentiate political democracy from the feudal polity, in which the individual is excluded from the state, and also from monarchy, in which sovereignty is invested in a single person. In contrast to both of these the whole people is given sovereign authority by the democratic constitution. But Marx's major consideration is that the full sovereignty of man, the supreme power of man as man, which occurs only as a manifestation of man's species-nature, is denied in political democracy. Indeed, he says that its absence is the foundation of political democracy, for the state imbues the whole people as a

¹Ibid., p. 233.

²Ibid., pp. 225-226.

sovereign force on the supposition that as individuals they will be without sovereignty in their social alienation. It is in this sense that Marx says that the sovereignty of man in political democracy is a merely fictitious sovereignty. It is only in their relations in the political community that men are sovereign. Man's true power of community is alienated from him and invested in the political state. The sovereignty of man in the political state is the sovereignty of citizenship, and it is the relationship between citizens which constitutes the political community of the democratic state.

IV

As the theory of the state as alienated social power has been fully outlined, it can now be evaluated. It will be recalled from our discussion of the Critique's political theory that Marx identifies the state with citizenship. The difference between the political and the democratic states is a difference in the scope of citizenship; in the former man is a citizen in only half of his being, in the latter it embraces his entire being. In On the Jewish Question he similarly refers to "citizenship, the political community"¹, although he rejects the claim that there is a significant distinction between the political state and the democratic state. What is continuous, though, is that the state is conceived as the relation between men as citizens. We shall return to this point shortly. It has also been shown that the state, in being separated from civil society, divides man into two, each person is both a member of the political community and an individual non-communal member of civil society. As a citizen in the political community man fulfils a general need which is to be the "means for the conservation of...[the] rights of man" so

¹Ibid., p. 231.

that the citizen is "the servant of egoistic man".¹ The secondary alienation of man in the state — which is his social power invested in the political community — is to preserve the primary alienation of man in civil society. Basically, then, in his political alienation man provides the state with a sovereign community which functions to preserve his alienation in civil society, his egoistic being founded upon private property and private interest. This conception of the state bears a striking resemblance to the legal theory of democracy developed in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries.

In general terms this theory argues that in democracy the people as a whole has vested its sovereign power in the legal structure of the state, which in turn protects the interests of the people. The political state represents itself as the embodiment of the general interest of the whole of society. The state's legitimacy and sovereignty derives from the participation of formally free and equal individual citizens, who form a single and unified political community through the suffrage. In surrendering their individual sovereignty to the political community the people as a whole receive in return the secular responsibility of the state towards the people.² An early statement of this view can be found in John Locke's Second Treatise on Government where he says that

Political Power is that Power which every Man, having in the state of Nature, has given up into the hands of Society, and therein to the Governours, whom the Society hath set over itself, with this express or tacit Trust, That it shall be employed for their good, and the preservation of their Property.³

¹Ibid.

²Cf. Joseph Schumpeter, Capitalism, Socialism and Democracy, pp. 247-248, for a brief discussion of this theory.

³John Locke, Two Treatises of Government, p. 428.

The argument here is that man surrenders to the state a power he naturally possesses, with the purpose of preserving property.

Marx's theory of the state as alienated social power is not simply a restatement of early democratic theory, but all of the elements of the latter are in the former. The key propositions of both theories are the same. First, man surrenders or alienates to the political community a power which he naturally possesses. Second, he participates in the community of the state as a free citizen, and it is from this that the state derives its sovereignty. Third, the political community stands apart from civil society and functions to preserve and safeguard its material foundation, private property. Marx's theory diverges from liberal theory, though, in having a critical dimension. Marx regards the state, as a product of man's essential powers which exists independently of his material existence in civil society, to be an object or institution which oppresses man. Thus Marx adds to the democratic theory of the state an element of Feuerbachian humanism.¹ He also argues, where neither the democratic theorists nor Feuerbach do, that man's existence in the state as a citizen constitutes a secondary alienation. Man's community with others in the state, in being political, is merely partial, and in its partiality is an unreal community.

The philosophical aspect of the theory of the political state as alienated social power is a theory of sovereignty similar to classical democratic theory. Unlike democratic theory, though, there is implicit in Marx's theory a humanist critique of the state. The empirical component of Marx's theory of the democratic state is the proposition that the

¹Daniel Tarschys, Beyond the State, p. 61, makes this point with regard to the theory of the state in the Critique without recognising its general relevance for the theory of the state in Marx's writings up to 1845.

state is a system of relationships between men as citizens. This is consistent with his general theory of alienation, which argues that in his alienation man has imposed upon him particular roles. In the alienation of his labour, for instance, man is nothing but a worker. In his political alienation, pari passu, man is nothing but a citizen. These separate roles, when strung together, make up the single individual, but an individual devoid of integrity and divided into unrelated spheres of being. To the extent that there is a sociological dimension to Marx's early theory of the state it is the political sociology of roles. In his political alienation man has imposed upon him the role of citizen. The relationship of men in the citizenship role constitutes the state. In the Critique Marx says that "the state cannot be regarded as a simple reality, it must be viewed as an activity, as a differentiated activity".¹ This is because, according to Marx, in the political state man does not interact with others as men, but as role occupants.

Although it is not an exhaustive description, Marx's theory of alienation can be depicted as a version of role theory.² In arguing that man is fragmented in the alienation of his labour and in his political alienation, the conception of human estrangement entails that in occupying different roles man is oppressed. It thus shares with modern sociology the view that "roles are a constraining force on the individual".³ The major difference between Marx's theory of estrangement and sociological role theory is that whereas Marx conceives of a situation in which man's alienation is transcended and, therefore, of a situation in which man occupies no roles, role theory can conceive of no such

¹Early Writings, p. 71.

²Cf. Eduard Urbánek, 'Roles, Masks and Characters: A Contribution to Marx's Idea of the Social Role'.

³Ralf Dahrendorf, Homo Sociologicus, p. 20.

situation. But in other respects the two are quite similar, especially in their focus of analysis and their analysis of institutions. It was shown in Chapter 5 above that Marx's early theory of alienation is without a sociology. In so far as role theory is concerned with the multifarious personae which man has imposed upon him by society, it focusses on the individual's 'meshing' of roles, which does not extend beyond the area of mediation between the individual and society.¹ In this sense role theory has no fully sociological conception of society, it occupies the catchment area between social psychology and sociology.² Alienation theory and role theory are approximate in their omissions.

More importantly, there is a similarity between Marx's theory of alienation and modern role theory in the way they each depict institutions. According to both theories institutions are constructed from the roles occupied by men active in a particular capacity in social life. Peter Berger and Thomas Luckmann, for instance, have said that "roles represent the institutional order"³; and as C. Wright Mills has put it, "an institution is a set of roles graded in authority".⁴ It would follow from this that the particularly political role of citizen would constitute the particularly political institution of the state. This is exactly Marx's position when he says that the state is the relation between men as citizens in the political community. The claim regarding the totalised citizen relationship which constitutes the state, and the argument concerning the democratic state's sovereignty as the community of alienated beings, are equivalent in substance. What one says in terms

¹Ibid., pp. 6-7.

²Cf., e.g., Patricke Johns Heine, Personality and Social Theory.

³Peter Berger and Thomas Luckmann, The Social Construction of Reality, p. 92; emphasis in original.

⁴C. Wright Mills, The Sociological Imagination, p. 38.

of empirical role categories, the other expresses in the language of traditional political theory.

V

The philosophical conception of the state's sovereignty is in principle neutral on the question of social class. Role analysis, on the other hand, need not ignore class; indeed, in The German Ideology Marx discusses class in something like role terms.¹ But the citizenship role, as it is related to the conception of democratic sovereignty, is an inherently non-class category. When Marx refers to the power of the state it is also as a non-class force. Man's alienated social power, the power of man's essential nature estranged from him, comprises state power. The early discussion of the instrumental aspect of the state is similarly couched in a non-class phraseology. The state preserves the egoism of civil society, or, more concretely, preserves private property. In all of this Marx's early formulations are quite unlike his later theory of the state. In his works after The German Ideology Marx describes the state in a specifically class context. On the question of citizenship, for instance, he says in The Civil War in France that the democratic suffrage allows the people to decide "once in three or six years which member of the ruling class was to misrepresent [it] in Parliament".² The state's power is a class power, in the celebrated words of the Communist Manifesto, "[the] executive of the modern state is but a committee for managing the common affairs of the whole bourgeoisie".³ Marx argues that the state in capitalist society is a capitalist state

¹The German Ideology, p. 95.

²MESW, II, p. 221.

³MESW, I, pp. 110-111.

irrespective of which class is drawn upon in forming the government.¹ And the state's function, Marx says in The German Ideology, is to "guarantee...[the] property and interests" of the bourgeoisie.² For each non-class statement in Marx's early discussion of the state, the later account stresses the class dimension.

A consideration of the class nature of the democratic state leads to certain modifications of Marx's early analysis. The state as alienated social power is founded upon man's primary alienation in civil society. In his mature writings Marx continues to argue that the state has a material foundation, but not on the supposition of man's loss of essence in civil society. The state is founded, rather, on the class nature of society and, in particular, on the economic exploitation of labour which is at the basis of class relations.³ This may not appear to be fundamentally different from the early treatment of the state, for as we saw in Chapter 6 above, the early conception of the alienation of labour is analogous to the conception of a quantitative economic exploitation of labour. But its significance can be appreciated when it is recognised that whereas all men as citizens are alienated in the political community, according to the early theory, in the mature theory the state is an instrument of oppression wielded by one class against another. In The German Ideology Marx remarks that members of the ruling class enjoy "personal freedom" in the state.⁴ The relationship between the proletariat and the state is seen to be of a very different order.

¹'The Chartists', Articles on Britain, p. 118; 'The Eighteenth Brumaire of Louis Bonaparte', MESW, I, p. 436. Cf. also Engels, 'Socialism: Utopian and Scientific', MESW, III, pp. 110-111.

²The German Ideology, p. 79.

³Capital, III, pp. 791-792; A Contribution to the Critique of Political Economy, p. 193.

⁴The German Ideology, p. 93.

In a draft of The Civil War in France Marx says that "the state machinery and parliamentarism are not the real life of the ruling classes, but only the organised general organs of their domination".¹ In serving one class the state is an instrument of oppression to another. The claim that there is a differential class experience of the state is dissimilar to the assumption of the early theory that all are equally alienated in it.

The sentence quoted above raises a separate issue which can be dealt with here. In arguing that the state is not the real life of the ruling class, Marx indicates that the state can not be regarded as a class 'community'. In the mature writings the state is not primarily a relationship between citizens, but a structure of governance which serves the interests of the ruling class in the long term. We say in the long term because Marx argues — especially in his discussion of the Factory Acts in Capital — that the capitalist state guarantees certain economic interests of the working class and contravenes the short-term economic interests of the factory owners.² He also recognises that the state and the capitalist class sometimes meet in antagonism.³ Thus the capitalist state is not the bourgeoisie in politics, but an instrument guaranteeing the dominance of bourgeois production and property. Some scholars have argued that there is a second theory of the state in Marx's mature writings which proposes that the state, rather than being an instrument of the superordinate class, exists independently of classes and constitutes itself as the dominant force in society.⁴ This is relevant to our

¹On the Paris Commune, p. 156.

²Capital, I, pp. 257, 267, 279-280, 285-286, 451, 464.

³Cf. e.g., MESW, I, pp. 433, 463.

⁴John Sanderson, An Interpretation of the Political Ideas of Marx and Engels, pp. 64-68; John Plamenatz, German Marxism and Russian Communism, pp. 144-150; Ralph Miliband, 'Marx and the State'.

discussion because Shlomo Avineri has suggested that this second theory is a restatement of Marx's earlier view of the state.¹

The argument that there are two distinct theories of the state in Marx's mature writing is based upon a misunderstanding. It is certainly the case that in one context Marx refers to the state as an appendage or instrument of the dominant economic class, and in another he refers to the state as a force which is independent of all classes and stands above them. But these different accounts do not assume different theories of the state. A formal statement of the first description of the state will show that it implies the second. To say that something, call it S, is an instrument of something else, call that C, entails both that S be distinct from C and that S provide some functional value to C. In the discussion of Bonapartism, for instance, where Marx allegedly develops the second theory of the state, the state still serves a class function, but in a contradictory manner:

As the executive authority which has made itself an independent power, Bonaparte feels it to be his mission to safeguard 'bourgeois order'. But the strength of this bourgeois order lies in the middle class. He looks on himself, therefore, as the representative of the middle class and issues decrees in this sense. Nevertheless, he is somebody solely due to the fact that he has broken the political power of this middle class and daily breaks it anew. Consequently, he looks on himself as the adversary of the political and literary power of the middle class. But by protecting its material power, he generates its political power anew. The cause must accordingly be kept alive; but the effect, where it manifests itself, must be done away with.²

What is important here is that in maintaining social order the state serves the material interest of the capitalist class. And this because

¹Avineri, The Social and Political Thought of Karl Marx, pp. 50-51.

²MESW, I, pp. 484-485.

the social order is itself based on economic exploitation and class domination. What has been claimed to be two theories of the state are really two theorems of a single theory. The theory that the state in capitalist society is a capitalist state means that the state serves the interests of the capitalist class even though it is independent of it. When he emphasises the independence of the state from social classes Marx does not cease to consider it in class terms, as he did in his theory of the state as alienated social power.

Marx's early considerations of the state as a citizenship relation, while not central to his later discussion, do not disappear from it. They do, though, figure in a different context than that of the early writings in so far as the concept of class is taken into the core of political analysis in the later works. The class concept is not absent from Marx's early theory of politics, however, as was shown above in the discussion of the Introduction to the Critique of Hegel's Philosophy of Right, in which the proletarian revolution is a central category. It remains, then, to explain this apparent anomaly of an absence of class considerations in the early theory of the state.

The most advanced appreciation of class in Marx's early writings can be found in the Economic and Philosophic Manuscripts. The concepts of class struggle, the two class model and the proletariat, which are generally understood to be the characteristically Marxist class categories, appear in the Manuscripts when any one of them may be absent or less than clearly formulated in the other works of the period. The Manuscripts open with the claim that it is "the antagonistic struggle between capitalist and worker" which determines wages.¹ In the section on 'Estranged Labour' Marx says that in the modern development of the

¹Economic and Philosophic Manuscripts, p. 23.

economy "the whole of society must fall apart into two classes – the property-owners and the propertyless workers".¹ And the proletarian is defined as "the man who, being without capital and rent, lives purely by labour".² While the class categories employed in Marx's mature thought are already assembled in the Economic and Philosophic Manuscripts, the conception of class in the latter is quite different in one fundamental respect from that developed in The German Ideology and elaborated in Marx's works thereafter. In the 1844 Manuscripts class is conceived aggregatively, as a collection of individuals who merely share particular individual attributes. The explanation of the absence of class in the early theory of the state must begin with this point.

When discussing the relations of exploitation in the Manuscripts Marx focuses on the individual worker and rhetorically asks to whom does the worker's alienated activity belong; the answer is that "it belongs to some other man than the worker".³ He goes on to explain that

Through estranged, alienated labour, then, the worker produces the relationship to this labour of a man alien to labour and standing outside it. The relationship of the worker to labour engenders the relation to it of the capitalist, or whatever one chooses to call the master of labour.⁴

The relation of worker to capitalist is thus described as an individual relation between one man and the other. We know that what the worker loses to the capitalist is a part of his essential human being and, of necessity, this constitutes an individual loss. All individuals suffering the same individual loss comprise the working class, the individuals

¹Ibid., p. 64; cf. also ibid., p. 58.

²Ibid., p. 31.

³Ibid., p. 74; emphasis in original.

⁴Ibid., pp. 75-76.

who command the benefit of that loss similarly amass into the capitalist class. The class concept of the Manuscripts assumes that empirically class is simply reducible to its individual members. This view is not confined to the Manuscripts. Although in other respects Marx's thought evolved considerably from the Critique of Hegel's Philosophy of Right to the Economic and Philosophic Manuscripts, the aggregative conception of class, which is also to be found in the Critique¹, remains unchanged during the period.

In terms of Marx's later thought the reduction of class to its individual members is methodologically limiting, for it disembodies the social dimensions of the class relation. Classes are made up of individuals, but class as a social phenomenon can not be reduced to its individual members. Classes have an historical existence which can not be explained in terms of the biographies of the people who comprise them, they also have a social existence which can not be accounted for through a knowledge of the behaviour and destiny of single persons. Rather it is one's position in the class structure which determines individual attributes, expectations and affiliations. It is "crude and naive", as Henri Lefebvre has put it, to argue that the capitalist exploits the worker, for it is the class of capitalists which exploits the class of workers.² In Marx's mature writings economic class is conceived as a function of the mode of production. The relation between the two is located in the labour process. Marx says in the 'Preface to A Contribution to the Critique of Political Economy' that "[in] the social production of their existence, men inevitably enter into definite relations, which are independent of their will, namely relations of production appropriate to a

¹Early Writings, p. 147.

²Lefebvre, op. cit., p. 121.

given stage in the development of their material forces of production".¹ The productive forces, the means of production and the social organisation of labour are irreducible to the individuals who occupy a place in them. Marx makes the same point himself in Capital when he says that "individuals are dealt with only in so far as they are the personification of economic categories, embodiments of particular class-relations and class interests".²

Marx's early conception of class is similar to that developed by Adam Smith, whose account of class is drawn upon in the Economic and Philosophic Manuscripts. At the end of the eighteenth century Smith was one of the first thinkers to recognise the importance of the class nature of modern society³, but as we saw in Chapter 5 above, Smith's model of the social structure is one which builds upon individual persons, each pursuing an individual interest motivated by an individual propensity. Throughout the first of the 1844 Manuscripts Marx treats class in a thoroughly Smithian fashion. He concludes from Smith that "the governing power over labour and its products" is capital⁴, but conceives such a power to be purely economic. Indeed, Marx approvingly quotes Smith to the effect that such an economic dominance is irrelevant to a political understanding of class relations:

The person who either acquires, or succeeds to a great fortune, does not necessarily acquire or succeed to any political power...The power which that possession immediately and directly conveys to him, is the power of purchasing; a certain command over all the labour, or over all the produce of labour, which is then in the market.⁵

¹A Contribution to the Critique of Political Economy, p. 20.

²Capital, I, pp. 20-21.

³Cf. Alan Swingewood, 'Origins of Sociology: The Case of the Scottish Enlightenment', p. 171.

⁴Economic and Philosophic Manuscripts, p. 37.

⁵Adam Smith, The Wealth of Nations, quoted in Economic and Philosophic Manuscripts, p. 37.

It is certainly true that the fact that an individual possesses capital wealth does not imply that he enjoys a proportionate political power, nor that he has aspirations to acquire such. When the conception of class assumes that class can be reduced to its individual members any assumption regarding the political consequences of economic class relations must be without foundation or sense.

In The German Ideology, where Marx conceives of class as a function of the mode of production¹, the political dimension of class relations becomes apparent. Marx carefully outlines the relation between the individual and social class. First, he recognises a tendency in competition toward the individualisation of class, and a countervailing tendency toward class cohesion through class struggle. Marx says that "[c]ompetition separates individuals one from another...in spite of the fact that it brings them together"², for while "they are on hostile terms with each other as competitors" the "separate individuals form a class only insofar as they have to carry on a common battle against another class".³ Secondly, the social consequence of class relations, Marx argues, is that "class...achieves an independent existence over against the individuals, so that the latter find their conditions of existence predestined, and hence have their position in life and their personal development assigned to them by their class, become subsumed under it".⁴ Thus, while individuals comprise social classes, class can not be reduced to its individual members.

¹The phrase 'mode of production' appears at least twice in the Manuscripts, pp. 96, 107, each time with a different meaning, neither of which coincide with the meaning given to the term in The German Ideology, pp. 31-32.

²MESW, I, p. 63.

³The German Ideology, p. 69.

⁴Ibid., pp. 69-70.

This new notion of class allows Marx to draw conclusions pertinent to the political dimension of class which are denied by the conception of class employed in the Economic and Philosophic Manuscripts. If class is merely an aggregate of individuals, then an individual's ownership of property entails no more than that he has a command over labour. The question of the relation between class and the political state does not arise, and to have it raised against this background is extraneous to the issues at hand. However, if class is conceived as a phenomenon comprising more than the sum of its individual members, that is, a social entity as opposed to a conglomeration of individuals, the question of political power becomes a class question. This is Marx's position in The German Ideology:

The conditions under which definite productive forces can be applied, are the conditions of the rule of a definite class of society, whose social power, deriving from its property, has its practical-idealistic expression in the form of the state.¹

As the conception of class develops in Marx's writings, there is an associated development in the theory of the state. Marx's early theory of the state as alienated social power corresponds to an individualised conception of class; when he conceives of class as a function of the mode of production and irreducible to its individual members, the state is described as an instrument of class rule.

It has been argued in this chapter that Marx's political theory developed gradually and piecemeal. The theory of the state as alienated social power occupies his thought from the Critique of Hegel's Philosophy of Right up to The German Ideology, where a different theory of the state as a class instrument is outlined. But Marx's political and social ideas

¹Ibid., pp. 86-87.

are not static or simply elaborated in this period, for he does not merely add to or fill out a position previously stated in each new piece of writing. In the Critique Marx argues that the history of the state must be understood in terms of the history of man. The writings which follow are the result of a restless attempt to develop this idea into a full theory of man's oppression and liberation. The first step in this advancement occurs when Marx drops the assumption of the Critique that emancipation from alienation can be achieved politically, through a democratic development of the political state. He simultaneously drops the assumption that the cause of alienation can be located in the division between the state and civil society, although the bifurcation of man's individual being — which results from this division — continues to be regarded as a feature of alienation. In On the Jewish Question Marx begins to analyse civil society in an attempt to discover the cause of alienation, and concludes that money is responsible for man's estrangement. This notion too is abandoned in the Economic and Philosophic Manuscripts, where money is described as the phenomenal form of alienation, and where it is argued that the root of estrangement is in the process of labour under conditions of private property. Each new position formulated by Marx is not merely a development of the previous one, but an alternative to it.

On the more directly political plane, Marx has argued in On the Jewish Question that the universality of the democratic state is illusory and that democracy can liberate man only politically, leaving his alienation in civil society unaffected and itself constituting a political alienation. In the Introduction to the Critique of Hegel's Philosophy of Right the proletariat, rather than the citizenry of the Critique, is designated the universal class. A revolutionary programme of emancipation

from the state and civil society is outlined in which human emancipation is achieved by the insurrectionary action of the proletariat. Marx thus discovers the relevance of class for the transcendence of estrangement. But because his conception of class is such that it is reducible to its individual members, Marx fails to perceive the class nature of the state. He refines the class concept in The German Ideology and then argues that the state is not merely man's alienated social power, a community of citizens in the manner of early democratic theory, but rather is an instrument of class rule. This observation initiates a new theory of the state in Marx's work.

It can be seen that Marx's theoretical development does not simply occur through an 'epistemological break', in which he embarks on a new departure by apprehending a single new problematic. His development is incremental and step by step. Marx develops a series of new positions in sequence rather than all at once. But neither is Marx's development in the form of a continuing elaboration of a unit of theories which persist throughout his work, nor even throughout the works of the early period. It has been shown that during the relatively short period of 1843 to 1845 Marx's understanding of the cause of alienation, the possible agency of human emancipation and the theory of the state are represented by a number of different theories which are held only as long as it took him to construct a quite different theory, which he regarded as more adequate than the one preceding it.

Chapter 8

CLASS-RULE

The theory of the state in The German Ideology constitutes a new departure of Marx's political theory, for it indicates that the theory of the state as alienated social power has been abandoned. This new development basically corresponds to the development of the class concept in Marx's thought. When he argued that man's alienation is not the result of the estrangement of an essential human nature, but of an economic exploitation which is a function of class relations, Marx advanced the view that the state is a social institution with the specific task of preserving the relations of exploitation between the classes. The view that the state is a repository of the social power alienated from man in civil society proposes that all are equally alienated as citizens and that the political life of the people as a whole constitutes the political community. The absence of class from this political theory stands in sharp contrast to Marx's later theory of the state. The critical element of both theories implies that the state must be abolished if man is to achieve emancipation from alienation; but the analytical content of the later theory, in explicitly specifying the political dimension of class relations, encourages Marx to develop a revolutionary programme dissimilar to the one advanced in his earlier thought. Integral to Marx's theory of the state as a class instrument is the programme of a revolutionary class struggle between the principal classes of labour and capital. This is a precipitant of human emancipation which is absent from his early political and social theory, as discussion of the Introduction and the Economic and Philosophic Manuscripts in previous chapters of this thesis has shown.

There is a further interpretation of the development of Marx's theory of the state apart from the view that the early theory is abandoned by Marx when he developed the conception of the state as an organ of class rule. In one of its versions it argues that both theories

continued to play a role in Marx's thought and that they exist in tension with each other. The other version of this interpretation has it that the later theory of the state merely subsumes the earlier, that Marx broadens his conception of the state in recognising that it performs a class function, but that this is quite compatible with the earlier theory of the state on which it rests. The present chapter will attempt to show that both of these views are unfounded. It will also be argued that Marx revised the theory of the state outlined in The German Ideology in his subsequent writings. In The German Ideology Marx tends to reduce the concept of the state to the concept of class; in his later writings he shows that the state is not merely the ruling class in politics, as he argues in The German Ideology. In his later work Marx also shows that the state plays a significant role in the historical formation of the capitalist class, a point which escapes him in The German Ideology. Finally, in the last section of the chapter Marx's debt to the political theory of the Enlightenment is considered in order to indicate Marx's particular contributions to political theory.

I

In The German Ideology Marx says that the state

is nothing more than the form of organisation which the bourgeois necessarily adopt both for internal and external purposes, for the mutual guarantee of their property and interests.¹

¹MESW, I, p. 77. Citations to the first part of The German Ideology will refer to the latest corrected edition published in the Moscow edition of the three volume Selected Works, which incorporate a hitherto unknown fragment of The German Ideology published by the Institute of Social History in Amsterdam in the early 1960s. This has been accepted by the Soviet editors of Marx's works and included in the revised and re-ordered reconstruction of Part One of The German Ideology.

An entirely new theory of the state is reflected in this new conception of the state as "the form in which the individuals of a ruling class assert their common interests"¹, a formulation quite different from the one which Marx had previously employed. In his earlier writings Marx describes the state as both a manifestation of man's self-estrangement and a vehicle in its maintenance; a consequence of man's alienated social power and a means for preserving the egoism of man in civil society. With a refinement in his works of the notion of class, it became apparent to Marx that the state's role in the preservation of property rights is a class function, and the state, therefore, is a class instrument, an instrument of class domination.

Arthur McGovern has noted that this theoretical development coincides with a shift in Marx's attention from industrially backward Germany to the more advanced countries of Europe.² It should not be forgotten, however, that Marx had already discussed the constitutions of America and France in his writings prior to The German Ideology without a suggestion that the state functions as an instrument of class rule. While empirical focus may be related to theoretical development, a more suggestive account of the genesis of Marx's conception of the state as a class instrument, an account which is acknowledged by McGovern, is that Marx reconstructed his theory of the state when the concept of 'mode of production' was first elaborated in The German Ideology. That is, with the advent of historical materialism, which has been briefly discussed in Chapters 1, 2 and 4 above, Marx establishes a theory of society which, when applied to an analysis of the political domain, furnishes a theory of the state which relates it directly to the economic relations of society and the class relations which are there constituted.

¹MESW, I, p. 77.

²Arthur McGovern, 'The Young Marx on the State', p. 431.

In Marx's early writings the state appears as a relation between isolated monads, alienated men, and is a consequence of an alienated social power which exists outside of civil society itself. In The German Ideology, on the other hand, the state is an expression of the social power of a definite class in society, and that social power is not inherent in man as such but derives rather from the property of the dominant class.¹ Both theories of the state claim a basis for the state in man's condition. The "presupposition" of the state according to On the Jewish Question, for instance, is "egoistic man"², and in The German Ideology Marx says that the state "continually evol[ves] out of the life-process of definite individuals".³ But man's condition is differently conceived in the two works. In On the Jewish Question, and other writings of the period, the human condition and the state are perceived in terms of a particular relation between individuals, such that individuals as citizens constitute the state in the alienation of their social power, and the individual condition of alienation is one in which the state divests man of "his real individual life".⁴ In general terms this last point is not at issue in The German Ideology, but the analysis acquires a new content as Marx now argues that the common class interests of the bourgeoisie lead it to participate in the state "not as individuals but as members of a class"⁵, and as a member of the ruling class the individual bourgeois enjoys a personal freedom through the state which is denied to others⁶, even though others may "have given themselves collective expression...

¹MESW, I, p. 40.

²Early Writings, p. 233.

³MESW, I, p. 24.

⁴Early Writings, p. 220.

⁵MESW, I, p. 68.

⁶Ibid., p. 66.

[in] the state" as citizens.¹ The citizenship notion here is descriptively employed without the theoretical assumption that it derives from alienated social power. The class content ascribed to the state is contrary to the earlier formulation in which participation in the state is strictly in terms of a political community of alienated individuals who all exist in it as mere citizens.

While the theme of the denial of individual autonomy under capitalism, which was developed in the earlier writings, is maintained in The German Ideology, the state is seen in the latter work as an instrument of class aspiration rather than merely the denial of human fulfilment, as Marx had previously conceived it.² The state satisfies class needs and interests, as well as detracting from fully human needs. In a sense these are not contradictory formulations, for class needs are not themselves human needs, but on the contrary needs generated in a society which denies fully human capacities and interests. In this sense, it could be argued that the proposition that the state satisfies class needs merely clarifies the proposition that the state denies human needs. However, in moving from an analysis which focusses on the individual and his alienation to one in which class is not reducible to its individual members, Marx constructs a theory in which the state is based on the social power of a definite class rather than the alienated power of man in a citizenship relation. The difference between the two is not merely that the character of alienation is differently depicted in each, but also that alienation is no longer conceived as uniform and universal in the state, but differentiated in the different class conditions. The state power is

¹Ibid., p. 67.

²In the Critique of Hegel's Philosophy of Right Marx argues that the state bureaucracy uses the state to satisfy its own interests, but the argument is quite different from the one of The German Ideology. Cf. the discussion in Chapter 1 above.

no longer conceived as an abstract force of uniform oppression in alienation, but an instrument in the service of one class enforcing the alienation of another.

Not only does the conception of the state change when the focus shifts from individual citizen to social class, but the historical genesis of the state is differently conceived in the two theories. In the early writings the modern state is seen primarily as a consequence of a political revolution, a revolution which in destroying the corporate distinctions of feudal society created the nation state. The argument of On the Jewish Question¹, for instance, is that the distinction of estate and corporation, which defined the relation of the individual to civil society by the relation between his corporation and the state, was destroyed by the political revolution. The political revolution, then, destroyed the bonds of the feudal state and the political character of civil society. In so doing the political revolution both reduced civil society into its basic elements, egoistic men, and created a political community of the entire nation. The emergence of the modern state is thus explained strictly in terms of political emancipation, and the state is regarded as being based on the power of society which had been released by the political revolution and alienated from the medieval corporations. The alienation of the individual egoistic beings provides the content of the state form thus created. In The German Ideology Marx accounts for the origins of the modern state in the development of private property and the emergence of the class power of the bourgeoisie.² In the Economic and Philosophic Manuscripts Marx describes the emergence of the capitalist class as a function of the development of private property³,

¹Early Writings, pp. 232-233.

²MESW, I, pp. 76,77.

³Economic and Philosophic Manuscripts, pp. 82-85.

but says nothing which relates to the formation of the modern state except that "[movable property, i.e. capital] claims to have obtained political freedom for the people".¹ The discussion of The German Ideology, on the other hand, is quite explicit in claiming that private property, emancipated from communal determination, corresponds on the one hand to a class of individual owners who have in common their property interests, and on the other the national state which serves those interests. The description of the state as the form of organisation which the bourgeoisie adopts to guarantee its property follows naturally from the conception of class employed for the first time by Marx in The German Ideology.

A major characteristic difference between the theory of the state as alienated social power and the theory of the state as an instrument of class rule is that in the former the state is strictly separated from civil society and exists in antagonism with it, as was shown in Chapter 7 above, whereas in the latter the state serves a social class and is therefore conceived as a part of the social formation. The difference between the two positions is that the concept 'civil society', as it is defined in terms of individual egoistic needs, entails that the state must be radically distinct from civil society. The concept 'social formation', on the other hand, as it is defined in terms of social classes and institutions, entails that the state is a part of the social formation.

Some of Marx's formulations in The German Ideology, however, and indeed in works after The German Ideology, resemble those found in statements of the early theory of the state. This has led some writers to argue that in his later works Marx did not abandon the conception of the

¹Ibid., p. 84.

state an alienated social power¹, that it exists in tension with a conception of the state as a class instrument², even though Marx may have concentrated more on this conception of the state in his later analysis.³ Others, however, have argued — as it will be argued below — that after the mid-1840s the later conception of the state alone prevailed.⁴ While there is a verbal similarity in various statements of Marx's two theories of the state, this can not be interpreted to signify a theoretical continuity. Where scholars have perceived the two theories of the state coexisting in Marx's later writings they have failed to distinguish between the form of the state and its function, and assume that Marx's account of the state's form is an account of the state as alienated social power.

II

In The German Ideology Marx describes the state as an "illusory community" which has "an independent existence in relation to" the individuals who comprise it.⁵ Although not specifically referring to the state he goes on to say, in the manner of the earlier discussion of the division between the state and civil society, that "there appears a division within the life of each individual".⁶ There is also in The German Ideology a description which claims that the state is part "of the idealistic superstructure".⁷ These formulations are similar to ones in the

¹Robert Tucker, The Marxian Revolutionary Idea, p. 57; David McLellan, The Thought of Karl Marx, p. 181.

²Tucker, op. cit., p. 59.

³McLellan, op. cit., p. 181.

⁴Daniel Tarschys, Beyond the State, pp. 82-83.

⁵MESW, I, p. 66.

⁶Ibid.

⁷Ibid., p. 76.

early writings where the state is conceived as alienated social power. In the Critique of Hegel's Philosophy of Right, for instance, Marx says that man's "political life is the air life, the aetherical region of civil society"¹, and in On the Jewish Question the citizen is described as "the imaginary member of a fictitious sovereignty".² The subject of Marx's discussion is made clear when he says in The German Ideology that the social power of the ruling class "has its practical-idealistic expression...in the form of the state".³ There are basically two issues here. In both conceptions of the state the form of the state is distinct from civil society, but the nature of the distinction or separation between state and society is dissimilar. Secondly, the "idealistic" nature of the state is differently conceived in the two theories.

It has already been argued above and in Chapter 7 that the form of the state as alienated social power is the citizenship relation, in which man's essential sociality is posited in the sovereignty of the democratic state. In The German Ideology, on the other hand, the state is "the form in which the individuals of a ruling class assert their common interests".⁴ The question of citizenship is not germane to this definition. In both conceptions of the state the state as a formal organisation is separated from the society on which it is based, but the nature of the separation is different in each case. In the early writings the state is separated from civil society in an almost ontological fashion. The content of man's being in civil society is fundamentally different from and antagonistic to the content of his being in the state, for in civil society man is without community and exists in egoistic isolation, in the state he is

¹Early Writings, p. 146.

²Ibid., p. 220.

³MESW, I, p. 40; emphasis added.

⁴Ibid., p. 77.

a communal being, existing in a condition of universality, even though it is partial.¹ The basis of the distinction between the state as a class instrument and society is identified in The Civil War in France when Marx says that the state power is "wrought after the plan of a systematic and hierarchic division of labour".² This indicates that it is the particular function of the state which separates it from the rest of society. The promulgation and administration of laws for the regulation of social life as a whole is the sole activity of the state apparatus, it is the performance of these activities which institutionally separate it from the rest of society. Although the state as a class instrument stands apart from society, Marx says that it only "apparently soar[s] high above society"³, for it functions as a social institution in the service of a social class.

The claim in The German Ideology that the state is an idealistic expression of the social power of the ruling class is not a statement asserting that man is an "imaginary member of a fictitious sovereignty" in the state, as Marx argues in On the Jewish Question. Rather it is a statement concerning the causal subservience of the state to the class which it serves. This is explained by Marx when he says that "civil society is the true source and theatre of all history,...absurd is the conception of history...which neglects the real relationships and confines itself to high-sounding dramas of princes and states".⁴ The state is described as "illusory" and "idealistic" in The German Ideology in order to emphasise that it is a 'reflection' of social classes and the productive forces which produce them. Thus when Marx confines his

¹Early Writings, p. 220.

²MESW, II, p. 217.

³Ibid., p. 219; emphasis added.

⁴MESW, I, p. 38.

remarks to the form of the state, there is a superficial similarity in his discussion of the state as alienated social power and as a class instrument. Beneath this apparent uniformity, however, are quite different conceptions of the state's form.

In his full account of the state Marx distinguishes between the form of the state and its function, as Michael Evans has suggested.¹ It has already been shown that the function of the state which corresponds to the different conceptions of the form of the state is also different in the case of the state as alienated social power on the one hand and the state as a class instrument on the other. In the former the state functions to preserve the egoism of civil society, in the latter it functions as an organ of class rule. Thus when Marx writes of the state in his mature works as an institutional form which is quite separate and distinct from economic and social relations, that is a purely political and national apparatus, he is not providing an account of the state which stands as an alternative to his description of the state as an institution which functions to safeguard the common and general interests of the economically dominant class in society. These are not contradictory formulations, but references to the state's form on the one hand and its function on the other.

Robert Tucker fails to make this distinction when he says that there is a

definite tension in the thought of Marx and Engels between their conception of the state as alienated social power and their functional definition of it as an organ of class rule. Whereas the one view propounds a dichotomy of state versus society, the other treats the state as an instrumentality of a class, which in turn is part of society.²

¹Michael Evans, *Karl Marx*, pp. 113-114.

²Tucker, *op. cit.*, p. 59; emphasis in original.

In The German Ideology and the writings thereafter, where Marx describes the state as being in a dichotomous existence with society, he merely acknowledges that the state is a political institution separate and distinct from other formal aspects of the social structure. This is not in tension with his description of the state's class function. Marx's later discussion of the state as a form which exists 'outside' society, is somehow 'alien' to society, may encourage the idea that he regards the state as alienated social power, as he did in the early writings. But to argue that this is actually the case, as Tucker does, is to fail to distinguish between alternative representations of the form of the state in Marx's early and later writings, as we have done above. Tucker's argument, therefore, is based upon two misconceptions. He fails to distinguish between alternative representations of the form of the state in different periods of Marx's writing, and also fails to distinguish between the form of the state and its function.

Shlomo Avineri has developed another interpretation of Marx's theory of the state which argues that Marx

conceives the modern state as a perpetual tension between the idea of universality, ideally a bulwark against the particularistic interests of civil society, and these antagonistic interests themselves.¹

This claim can be supported by citations from the Vorwärts! article of 1844, The German Ideology and Capital. In Critical Notes on 'The King of Prussia and Social Reform' Marx says that "the state is based on...the contradiction between public and private life, between universal and particular interests".² As the state is frustrated in attaining

¹Shlomo Avineri, The Social and Political Thought of Karl Marx, p. 203.

²Early Writings, p. 412; emphasis in original.

universality because it is a political state, Marx concludes that it "must confine itself to formal, negative activities".¹ The German Ideology similarly argues that in the division of labour there arises a contradiction between "the interest of the separate individual...and the communal interest", and also that the latter "takes an independent form as the State".² In a margin comment on the manuscript Marx adds that

Just because individuals seek only their particular interest, which for them does not coincide with their communal interest (in fact the general is the illusory form of communal life), the latter will be imposed on them as an interest "alien" to them, and "independent" of them, as in its turn a particular, peculiar "general" interest; or they themselves must remain within this discord, as in democracy. On the other hand, too, the practical struggle of these particular interests, which constantly really run counter to the communal and illusory communal interests, makes practical intervention and control necessary through the illusory "general" interest in the form of the state.³

In Capital Marx gives a concrete example which can be seen as a confirmation of the argument of The German Ideology. The nineteenth century Factory Legislation, which limited the working day, is described by Marx "as an all-powerful social barrier"⁴ which capital accepted, he says, only "under compulsion from society".⁵ Thus Marx argues that the interest of the class of labour is satisfied by the state's cognisance of a general interest, which was opposed by the particular interest of

¹Ibid.; emphasis in original.

²MESW, I, p. 34; emphasis in original.

³Ibid., p. 35. The Moscow editors erroneously attribute this and the preceding paragraph to Engels. In fact only the paragraph quoted was inserted into the text of the manuscript of The German Ideology, and by Marx, not Engels. This information is contained in private correspondence from Bert Andréas of the Institut Universitaire de Hautes Études Internationales, Geneva, who has checked the original manuscript at the International Institute of Social History.

⁴Capital, I, p. 285.

⁵Ibid., p. 257.

capital, against whom the legislation was passed. The first question which arises from this is whether the conception of the state's inclination towards universality, expressed as a general interest embodied in the political state, is the same in the early and later conceptions of the state. Secondly, it is necessary to know what relationship there is between the class function of the state and the fact that it serves a general interest.

Although dispersed over many sources Marx's mature discussion of the relation between particular and general interests is fairly detailed. In The Eighteenth Brumaire of Louis Bonaparte Marx differentiates between the "private interests" of the bourgeoisie and its "general class interests, that is, its political interests".¹ Although he does not say so here, the private interests of the bourgeoisie — as opposed to its political and general interests — can be regarded in Marx's writings to be the economic interests of the different sections of the capitalist class. Both type of interest are class interests, one general and long-term, the other narrow and short-term. This contention is given support in the discussion of the Factory Acts in Capital where Marx argues that while in general terms the capitalists have good reason to ensure the protection of the working class provided by the legislation limiting the working day, their narrow economic interest compels them to oppose such legislation.² Thus while the general class interest of capital would lead the class as a whole to support the legislation, the particular interest of capital led the factory owners to oppose it. Marx goes on to show that the general interest of capital, in the instance of the Factory Legislation, was a consequence of the fact that "the spokesmen and

¹MESW, I, p. 466.

²Capital, I, pp. 256-257.

political leaders of the manufacturing class...had entered upon the contest for the repeal of the Corn Laws, and needed the workers to help them to victory".¹ In order to repeal one set of laws, which served the landed proprietors, the parliamentary representatives of the manufacturers enacted the Ten Hours' Bill, even in the face of opposition from the manufacturers themselves. While the economic interest of the manufacturers, as they conceived it themselves, was contravened by the new legislation, the general interest of capital as a whole was advanced. The repeal of the Corn Laws, which required working class support, was to cheapen the cost of bread and therefore reduce the wages bill.

With the example of the Factory Acts — "made by a state which is ruled by capitalist and landlord"² — Marx in effect demonstrates that the liberal maxim is false which claims that the aggregate satisfaction of individual interests leads to the satisfaction of a general interest. For he argues that in order that the general interest be served capital must be restrained and regulated in the pursuit of its particular economic interests. The implication of Marx's analysis is that there is a disjuncture between the particular economic interests and the general political interests of capital. The purpose of the Factory Acts was to "curb the passion of capital for a limitless draining of labour-power".³ In the pursuit of its immediate economic interests capital was led to exploit labour to the point of extinction and it could not stop itself from doing so. The general interest, which is of a political rather than a narrow economic nature, and therefore not limited by narrow considerations of particular requirements, saw that "the limiting of factory

¹Ibid., p. 267. Cf. 'On the Question of Free Trade', The Poverty of Philosophy, pp. 184-185, for a slightly different account.

²Capital, I, p. 229.

³Ibid.

labour was dictated by the same necessity which spread guano over the English fields".¹ "Factory legislation", says Marx, is "just as much the necessary product of modern industry as cotton yarn, self-actors, and the electric telegraph".² Thus while Marx holds that there is a disjuncture between particular and general interests, he regards them both to be capitalist interests. The general interest of the capitalist class requires that certain of its particular interests be denied. So that while there may be conflicts between the particular interests of society and the attempts of the state to serve a general interest, there is no tension between the conception of the state as an instrument of the capitalist class and the conception that there is a general interest embodied in the state.

Marx's argument seems to be that in the separation of the state from the economy, the former is encouraged to develop a perspective which both transcends the particular interests of capital and orchestrates its general interests. The state itself is not concerned to make a profit, but to ensure that the social order based upon profit continues to function satisfactorily. When Marx acknowledges that the state performs a public function as well as a class function, as when he says that

supervision and all-round interference by the government involves both the performance of common activities arising from the nature of all communities, and the specific functions arising from the antithesis between the government and the mass of the people³

he is not asserting that the two are not related. He makes it clear that "regulation and order are themselves indispensable elements of any mode

¹Ibid.

²Ibid., p. 451.

³Capital, III, p. 384.

of production"¹, and there good management, therefore, serves the general interest of the ruling class whose dominance is based upon the mode of production.

Marx therefore does conceive of the state as something like a "bulwark against the particularistic interests of civil society"², as Avineri says, for the interests arising in the antagonistic relations between the classes of labour and capital, and within the classes themselves, are managed and resolved by the state in the satisfaction of a general interest. But in Marx's mature writings the general interest of the state is not in tension with the antagonistic social interests, as Avineri suggests. The general interest of the state is the general interest of capital, which takes a political form in the state, serving the capitalist class as a whole by maintaining the capitalist social order. That the state satisfies certain working class interests does not mean, for Marx, that the state ceases to serve the interests of capital. The satisfaction of such particular interests is regarded by him as a means of ensuring the continuance of capitalist production and therefore a necessary measure to ensure the social dominance of capital. The conception of the state as an instrument of class rule entails that the state encapsulate the general political interest of capital, which requires that it restrain certain narrow and particular economic interest manifest in the capitalist class. The general interest embodied in the state is not conceived in terms of the "idea of universality"³ according to Marx's mature writings, for it is the general interest of capital which, in the state, sanctions and satisfies the interests of capitalism as such by preserving a social order conducive to capitalist production.

¹Ibid., p. 793.

²Avineri, op. cit., p. 203.

³Ibid.

Avineri's interpretation of Marx's conception of the state as a perpetual tension between the idea of universality and antagonistic social interests is justified for Marx's early account of the state only. According to the theory of the state as alienated social power the universality of man's essential sociality is given partial expression in the political community. The political function of man as citizen is "his universal function".¹ But because the state's "universality [is] in opposition to" the particular differences — and competitive interests — of men in civil society, the political limitations of the state and its function in safeguarding the egoism of civil society², places it in a condition of tension between these two poles. Indeed, Marx says that the political state is "unthinkable in the absence of an organised antithesis between the universal idea and the individual existence of man".³ The conception of universality in this context is based upon the assumption of an essentialist human nature. The state is a merely partial community precisely because man is estranged from his essential universality in his individual existence in civil society.

The state's inclination towards universality, which is restrained by and in tension with its presupposition and protection of the egoism of civil society, is fundamentally different from the conception of a general interest embodied in the state as a class instrument. In the early theory of the state there is a contradiction within the state between its communal universality and its political particularity. In the later theory the general interest embodied in the state is not in conflict with its class function, although in serving the general interest of capital the state may find itself in conflict with particular capitalist interests

¹Early Writings, p. 233.

²Ibid., pp. 219, 231.

³Ibid., p. 419.

and working class interests. Whereas the state as alienated social power is in principle in a condition of internal tension, there is no necessary internal tension within the state as a class instrument. Secondly, the universality of the state as alienated social power is based upon a philosophical anthropology of man's essential nature; the generality of the state as a class instrument is based upon the material reality of a mode of production in which the general interest of the dominant class is expressed politically in the form of the state. Finally, the particularity of civil society on which the state as alienated social power is based is the result of the alienation of man from his essential nature. The particular interests of capitalist society which the state as a class instrument subordinates to its general interest, are the class interests of a society in which the alienation of some serves the direct economic needs of others.

While there is a superficial similarity between the theory of the state as alienated social power and the theory of the state as a class instrument in so far as they both indicate that there is a tension between universality or generality on the one hand, and antagonistic particular interests on the other, the content of the tension is not the same in either case. There is no basis, therefore, on this supposition, to argue that Marx's later theory of the state merely subsumes the earlier theory, for they are quite different in their comprehension of the basis and condition of the state and offer significantly dissimilar analyses of the state.

The discussion so far has attempted to demonstrate that in The German Ideology Marx abandons the theory of the state as alienated social power, which was developed in the Critique of Hegel's Philosophy of Right and On the Jewish Question, and reflected in other works of the period.

In proposing that the state is a class instrument Marx formulates a theory of the state which continues to be fundamental to all of his later political thought. The first statement of the new theory is not its final form, however, and in two specific areas of the account of the state in The German Ideology Marx develops an analysis which he later went on to seriously modify. In his first discussion of the state as a class instrument Marx tends to reduce the capitalist state to the capitalist class. He also argues that the bourgeoisie 'purchases' the state without realising, as it is argued in Capital, that the state plays an important role in the historical development of the capitalist class. It is to these issues that we will now turn.

III

The German Ideology was begun in September 1845 after Engels had completed his survey of the conditions of English labour¹ and both he and Marx had spent six weeks in England researching economic literature.² The work was begun, therefore, only after both authors had had first-hand experience of the most advanced capitalist nation in the world at the time; it also brings together a wealth of historical material.³ But it was not until 1847, with The Poverty of Philosophy, Wage Labour and Capital and the Communist Manifesto⁴ that Marx began in earnest a general analysis of the capitalist mode of production. The full theoretical account of capitalist production was not completed until a decade later

¹Frederick Engels, The Condition of the Working Class in England, first published 1845.

²David McLellan, Karl Marx, pp. 141-142.

³The bibliography of works referred to in The German Ideology covers fourteen pages, including two pages of periodical literature; cf. The German Ideology, pp. 708-722.

⁴Published in February 1848, the Communist Manifesto was written between December 1847 and January 1848, by Marx; cf. David Riazanov, Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels, pp. 76-78.

when Marx outlined the theory of surplus value in the Grundrisse. The German Ideology is largely Marx's last full-scale grapple with German philosophy, and while it presents numerous arguments concerning the empirical relations of class and power, it uses them to illustrate methodological and philosophical points rather than to develop a theory of capitalist and the capitalist state. Many of the ideas expressed in The German Ideology are certainly early statements of Marx's broad analysis of capitalist society and politics which occupies his later writing, but we should be aware that the relations of property, class and state outlined in the work are subject to subsequent clarification. The limitations of The German Ideology in this regard are clearly evident in the way which Marx draws the relationship between the bourgeois class and the organisation of its political power.

According to Marx's argument in The German Ideology, the state is the ruling class in politics, for he says that "the bourgeois...are forced to constitute themselves as 'we', as a moral person, as the State, in order to safeguard their common interests".¹ This is seen by Marx as an historical consequence of the fact that as "a class and no longer an estate, the bourgeoisie is forced to organise itself no longer locally, but nationally, and to give a general form to its mean average interest" in the state.² He does say, however, that the political power of the class is not exercised directly by the class as a whole, for the "collective power thus created" by the formation of the properties class into the state "is delegate[d]...to a few persons", "if only because of the division of labour".³ Thus Marx argues that the state is formed by the bourgeoisie and exists as an apparatus delegated with its class power.

¹The German Ideology, p. 399.

²MESW, I, p. 77; emphasis in original.

³The German Ideology, p. 399.

The direct nexus between the state and the bourgeoisie is indicated further in Marx's association of the will of the state as law with the will of the bourgeoisie.

The real basis of the state, Marx says, is "quite independent of the will of individuals", for it rests on the "material life of individuals...their mode of production and forms of intercourse".¹ He goes on to say that

The individuals who rule in these conditions, besides having to constitute their power in the form of the state, have to give their will, which is determined by these definite conditions, a universal expression as the will of the state, as law — an expression whose content is always determined by the relations of this class.²

Marx makes it clear that the enforcement of bourgeois will as law is not an arbitrary expression of individual wills, but the collective or average will of the bourgeoisie as a class, "determined by their common interests, [which] is law".³ Thus law is not based on will, but on material relations of production; however, the general interest of the capitalist class arising from these relations is given expression in its common will as the will of the state in law. Marx's analysis is highly significant in terms of the history of legal theory, for to the classical jurist conception of law as the 'will of the state'⁴, he adds a factor which demonstrates the fictitious character of the state's sovereignty; he shows that the content of law has a class determination based upon the property relations of society, and thus that the state's will is not original but derivative. While the account of law which holds that law

¹Ibid., p. 366; emphasis in original.

²Ibid.; cf. also MESW, I, pp. 78-79.

³The German Ideology, p. 366.

⁴Harold Laski, The State in Theory and Practice, p. 31.

changes to suit the commercial and economic necessities of capitalist production, remains central to Marx's later discussion of the subject, the direct relation drawn in The German Ideology between the bourgeoisie and its will in the state and law is shown, in later writings, to be inadequate for a general theory of the capitalist state.

In works subsequent to The German Ideology Marx argues that the relation between the capitalist class and the state personnel is historically variable. In an article published in the New York Daily Tribune of 1852 Marx describes the Whigs as "the aristocratic representatives of the bourgeoisie...[who] abandon to them...the monopoly of government and the exclusive possession of office".¹ An aristocratic government in this situation, Marx says, means that the state serves the bourgeois interests, for in their monopoly of government the Whigs administer a "course of social and political development [which] have shown themselves to...[be] unavoidable and undeniable"² as a consequence of the dominance of bourgeois property. In the opening paragraphs of The Class Struggles in France it is argued, on the other hand, that there is a deleterious consequence for the government of society in one faction of the bourgeoisie holding state power.³ Because of the difference between the particular and the general interests of the bourgeoisie, the administration of the state in favour of the interest of one faction of the ruling class disrupted the equilibrium of national production as a whole. Thus Marx argues that the capitalist state may function adequately as an instrument of class rule even though the bourgeoisie is not directly represented in the state, and also that a narrow representation of a particular bourgeois

¹'The Elections in England - Tories and Whigs', Articles on Britain, p. 112.

²Ibid.

³MESW, I, pp. 206-208.

interest in the state apparatus may be disruptive of its proper functioning.

In The Eighteenth Brumaire of Louis Bonaparte Marx describes a situation in which it is in the interests of the bourgeoisie to relinquish "its own rule". He says

that in order to preserve its social power intact, its political power must be broken; that the individual bourgeois can continue to exploit the other classes... only on condition that their class be condemned along with other classes to like political nullity; that in order to save its purse, it must forfeit the crown, and the sword that is to safeguard it must at the same time be hung over its own head as a sword of Damocles.¹

The political power to which Marx refers is the bourgeoisie's power in the state, not its power of the state. It is "in order to preserve its social power intact", that "the sword that is to safeguard it" must be out of the hands of the class itself. Such different factors as the weight of aristocratic traditions, the involvement of the working class in politics through the universal suffrage and disruptive political divisions within the bourgeoisie, have, at different times, made untenable the prospect of a state manned by members of the bourgeois class.² Marx's general point is that the government of a bourgeois state need not be drawn from the bourgeois class.

It is sufficient that the state safeguard the capitalist relations of property and production for the social power of the capitalist class to remain intact. It is upon this power, according to Marx's argument, that the state rests, for "each mode of production produces its specific legal relations, political forms, etc."³ The administration and creation

¹Ibid., p. 436.

²Cf. Engels' discussion in MESW, III, pp. 110-111.

³A Contribution to the Critique of Political Economy, p. 193.

of law, on this account, is not reliant upon the direct expression of a class 'will', as it is in The German Ideology. Marx says that "in general, the relationship between the political...representatives of a class and the class they represent" is that "in their minds [the former] do not get beyond the limits which the latter do not get beyond in life, that they are consequently driven, theoretically, to the same problems and solutions to which the material interests and social position drive the latter practically".¹ In conducting the business of state, which is the business of maintaining social order, the state personnel are led to resolve as problems of policy and law what are, on the economic plane, problems of production and the relations of property. Who directly manages the state is, in this sense, irrelevant to Marx's theory of the state. The imperatives of the economic relations of society, which determine the real course of social and political development, thereby determine the activities of the state and in broad terms set the limits of its charter and conduct. The state power is based upon the economic relations of society, which constitute the power of the bourgeoisie. The state power, therefore, is the power of the bourgeoisie, even though it may not hold office.

The relationship between the capitalist class and the capitalist state in Marx's mature theory is even less direct when the question of the social composition of the bureaucracy is considered. While the capitalist nature of the state is indifferent to the class origins of the government, the professional administrators of state power are not conceived in class terms at all. Officialdom, in Marx's theory of the state, is merely a social stratum. The bureaucracy produces nothing but regulations, it administers state power rather than the power of productive

¹MESW, I, p. 424.

forces, it neither produces nor appropriates value directly but lives on taxes, it exists alongside the real classes of society, serving one and oppressing the other, but remaining distinct from both.¹ Although individuals in the higher echelons of the state administration may have been born into the capitalist class, as members of the bureaucracy they are without class. But in their bureaucratic production they serve the interests of the bourgeoisie by serving the state power. Thus the relation between the capitalist class and the organisation of its political power is socially most distant in the bureaucracy, although politically quite direct, for the bureaucracy has a specific vocational interest in the administration of state power and therefore the power of the capitalist class.

The basic assumptions of The German Ideology, that the power of the state is the power of the capitalist class and that law is the generalised will of the bourgeoisie, are developed in Marx's later writings on the capitalist state. The relation between the capitalist class and the state, and between the capitalist class and law, however, are later shown to be less direct and much more complex than Marx describes them in the first statement of the theory. The basic proposition of the theory of the state as a class instrument, that the power of the state rests upon the power of property relations which give the bourgeoisie its social dominance, is not subsequently changed by Marx; but the relationship between the capitalist class and the organisation of its political power is later described in terms of different mechanisms than it is given in The German Ideology.

In both The German Ideology and Capital Marx dates the beginnings of the capitalist state from the advent of the national debt.² In The

¹Ibid., pp. 477, 482-483.

²Ibid., p. 77; The German Ideology, p. 404; Capital, I, pp. 706-707.

German Ideology the situation is described as one in which the bourgeoisie simply purchases the state and enhances its own wealth in doing so. In Capital and other writings of the period the relations are more dialectically drawn. Instead of an undifferentiated and already existing class merely purchasing the state, Marx outlines a process in which the national debt acts as a means of primitive accumulation for the emerging bourgeoisie, bringing forth a finance faction of the class, altering the composition of the class as a whole, and, with the introduction of a banking system, altering also the institutional nature of the economy. The relations of property, class and state are seen to be more subtle in Marx's later treatment of the subject than the description in The German Ideology allows.

The historical origins of capitalism, according to Marx, are to be located in the mercantile period of economic development. As a system of commerce the major feature of mercantilism was that it gave the economy a national rather than a local character, and established the state on a foundation of private property. Marx says in Capital that the national character of the mercantile system was a matter of real substance, for in their concern for the wealth of the nation and the resources of the state the mercantilists "pronounce the interests of the capitalist class and the amassing of riches in general to be the ultimate aim of the state".¹ He goes on to say that the "foundation of national power" rests upon "the development of the interests of capital and of the capitalist class".² So that although Marx comments in the Communist Manifesto that the bourgeoisie has ruled for "scarce one hundred years"³, he can also say, in Capital, that the "English Parliament...for 500 years, [and],

¹Capital, III, p. 785.

²Ibid.

³MESW, I, p. 113.

with shameless egoism... [has served] the capitalists".¹ For while the political dominance of the capitalist class in the state has endured for a century, the satisfaction of the capitalist interest by the state has a history five times as long.

Marx explains² that the international trade and commerce of mercantilism, and the colonial system which it developed, involved the emerging nations of Europe in trade wars. The contradictory consequence of this early phase of capitalism was that while the incipient national capitalist class, and through it, the nation, accumulated great wealth, the state, in prosecuting commercial war in defence of the national interest, became impoverished. The state could finance its navy and the advancement of the interests of the nation only by levying taxes and inaugurating a system of public credit or national debt. This need for state finance set in motion a complicated set of reactions which not only consolidated the capitalist mode of production, but undermined the absolute monarchy which had overseen the mercantile system, replacing it with a more directly capitalist state form. In The Poverty of Philosophy Marx quotes James Steuart to the effect that monarchy, unlike limited government, "imposes taxes upon people who are growing richer... Thus the monarch imposes a tax upon industry", and adds that

the English bourgeoisie, on attaining its political constitution under William of Orange, created all at once a new system of taxes, public credit and the system of protective duties, as soon as it was in a position freely to develop its conditions of existence.³

¹Capital, I, p. 692.

²Ibid., Chapter 31.

³The Poverty of Philosophy, p. 133.

Marx argues that the problems of state finance, consequential upon the growing national wealth of the mercantile period, were resolved in a manner which not only produced the modern systems of taxation, fiscal policy and banking, but which further advanced the development of the capitalist class and enhanced its political power.

In The German Ideology Marx says that

the modern State [was] purchased gradually by the owners of property by means of taxation, [and] has fallen entirely into their hands through the national debt, and its existence has become wholly dependent on the commercial credit which the owners of property, the bourgeois, extend to it, as reflected in the rise and fall of State funds on the stock exchange.¹

This assessment of the situation is consistent with Marx's later accounts, but his subsequent arguments add that the capitalist class not only acquires the state, but is itself significantly restructures through the development of the state. The system of the public debt, Marx says in Capital, functioned as "one of the most powerful levers of primitive accumulation", for it endowed "barren money with the power of breeding and thus turns it into capital".² The money lent to the state was converted into national bonds issued to the lender, these continued to circulate as negotiable notes and served the same function as cash in the economy. Thus a state loan did not deprive the capitalist of spending power, it enriched his money wealth through the interest it earned and give rise to associations of capitalist financiers who formed themselves into joint-stock companies and forerunners of the modern banks. Thus the national debt created a section of the capitalist class which Marx says was essential to the full development of capitalism itself.

¹MESW, I, p. 77.

²Capital, I, p. 706.

Marx argues that during the period of the mercantile system the production process could hardly be distinguished from that of the pre-capitalist era; it lacked the intense technical division of labour typical of capitalist production proper. At the time of royal absolutism the only difference between manufacture and the handicraft trades of the medieval guild was that of scale, in early manufacture the "workshop of the medieval master craftsman is simply enlarged".¹ The fully capitalist organisation of production requires a financial infrastructure, the appearance of which marks the consolidation of the capitalist mode of production, for the "social character of capital is first promoted and wholly realised through the full development of the credit and banking system".² But this development, as we have just seen, was not a spontaneous consequence of the development of property and the propertied class, for it was facilitated by an innovation in state finance. Marx's argument, then, is that the enhancement of the capitalist interest and the capitalist economy was historically affected through the direct and indirect efforts of the state. The absolutist state directly defended national mercantile wealth and indirectly, in floating public loans, enriched the extant wealth of the bourgeoisie and gave rise to finance capital which further promoted the development of the capitalist mode of production. These changes led the capitalist class to acquire political ambitions of its own against the monarchy, and provided it with the means of direct political power, through the banking and credit systems, with which it could realise those ambitions.

The "subordination of the kingship to Parliament", Marx says in a review article on English history, "was its subordination to the rule of

¹Ibid., p. 305.

²Capital, III, p. 607.

a class".¹ The factor which gave the bourgeoisie its "control over the state"² was the growth of finance capital which culminated in the institution of the Bank of England in 1694, a fact deplored by its Tory detractors who protested that "Banks are republican institutions".³ Thus as Marx had argued in The German Ideology, it was through the national debt that the state had fallen out of the hands of the royal house into the pocket of the bourgeoisie. "Each step in the development of the bourgeoisie", claims the Communist Manifesto, "was accompanied by a corresponding political advance of that class".⁴ The subject of this comment is the political evolution of the French bourgeoisie, but the point is a general one. The consolidation of the capitalist class as a political force is possible only after the consolidation of the capitalist mode of production. The financial sustenance of the absolute monarchy created the modern credit and banking system which provided the capitalist class with a lever which gave it the political impetus to rule on its own behalf. But the basis of the economic development of the bourgeoisie which undermined the absolute monarchy was the creation, through the state, of finance capitalists who endowed the capitalist class as a whole with the economic means to acquire full political power.

The complex interrelation between the development of money property, the changing requirements of the state and the structural development of the capitalist class, demonstrated in Marx's later discussion of the relation between the class and political power, indicate the limitations of his earlier tendency to reduce the state to the capitalist class. In

¹'A Review of Guizot's Book Why Has the English Revolution Been Successful?', Articles on Britain, p. 92.

²Capital, III, p. 602.

³Cited ibid.

⁴MESW, I, p. 110; cf. also MESW, III, p. 218.

Marx's later discussion it is implicit that the state had served the interests of capital prior to the full development of the capitalist class, and that the maturity of the class followed upon the development of the national debt in the state. It was only after this state sponsored development of the class in the creation of finance capital, according to Marx's later discussion, that the bourgeoisie could begin to fully acquire the state as its own. Marx has not fundamentally revised the early formulation of the theory of the state as a class instrument, but he has modified it in order to show that the state, in its promotion of national wealth, provided an instrumental value to the capitalist class before it was wielded by the bourgeoisie as its own. Secondly, Marx's later account of the state shows that the consolidation of the capitalist mode of production and the crucial development of the capitalist class was as much a consequence of the evolution of the state as the changing political nature of the state was a consequence of the evolution of capitalist property.

IV

Marx's general proposition that the state is an expression of class domination, while breaking radically with the philosophy of German Idealism and Hegel in particular, has its precursors in the Western tradition of political theory.¹ This assessment is acknowledged by Marx when he says in The German Ideology that

The modern French, English and American writers all express the opinion that the State exists only for the sake of private property, so that this fact has penetrated into the consciousness of the normal man.²

¹This is strongly denied by Arthur McGovern, 'The Young Marx on the State', p. 431, but affirmed by George Lichtheim, Marxism, p. 373.

²MESW, I, p. 77.

Writers who had studied the political and economic changes of seventeenth and eighteenth century Europe were aware of the fact that changes in the form of property gave rise to corresponding changes in the political structure, and that newly acquired political power functioned to defend and advance the emergent property relations. Marx breaks with the earlier materialist political thought by analysing the political organisation of class rule in terms of the relations of social production, and also in the implications he draws from this. Before discussing Marx's contribution to political theory, we will consider the tradition to which Marx is heir.

Although the seventeenth century historian of the English Civil War seems not to have influenced Marx, nor is he referred to in Marx's writings, James Harrington deserves to be mentioned as an intellectual forebear of the theory of the state as a class instrument. Harrington is widely regarded to have discovered the law that political power follows property, that economic phenomena have a decisive influence on political structure and function.¹ He argues that the English Civil War was a mere readjustment of the political "superstructure"² to the economic reality of the movement of landed property from the crown and the nobility to the bourgeoisie and the lower gentry. Harrington also recognised that in the commercial cities of the Netherlands the distribution of capital was responsible for the configuration of political power. Harrington's conception of property, however, is legalistic. He saw property as a legal institution, believing that the distribution of property could be changed

¹Lord Acton, Lectures on Modern History and Historical Essays and Studies, as quoted in G.E. Fasnacht, Acton's Political Philosophy, p. 13; G.P. Gooch, Political Thought in England from Bacon to Halifax, p. 114; Harold Laski, The Rise of European Liberalism, p. 112. Harrington's major work, Oceana, was first published in 1656.

²Harrington's expression, cited in Christopher Hill, 'The English Civil War Interpreted by Marx and Engels', p. 130.

by law, and that by such means government could bring about a distribution of property favourable to its rule.¹ Notes jotted in Marx's excerpt-books for the years 1879 to 1881 explicitly repudiate the juristic notion of property², but the general thrust of Harrington's political sociology is impressive in its similarity to Marx's discussion of the material basis of the political state and the changes affected in the form of the state through changes in property relations.

The resemblance between the analysis of political power in terms of property developed by the participant-historian of the French Revolution, Joseph Barnave, and Marx's materialist interpretation of history has also been noted by various writers.³ Barnave argues that

a new distribution of wealth produces a new distribution of power. Just as the possession of land raised the aristocracy, so does industrial property raise the power of the people⁴

and,

just as landed property is, in all large states, the basis of aristocracy and federalism, so is capital the principle of democracy and of unity.⁵

This can be read as almost a summary of Marx's discussion in the Communist Manifesto.⁶ Henri Saint-Simon similarly explains political relations in terms of economic conditions and argues that property is

¹George Sabine, A History of Political Theory, p. 501.

²'Marginal Notes on Adolph Wagner's Lehrbuch der politischen Ökonomie', pp. 57-58. Cf. also A Contribution to the Critique of Political Economy, pp. 192-193.

³Laski, op. cit., pp. 234-235; Ralph Miliband, 'Barnave: A Case of Bourgeois Class Consciousness', p. 28.

⁴Joseph Barnave, Introduction à la Révolution Française, as quoted by Miliband, op. cit., p. 33, and Laski, op. cit., p. 232.

⁵Barnave, op. cit., as quoted by Miliband, op. cit., p. 31.

⁶MESW. I, p. 113.

primary over politics in so far as government and political institutions in general are subject to the property relations of society:

La form du gouvernement n'est qu'une forme et la constitution de la propriété est le fond; donc c'est cette constitution qui sert véritablement de base à l'édifice social.¹

[The form of government is merely a form and the constitution of property is the basis; therefore it is this constitution which is really at the base of the social edifice.]

As with Harrington, neither Barnave nor Saint-Simon went as far as Marx's model of economic causation in their theorising. Both French thinkers maintain that economic development is a consequence of intellectual advancement², whereas Marx argues that in the development of their material production men develop their knowledge.³ In political theory, however, the ancestry of Marx's analysis of the material foundation of politics can be clearly discerned in these historians of the French Revolution.⁴ In the case of Saint-Simon Marx owes a direct intellectual debt.⁵ The cultural milieu in which he developed in the Germany of the 1830s was as strongly Saint-Simonian as Hegelian. Marx's elders, peers and teachers were in varying degrees followers of Saint-Simonian ideas.⁶ And, as the critique of Karl Grün in The German Ideology indicates, Marx

¹Henri Saint-Simon, L'Industrie, as quoted by T.B. Bottomore and Maximilien Rubel, 'Introduction', p. 26; translation my own.

²Cf. respectively Laski, op. cit., pp. 231-232 and Z.A. Jordan, The Evolution of Dialectical Materialism, p. 121.

³The German Ideology, p. 38; A Contribution to the Critique of Political Economy, pp. 20-21.

⁴Engels, Anti-Dühring, p. 307, says that "[t]he knowledge that economic conditions are the basis of political institutions appears [in Saint-Simon] only in embryo".

⁵Cf. Lichtheim, op. cit., pp. 61-62.

⁶Jordan, op. cit., p. 119; Irving Zeitlin, Marxism: A Re-Examination, pp. 17-18.

had a good working knowledge of the Saint-Simonian texts.¹ Saint-Simon's plea for a unified science and his positivism are echoed in the Economic and Philosophic Manuscripts and The German Ideology.² It is, indeed, difficult to discuss the development of Marx's social theory and the theory of the state without at least a passing reference to Saint-Simon.

The materialist tradition of political analysis continued to be expressed in the work of writers contemporary to Marx. The French historian and statesman, Francois Guizot, for instance, argued in his various books on European and French history that in order to understand political institutions, one must examine the various strata existing in society and their mutual relationships, and that in order to understand these various strata, one must first know the form and the relations of landed property.³ And John Stuart Mill, commenting on European ideas which had influenced him, mentions the proposition "that government is always either in the hands, or passing into the hands, of whatever is the strongest power in society, and that what this power is does not depend on institutions, but institutions on it".⁴ The general approach outlined by these writers to the consideration of political institutions is strikingly similar to Marx's, and all the more interesting for the fact that Marx polemicised against both of them.

The precursors of Marx's theory of the state have in common an historiography based on the study of revolution. Revolution not only creates new social order and establishes new political power, but in

¹The German Ideology, pp. 554-574.

²Economic and Philosophic Manuscripts, pp. 102ff; The German Ideology, pp. 31, 36-37. Compare with the quotations from Saint-Simon in Herbert Marcuse, Reason and Revolution, pp. 331-332.

³Guizot's contemporary, Augustin Thierry, might also be mentioned in this context; cf. Marx's letter to Engels, July 27, 1854, in Selected Correspondence, p. 87.

⁴J.S. Mill, Autobiography, p. 124.

laying bare the social roots of political organisation it also introduces new political discourse. Reasoning which argues from society to state rather than from state to society is the intellectual product of revolution. The vocabulary of such a methodology was alien to German thought until the revolution of 1848, although it had been established in England by the seventeenth century and in France by the eighteenth. German intellectuals at the time of Marx's early development accepted the power of the state as the effective factor in social events and looked to the absolute monarchy of Frederick William IV for social reform. The wave of academic repression and press censorship of 1842-1843 merely confirmed their belief in the potency of the state over society. Marx's theoretical strength lies in the fact that he based his research on the intellectual tradition of revolutionary historiography rather than the tradition which dominated Germany at the time. While in Paris during the end of 1843 Marx made an avid study of the French Revolution and planned to write a history of the Convention. The book was abandoned before it was begun, but the work he put into its preparation undoubtedly led Marx to develop the theory of the state as an instrument of class rule based upon the power of the dominant class in society.¹

Marx went beyond the materialist tradition of political analysis upon which he built his mature theory of the state by analysing the political organisation of class rule in terms of the relations of social production, and drew implications from this model which opened a new phase in political theory. Earlier theorists had understood property either legally, as with Harrington, or functionally, relating it to particular occupations and different sources of income. Marx argues that

¹The importance of Marx's study of the French Revolution is discussed by Bruce Brown, 'The French Revolution and the Rise of Social Theory', pp. 423-424. Cf. also Evans, *op. cit.*, p. 18.

the relations of property are ultimately the relations of social production, the former being merely a legal term for the latter.¹ This introduces a consideration absent in earlier writers. Property is conceived by Marx in terms of the social appropriation of the product of labour, rather than merely in terms of the appropriation of the product of nature. The relationship between ruler and ruled is ultimately taken back, therefore, to the social relations of production on which the relations of property rest. Thus Marx specifies that the different relations of property, on which different state forms are founded, can be understood only in terms of the social mode of production. The importance of this factor to the analysis of politics is that it explicitly relates the class nature of political rule to the instrumental value of the state as an organ of class domination. Whereas previous materialist appreciations of political organisation went no further than to argue that the power of the state derives from the power of property, Marx explicitly specifies that the state relates back to the economic relations of social production as a force of oppression against the class of direct producers. The state serves as an instrument of class rule, according to Marx, in maintaining the relations of production and enforcing the subordination of the working class to them. Earlier political theories had emphasised the oppressive nature of the state, but none of them, including Marx's early theory of the state as alienated social power, had argued that the state's oppression is a class oppression and that the state is an oppressive instrument of class rule.

The basic proposition of Marx's political analysis, that the state is the political expression of class domination, leads him to make two further points which are essential to his political theory. In its rise

¹A Contribution to the Critique of Political Economy, p. 21.

to social power the proletariat, Marx argues, must seize the state and turn it against the bourgeoisie. Secondly, in the post-capitalist society of communism, in which class and class oppression have been abolished, the state is without a purpose and will therefore disappear with the last vestiges of class antagonism.

Marx argues that although the material basis of communism is inherent in the dynamic of capitalist development¹, in pursuance of its general interest in class struggle it is imperative that the proletariat capture the state and neutralise the political power of the bourgeoisie. In the Inaugural Address of the Working Men's International Association Marx describes the conquest of political power as "the great duty of the working classes"², and he explains in the Critique of the Gotha Programme that

Between capitalist and communist society lies the period of the revolutionary transformation of the one into the other. Corresponding to this is also a political transformation period in which the state can be nothing but the revolutionary dictatorship of the proletariat.³

In its ascendancy to social power and economic dominance the proletariat is compelled, as the bourgeoisie was before it, to turn the state into the political instrument of its class rule. Marx's concept of the 'dictatorship of the proletariat' is an expression for the historical form of the state under the conditions of proletarian superiority during the period of revolutionary transformation from capitalism to classless communism.⁴

¹Capital, I, pp. 457-458, 472, 714-715.

²MESW, II, p. 17.

³MESW, III, p. 26.

⁴Avineri, op. cit., p. 204, denies the importance to Marx of the concept 'dictatorship of the proletariat' in this context. Cf. the critical discussion of Avineri's assertion in Chris Arthur, 'Two Kinds of Marxism' and Alan Gilbert, 'Salvaging Marx from Avineri'.

The dictatorship of the proletariat, in Marx's political theory, is the post-bourgeois form of the state which expresses the political power of the working class.

Unlike previous forms of the state, however, the class rule of the proletariat is not to sanction the class relations over which it is dominant, nor is it to advance the particular interests of the proletariat as a ruling class vis-à-vis the defeated bourgeoisie, it is to undermine the basis of class rule itself. Marx's discussion in The Civil War in France of the difference between the proletarian state and the capitalist state indicates that as the former is "the political form...[of] the emancipation of labour" it is "to serve as a lever for uprooting the economical foundations upon which rests the existence of classes, and therefore of class-rule".¹ This is because, as Marx stated in the preamble to the General Rules of the International Working Men's Association, "the emancipation of the working classes means...the abolition of all class-rule".² The dictatorship of the proletariat, therefore, is regarded by Marx as a form of political transition from the capitalist state to stateless communism. This is a logical consequence of Marx's theory of political power as "the official expression of [class] antagonism", for with the demise of class the social basis of the state, the instrument of class domination, is removed.³ The claim that the state will disappear in communism is not an expression of anarchist thought in Marx's political theory. Unlike the anarchists, Marx does not argue that the abolition of the state will break the power of the ruling class, but rather that as a consequence of social development and revolution, through which classes are abolished, there is no place for the political organisation of class

¹MESW, II, p. 223.

²Ibid., p. 19.

³The Poverty of Philosophy, p. 151.

domination.¹ The theory of the state as an instrument of class rule entails that in the classless society there will be no state.

Although Marx's mature theory of the state continues a tradition of Western political thought, the particular interpretation which he gives to the view that political power is based on the social power of property leads Marx to develop a political theory which is profoundly original. By arguing that property relations derive from the relations of social production, Marx is able to show that political rule is the rule of the dominant class in society, and that the state is the instrument of class oppression which, in maintaining the relations of social production, is an oppressive force against the class of direct producers. Secondly, as the form of the state is appropriate to the class relations of the society in which it functions, the rising working class is led to capture the capitalist state, change its form, and exercise it as an instrument for the abolition of class in the quest for its emancipation from wage-labour. And finally, as the state is the organisation of political power for class domination, the state will disappear in the classless society of communism. These three fundamental tenets of Marx's political theory are unique to his mature theory of the state as the instrument of class rule.

¹'Fictitious Splits in the International', MESW, II, pp. 285-286.

CONCLUSION

Over the eight chapters of this dissertation a number of different themes have been discussed, the treatment of which leads to a particular interpretation of Marx's thought.

It has been shown in this thesis that in an endeavour to build an instrumental science of capitalist society Marx developed a number of different specific theories, theories which provide analyses of social and political relations and structures, of the oppressive conditions to which man is subject, and of the means by which exploitation and its associated conditions can be overcome, or, rather, overthrown.

Marx's principle concern was to elaborate a social and political theory integral to a political programme of fundamental social change. This led him to constantly revise his interpretation of social reality and to construct what were in terms of an earlier statement often significantly new theories. This point is demonstrated in the discussion of the development of alienation theory in Marx conducted in both chapters 7 and 8.

As well as indicating the discontinuous theoretical development of Marx's thought, the thesis has attempted to demonstrate that there is a common set of problems to which his writings addressed themselves. Marx's theoretical development must thus be seen as a continuing programme to develop the insight, lighted upon in the Critique of Hegel's Philosophy of Right, that human oppression has ultimately a social basis and that the history of the state is a history of such social conditions and causes. Over the course of his intellectual

career a number of approaches are adopted by Marx, some of which are abandoned while others are elaborated, but all address themselves to the need for an adequate interpretation of the social world in order that it be changed. Associated with this is Marx's continual consideration of the relation between the individual - and especially the individual producer - and the wider context of his social environment.

Unlike most current interpretations of Marx's work, the present dissertation attempts to emphasise his continuing concern with a common core of problems, whilst at the same time it shows that the particular solutions advanced in different works are often theoretically distinct.

The intellectual sources of Marx's theory, and especially those of his formative or early period, have also been discussed in the thesis. There is something of a consensus in the current literature that Marx's early writings demonstrate a significant Hegelian and Feuerbachian background. It has similarly been argued in this dissertation that the influence on Marx's early writings of German philosophy is both evident and important. More significantly, though, it has been shown that the dialectical method in Marx is not drawn from Hegel. The influence of Hegel is largely confined to Marx's conceptualisation of class and property in his 1843 Critique and ceased to be of consequence thereafter, except in so far as the Hegelian notion of 'transcendence' was utilised by Marx in the Economic and Philosophic Manuscripts of 1844. Although the conception of the state as a rational organism is taken from Hegel and employed in the Critique, it

was shown in the last chapter that Marx's political theory developed out of a political tradition which bears no relation to Hegel. Indeed, it is for his critique of Hegel and for his hostility to a development of the 'revolutionary side' of Hegel that Marx turned to Feuerbach during the period 1843-1844.

Again, there is little that is new in the suggestion that Feuerbach exercised an influence on Marx's thought. What is new is the argument of Chapter 4 that Marx made Feuerbachian theory consistent where it had been left undeveloped by its author, and that the Theses on Feuerbach provide an internal critique of their subject which enhances the competence of Feuerbachian theory. Related to this is the argument that the critique of Feuerbach outlined in The German Ideology is dissimilar in its basic content and intention from that of the Theses. The criticisms of the Theses of Feuerbach, and also those in the Critique, the Introduction, the 1844 Manuscripts and The Holy Family, are designed to strengthen what are fundamentally Feuerbachian positions and advocate the Feuerbachian programme. The German Ideology, on the other hand, undermines this early content in its development of theories of alienation, history, social change and human nature which are different from and contrary to the Feuerbachian-inspired earlier pronouncements on these matters. Thus a new interpretation of the German philosophical sources of Marx's early thought is advanced in this thesis where Hegel and Feuerbach are discussed.

Another influence on Marx's thought, seldom mentioned in published discussion, which has been identified in a number of the above chapters

is that of liberal theory. There is some discussion in the critical literature of the materialist theory of history and politics which is a part of the democratic revolutionary tradition to which Marx's thought is related. What seems not to have been previously argued, though, is that there is a similarity between Marx's early theory of civil society and that found in classical liberal theory, and also that there is a theoretical proximity between the underpinnings of Marx's early model of communist society and those of liberal conceptions of a harmonised commercial society. More specifically, the theoretical similarity between aspects of Marx's Paris Writings and the work of Adam Smith, which has been discussed in the thesis, has been neglected by most interpreters of Marx's early thought. The influence of Smith on Marx has been discussed in relation to not only the conception of 'social harmony', but also with regard to the concept of social class and that part of Marx's early theory of alienation which deals with labour productivity, the labour process and with the conception of history as the self development of man (cf. Chapters 5, 7, 6 and 3 respectively).

As well as a new interpretation of Marx's thought in terms of its intellectual sources and influences, the thesis also attempts to elaborate a particular interpretation of Marx's methodological and epistemological development, on the one hand, and the development of his substantive social and political theory, on the other. It has been shown in Chapters 1 and 2 that the foundations of Marx's mature social and political theory cannot be located in the methodological and epistemological position adopted in his writings prior to The German

Ideology. In contrast to an early empiricism and idealism, his mature works are based upon a materialist and scientific methodology and epistemology. This is not an original interpretation, of course, although its statement in these chapters is argued in a close textual examination of the particular details of the case.

The two basic themes of class and alienation, and Marx's theoretical accounts of the phenomena to which these concepts refer, has been explored in various chapters of the dissertation. The discussion of class theory in general and of the proletariat and class struggle in particular, has shown that Marx's social theory passed through various stages of development before he arrived at the position for which he is best known. The notion that class is formed in the social relations of production, that the proletariat develops as a revolutionary force with the development of capitalist industry and that communism is achieved through class struggle are absent from the Critique of Hegel's Philosophy of Right, the Introduction to the Critique and the Economic and Philosophic Manuscripts. In these early works class is conceived as an aggregative collectivity of individual persons, and the individual in civil society is seen as being without social relations or determination. A philosophico-anthropological conception of man leads Marx to argue that society is a faculty of human nature, that in his alienation man is without society and that communism is attained through the resolution of an ontological contradiction internal to man's alienated social labour in private property.

With the development of a theory of social class which operates through the concept 'mode of production' there appears in Marx's

writings a conception of the proletariat and the attainment of communism quite different from that of his early writings. The theory of the state in Marx similarly undergoes fundamental change when the historical materialist theory of class is developed. With the change in the theory of class there occurs a similar change in the theory of alienation. The treatment of alienation theory in this thesis is also part of an interpretation of Marx's development which is not met elsewhere.

In arguing that Marx continued to employ the concept of alienation throughout his work, it is also shown that the concept appears in at least two different and dissimilar theoretical frameworks at different periods of his writing, and that while the early theory of alienation presents a single view of the state as alienated social power, other of its aspects are quite different in different works of the period 1843 to 1845. With changes in Marx's theory of class and of alienation Marx's general social theory and political theory undergo fundamental change. These and related developments are highlighted by the interpretation of Marx's intellectual and theoretical evolution elaborated in the present thesis.

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