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REIFICATION, RATIONALIZATION AND CAPITALISM'S 'DIALECTIC OF SCARCITY': A RECONCEPTUALIZATION OF THE MARXIST EMANCIPATORY PROJECT

by

KONSTANTINOS (COSTAS) PANAYOTAKIS

Volume I

A dissertation submitted to the Graduate Faculty in Sociology in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy, The City University of New York

2001

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This manuscript has been read and accepted for the Graduate Faculty in Sociology in satisfaction of the dissertation requirement for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy.

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THE CITY UNIVERSITY OF NEW YORK

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ABSTRACT

REIFICATION, RATIONALIZATION AND CAPITALISM'S 'DIALECTIC OF SCARCITY': A RECONCEPTUALIZATION OF THE MARXIST EMANCIPATORY PROJECT

By

Konstantinos (Costas) Panayotakis

Adviser: Professor Stanley Aronowitz

This dissertation undertakes an immanent critique of the work of Marx, Weber, Lukacs and Gramsci as a means to the reconceptualization of the Marxist emancipatory project. It is argued that capitalism's 'dialectic of scarcity' accounts for both the utopian, transcending moment of capitalist society and this society's reifying thrust. This ambiguity is reflected in the work of the thinkers in this study and it is this ambiguity that makes possible the immanent critique of their work.

The transcending moment of capitalism's dialectic of scarcity stems from the compulsive dynamism of capitalist society that raises the specter of a radically different, non-alienated society that would use capitalism's technological achievements to conquer material scarcity and enrich human life. This utopian potential is obscured, however, by the workings of a capitalist society that can artificially reproduce scarcity even after this scarcity has become objectively obsolete.

Weber's analysis of rationalization is treated as an ideological manifestation of capitalism's contradictoriness. Weber's recognition of the materialist impulse underlying religion implies that with the emergence of capitalism the meaning of intellectual

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rationalization has to shift. Instead of representing a movement towards the ideological sublimation of the impulse for a world without undeserved suffering, rationalization after the emergence of the dynamic capitalist society requires social change that would turn a drastic reduction of undeserved human suffering into a reality.

While Weber's pessimistic development of his rationalization analysis is interpreted as a symptom of the reification that capitalism's artificial reproduction of scarcity produces, this reification is also shown to inform Marx's more optimistic vision. More specifically, the transcending moment of capitalism's dialectic of scarcity signifies the objective obsolescence of all forms of social oppression and gives rise to a genuinely universal interest in a free, non-alienated society. Capitalism's artificial reproduction of scarcity, however, not only obscures this general interest but also constitutes social subjectivity along the lines laid down by forms of social oppression. The traditional Marxist appeal to class consciousness and struggle as a means to human liberation unwittingly contributes to the naturalization of scarcity implicit in the conflict theoretical imaginary.

The recognition that reification forms the great obstacle to human liberation forces us to rethink emancipatory politics as a universalistic project that will have to crystallize out of an alliance between the partial struggles of different movements against the different forms of class and non-class oppression. This implication for emancipatory politics is developed through an immanent critique of Gramsci's concept of hegemony.

Finally, the implications of capitalism's ecological destructiveness for emancipatory politics are examined. To the extent that this destructiveness threatens to

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turn scarcity from a social into an once again natural fact, it also threatens the material preconditions for abolishing all forms of social oppression. In so doing, capitalism provides the material basis for an alliance between ecological movements and movements struggling against the various forms of social oppression.

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ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

I would like to thank all my teachers at CUNY Graduate Center for their contribution to my intellectual development. Special thanks go to my principal adviser, Stanley Aronowitz, and to Roslyn Bologh and Marnia Lazreg, who were kind enough to be on my committee, offer me encouragement and make insightful suggestions that helped improve this dissertation. It goes without saying that the responsibility for any remaining weaknesses lies with the author.

Finally, I would like to thank my parents, Yannis and Voula Panayotakis, for their support and encouragement through the years. Since they were the ones to introduce me to the wonderful world of spirited political arguments, it is to them that I would like to dedicate this work.

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Abbreviations

EPM stands for Marx, Karl (1964) Economic and Philosophic Manuscripts of 1844. NY: International Publishers.

ES stands for Weber, Max (1978) Economy and Society: An Outline of Intrerpretive Sociology. Berkeley: University of California Press.

FMW stands for Gerth and Mills, eds. (1958) From Max Weber: Essays in Sociology, New York: Oxford U.P.

FSPN stands for Gramsci, Antonio (1995) Further Selections from the Prison Notebooks. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press.

GEH stands for Weber Max (1961) General Economic History. NY: Collier Books.

HCC stands for Lukacs, Georg (1971) History and Class Consciousness. Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press.

M stands for Max Weber on the Methodology of Social Sciences (1949). Glencoe, Ill., Free Press.

MER stands for Robert Tucker (ed.) (1978) The Marx-Engels Reader. NY: Norton.

PE stands for Weber, Max (1958a) The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism, Macmillan.

PN stands for Gramsci, Antonio (1991) Prison Notebooks. New York: Columbia University Press.

PP stands for Marx, Karl (1963) The Poverty of Philosophy. NY: International Publishers.

PW stands for Weber, Max (1994) Political Writings. Cambridge University Press.

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RK stands for Weber, Max (1975) Roscher and Knies: The Logical Problems of Historical Economics. Free Press.

SPN stands for Gramsci, Antonio (1972) Selections from the Prison Notebooks. New York: International Publishers.

Stammler stands for Weber, Max (1977) Critique of Stammler. NY and London: The Free Press and Collier Macmillan.

SV stands for 'Science as a Vocation' in FMW.

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INTRODUCTION

Two major recent developments have come to signify turning points for contemporary society. The coming to an end of Social-Democratic welfare capitalism and liberal Keynesianism in rich capitalist countries as well as the renewed economic crisis and stagnation in developing and Third World countries represent the first set of important recent developments. Coming after a period of growing prosperity (in rich capitalist countries), these developments saliently demonstrate the continuing relevance of Marx's critique of capitalism. Indeed, these developments problematize the Keynesian Social-Democratic belief in the feasibility of a 'capitalism with a human face' by showing that there are limits to how human capitalist society can become. While, on one hand, discrediting the naive belief in capitalism's gradual but continuous progress towards a more humane society, these developments have also shown that even what was achieved in the domain of social justice during capitalism's post-war 'golden age' (cf. Marglin and Schor, 1990) has become very precarious.

The other important event informing the perspective of this study is the failure of Soviet-style communism. While many Marxists and anti-capitalists of various stripes had undertaken critiques of the Soviet system long before its collapse, this collapse as well as the deeply undemocratic and economically inefficient character of this system has produced an understandable skepticism towards any radical vision of human emancipation. The collapse of the Soviet Union, we were told just a few years ago, signifies the end of history as humanity is supposed to have finally discovered the indisputable superiority of capitalist democracy. As the recent emergence of a movement against global capitalism demonstrates, however, the complacent platitudes of the 'end of history' ideologists may prove much more short-lived than even their fiercest critics

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might have predicted. At a moment when the old certitudes have fallen into deserved oblivion, the continuing growth of the global anti-capitalist movement calls for a rethinking of the emancipatory project.

This study is a reaction to the crisis of socialism both in its Soviet communist and its social-democratic varieties. Such a crisis inevitably brings to the fore questions about the continuing relevance of Marxism, the intellectual tradition underlying bot of these streams of socialist politics. A fundamental premise of this study is that Marxist theory is as relevant today as ever because it still provides the most sophisticated critique of capitalist society, the most coherent account of capitalism's peculiar dynamism and the contradictions that this dynamism entails, and the most compelling vision of a free, non-alienated society. This premise should not, however, be constrained as a plea to return to the 'basics' of Marxist theory. It is my contention that Marxism's contribution to the understanding of and struggle against capitalism is a project that needs to constantly reconceptualize itself by applying Marxism's critical historicist perspective to itself. If there is any truth to Lukacs' claim that Marxist orthodoxy refers not to an acceptance of 'every one of Marx's individual theses' but 'exclusively to method' (HCC, 1), this must be it.

In this sense, this study moves on at least two different levels. On the one hand, our analysis endorses Marxism's contention that emancipatory politics and the struggle for a free and democratic society cannot be posited as an abstract 'Ought' but have to be understood as an active appropriation of the dynamic tendencies and contradictions immanent in capitalism. This being the case, the reconceptualization of capitalism's dynamic tendencies and contradictions is one of this study's central tasks. On the other hand, my belief that Marxism offers the most powerful account of capitalism's

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development and its contradictions is accompanied by a recognition that Marxism is not just a critique of capitalist society but also its product. Developing Marx's and Lukacs's recognition that the structural logic of capitalist society necessarily engenders reifying forms of appearance that shape the capitalist subject's experience of social reality, I argue that this reification also informs the Marxist philosophy of history accepted not only by Marx and Lukacs but also by Gramsci, the other major Marxist thinker that this study discusses. The trace of capitalist reification is also discovered in Weber's development of the implications of his concept of rationalization. I argue that an immanent critique that rescues Weber's critical insights from their reified shell can make a valuable contribution to the Marxist emancipatory project. I discuss Weber's recognition of the material impulse underlying religion and rationalization and argue that such a recognition undermines Weber's pessimistic diagnosis of modernity by pointing towards the completion of the rationalization process through the attainment of a free, non-alienated society that, being able to satisfy the material impulse underlying religion and rationalization in reality, would no longer require this impulse's ideological sublimation.

In other words, the immanent mode of my analysis allows me to pursue simultaneously the project of critically reconceptualizing both Marxist theory and the direction that emancipatory politics should take if it is to take advantage of the opportunities and contradictions immanent in capitalist development. The political implications of my analysis are developed through a confrontation of both Gramsci's thought and Laclau and Mouffe's reinterpretation of the concept of hegemony. I argue that Gramsci's use of this concept can be interpreted as an early and undeveloped recognition of the fact that the Marxist emancipatory project could not be fulfilled without a more genuinely universalistic politics. I also point out that although Laclau and

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Mouffe are right to criticize the 'ontological primacy' of class in traditional Marxist theory they are as unable to clearly articulate the implications of a 'universalist turn' for emancipatory politics as Gramsci himself. Finally, I discuss these political implications through an analysis of capitalism's 'dialectic of scarcity.' I argue that capitalism's unprecedented dynamism raises, for the first time in history, the specter of a free, non-alienated society. This utopian moment of capitalist development is, however, constantly overwhelmed by capitalism's artificial reproduction of scarcity. Nonetheless, by raising the specter of a non-alienated society capable of supporting the infinite enrichment of every individual's life, capitalism creates a universal interest in the realization of such a society. To the extent that the possibility of such a non-alienated society renders all forms of social oppression obsolete, the universal interest in its realization provides the material basis for an alliance between social movements struggling against different forms of social inequality. Finally, I use a discussion of Marxist ecology and James O'Connor's thesis concerning a second, ecological contradiction of capitalism as a starting-point for the exploration of the implications of a capitalist 'renaturalization' of scarcity. More specifically, I argue that if capitalist ecological destruction is allowed to turn scarcity from a social to a natural fact, this could render impossible the realization of a free, non-alienated society, freeze into place or make harder the resistance against any and all forms of social inequality, and lead to a fragmentation of emancipatory movements from which it may prove impossible for them to recover. Thus I argue that the modifications to capitalism's dialectic of scarcity that capitalist ecological destruction implies makes imperative the common struggle of labor, feminist, anti-racist, Third World, ecological and other social movements against the specter of the authoritarian

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society that, if left unchallenged, capitalism's ecological unsustainability is in the long term bound to raise.

As this overview makes clear the theoretical character of this work is animated by a practical, political intent. Sharing Marx's commitment to a theoretical analysis that seeks not merely to understand but also to change the world, I have attempted to sketch the ways in which Marxist theory would have to be reconceptualized if it is to illuminate the conditions of possibility for an alliance of movements struggling against class and non-class forms of oppression into a radical, universalistic movement struggling for freedom, democracy, equality and the enrichment of life for all. Such a project is as vast and ambitious as it is urgent, so this study can only claim to be a starting-point. The further pursuit of this project would require the continuation of the confrontation between Marxism and other critical theoretical traditions within social science as well as the exploration of the complex connections between the class oppression that Marxism has helped illuminate and other non-class forms of oppression relating to gender, race and global inequality. Clearly, no single study could treat all the dimensions of such a programme. Instead the goal of this study is to show that the radicalism of the Marxist emancipatory project's vision is as valid as ever and that an immanent critique of Marxist theory could help us rethink some of the traditional Marxist assumptions concerning this vision. To the extent that it succeeds in fulfilling this general goal, this study will serve as an argument for further pursuing the research programme implicit in its theoretical conclusions.

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CHAPTER 1

ALIENATION, MODERNITY AND SOCIALISM IN MARX'S THOUGHT

Marx's Concept of Alienation

The radicalism of the Marxist emancipatory vision consists in its foregrounding of the project to abolish human alieation. The centrality of the concept of alienation to Marx's thought has been disputed by Althusser (1979) who has postulated a radical disjuncture - or 'epistemological break' - between Marx's early more philosophical, 'ideological' and humanistic work and his later more materialist and scientific work. According to Althusser the break by mature Marx from humanist ideology to the science of historical materialism entails a rejection of his Hegelian past. Thus, not only does Althusser not see the transcendence of alienation as a central aspect of the Marxist emancipatory project but he even argues that alienation is an inevitable functional necessity for any human society, even a communist one. Other commentators disagree with this sharp opposition between Marx's humanist early writings and his mature materialistic writings. Avineri (1968) explicitly rejects it while Meszaros (1970) locates the birth of Marx's system in one of Marx's early works, The Economic and Philosophic Manuscripts of 1844, and its discussion of "the negation and supersession of 'labor's self-alienation'."[1] This disagreement stems from the fact that although there is a continuity of concerns between Marx's earlier and later work, there is a certain ambiguity in Marx's early discussion of alienation in the Manuscripts that is not as present in later works such as Capital. This ambiguity reflects a certain hesitation- in Marx's Manuscripts- between a

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philosophical anthropology inspired by Feuerbach and a more materialist and non-essentialist conception of alienation. Postone's claim that "[i]n the early works, Marx's categories are still transhistorical: although his early concerns remain central to his later works- his analysis of alienation for example- they become historical and thereby transformed"[2] points in the same general direction but underestimates the ambiguity of the early position which already contained the elements that would develop into the later, more unambiguously materialist position.

Alienation is a recurrent theme in Marx's early work. Drawing from Feuerbach's humanist reinterpretation of Christianity, Marx seeks to uncover secular forms of alienation that present parallels to the religious form identified by Feuerbach. In 'On the Jewish Question' Marx finds in the bourgeois opposition between civil society and the state the same dualism between the profane reality of actual human life and the imaginary realization of human essence that Feuerbach had discovered in religion. Anticipating his later discussion of estranged labor he even draws a parallel between secular alienation exemplified by money and religious alienation as discussed by Feuerbach:

> As long as man is restrained by religion he can objectify his essence only by making it into an alien, fantastic being. In the same way, when under the sway of egoistic need he can act practically and practically produce objects only by making his products and his activity subordinate to an alien substance and giving them the significance of an alien substance – money.[3]

Thus even in his early work, when he is clearly under the influence of Feuerbach, Marx has already started to move beyond Feuerbach not only by seeking "to unmask human self-alienation in its secular form now that it has been unmasked in its sacred form"[4] but

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[1] Meszaros (1970), p. 18.
[2] Postone (1993), p. 74.
[3] See Marx's Early Writings, p. 241.
[4] MER, p.54.

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also by insisting that it is only the former that holds the key to an understanding of the latter.

The above-mentioned dilemma between a philosophical anthropology with trans-historical implications and a more strictly historical and non-essentialist approach to the analysis of human society and the formulation of an emancipatory project becomes more clear when we examine Marx's discussion of alienation in the Manuscripts. Although alienation is an important theme in all of Marx s work- whether his early or his late work- his discussion in the Manuscripts is especially interesting since it offers what is perhaps the most explicit and extensive treatment by Marx of the question of alienation. This treatment goes beyond the section of this book on 'Estranged Labor' since much of what follows this section in the Manuscripts can be seen as complementing and elaborating on the concept of alienation that this section outlines. Marx starts this section by reminding us that the starting-point of his analysis has been 'the premises of political economy'. Thus he seeks to emphasize that his analysis is only a (more adequate) reinterpretation of the language, laws and facts already established by classical political economy. Indeed, before he addresses the question of estranged labor, Marx reviews and develops the insights and conclusions of the political economy of his time. He starts by emphasizing the unequal 'struggle between capitalist and worker' which leads to a wretched existence for the worker since -as even Adam Smith admits- "the ordinary wage ... is the lowest compatible with common humanity, that is, with cattle-like existence."[5] The intense competition among the workers who have "neither ground rent nor interest on capital to supplement [their] industrial income" and can only survive by finding work at the service of a capitalist is responsible for the very low wages that workers can secure for

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themselves. Having shown that the structural asymmetry between labor and capital turns the worker 's misery into a constant of the capitalist economy, he examines the effects of capitalism 's internal cyclical dynamics and concludes that "although the working class cannot gain as much as the property owners when society is prospering, none suffers more cruelly from its decline than the working class". Thus the working class does not only suffer from unemployment and deprivation in times of economic crisis. Even in periods of rapid capital accumulation, the ultimate result of capitalist competition is the centralization of capital. The concrete meaning of this centralization is that "a section of the working class falls into beggary or starvation just as necessarily as a section of the middle capitalists falls into the working class."[4]

It is this analysis -the main results of which Marx summarizes in the opening paragraph of the section on 'Estranged Labor'- that underlies Marx's discussion of alienation in the Manuscripts. Indeed, this analysis makes clear why, according to Marx, labor under capitalism can be seen as separated and even dominated by its own product. Under capitalism not only is labor not allowed to appropriate and enjoy its own product but is even forced to contribute -through its own production - to the intensification of the oppression under which it suffers. Since accumulation under capitalism leads to an intensification of competition within the ever-growing ranks of the working-class which, for that reason, sinks ever deeper into misery, Marx is led to the conclusion that "the more objects the worker produces the less he can possess and the more he falls under the sway of his product, capital."[5] Labor does not only produce objects that the worker cannot possess and enjoy but also capital which, as Marx tells us, is nothing but 'stored-

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[4] EPM, p. 65.
[5] Ibid, p. 68.

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up labor'. Insofar as capital is also the "*governing power* over labor and its products"[8], labor in reproducing capital is reproducing its misery and subjection to a world of objects, which it has itself produced. By producing capital as 'stored-up labor', the worker also produces this capital's 'purchasing power' which, by making it possible for the capitalist to "live longer without the worker than can the worker without the capitalist"[9], secures capital's structural advantage over labor. Thus estranged labor implies both the product's escape from the control of the producer and even more its autonomization and transformation into a hostile reality that turns against the worker. Marx completes his introductory discussion of estranged labor as a form of alienation that is conceived in a thoroughly secular and materialist manner by pointing out, once again the parallel between his conception and Feuerbach's analysis of "human self-alienation in its sacred form". Indeed, Marx tells us that

> "the more the worker spends himself, the more powerful becomes the alien world of objects which he creates over and against himself, the poorer he himself –his inner world- becomes, the less belongs to him as his own. It is the same in religion. The more man puts into God, the less he retains in himself ..... Whatever the product of his labor is, he is not. Therefore the greater this product, the less is he himself."[10]

Our discussion so far has covered only one aspect of estranged labor, what Marx calls 'estrangement of the object.' Marx goes beyond this alienation of labor from a product turned into an independent and hostile reality by pointing out that estranged labor also implies the worker's self-estrangement in the course of production. As Marx tells us "estrangement is manifested not only in the result but in the *act of production*, within the

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[8] Ibid. p. 108.
[9] Ibid. 78.
[10] Ibid. p. 65.
[11] Ibid. p. 108.

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producing activity, itself."[11] It is not only his product but also the activity of its production that confronts the worker as an alien and hostile reality. The activity of labor is experienced as a 'self-sacrifice' and 'mortification' rather than as a means of self-affirmation. The worker feels "at home when he is not working, and when he is working he is not at home". Thus estranged labor dehumanizes the worker by turning his/her animal functions such as "eating, drinking, procreating, or at most in his dwelling and dressing-up" into "sole and ultimate ends".[12]

Because of this, Marx argues, the worker is also estranged -and this is the third aspect of estranged labor- from her species-being. Marx's discussion of species-being remains faithful to Feuerbach's description in The Essence of Christianity of the specificity of human consciousness. According to Feuerbach (1957) "[t]he brute ... is indeed conscious of himself as an individual but not as a species: hence he is without that consciousness which in its nature, as in its name, is akin to science" (1). Since "only a being to whom his own species, his own nature, is an object of thought, can make the essential nature of other things or beings an object of thought", people -and only people- are, according to Feuerbach, capable of this theoretical, scientific consciousness. While confirming this claim, Marx makes clear that 'Man' "makes the species -both his own and those of other things- his object" not only theoretically but also practically. While animals cannot distance themselves from their life activity placing it under their conscious control, people can confront their life- activity both theoretically and practically by making it "an object of [their] will and consciousness." A human individual's species-being implies, according to Marx, a double relation to nature: on the

[11] Ibid. p. 110.
[12] Ibid. p. 111.

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one hand, people depend on nature for the provision of the means of physical subsistence while, on the other, they also make nature the object of a free life-activity which is not oriented to the provision of these means but is undertaken for its own sake. This last distinction is very important because of its great- even though implicit- existential significance. Marx's recognition that people's capacity of making their life-activity "an object of [their] will and consciousness" is what makes this activity free activity amounts to a recognition that people are free to form their lives and determine its meaning. Moreover, this free determination of the content and meaning of their lives involves a dialectic between thought and practical activity. This dialectic, captured by the term conscious life activity, implies not only that human life -which, as Marx recognizes, is inseparable from activity- necessarily involves people's objectification but also that this objectification can serve as a stimulus to people's interpretation and further development of their life and its content. The meaninglessness of human life in the absence of activity involving an appropriation of the world merely expresses the fact that only such activity can advance people's project of enduring life with a meaning by allowing them to "contemplate [themselves] in a world [they themselves] ha[ve] created."

Marx's discussion of people as species-beings has metaphysical implications which will become even clearer when some of Marx's other claims in the Manuscripts are examined. It is possible, however, to keep the valid insight in Marx's discussion of people's alienation from their species-being if we strip this discussion from its metaphysical character. Once the concept of species-being is defined, Marx's argument concerning people's alienation from their species-being follows from his preceding discussion of the worker's alienation from his work and its product. According to Marx, people's alienation from their species-being involves a reversal parallel to the paradoxical

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state -mentioned above- in which estranged labor made people feel most at home in their animal functions and least so in their human functions. The worker's alienation from his work and its product forces him to experience productive activity as only a means to his physical existence. But productive activity is precisely the conscious free activity that Marx identifies as man's species-being or human essence. Once again people are reduced to the level of animals, which only produce to satisfy their immediate physical needs. More than that, it is people's capacity for a conscious free activity which leads to people's oppression and de-humanization. After all, the autonomization, under capitalism, of the worker's product into a hostile reality presupposes an alienated form of free conscious activity, that of self-interested teleological action treating other people as means to one's own ends. Thus, not only man's species-being but also other men are transformed into alien, hostile realities.

Marx's discussion of estranged labor can make a contribution to the formulation of a non-metaphysical emancipatory project in two ways. On the one hand, Marx's discussion of the worker's alienation from his product shows the reversal whereby the means end up -under capitalism- dominating the human subjects they were supposed to serve. This reversal was identified by Weber as a central element in the socialist interpretation of capitalist society and is recognized by Agnes Heller as a central implication of alienation. Lefebvre and Avineri have described the same reversal in terms of the relation between subject and object with alienation implying the domination of the human subject by the object of his activity. A radical emancipatory project would aim to reverse this perverse relation between subject and object by making the latter the means to the enrichment of human life. It is this project that would preserve the valid insights of Marx's discussion of the human individual's alienation from his species- being

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while doing away with the metaphysical implications in Marx's treatment. These metaphysical implications take in the Manuscripts the form of a philosophy of history whereby history is seen as the process towards the transcendence of alienation and the reconciliation of subject and object. A non-metaphysical interpretation of what Marx calls man's species-being would not see it as a human essence the realization of which provides the *telos* inherent in historical development but rather as the human capacity to consciously shape human life. This capacity would also not be considered a self-evident end-in-itself but rather as something to be valued and cultivated as a means to the enrichment of human life through the enrichment of human capacities and, thus, of human appropriation and experience of the world.

In any case, in order to further explore the latent emancipatory potential in Marx's discussion of alienation in the Manuscripts, we have to discuss a little more in detail the metaphysical elements in his analysis. When I discussed Marx's analysis of labor's estrangement from its product, I pointed out its thoroughly materialist character. Marx's starting-point was an analysis of capitalism that was based on his appropriation, reinterpretation and development of the premises of classical political economy. In the course of his discussion of estranged labor, however, Marx makes it clear that "though private property appears to be the source, the cause of alienated labor, it is rather its consequence, just as the gods are *originally* not the cause but the effect of man's intellectual confusion. Later this relationship becomes reciprocal."[13] Marx -who at the very beginning of his section on 'Estranged Labor' had criticized political economy for simply accepting private property as a fact rather than explaining it- is not content to analyze alienation simply in terms of the social relations and institutions that provide its

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social context but seeks to locate these social relations and institutions within a larger philosophy of history. While the link between the political economic part of the Manuscripts and the section on 'Estranged Labor' is provided by labor's estrangement from its product, it is people's estrangement from their species-being that provides the link between the section on 'Estranged Labor' and the second more philosophical part of the Manuscripts. While the first part of the book places a greater emphasis on the internal functioning and dynamics of the capitalist economy, the second part develops a philosophy of history which sees human history as the process through which people's species-being is to be realized.

More specifically, Marx considers communism more than a practical emancipatory project, a society that would allow human self-development and the enrichment of human life. He proclaims communism to be nothing less than "the solution of the riddle of history" which "knows itself to be the solution". His description of the significance of communism shows it to be the realization of philosophy that Marx had demanded in his 'Introduction' to the Critique of Hegel's 'Philosophy of Right'. Indeed, communism amounts, according to Marx, to the practical resolution of the perennial theoretical antitheses plaguing philosophy including "the conflict between man and nature and between man and man – 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."[14] Moreover, Marx does not only emphasize the achievements that communism represents but also turns these achievements into the meaning of human history when he tells us that "[t]he entire

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[13] Ibid. p. 117.
[14] Ibid. 135.

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movement of history is, therefore, both its [communism's] *actual* act of genesis (the birth act of its empirical existence) and also for its thinking consciousness the *comprehended* and *known* process of its *becoming*."[15]

For Marx, the transcendence of 'man's' estrangement from his species-being implies the reconciliation between 'man' and nature in society. This reconciliation involves a certain relation between people and Nature which both 'humanizes' nature and presupposes people's recognition of the 'inherent standard' to his object. This humanization of nature implies, on the one hand, that nature and the world become an objectification of people that does not confront them as an alien and hostile reality but rather "confirm[s] and realize[s] his individuality." Insofar as this is a world created by people making use of the capacities they have developed in the course of human history, people can contemplate themselves in such a world thus becoming themselves the object.[16] At the same time, however, people's appropriation of and self-affirming objectification in nature does not imply, according to Marx, a reduction of nature into a mere means. Even though nature would, objectively speaking, be "the material, the object, and the instrument" of a non-alienated humanity's life-activity, people's relation to nature would replace the instrumental orientation to nature's 'mere utility' with what Marx calls a human use. This 'human' use has both a subjective and an objective aspect. It presupposes- on the subjective side- the presence of senses that have become humanized and which, for that reason, relate to their objects in an objectively appropriate manner that respects the standard inherent to these objects. This human use differs from the one-sidedly subjective production of animals which can only form "things in accordance with

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[15] Ibid. 135.
[16] Ibid. 140.

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the standard and the need of the species to which it belongs."[17] People's capacity, on the other hand, "to produce in accordance with the standard of every species" and "to apply everywhere the inherent standard to the object" is what allows Marx to draw the contrast between people and animals by arguing that an animal "produces one-sidedly, whilst man produces universally."[18] It is because of this universality of their species-being that Marx conceives the ever more extensive appropriation of nature by people not as an ever-growing domination over Nature but rather as the simultaneous process of people's and Nature's self-realization. According to Marx, "[t]hat man's physical and spiritual life is linked to nature means simply that nature is linked to itself, for man is a part of nature."[19] Adding a dynamic dimension to this insight, Schmidt (1971) argues that it is possible to see human history as a natural process in which a self-mediated Nature -based on the function of human beings (who are themselves part of Nature) as "the connecting link between the instrument of labor and the object of labor"- "is the Subject- Object of labor" (61). Taking the next logical step we could add that Marx's vision does not only involve the recognition of a link between people and Nature but also the interpretation of human history as the process through which Native returns to itself. In this sense, already in the Manuscripts, Marx effects an inversion of Hegel's idealist philosophy that Marx would later describe as "standing on its head."[20] But insofar as Marx's inversion- making human history the process through which Nature rather than 'Absolute Spirit' or 'Mind' returns to itself- does not really affect the structure and logic of Hegel's metaphysical vision, Marx himself ends up with a materialist philosophy of history. It is in this sense that Marx tells

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[17] Ibid. 113.
[18] Ibid. 113.
[19] Ibid. 112.
[20] Capital I, 103.

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us about communism that "as fully-developed naturalism equals humanism, and as fully-developed humanism equals naturalism" (EPM, 135).

All in all, the metaphysical character of Marx's vision in the Manuscripts does not stem only from the form of philosophy of history that this vision assumes but also from the very manner in which Marx characterizes the substance of this vision. Although this vision of transcending alienation implies for Marx the realization of human essence, this conception -which relies on Marx's discussion of man's species-being- is metaphysical in a very specific sense. The metaphysical element in Marx's vision in the Manuscripts does not so much have to do with his substantive characterization of this human essence. As noted above, Marx's analysis of human essence in terms of a species-being allowing people to make "[their] life-activity itself the object of [their] will and of [their] consciousness"[21] refers to a very general human capacity and -far from amounting to an overly restrictive conception of human nature- seems to point more in the direction of people's potential freedom and capacity to create themselves. Marx's rejection of any naively trans-historical conception of human nature also becomes clear when he insists that "[t]he forming of the five senses [of human beings] is a labor of the entire history of the world down to the present."[22] In this sense, Marx's vision in the Manuscripts cannot be criticized for relying on a dogmatic and metaphysical revelation of a highly specified human nature. At most, one could criticize Marx for his inability-stemming from the fact that he had not yet developed at that time historical materialism- to provide a more adequate and convincing theoretical basis for his philosophical interpretation of history as human self-development. Although the fact that, in the Manuscripts, he has not

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[21] EPM, 113.
[22] Ibid. 141.

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developed and cannot make use of historical materialism does not lead Marx to a trans-historical conception of human essence, it does lead to the above-mentioned lack of coherence between Marx's materialistic analysis of capitalism in the first part of the Manuscripts and the more philosophical analysis of alienation and its transcendence in the second. In this sense, the Manuscripts illustrate the useful integrative function that the historical materialist view of history could play in Marx's theoretical project.

In any case, the way in which the Manuscripts analyze the production of human senses in the course of history is a process of humanization for humanity. What this means is that human nature or essence refers more to a capacity or potential than a given fact present from the very beginning of human history. It is worth noting here that although most commentators would agree that Marx's conception of human essence has a crucial historical component there is a certain disagreement concerning the existence or not of any trans-historical elements in this human essence. Thus, for example, Markus (1978) claims that "the assumption that Marx meant by 'human essence' the ensemble of those fundamental traits which remain untouched by the historical development of mankind, which are inseparable from man as such and are characteristic of every human individual in any form of social life ... cannot be reconciled with Marx's texts" (36) while Meszaros (1970) goes as far as to claim that "Marx categorically rejected the idea of a human essence" (13). On the other side we have writers who recognize the historical character of Marx's concept of human essence but argue that this concept also involves a transhistorical component involving a human potential[23] or a set of needs and powers,[24] which -even though existing latently throughout the history of alienated societies- are

[23] See Fromm 1991.
[24] Ollman (1976), 76.

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inherent in every human being by virtue of the fact that she is human. Both of these interpretations capture part of the truth but are by themselves inadequate. The second approach captures the teleological character of Marx's vision but in a way that is not complete. More specifically, it tends to interpret the transcendence of alienation as the full actualization of human essence. This may implicitly form part of Marx's vision in the Manuscripts but it is not the aspect of the question that Marx emphasizes. Marx is not simply interested in the self-development of the human subject. Marx's vision points above all to the relation between the human subject and her world implying that humanity's humanization does not so much refer to a substantive picture of the truly or fully human being but above all a specific relationship to her world and Nature that this human being must have. When representatives of the second approach mentioned above such as Fromm (1991) argue that "[m]an's potential, for Marx, is a given potential" (26) it becomes hard to avoid the conclusion -drawn by Ollman (1976)- that once alienation is transcended under communism "[t]he vast storehouse of his potentialities is at last emptied" (94-5). By contrast, Marx's conception of the truly human character of a non-alienated humanity takes in the Manuscripts a primarily negative rather than positive and relational rather than substantive form. What is human is defined through a contrast to what is animal and through its relation to a nature that is assumed to have an objective standard inherent to it. What is human is defined, therefore, as the non-subjective, as the capacity to relate to nature universally and in accordance with the standard inherent in the object rather than one-sidedly and in accordance with the subject's immediate needs. It is this assumption that there is an inherent standard to the object beyond the one-sided and utilitarian appropriation of the object from the standpoint of the subject's needs that gives Marx's vision its metaphysical character. Insofar as the analysis of the representatives of

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the second approach mentioned above has teleological implication for human essence, they come closer to Marx's vision in the Manuscripts. As we will see, the representatives of the first approach are closer to Marx's later views when he abandons the vision of a reconciliation between people and nature in favor of a more anthropocentric view that accepts the subordination of nature to human ends.

A radical emancipatory vision can make use of Marx's conception of the transcendence of alienation provided that this conception is appropriated from an anthropocentric standpoint. Marx's formulation of human essence in the Manuscripts is not fully compatible with human autonomy because it depends on the metaphysical assumption of a standard inherent in nature the orientation towards which defines people's specificity as human beings. The reconciliation of people to nature amounts to an objectivistic vision that reduces people to the means through which nature returns to itself. The transcendence of human alienation is not so much conceived as a human project pursuing the enrichment of human life as end-in-itself but rather as a moment in an objective metaphysical process larger than people. An anthropocentric reformulation of Marx's vision would keep Marx's emphasis on human self-development but would turn it from a subordinate element in a metaphysical historical process into an ultimate end that would make nature and its appropriation its means. It is interesting to note that Marx assumes a connection between people's species-being and their capacity for an aesthetic appropriation of the world when he tells us that people's capacity for a universal production which applies "everywhere the inherent standard to the object" implies that people can also form "things in accordance with the laws of beauty."[25] By associating it to the inherent standard to the object, Marx conceives beauty in an objectivist and

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metaphysical fashion. The source of this weakness in Marx's argument consists in the way he conceives alienation in terms of the dichotomy between subject and object. More specifically, Marx's conception leads him to equate the development of human subjectivity that the transcendence of alienation would imply with the adaptation of this subjectivity to the inherent standards of its object. In another telling passage Marx not only discloses -once again- the objectivism of his assumptions but also provides us with the tools to transcend this objectivism:

"The sense caught up in crude practical need has only a restricted sense. For the starving man, it is not the human form of food that exists, but only its abstract being as food; it could just as well be there in its crudest form, and it would be impossible to say wherein this feeding-activity differs from that of animals. The care-burdened man in need has no sense for the finest play; the dealer in minerals sees only the mercantile value but not the beauty and the original nature of the mineral: he has no mineralogical sense".[25]

Here, once again, Marx associates beauty with a relation "to the thing for the sake of the thing." The people in Marx's examples cannot relate to their object in a disinterested manner because they are compelled by 'crude practical need.' Thus the dealer in mineral cannot see its beauty because she treats it as simply a means to monetary enrichment. By contrast, Marx sees the emancipated human senses as 'theoreticians' that have come to transcend the partial and one-sidedly subjective standpoint of animals. The irony in Marx's treatment is that his contrast between men's universal and the animals' one-sided production and sensibility does not end up in an affirmation of human autonomy vis-a-vis nature but, on the contrary, in the man's heteronomous determination on the basis of the ends inherent in nature. At the same time the passage just quoted can be reinterpreted from an anthropocentric standpoint. This implies the rejection of the metaphysical notion

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[25] EPM, 114.
[26] Ibid. 141.

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of a standard inherent in the object or in Nature and the affirmation of people's subjective appropriation of Nature. Then Marx's distinction between a refined, developed as opposed to a crude, practical need would become a distinction between two different kinds of subjective need, a need having to do with the instrumental pursuit of survival and a need stemming from an activity undertaken for its own sake and oriented to the enrichment of human life. In this case, beauty does not refer to people's attainment of an objective standard but rather to people's experimentation with different forms of appropriating the world and nature. It does not refer to nature's returning to itself by means of human history but rather to people's appropriation of nature not only for survival but also as a means to a life-activity which is viewed as an end-in-itself and which makes life worth living. Once we interpret the transcendence of alienation in this way we avoid the paradox that Marx's discussion in the Manuscripts presents us with, namely that in his definition of man's species-being in terms of the standard inherent in nature he ends up reproducing alienation by subordinating the human subject to its natural object. In this way, Marx's claim that alienated humanity "makes [its] life-activity, [its] essential being, a mere means to [its] existence"[27] allows us -when freed from the metaphysical way in which it is developed in the Manuscripts- to reinterpret the transcendence of alienation as a reversal of the reduction -under capitalism and previous societies based on oppression and structural inequalities- of life activity to a means of survival. This reinterpretation of alienation and the meaning of its transcendence could provide the guiding vision for a radical emancipatory politics which would fight for an egalitarian society that would not only alleviate human suffering but also make the immense material wealth and technological resources first produced by capitalism the

[27] Ibid. 113.

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basis and the means for a richer human life that would foreground for all individuals a life-activity which would involve an aesthetic appropriation of the human world and thus be valued as an end-in-itself.

We have been discussing Marx's vision of a reconciliation between people and nature. As noted above, however, in Marx's view this reconciliation can only take place in society, meaning that this reconciliation as well as the transcendence of people's alienation from their species-being will allow to realize themselves as social beings. In Marx's own words "society is the consummated oneness in substance of man and nature- the true resurrection of nature -the naturalism of man and the humanism of native both brought to fulfillment."[28] More concretely, Marx offers the example of French socialist workers who -in the course of their common activity in pursuit of political ends and their common interest- discover society as an end in itself. For them association becomes more than a simple means to an end. Thus by developing "a new need -the need for society"[29], these socialist workers come to prefigure the realization of man's social species- being under communism. While hinting at what the realization -in a non-alienated society- of people's social being would involve, Marx also discusses the character of people's relation to each other in a society based on private property. Rather than experiencing society as a need and an end-in-itself, society and other people are experienced as means to individual self-enrichment. In their pursuit of such self-enrichment individuals do not hesitate to actively manipulate each other so as to create "a new need in another, so as to drive him to a free sacrifice, to place him in a new dependence and to seduce him into a new mode of gratification and therefore economic

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[28] Ibid. 137.
[29] Ibid. 155.

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ruin. Each tries to establish over the other an alien power, so as thereby to find satisfaction of his own selfish need."[30] Avineri (1968) has interpreted Marx's characterization of people as social species beings as an anthropological restatement of Kant's categorical imperative (87). It is clear from what has been said so far that Marx's vision does imply a social reality where people no longer treat each other as means. The anthropological character of Marx's restatement of Kant's Categorical Imperative is, however, what provides the link between people as species-beings reconciled with nature and people as social beings. According to Marx, people's treatment- under private property- of each other as means leads to the dehumanization not only of the worker but of every individual. According to Marx "[p]rivate property does not know how to change crude need into *human* need."[31] Far from facilitating the humanization of people's needs and sensibility, people- under private property- seek to capitalize on human weaknesses. Private property leads to a "general exploitation of communal human nature" with each individual" put[ting] himself at the service of the other's most depraved fancies, play[ing] the pimp between him and his need, excit[ing] in him morbid appetites"[32]. Thus the realization of people's social being appears as itself being a necessary precondition for people's humanization and reconciliation with Nature.

Once again, we have to remember that Marx's vision of people's reconciliation with Nature in society is embedded in a philosophy of history. This philosophy of history privileges, for example, the concept of estranged labor over material conditions and institutions such as that of private property. Even more, he turns private property into a necessary stage in history. Thus after holding private property responsible for the

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[30] Ibid. 147.
[31] Ibid. 147.

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estrangement of human senses encapsulated in "the sense of having", Marx continues by arguing with reference to this estrangement that "[t]he human being had to be reduced to this absolute poverty in order that he might yield his inner wealth to the outer world." [33] Marx's later work did come up with formulations concerning the transcendence of alienation that were less metaphysical but didn't quite do away with this philosophical conception of history. In this sense, there are important differences between Marx's early and later work but many of these differences stem from Marx's attempt to develop more adequately the same - in some respects problematic- conception of human history.

The Internal Tensions of Marx's Thought

In his later work Marx moves away from the metaphysical conception of the transcendence of alienation as a reconciliation of the human subject to her natural object. Rather, his continued analysis of alienation as a reversal between means and ends which ends up enslaving the human subject to the object of her activity leads Marx to conceive the transcendence of alienation as a reversal of the perverse reversal between means and ends. Through this reversal of the reversal the human subject would become the ultimate end subordinating her natural object to a means to her self-development. In a very telling passage in the Grundrisse, Marx not only refuses to denounce people's utilitarian relation to and appropriation of nature but he even presents this utilitarianism as capital's civilizing contribution. The exploitation of nature under capitalism is praised as a source of dynamism in human history that promotes human self-development. Indeed Marx specifies, in this passage

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[32] Ibid. 148.
[33] Ibid. 139.

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> "the great civilizing influence of capital; its production of a stage of society in comparison to which all earlier ones appear as mere local developments of humanity and as nature-idolatry. For the first time, nature becomes purely an object for humankind, purely a matter of utility; ceases to be recognized as a power for itself; and the theoretical discovery of its autonomous laws appears merely as a ruse so as to subjugate it under human needs, whether as an object of consumption or as a means of production. In accord with this tendency, capital drives beyond national barriers and prejudices as much as beyond nature worship, as well as all tradition, confined, complacent, encrusted satisfactions of present needs, and reproductions of old ways of life."[34]

Here Marx directly affirms the redirection of nature to a 'matter of utility' rather than contrasting this utilitarian attitude to what he referred to as the Manuscripts as truly human senses. Rather than seeing nature as providing the *telos* of the process of humankind's humanization and the criterion for establishing whether people have transcended alienation and actualized the universality of their species-being, Marx here makes nature and its subordination to human activity a mere means to human self-development. In Marx's vision here theory does not figure in the function of establishing the standard inherent to the object and thus of turning senses into 'theoreticians' but as a 'ruse' that will facilitate nature's subjugation to human needs. Finally, Marx does not conceive of alienation here as a return of nature to itself. On the contrary, by distancing himself from any form of nature worship, he also distances himself from his own vision in the Manuscripts, based as that was on a metaphysical conception of nature.

In his important book on Alienation, Praxis and Technique in the Thought of Karl Marx[35] Kostas Axelos recognizes the existence in Marx's thought of both the vision of a reconciliation between man and nature and that of man's conquest of the world. Rather than perceiving a tension between these two visions or identifying them with two

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[34] Marx, Karl (1973) Grundrisse. New York: Vintage Books, 409-10.

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different stages in Marx's thought, Axelos presents them as two elements coexisting in and forming part of the same practical project. In Axelos's interpretation of Marx's work,

> "[b]eginning from the analysis and critique of the alienation of work, of economy, of politics, of human existence, and of ideas, this central core of thinking culminates in the technique-structured prospect of universal reconciliation. The vision is one of man's reconciliation with Nature and with himself brought about through the historical and social community of men, a reconciliation that finally makes possible the full satisfaction of basic needs, the reign of abundance, and a world in which everything which is or comes to be is fully transparent. It is a [re]conciliation that means the conquest of the world by and for man in the unlimited deployment of technical forces" (p. 4).

Axelos avoids the tension between 'reconciliation' and 'conquest' by describing Marx's conception of human essence in teleological terms. Indeed, Axelos tells us that, according to Marx, "[m]an is the species being who acts according to his nature against Nature in order to satisfy his needs" and who is internally driven towards self-development and self-realization. Indeed Axelos interprets Marx as assuming not only a tendency of human beings "toward the complete satisfaction" of "their natural drives and his needs and desires"[36] which is, however, frustrated by alienation but also an 'internal necessity' which "constantly drives [them] to external realization" of their 'infinitely rich' needs.[37] Once these pieces are put together, Axelos's interpretation of Marx's project becomes more understandable. The conquest of Nature appears as a naturally imposed necessity on people, as the actualization of their own nature. This conquest stems from the fact that people are themselves part of Nature having needs that they must satisfy through work and technical progress. Moreover, people are driven towards their nature, towards self-realization through an internal necessity. Axelos's interpretation is useful

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[35] Axelos, Kostas (1976) Alienation, Praxis and Technique in the Thought of Karl Marx. Austin and London: University of Texas Press.
[36] Ibid. p. 44.
[37] Ibid. pp. 128-9.

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insofar as it can help us identify the teleological elements that persisted even in the later Marx's work. However, the distinction between the transformation of people to an ultimate end with nature serving them as a means, on the one hand, and the metaphysical vision of a reconciliation with nature has to be emphasized, if a viable emancipatory vision is to be developed. Unless 'the reconciliation of man and nature' is conceived as a situation where are people no longer confront nature as a hostile and threatening reality beyond their control; ie unless this 'reconciliation' is used to refer to nothing more than people's technical mastery or 'conquest' of nature, such a conception will involve metaphysical or teleological connotations incompatible to a viable emancipatory vision.

At the same time we have to keep in mind that even Marx's later non-metaphysical conception of emancipation and the transcendence of alienation is not devoid of teleological elements or an implicit philosophy of history. The teleology in Marx's later work does not of course take the more traditional metaphysical form characteristic of the Manuscripts. Rather it is a secularized teleology which either takes the form of historical materialism as a philosophy of history or an economic analysis portraying capitalism as a contradictory system which, for that reason, is necessarily transitory and bound to be replaced by a non-alienated communist society. We have to recognize, however, that Marx's analysis is not monolithic and that there are countertrends in his theorizing that go against the main teleological thrust of his analysis. In this sense Marx's own work provides some of the tools that can be used to criticize the teleological bias of some of the central axioms of Marxism.

With respect to Marx's general view of history there is a tension between the predominant element in Marx's theory, namely historical materialism and a distinction between pre-modern, pre-capitalist society, on the one hand, and modern capitalist

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society, on the other. Historical materialism, as Marx sketches it out in the 'Preface' to the Critique of Political Economy, views history as a unified movement driven by the dialectic between forces and relations or production. This movement comprises several different social stages as well as the revolutionary transitions from one to the next. Thus this view of history as a unified movement does not imply a simple continuity but rather a dialectic between continuity and discontinuity in which both elements fulfil a necessary function. Conversely what makes this dialectical movement unified is its directional character. As Eric Hobsbawn points out with historical materialism Marx does not only seek "to establish the general mechanism of all social change" but also to show that "the content of history in its most general form... is progress .... [towards] the free development of all men."[38] Since this historical movement has a directional character, therefore, one can further specify it by seeing it not simply as a dialectic between continuity and discontinuity but also as a dialectic between growth and development. The distinction between growth and development is drawn by Lefebvre who argues that the connection between them is "stipulated by the most general principles (laws) of dialectical thought."[39] It is not surprising then that this distinction by Lefebvre is in some ways reminiscent of Hegel's discussion- in the Science of Logic[40]- of the transformation of quantitative into qualitative change. According to Lefebvre "[g]rowth... is quantitative, continuous development is qualitative, discontinuous. It proceeds by leaps; it presupposes them. Growth is easy to predict, development less so. It may involve unforeseeable accidents, the sudden emergence of new qualities irreducible to pre-

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[38] Hobsbawm, Eric (ed.). 'Introduction' to Marx, Karl (1965) Precapitalist Economic Formations. NY: International Publishers. pp. 11-2.
[39] Lefebvre, Henri (1968) The Sociology of Marx. Allen Lane The Penguin Press. p. 29.
[40] Hegel's Science of Logic. Atlantic Highlands, NJ: Humanities Press International. See chapter 2 of Section 3 and especially Hegel's criticism of the maxim that 'Nature does not make Leaps'. pp. 368-71.

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existing qualities and determinist expectations."[41] Although such a formulation is already more open-ended and less deterministic than some of Marx's formulations on the question of historical change, it is clear that Marx's conception of historical materialism could be usefully understood as a dialectic between growth and development. More specifically, the moment of growth would refer to the quantitative growth- within a given social stage- of the forces of production which would come to an end only when "all the productive forces for which there is room in [this social stage] have developed."[42] As soon as this happens, no further quantitative growth of the forces of production is possible because the relations of production turn into fetters of the forces of production thus initiating "an epoch of social revolution." It is only in the course of such a revolution that qualitative development takes place which gives rise to a new social structure and mode of production capable of supporting further quantitative growth of the forces of production.

Given the scope of historical materialism as a theory of historical development and the less than thorough or fully convincing support of this theory by Marx, one could interpret historical materialism as a secularization of the teleology of emancipation already present in the Manuscripts. Although the contribution of historical materialism as a heuristic hypothesis or tool of analysis is indeed invaluable for social analysis, its status as a theory of history seems to be inspired by a metaphysical faith in the historical necessity of progress. Marx seems to vacillate between these two different uses of his theory but his persistent declaration of the inevitability of capitalism's overthrow and the establishment of a socialist society indicates that the teleological component of his thought was clearly the predominant one. This teleological component, moreover, grants

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[41] Lefebvre, op. cit., p. 29.

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the totality of Marx's work a greater coherence since it represents an element of continuity in difference. By this I mean that Marx's shift after the Manuscripts towards a more consistently materialist analysis did not completely do away with all of his precious metaphysical and teleological assumptions. Thus the recognition of a certain evolution in Marx's thinking would not imply the simple opposition between the fully materialist and scientific work of the 'mature' Marx and the still ideological work of the young Marx. Rather, it would imply the necessity of viewing Marx's work as an incomplete movement away from a metaphysical and teleological way of thinking. Thus instead of privileging one part of Marx's world over another, such a view would seek to make use of insights that Marx provides us with throughout his work so as to pursue this incomplete movement away from metaphysics and teleology to its logical conclusion.

More specifically it is interesting that many of Weber's objections to what he- not to mention other sociologists after him- perceived as Marx's reductionism are often countered by Marx's own statements and analysis. Hence Weber's argument that historical materialism can make a valuable contribution if treated as a heuristic hypothesis rather than a comprehensive theory of history is fully compatible with the moments in Marx's thought when the anti-teleological element in his thought makes its appearance. Thus in The German Ideology Marx warns us that "[e]mpirical 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."[43] Similarly he insists that when 'real, positive science' depicts reality

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[42] Marx, Karl (1969). 'Preface' to A Contribution to the Critique of Political Economy. NY: International Publishers, 21; also see MER, p.5

[43] Marx, Karl and Engels Friedrich (1971) The German Ideology. NY: International Publishers, p. 46.

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> "philosophy as an independent branch of knowledge loses its medium of existence. At the best its place can only be taken by a summing-up of the most general results, abstractions which arise from the observation of the historical development of men. Viewed apart from real history, these abstractions have in themselves no value whatsoever. They can only serve to facilitate the arrangement of historical material, to indicate the sequence of its separate strata. But they by no means afford a recipe or schema, as does philosophy, for neatly trimming the epochs of history. On the contrary, our difficulties begin only when we set about the observation and the arrangement -the real depiction- of our historical material, whether of a past epoch or of the present." [44]

When we take this warning into account the meaning of Marx's formulations on historical materialism becomes more problematic. Marx's qualifications concerning philosophical results would seem to be applicable to his meta-historical claims in his famous summary of historical materialism in the 'Preface' to the Critique of Political Economy. Then this summary would have to be seen not as the final, definitive result of or substitute for empirical historical analysis but rather as a starting-point or a heuristic tool. The very way that Marx introduces his famous statement on historical materialism is consistent with just an interpretation. Indeed, Marx refers to this summary as "[t]he general result at which I arrived and which, once won, served as a guiding thread for my studies."[45] This summary is thus not the end of Marx's studies, but rather a 'guiding thread' for further studies. In short, the use of historical materialism as a heuristic tool would not be alien to Marx's thinking. At the same time, it is true that he tended to use historical materialism not so much as a working hypothesis but as a result which could not only explain history but also outline the preconditions for radical social change. Beginning with The German Ideology and throughout the rest of his work (including The Poverty of Philosophy, The Communist Manifesto, Capital, etc) Marx sees the conflict between forces and relations

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[44] Ibid, p. 48.
[45] Marx, Karl (1969), A Contribution to the Critique of Political Economy, p. 20; see also MER, p. 4.

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of production as a central aspect of all social change. What is also important to point out here is that the elaboration of historical materialism provides a veneer of scientificity to Marx's teleological vision of history. Marx's move away from the kind of more traditional metaphysical vision characteristic of the Manuscripts may have allowed a more adequate exploration of the material preconditions for human emancipation but may have also ended up obscuring the fact that human emancipation is above all a practical project to be pursued by people themselves. Once historical materialism makes the dialectic between forces and relations of production the driving force of history, class struggle and human action necessarily become subordinate elements, vehicles of historical development Marx's attempt to contrast the scientificity of his teleological vision to the voluntarism of utopian socialists leads him to the paradoxical result that humankind and the working class achieve their freedom and autonomy precisely through a heteronomous historical process that assigns to them the mission they have to fulfil. As Marx himself puts it in The Holy Family

> "[i]t is not a matter of what this or that proletarian or even the proletariat as a whole pictures at present as its goal. It is a matter of what the proletariat is in actuality and what, in accordance with this being, it will historically be compelled to do. Its goal and its historical action are prefigured in the most clear and ineluctable way in its own life-situation as well as in the whole organization of contemporary bourgeois society."[6]

Indeed, the historical movement reduces the proletariat and revolutionary science into the vehicles through which it reaches its fulfillment. Socialists are not to follow any longer the utopian path and "seek science in their minds; they have only to take note of what is happening before their eyes and to become its mouthpiece ... From this moment, science, which is a product of the historical movement, has associated itself consciously with it,

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has ceased to be doctrinaire and has become revolutionary."[47] Thus Marx's historical materialism ends up with the paradoxical result that the agents and the vision of the emancipatory project to achieve human freedom and autonomy are both heteronomously determined by the underlying historical process.

Having discussed a certain ambiguity or submerged tension within Marx's conception of historical materialism it is interesting to note that additional tensions arise once we start interpreting the implications of Marx's recurrent contrast between modern capitalist and pre-modern, pre-capitalist societies. Again and again Marx stresses the dynamism of capitalist society as opposed to the static character of pre-capitalist societies oriented towards the simple reproduction of their conditions of existence. This becomes especially clear in the Communist Manifesto which is not so much based on the analysis of the entire human history as a continuous movement of progress but rather on a celebration of the unique dynamism of modern society. Indeed, Marx emphasizes the uniqueness of the bourgeoisie's achievements by constantly contrasting them to and declaring their superiority over pre-capitalist reality and its achievements. Thus, according to Marx, "the bourgeoisie has disclosed... the most slothful indolence"[48] of the Middle Ages. "It has accomplished wonders for surpassing Egyptian pyramids, Roman aqueducts, and Gothic cathedrals; it has conducted expeditions that put in the shade all former Exoduses of nations and crusades." "The bourgeoisie, driving its rule of scarce one hundred years, has created more massive and more colossal productive forces that have all preceding generations together." Listing the bourgeoisie's technical achievements and emphasizing how greatly the mastery of nature has been advanced

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[46] MER, pp. 134-5.
[47] Marx (1963), 124.

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under the bourgeoisie leadership, Marx poses the rhetorical question: "what earlier century had even a presentiment that such productive forces slumbered in the lap of social labor?" Modern capitalism's unique dynamism is even reflected, according to Marx, by the historical uniqueness of its problems. In capitalist crises "there breaks out an epidemic that, in all earlier epochs, would have seemed an absurdity- the epidemic of over-production." Paradoxically "society suddenly finds itself put back into a state of momentary barbarism" precisely because "there is too much civilization" while what "appears as ... a famine, a universal war of devastation ha[ving] cut off the supply of every means of subsistence" is the result of a state where there is "too much means of subsistence, too much industry, too much commerce."[49] How can one explain this unique dynamism of modern capitalist society? Marx has the answer:

> "The bourgeoisie cannot exist without constantly revolutionising the instruments of production, and thereby the relations of production, and with them the whole relations of society. Conservation of the old modes of production in unaltered form, was, on the contrary, the first condition of existence for all earlier industrial classes. Constant revolutionising of production, uninterrupted disturbance of all social conditions, everlasting uncertainty and agitation distinguish the bourgeois epoch from all earlier ones."[50]

And what is it that drives the bourgeoisie into this tireless, even compulsive, revolutionization of production and social relations? Marx tells us in the next paragraph that the ultimate culprit is competition in the market. "The need of a constantly expanding market for its products chases the bourgeoisie over the whole surface of the globe. It must nestle everywhere, settle everywhere, establish connections everywhere." The unique dynamism of modern capitalism is not due to the bourgeoisie's spontaneous

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[48] Marx's Communist Manifesto; see MER, p. 476.
[49] Ibid. p. 478.
[50] Ibid. p. 476.

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propensity to run but rather to the fact that it is being chased by a process that transcends its control and subordinates it to its logic.

Marx the theorist of modernity implicitly renders problematic Marx the philosopher of history. Marx's historical materialism amounts to a dynamic vision which presupposes the consistent development of human needs and productive forces throughout history. Marx the theorist of modernity unwittingly brings to our attention that Marx the philosopher of historian may just be a child of his time projecting the structurally induced dynamism of modern capitalism back on to human history as a whole. The fact that under capitalism the extraction of surplus labor is not directed to the support of a conventional standard of life for the ruling classes but is distributed among capitalists on the basis of competition implies a shift from production for use to production oriented towards the accumulation of capital[51]. Marx's M-C-M' formula represents commodity exchange as it appears from the standpoint of the capitalist. Unlike the C-M-C formula which implies exchange of commodities for the sake of satisfaction of needs through the consumption of use-values, the M-C-M formula makes profit and the accumulation of capital an end-in-itself or, to be more precise, a matter of life-and-death for each capitalist. The shift from C-M-C to M-C-M, however, means that consumption is no longer the ultimate end with reference to which production is only a means. Rather the relation is reversed since consumption now becomes only the means to the realization of profit and the accumulation of capital. Once the formula M-C-M establishes the limitless movement of capital and production we are confronted once again with a new situation since it is no longer the case that "[p]roduction is ... always

[51] Capital, vol. I, p. 345.

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subordinated to a given consumption, supply to demand, and expands only slowly."[52] This situation- typical of pre-capitalist societies- is reversed giving rise to the unprecedented dynamism of capitalist society. As Marx tells us "[l]arge-scale industry, forced by the very instruments at its disposal to produce on an ever-increasing sale, can no longer wait for demand. Production precedes consumption, supply compels demand."[53] All this makes Marx's conception of historical materialism problematic because the dynamism of this conception makes it seem more applicable to capitalism than to pre-capitalist societies. As long as Marx elaborates on the uniqueness of modern capitalist society, he does not only recognize the theoretical possibility of pre-capitalist societies in static equilibrium but even seems to imply that such a picture actually did correspond to the reality of such societies. Indeed, given this picture, given the fact that production is subordinated to a given consumption rather than the other way round, what would be the source of the growth of productive forces? One factor that Marx often cites whenever he explains his theory of history is that of population increases. Marx cites this factor repeatedly in The German Ideology and in his discussion of pre-capitalist societies in the Grundrisse. Clearly this quasi-Malthusian explanation is not very convincing. Marx himself, however, convincingly criticizes in Capital such Malthusian arguments. Insofar as there are no natural laws of population valid for all time but population developments are shaped by social conditions and social structure there is no reason why the population developments within a pre-capitalist society might not be adjusted to the imperatives of social reproduction.

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[52] Grundrisse, p. 275.
[53] Marx, Karl (1963) The Poverty of Philosophy, NY: International Publishers, pp. 68-9.

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The previous discussion renders problematic the attempt to treat the historical materialist schema not as a heuristic tool and one possible 'ideal typical' source of social change but rather as "the general mechanism of all social change."[54] In this sense Weber was right. What is also interesting, however, is that -far from being as monolithic as Weber seems to imply- Marx himself provides the tools for criticizing the traditional conception of historical materialism. This traditional conception -which does correspond to the predominant aspect of Marx's thought- can best be understood both as a secularization of the teleological belief in history as a unified movement towards human emancipation and a projection of the unprecedented dynamism of capitlist society back on to human history as a whole. By using the insights provided by the submerged aspect of Marx's thought -that of Marx as a theorist of capitalist modernity rather than as a philosopher of history- we can avoid the teleological implications of Marx's vision of history and rather than see history as the necessary movement towards the transcendence of alienation, we can recognize the importance of contingency and see the practical project of transcending alienation not as a challenge to solve the riddle of history but rather as a project which might have been impossible and meaningless if a social system as dynamic as capitalism had never emerged. In an important passage -which is worth quoting at length- the submerged, critical aspect of Marx's thought surfaces. In this passage Marx views capitalism as the precondition that makes the project of transcending alienation meaningful rather than as merely a stage in the unified historical process -beginning with the beginning of human history- of transcending alienation. Once again emphasizing the implications of capitalism's unprecedented dynamism, Marx tells us that

[54] Hobsbawm, op. Cit., p. 11.

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> "[t]he great historic quality of capital is to *create* this *surplus labor*, superfluous labor from the standpoint of mere use value, mere subsistence; and its historic destiny [*Bestimmung*] is fulfilled as soon as, on one side, there has been such a development of needs that surplus labor above and beyond necessity has itself become a general need arising out of individual needs themselves- and, on the other side, when the severe discipline of capital, acting on succeeding generations [*Geschlechter]* has developed general industriousness as the general property of the new species *[Geschlecht]* - and, finally, when the development of the productive powers of labor, which capital incessantly whips onward with its unlimited mania for wealth, and of the sole conditions in which this mania can be realized, have flourished to the stage where the possession and preservation of general wealth require a lesser labor time of society as a whole, and where the laboring society relates scientifically to the process of its progressive reproduction, its reproduction in a constantly greater abundance; hence where labor in which a human being does what a thing could do has ceased ... Capital's ceaseless striving towards the general form of wealth derives labor beyond the limits of its natural paltriness [*Naturbedurftigkeit*], and this creates the material elements for the development of the rich individuality which is all- sided in its production as in its consumption, and whose labor also therefore appears no longer as labor, but as the full development of activity itself, in which natural necessity in its direct form has disappeared; because a historically created need has taken the place of the natural one. This is why capital is productive; ie an essential relation for the development of the social productive forces. It ceases to exist as such only where the development of these productive forces themselves encounters its barrier in capital itself."[55]

Here Marx identifies capitalism's unique dynamism with capital's productive character which makes it "an essential relation for the development of the social productive forces." What this implies is that the other of capital, to be found in pre-capitalist social relations cannot be assumed to generate the same kind of dynamism. And indeed Marx concludes this section in the Grundrisse by referring to the "plea for the re-introduction of Negro slavery" by a West-Indian plantation owner protesting to the fact that the free blacks of Jamaica working as self-sustaining peasants "content themselves with producing only what is strictly necessary for their own consumption, and, alongside this 'use value',

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[55] Grundrisse, p. 325.

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regard loafing (indulgence and idleness) as the real luxury good."[56] Here Marx as a 'theorist of modernity' comes- in some ways - very close to Weber's analysis in The Protestant Ethic. Indeed Marx here contrasts the industriousness produced by capitalism with an attitude oriented to labor as a necessary evil not to be pursued beyond the minimum required for the satisfaction of basic needs. Weber also contrasts the work ethic of capitalist society to the same pre-capitalist attitude towards labor. In Weber's description of the spirit of capitalism "[e]conomic acquisition is no longer subordinated to man as the means for the satisfaction of his material needs. This reversal of what we should call the natural relationship, so irrational from a naive point of view, is evidently as definitely a leading principle of capitalism as it is foreign to all peoples not under capitalistic influence."[57] Marx himself explicitly recognizes this same reversal between means and ends in a passage that could be seen as complementary to the long passage from the Grundrisse which I quoted above. Like this previous passage which saw capitalism as providing the objective and subjective preconditions for human emancipation through its development of both the material forces of production and human needs and capacities for production and consumption, the passage to follow sees the reversal between means and ends as not simply a symptom of alienation but rather as the very process that makes the transcendence of alienation possible. Once again Marx contrasts the modern world with pre-modern societies and the Antiquity claiming that although the latter seems loftier because it doesn't turn production and wealth in ends-in-themselves but rather only recognizes the human being as the end of production, it cannot generate the kind of unlimited human development that modern world can. Implying that

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[56] Ibid. p. 325.
[57] Weber's PE, p. 53.

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the pre-capitalist world's acceptance of the human being as the aim of production did not lead to her further development but rather to the acceptance and reproduction of her limited character Marx insists that

> "the old view, in which the human being appears as the aim of production, regardless of his limited national, religious, political character, seems to be very lofty when contrasted to the modern world, where production appears as the aim of mankind and wealth as the the aim of production. In fact, however, when the limited bourgeois form is stripped away, what is wealth other than the universality of individuals, capacities, pleasures, productive forces etc, created through universal exchange? ... The absolute working-out of his creative potentialities, with no presupposition other than the previous historic development, which makes this totality of development, ie the development of all human powers as such the end in itself, not as measured on a predetermined yardstick? Where he does not produce himself in one specificity, but produces his totality? Strives not to remain something he has become, but is in the absolute movement of becoming? In bourgeois economics- and in the epoch of production to which it corresponds- this complete working-out of the human content appears as a complete emptying out, this universal objectification as total alienation, and the tearing-down of all limited, one-sided aims as sacrifice of the human end-in-itself to an entirely external end. This is why the childish world of antiquity appears on one side as loftier. On the other side, it really is loftier in all matters where closed shapes, forms and given limits are sought for. It is satisfaction from a limited standpoint; while the modern gives no satisfaction; or where it appears satisfied with itself, it is vulgar."[58]

In this sense, Marx as the theorist of modernity is very close to Weber who tended to focus his attention on and rightly criticized Marx the philosopher of history. Like Weber, Marx the theorist of modernity recognizes that modern capitalism implies a reversal of the intuitive relation between means and ends. At the same time, however, Marx the theorist of modernity does not interpret the alienation that this reversal implies in Weber's one-sidedly pessimistic way but rather sees it as providing the preconditions for the transcendence of alienation. What this transcendence implies is the genuine transformation of people and human life into ends-in-themselves. This was not possible

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in pre-capitalist societies because the idea that in them human beings were treated as the ends of production is accurate only in a very specific sense. In its orientation towards human beings and their needs as its ends, production was directly or indirectly serving an end even more fundamental than them, namely the reproduction of the given social order. Thus, for example, just before telling us that in the old view "the human being appears as the aim of production" Marx makes clear that the reason why in Antiquity "[w]ealth does not appear as the aim of production" is because "[t]he question is always which mode of property creates the best citizens."[58] This subordination of human beings to society's functional imperatives -which explains why Marx implies that it is not the human being as such which is the aim of production in pre-capitalist society but rather the human being in "his limited national, religious, political character"- can also take place indirectly even when production does not explicitly orient itself to any goal other that the satisfaction of individual needs. The reason for this is that even these needs have been shaped by the society individuals live in so that

> "the consumer is no freer than the producer. His judgement descends on his means and his needs. Both of these are determined by his social position. True, the worker who buys potatoes and the kept woman who buys lace both follow their respective judgements. But the difference in their judgements is explained by the difference in the positions which they occupy in the world, and which themselves are the product of social organization."[59]

The transcendence of alienation, by contrast, would imply a reversal of this reversal between means and ends because it would not shape individuals according to society's functional imperatives but rather turn the social order into a means to an enriched human life always "in the absolute movement of becoming." Thus the development of the

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[58] Grundrisse, pp. 487-8.
[59] Ibid, p. 487.

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submerged aspect of Marx's thought- here attributed to Marx the theorist of modernity - can contribute to the formulation of a viable emancipatory project because it is compatible to Weber's critique of the teleological implications in Marx's philosophy of history while, at the same time, avoiding Weber's pessimistic resignation vis-a-vis the alienating reversal between means and ends that capitalism -and pre-capitalist societies- represent.

We have discussed the significance of historical materialism for Marx's thought and pointed out that the dynamic element inherent in it may be attributed to the fact that Marx himself was the child of the unprecedentedly dynamic modern world while its teleological character can be seen as a secularization of the philosophy of history present in the Manuscripts. At the same time, we pointed out that in Marx's later work one can find both a more adequate and less metaphysical conception of human emancipation than in the Manuscripts and a submerged strand of thinking that problematizes the philosophy of history implicit in the historical materialist schema. We pointed out that this strand has to be further developed because Marx's shift from the more traditionally metaphysical philosophy of history in the Manuscripts towards the more materialist social, historical and economic analysis of his later work should not obscure the fact that Marx's thought never fully emancipated itself from its teleological assumptions. It would be useful to briefly comment on the above-mentioned two elements which come together to create historical materialism or, to be more precise, historical materialism as a comprehensive theory of history rather than an ideal typical depiction of the structural relationships within and long-term historical dynamics of social systems. Concerning the first element, namely the secularization of the philosophy of history already present in the Manuscripts,

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[90] Marx (1963), 41-2.

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we have to keep in mind that Marx himself had -in the context of his polemic against Proudhon- warned against turning the present into the *telos* towards which the past was working. Indeed, Marx tells us there that

> "[o]f course, the tendency towards equality belongs to our century. To say now that all former centuries, with entirely different needs, means of production, etc, worked providentially for the realization of equality is ... to substitute the means and the men of our century for the men and the means of earlier centuries and to misunderstand the historical movement by which the successive generations transformed the results acquired by the generations that preceded them"[61]

Similar passages can also be found in The German Ideology[62]. It is interesting that this warning exists both in the latter work and in The Poverty of Philosophy since in both of these works Marx (and Engels) are in the course of crystallizing historical materialism as the logic underlying human history and social change. Both of these works, therefore, embody the tension between the two opposing elements in Marx's thought. On the one hand, we have Marx's recognition of the importance of material factors but only as conditions that restrict the really decisive factor, namely human action, either from within (through their contribution to the constitution of the acting subject(s)) or from without (by virtue of the fact that the acting subjects have to take into account the external social and natural conditions precisely because these conditions may facilitate or hinder the goals of their action). On the other hand, both The German Ideology and The Poverty of Philosophy contain formulations much closer to the traditional scheme of historical materialism as encapsulated in the 'Preface' to the Critique of Political Economy.[63] The former approach does not have teleological implications and is compatible to Weber's approach to historical sociology. This approach is oriented towards

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[61] Ibid. 120.
[62] See, for example, MER, pp. 164-5 and 172.

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a more specific historical analysis rather than a meta-history which -by identifying the logic of social change- claims to supply nothing less than the meaning of human history. The passage from The Poverty of Philosophy that was just quoted could be read as a warning which if Marx himself had paid closer attention to, he might have avoided the second constitutive element of historical materialism as a philosophy of history, namely both the projection of the unique dynamism of modern capitalism back to the past and its transformation into a constant of human history. Substituting the development of the productive forces in this passage would indeed transform this passage into a historically grounded, materialist critique of historical materialism as a philosophy of history. Incidentally, the degree to which Marx's thought involves a historical generalization on the basis of capitalist modernity's specificities seems to be more or less recognized both by Postone who advises us to understand the Marxian theory "not as universally applicable theory but as a critical theory specific to capitalist society"[64] and Axelos who argues that Marx

> "recognizes that his vision and his schema, his method and categories are only fully valid, in the first place, for the historical conditions from which they draw their sustenance, in whose womb they develop... the schema of historical materialism and materialist dialectic, though valid for the oriental and Asian Empires, the Greek, and Roman cities and republics, and the medieval states, is nonetheless fully valid only for and within the economic, social and historical conditions of which it is the product."[65]

Having made the unprecedented dynamism of modern capitalist society the basis of a theory of human history, Marx also carries over the teleological implications of this vision into his analysis of the capitalist economic system. Marx repeatedly refers to the conflict between forces and relations of production as the source of capitalist crisis and

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[63] See, for example, MER, pp. 192-3 and PP, p. 174.

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the replacement of capitalism by a socialist society. In Capital, Marx undertakes an in-depth analysis of the specific economic form that capitalism's contradictions assume. He goes on to use this analysis as a basis for a projection of capitalism's future. Using competitive capitalism as his model, Marx shows that its internal logic leads it to the concentration and centralization of capital and, thus, the polarization of society between a "constant[ly] decreas[ing] number of capitalist magnates"[66] and the working masses confronted with "accumulation of misery, the torment of labor, slavery, ignorance, brutalization and moral degradation."[67] The dynamic character of Marx's economic analysis undoubtedly illuminates the process of 19th-century capitalism's transformation into the more 'monopolistic' form of 20th-century capitalism. At the same time, however, Marx's teleological assumptions may have led him to underestimate the coherence and viability of this new form . He recognizes the signs of competitive capitalism's transformation but interprets them in a one-sided way that rules out the possibility of a structural evolution on the part of capitalism and chooses instead to interpret them as the beginning of its end. Alluding to historical materialism's emphasis on the dialectic between forces and relations of production, Marx argues that "as soon as it [capital] begins to sense itself and become conscious of itself as a barrier to development, it seeks refuge in forms which, by restricting free competition, seem to make the rule of capital more perfect, but are at the same time the heralds of its dissolution and of the dissolution of the mode of production resting on it."[68] Although one could plausibly interpret the transformation from 'competitive' to 'monopolistic' capitalism in terms of a conflict

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[64] Postone, Moishe (1993), Time, Labor, and Social Domination: A Reinterpretation of Marx's Critical Theory, Cambridge University Press, p. 5.
[65] Axelos, op. cit. p. 302.
[66] Capital, p. 929.
[67] *Ibid*, p. 799.

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between forces and relations of production, it is clear that Marx's teleological assumptions may have led to a static conception of capitalism, equating the latter with what -in retrospect- seems to have been only its competitive form. Thus following up on a point made earlier Marx has to be seen not simply as a child of capitalist modernity in general but rather as a child of competitive capitalism in particular.

Rethinking Marx's Vision: History, Dialectics, and Socialism as the Articulation Between the 'Realm of Necessity' and the 'Realm of Freedom'

Marx's underestimation of capitalism's flexibility and capacity to evolve has important implications for the emancipatory project seeking the transcendence of alienation and the attainment of a society allowing the enrichment of human life, the development of human capacities and the mutually reinforcing dialectic between the two. According to Marx the replacement of capitalism by a socialist society was the necessary consequence of the conflict between forces and relations of production which took the form of economic crises and the creation of a class which- comprising the majority of the population in capitalist societies, facing conditions of extreme misery and oppression and occupying a key role in the production process- would have both the power and the will to overthrow capitalism. The rigid, teleological character of historical materialism as a theory of history did not only underestimate the capacity of capitalism to develop the productive forces but also ignore the possibility that, under capitalism, this development could be transformed from a disruptive, revolutionary force into a factor reinforcing the

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[58] Grundrisse, p. 651.

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reproduction of social domination. In retrospect it seems clear the there was no reason to assume that the two factors which, in Marx's view, were working to undermine capitalism had to have that effect. Marx's analysis is more convincing as a demonstration of the contradictions of a specific form of capitalism, that of competitive capitalism. The transformation of advanced capitalist countries in the direction of a welfare-consumerist capitalism implied structural changes that helped alleviate the potentially explosive contradictions of competitive capitalism. While not doing away with the social domination of capital, greater state intervention in and regulation of the free market, along with an institutionalization of class conflict that allowed the working classes of advanced capitalist countries to reap some of the benefits of capitalism's continued development of the productive forces did contribute to an alleviation of the danger for capitalism that, according to Marx, economic crises and the misery of the working class posed.

If we were to return for a moment to Lefebvre's above-mentioned distinction between growth and development, we could argue that the teleological element in Marx's materialist philosophy of history ends up setting up the quantitative growth of productive forces as the guarantee of the kind of radical, qualitative social change that would allow the transcendence of alienation. Once we recognize, however, that the teleological belief of Marx the philosopher of history in capitalism's imminent overthrow because of the conflict between forces and relations of production is problematic, we can seek a more adequate reformulation of the emancipatory project on the basis of the insights of Marx the theorist of modernity. Starting from the latter Marx's emphasis on the unique dynamism of capitalist society, it is possible to reconceptualize the transcendence of alienation not as the telos of human history or the solution to its riddle but rather as a

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practical political project which becomes meaningful and feasible only by virtue of the social conditions produced by modern capitalism. Indeed, capitalism does not only provide the technological preconditions for human emancipation by revolutionizing production. It also has an equally radical effect on human needs. This is so because, as was noted above, capitalism's break with traditionalism as well as its employment of competition meant that production emancipated itself from consumption to such a degree that their previous relationship was reversed so that it was now consumption which followed production rather than the other way round. This revolutionization of needs has important implications for the emancipatory project of transcending alienation but these implications are not the ones that Marx himself identifies.

To be more precise, on this issue, too, Marx does not express a fully consistent view. On the one hand, Marx seems to imply that capitalism does make a contribution to the development -even in an alienated form- of human needs. The two long passages from the Grundrisse quoted above express this line of thought by emphasizing "the universality of individual needs, capacities, pleasures, productive forces etc, created through universal exchange" and arguing that the realization of this universality is possible once "the limited bourgeois form is stripped away." Marx discussed the opposite side of the question in the Manuscripts where, as noted above, he emphasizes that the very logic of capitalism implies people's mutual instrumentalization and manipulation of each other's needs. There Marx argues that "[t]he need for money is therefore the true need produced by the modern economic system, and it is the only need which the latter produces"[69] while adding that "the extension of products and needs falls into *contriving* and ever-*calculating* subservience to inhuman, refined, unnatural and *imaginary*

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appetites."[70] Agnes Heller -in her important work on The Theory of Need in Marx[71]- reproduces this ambiguity when she claims, on the one hand, that, according to Marx, capitalism necessarily produces 'radical needs' which it cannot satisfy and which thus point beyond it[72] while, on the other hand, repeating Marx's claim that "private property is incapable of transforming 'crude needs' into 'rich human needs', however great the material riches that it produces."[73] Heller does not, however, discuss this ambiguity explicitly even though she comes close to a recognition of the problem that this ambiguity poses when she tells us that "[w]hen alienation has reached its extreme level, it must produce the need to transcend it, the need for wealth and for the realisation of the 'essence of the species.' It is the great paradox in Marx's theory of alienation."[74] Marx's first approach on capitalism's impact on human needs is more consistent with the teleological implications of historical materialism as a theory of history. This approach leads Marx to affirm 'production for the sake of production', a position that neatly fits with the historical materialist belief in the necessary transformation of quantitative growth of production into qualitative social change. The view expressed in the Manuscripts, on the other hand, renders this view problematic by providing an interpretation of capitalism's subordination of consumption to production that is more compatible to the submerged, non-teleological element in Marx's thought. Indeed, the Manuscripts offer a critique of consumerist capitalism showing that the mere multiplication and expansion of needs cannot automatically be interpreted as a sign of human development since its meaning can be the very opposite, namely the reproduction of capital's social domination. This insight would

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[69] EPM, 147.
[70] Ibid. 147.
[71] Heller, Agnes (1976) The Theory of Need in Marx. London: St. Martin's Press.
[72] *Ibid.* pp. 75-6.
[73] *Ibid.* p. 38.

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allow us to see the transcendence of alienation as a practical project the pursuit of which would obviously require taking into account objective social conditions without, however, accepting Marx's teleological determinism illustrated by the fact -noted by Agnes Heller- that he, "in the hegelian sense, 'objectivised' Ought in social necessity, or rather in economic necessity, thus removing precisely its character as 'Ought'."[75]

The point here should, of course, not be to restore the primacy of a metaphysically derived 'Ought' over social dynamics but rather to point out that -insofar as it identifies the 'Ought' with the *telos* or meaning of history- Marx's historical materialism is itself guilty of resorting to such a metaphysically derived 'Ought'. The alternative to a teleological conception of the emancipatory project would not only recognize the complications that the manipulation of needs under consumerist capitalism introduces but would also go a little further by exploring the dialectical process through which these complications may not only hinder but also facilitate the advance of this emancipatory project. Combined with its creation of the technological preconditions for human emancipation, late capitalism's dynamic and consumerist character not only denaturalizes any (traditional or not) form of social life but underlines the alienating reversal whereby human life is subordinated to the functional imperatives of the capitalist social system. Preserving the Marxist tradition's healthy insistence on the historical situatedness of the emancipatory project while freeing this insight from the teleological form it often assumed in Marx's thought, such an approach can avoid the rigid, overly simple but nonetheless influential opposition between idealism and deterministic materialism which Engels encapsulates when he criticizes the utopian socialists by arguing that

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[74] *Ibid.* p. 48.
[75] Ibid. p. 79.

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> "to our three social reformers [Saint-Simon, Fourier and Owen], the bourgeois world, based upon the principles of these philosophers, is quite as irrational and unjust, and therefore, finds its way to the dust-hole quite as readily as feudalism and all the earlier stages of society. If pure reason and justice have not, hitherto, ruled the world, this has been the case only because men have not rightly understood them. What was wanted was the individual men of genius, who has now arisen and who understands the truth. That he has now arisen, that the truth has now been clearly understood, is not an inevitable event, following of necessity in the chain of historical development, but a mere happy accident. He might just as well have been born 500 years earlier, and might then have spared humanity 500 years of error, strife, and suffering."[76]

In short, the non-teleological reformulation of the emancipatory project as a project for the transcendence of alienation makes the unprecedented dynamism of modern capitalism its point of departure precisely because it recognizes in this dynamism the conditions of its possibility and meaningfulness. Far from locating capitalism's contradictions in the immiseration of the masses and the conflict between forces and relations of production, this approach would recognize not only advanced capitalism's dependence on mass consumerism but also the fact that this very dependence makes the most fundamental form of alienation -namely the reversal whereby people tend to be subordinated to the functional imperatives of the social system- very transparent. Thus capitalism's unprecedented dynamism has the double effect of developing consumption in a way that makes alienation ever more transparent and production in a way that creates the material technological preconditions for transcending alienation through the transformation of the social order into a means for the enrichment of human life. Agnes Heller points out that in the presence of alienation "every end becomes a means and every means an end"[77]. The reversal between means and ends that alienation implies takes a number of different forms in Marx's work and includes the relation between individual and society, the

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[76] MER, p. 685.

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producer and her product, human life and survival, subject and object, use-value and exchange value, and so on. What the reversals in which the second terms of these relations come to dominate the first ones have in common is the treatment of human life and needs not as an end but rather as a means to the reproduction of a social process that escapes people's control and subordinates them to its imperatives. Through its development of the technological mastery of nature as well as the potential for the removal of social antagonisms that this mastery implies, the unique dynamism of modern capitalism makes the obsolescence of an alienated society increasingly obvious. Incidentally the side-effects of capitalism's technological mastery of nature also render problematic both the teleological character of Marx's view of history and its dependence on the belief that quantitative growth of the productive forces must inevitably turn into qualitative social change. Like consumerism, the threat to human life that environmental degradation represents should be enough to discredit Marx's repeated affirmation of "production for the sake of production" on the grounds that -as Heller tells us- the latter means for Marx "nothing but the development of human productive forces, in other words the development of the richness of human nature as an end in itself."[78] In this sense, the non-teleological reformulation of the emancipatory project can identify another contradiction within advanced capitalism which could not have been recognized on the basis of Marx's teleological production. Indeed, if it is the case that the technological mastery of nature creates the possibility of resolving social antagonisms and transcending alienation, it is equally true that under capitalism the actualization of this possibility becomes ever more urgent since the longer this possibility remains a mere possibility, the

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[78] Heller, op. cit, p. 48.
[79] *Ibid*, p. 84.

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more the technological mastery of nature is bound to turn into a liability and a threat to human life.

Once again, however, the foundation of a viable emancipatory project upon the critique of Marx's teleological production can draw from a formulation by Marx that qualifies the productivism of the main trend of his work. Indeed, in his distinction between the 'realm of necessity' and the 'realm of freedom' Marx does not affirm production for production's sake but on the contrary, argues that in an emancipated society the level of material production (or realm of necessity) would be nothing more than the means to human self-development in a 'realm of freedom' based upon the reduction of working time and characterized by activities pursued for their own sake rather than as a means to survival[79]. Apart from its implicit critique of Marx's productivist tendencies, this passage also avoids the metaphysical connotations implicit in Marx's conception of the transcendence of alienation in the Manuscripts. This passage is compatible to an aesthetic conception of human emancipation where material reproduction would be seen as only a means to the enrichment of human life.

The relation between the 'realm of necessity' and that of 'realm of freedom' is, of course, not that of production to consumption so that the anti-productivism of such a vision should not be interpreted as simply the transformation of production into a means to consumption. This vision means something more specific than that. First of all, production and consumption are present in both realms. The difference is that in the 'realm of necessity' this production and consumption only serve as means to the main part of human life taking place in the 'realm of freedom.' For this reason activity in the 'realm of necessity' would have an instrumental character. By contrast, insofar as production and

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consumption in the 'realm of freedom' would be undertaken for their own sake, they can be designated as 'aesthetic'. Needless to say, a given activity could be both aesthetic and instrumental at the same time (eg the preparation and consumption of food does not have to be simply an activity oriented to physical survival but can contribute to the enrichment of human life through an experimentation with and refinement of sensual pleasure). Thus, it becomes possible to understand in a non-metaphysical way Marx's statement in the Manuscripts, according to which "[f]or the starving man, it is not the human form of food that exists, but only its abstract being as food. It could just as well be there in its crudest form, and it would be impossible to say wherein this feeding activity differs from that of *animals*."[80] We have already discussed the metaphysical elements in Marx's discussion of the 'humanization of the senses' in the Manuscripts. The distinction between the 'realm of necessity' and the 'realm of freedom' allows a non-metaphysical understanding of the quotation just given because what accounts, according to Marx, for the animal character of the starving man's feeding activity is that his hunger forces him to orient himself above all towards survival. Making survival his primary and exclusive end, starvation does not allow the man in question to experience the 'realm of freedom' in the form of an activity that would orient itself towards anything beyond mere physical survival. The 'human form of food' that Marx refers to would not, therefore, be seen, in this non-metaphysical interpretation, as pointing towards a substantive, highly specific and unitary view of the food and truly human life but rather towards a social reality in which it becomes possible for all individuals to go beyond survival, exercising their capacity to consciously control and enrich their life. The identification of the full

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[79] See Capital, vol. III, pp. 958-9.
[80] EPM, 141.

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realization of this capacity to a 'truly human' life would not then see such an actualized capacity as a trans-historical essence present in every human individual or as a necessary telos of human history but rather as a potential that could inspire a practical political project aimed at its realization. Rejecting the idea of one substantive answer to the question of the good, truly human life, this project would above all be oriented towards the achievement of the material and political preconditions for a human activity in the 'realm of freedom' which would extend and enrich people's appropriation and experience of the world, thus also extending and enriching the meaning of being human. This enrichment of the meaning of being human would be made possible through people's experimental aesthetic appropriation of the world and the constructive confrontation between the different modes of appropriation and interpretations of this meaning. This constructive confrontation would not involve an either/ or choice since many different ways of appropriating the world could make a contribution to the enrichment of human life.

In this sense, this non-metaphysical approach points to a never-ending rather than a teleological process. It is for this reason that I have been talking about an 'enrichment of human life' rather than an 'actualization of human essence' accompanied by a 'discovery of the true meaning of being human.' One is reminded of Marx's appeal to "the development of all human powers as such ... not as measure on a predetermined yardstick" and a state in which man "[s]trives not to remain something he has become, but is in the absolute movement of becoming." Gould has used this passage in her effort to emphasize, on the one hand, the open-ended character of Marx's thought and to provide, on the other, the human freedom that accounts for this open-ended character an ontological grounding. Thus with reference to the long passage from the Grundrisse that

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was quoted above, Gould argues that "for Marx, freedom as the process of self-realization is the origination of novel possibilities, acting on which the social individuals creates and recreates himself or herself constantly as a self-transcendent being."[81] First of all, although it may be true that the two formulations from the passage in the Grundrisse may be truly inspired and useful for any effort to achieve a non-teleological emancipatory vision, it is also the case that this passage illustrates the internal tensions in Marx's work since it also makes use of teleological formulations such as "[t]he full development of human mastery over the forces of nature, those of so-called nature as well as of humanity's own nature," "[t]he absolute working-out of his [the human being's] creative potentialities," "this complete working-out of the human content" and so on. Secondly, this tension- which is not explicitly discussed in Gould's treatment of Marx's social ontology- does nonetheless surface when she tells us that "Marx views freedom as a fundamental value which has its basis in the very nature of human activity. As the capacity for self-transcendence, it characterizes all individuals in all historical periods, though it is realized to varying degrees in different forms of society. Furthermore, this value of freedom provides the ground for Marx's critique of the different social forms in terms of the degree to which they realize this value."[82] If Gould had made use of her insight concerning the historical situatedness of human self-transcendence in her interpretation of the long passage from the Grundrisse quoted above, she would have realized that this is a passage which explicitly contrasts the unique dynamism of modern society with "the childish world of antiquity." Once this contrast is taken into account, the passage takes a slightly different meaning whereby Marx's emphasis on the lack of 'a

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[81] Gould, Carol C. (1978) Marx's Social Ontology. Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, p. 109.
[82] *Ibid*, p. 169.

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predetermined yardstick' does not imply a critique of teleological conceptions of human self-development but rather a contrast between antiquity which turns the human being in 'his limited national, religious, political character' into a predetermined yardstick for society and the aim of production and modern capitalism in which, on the other hand, no equivalent yardstick exists because in it "production appears as the aim of mankind and wealth as the aim of production." Similarly, the contrast between "striv[ing]... to remain something he has become" and being "in the absolute movement of becoming" would also not imply a critique of a teleological conception of human development but rather a contrast between a static antiquity and a dynamic modernity. This approach also makes more understandable Marx's alternative -to the one he offers us in the 'Preface' to the Critique of Political Economy- periodization of human history that Gould herself repeats. In this periodization- which is more compatible to the approach of Marx the theorist of modernity- there are three stages, the pre-capitalist, the capitalist and the communist stage while "[t]he forms of social relations that correspond to these are

(1) Personal dependence

(2) Personal Independence based on objective dependence

(3) Free social individuality."[83]

We have already seen how central the distinction between capitalism and pre-capitalist societies is for Marx the theorist of modernity. The three-stage periodization just given can help us further develop the submerged and non-teleological aspect of Marx's thought by further clarifying the historical situatedness of human self-transcendence that Gould implicitly recognizes. It is clear from what has been said above that Marx the theorist of modernity would be inclined to attribute the power of dynamic self-transcendence above

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all to modern society. Moreover if this self-transcendence takes -under capitalism and the competitive pressure that it implies- a compulsive character, Marx's distinction between a 'realm of necessity' and a 'realm of freedom' implies -if interpreted in a non-teleological way- that this self-transcendence could -under socialism- be pursued consciously and freely. Indeed, once the compulsive self-transcendence of capitalism creates the material preconditions for human emancipation by reducing to a minimum the necessary labor for the material reproduction of a socialist society, it becomes possible for individuals to transcend themselves continuously through an activity in the 'realm of freedom' oriented towards the continuous enrichment of people's appropriation and experience of the world.

These two forms of human self-transcendence correspond to two different forms of the dialectic. On the one hand, we have the familiar Hegelian dialectic which Marx himself adopts -even though in a transformed version- and which projects the modern experience into a logic underlying the entire sweep of human history and more. As Lukacs recognizes it was the historical contradictions of modernity which "led to his [Hegel's] logic of contradictions, which expressed itself- for the first time in the history of thought- in Hegel's intrinsically dynamic and process-like method, in the knowledge of a universal historicity moving in contradictions."[93] More generally, the first form of the dialectic seeing history as the necessary teleological movement towards freedom and the transcendence of alienation is only understandable in terms of capitalist modernity's unique dynamism, which takes a compulsive and almost mechanical form that escapes people's control and which, indeed, creates the preconditions for human emancipation and the transcendence of alienation. The dynamism of the Hegelian dialectic mirrors the

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[93] Ibid. 4.
[94] Lukacs, Georg (1978) The Ontology of Social Being: Hegel, p. 22.

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dynamism of capitalist modernity, its necessity the compulsive character of the capitalist economy, its teleology of freedom the fact that capitalism does create the material preconditions for human emancipation while the 'cunning of reason' and its equivalents express the fact that the creation of these preconditions was the unintended consequence of all the actions of human individuals and social groups both under capitalism and leading up to its emergence. At the same time, however, that the compulsive character of capitalist dynamics and its specific form of human self-transcendence give rise to a teleological dialectic with a causal and cognitive character, capitalism's creation of the material preconditions for a non-alienated society makes it possible for us to envisage not only that form of human self-transcendence which would be freely and consciously pursued but also the free, consciously pursued and non-teleological form of the dialectic corresponding to it. As was noted above, human activity in the realm of freedom would pursue the enrichment of human life through the conscious and constructive confrontation between alternative modes of appropriating the world aesthetically, alternative ways of life and, ultimately, alternative constructions and interpretations of the meaning of being human. What this means is that the enrichment of human life under a non-alienated society would be nothing but an open-ended dialectical process which would not be the driving force towards human emancipation but rather human emancipation's consequence and *raison d' etre*. This, however, is not the only way in which a non-teleological and open-ended dialectic would form part of a non-alienated society's 'realm of freedom'. Returning to our previous point concerning the presence of the moments of production and consumption both in the realm of necessity and in the realm of freedom, we must also note that the enrichment of human life in the realm of freedom would be driven by the dialectical interaction between human objectification as production and human

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obectification as consumption. Making a contribution to the development of the submerged, non-teleological aspect of Marx's thought, the distinction between the two realms allows us to preserve what is valid in Marx's celebration of production for its own sake while discarding the narrowly and dangerously productivist form that this celebration often takes. Indeed, once we drop the teleological presuppositions of historical materialism as a philosophy of history, we can no longer count on quantitative growth to eventually bring about qualitative social change. The experience of contemporary capitalism has shown that to assume the contrary would be to ignore that- far from promising qualitative social change and the enrichment of human life- capitalist productivism is more likely to lead to the degradation of human life through consumerist stupefaction or -even more radically- to a direct threat to humanity's physical existence through an ecological catastrophe. Having criticized the dangerous and obsolete aspect of Marx's productivism, we come to its valid aspect which has to do above all with production in the 'realm of freedom.' Here, as we said, the enrichment of human life takes the form of an infinite dialectic between production and consumption. This is the case insofar as the development of people's aesthetic appropriation of the world in the form of production enhances people's aesthetic consumption both directly (through the direct consumption of the refined aesthetic product) and indirectly (by virtue of the fact that the development of an individual's aesthetic capacities resulting from the refinement of her aesthetic production is bound to result in the refinement of her consumption of aesthetic products as well as of her capacity to experience the world aesthetically). The converse of course also holds true insofar as the refinement of an individual's capacity to consume aesthetic products and experience the world aesthetically is bound to enhance their capacity for aesthetic production. It is worth repeating here that aesthetic activity is

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used here in a broad sense and includes activities that might not qualify as 'art' in our society. Returning to our previous example, this dialectical process could apply to as everyday an activity as eating and cooking. The refinement of an individual's cooking could lead to a refinement of their taste in food and vice versa. One could perhaps use Lefebvre's imperative of turning everyday life into a work of art to describe this vision of turning the enrichment of human life through activity in the 'realm of freedom' into the ultimate end of a radical emancipatory project.

We have discussed the infinite dialectic between production and consumption that would characterize the 'realm of freedom' of an emancipated society. We have also pointed out that the 'realm of necessity' represents for Marx only a means to human self-development and activity pursued for its own sake in the 'realm of freedom'. The realm of necessity is therefore oriented towards survival and the material reproduction of society while the 'realm of freedom' would provide the ultimate ends for human activity by becoming the locus of human life's enrichment. The status of the realm of necessity as merely a means implies a different relation between production and consumption from the one prevailing in the 'realm of freedom'. While activity in the 'realm of freedom' might involve an infinite human self-development, this infinite human self-development does not necessarily presuppose and might indeed be incompatible to the infinite increase of material production. There may be trade-offs involved implying a choice between alternatives which could only be made on the basis of democratic politics. It is interesting to note here Agnes Heller's view that

> "it is no accident that Marx did not even once formulate the question about 'how every individual can take part in decision making'. We have already noted that in his opinion the category of interest will be irrelevant in the society of the future, and that there will therefore be no group interests, nor conflict of interests. The clear common interest of every member of

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> society, apart from the satisfaction of necessary needs ... will be the reduction of labor time. This is possible only through the maximum of rationalisation. Consequently, every individual strives for the same thing, namely this maximum of rationalism; and the manner in which decision-making is carried on is of no consequence whatever. Whether the decisions are made by means of a referendum or through rotating representatives, every individual expresses the needs of all other individuals and it cannot be otherwise. In 'socialised man', the human species and the individual represent a realised unity. Every individual represents the species... and this means that the human species itself makes the decisions."[85]

This interpretation is clearly more compatible to the dominant teleological tendency in Marx's thought. It views Marx's conception of the transcendence of alienation as the actualization of human essence or species-being within every human individual. As a result, this is a vision of a society so homogeneous that makes politics irrelevant by producing individuals which have identical needs, priorities, interests, etc. Whether Heller herself seeks to affirm this vision or not, the way she has taken in this passage the teleological conception of the transcendence of alienation to its logical conclusion makes abundantly clear how problematic such a conception is. Once again, however, there is an opposing tendency within Marx's thought and this tendency becomes clear when in his Critique of the Gotha Program he bases his vision of a communist society "inscrib[ing] on its banner: From each according to his ability, to each according to his needs!"[86] on the presence of different and "unequal individuals (and they would not be different individuals if they were not unequal)"[87] who have different abilities and different needs. By making difference a constitutive element of individuality Marx shows us here, once again, the non-teleological element in his thought more compatible to our interpretation of the 'realm of freedom' not as a domain in which the human essence becomes actualized

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[85] Heller, op. cit., p. 124.
[86] MER, 531.

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through the creation of identical individuals but rather as a domain in which the meaning of being human is always 'in the absolute movement of becoming', is always reinvented and extended precisely through the constructive confrontation between the different modes in which different individuals appropriate the world aesthetically.

This latter vision has important implications for the reconceptualization of the meaning of socialism but before we come to this point we should close this parenthesis by returning to the question of the relation between production in the 'realm of necessity' and consumption of material goods. The fact that the 'realm of necessity' is only a means to a rich human life in the 'realm of freedom' means that activity in the 'realm of freedom' presupposes not only the satisfaction of all people's basic physical needs but also the production and consumption of the use-values that activity in the 'realm of freedom' presupposes. In this sense, the ultimate end of a rich human life in the 'realm of freedom' presupposes a certain level of material consumption which, in its own, presupposes a certain level of material production in the 'realm of necessity'. This production in the realm of necessity is anlalytically separable from the production within the 'realm of freedom' and would actually function as the means to the operation of the dialectic between production and consumption within the 'realm of freedom' . More concretely, the realm of necessity would not only produce basic goods such as food, clothing, housing, etc, but also material use-values such as musical instruments which are the necessary precondition for the dialectic between the refinement of people's musical taste, on the one hand, and the development and refinement of musical production, on the other. This may seem clear enough but my insistence on this point is necessary if we are able to distinguish between the dangerous aspect of Marx's productivism and what is valid in his

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[57] Ibid. 530.

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celebration of production for the sake of production. The problem with Marx's discussion is that his teleological assumptions led him to a conflation of these two levels of production as well as the belief that the quantitative growth of material production was bound to eventually lead to qualitative social change that would allow people to devote the greatest past of their life and energy to activity within the 'realm of freedom' . Thus, Marx's critique of all those lamenting the fact that in modern society production is not simply a means to consumption has a double meaning. On the one hand, it has a historical meaning because, as Marx the theorist of modernity is well aware, capitalism's unprecedented subordination of consumption to the imperatives of production is an integral aspect of this system's unique dynamism which- under the pressure of capitalist competition- leads to such an immense production of wealth and development of the productive forces that makes possible the transcendence of alienation. On the other hand, Marx is right to argue that a certain kind of activity and production would not be simply a means to consumption even in a socialist society. This is the case for production within the 'realm of freedom' which would be pursued for its own sake, even despite the great exertion that such production might involve. Criticizing Smith's conception of labor as a 'curse' as well as his assumption that "'[t]ranquility' appears as the adequate state, as identical with 'freedom' and 'happiness'" [88] Marx shows his awareness that a rich, happy life is inconceivable without freely undertaken activity and provides us with a good example when telling us that "[r]eally free working, eg composing, is at the same time precisely the most damned seriousness, the most intense exertion."[89] The absurdity of equating happiness with the lack of activity is clear since -under such an assumption- the

[88] Grundrisse, 611.
[89] Ibid. p. 611.

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happiest life of all would be death. At the same time, however, Marx fails for the most part to distinguish between production within the 'realm of freedom' - such as composing- from the production which serves as merely a means to the support of this 'realm of freedom'. This conflation seems to be operative in the Critique of the Gotha Program when in his discussion of the conditions that would allow the implementation of the formula 'From each according to his ability, to each according to his needs' Marx includes in these conditions not only the growth of the productive forces and wealth but also a state in which "labor has become not only a means of life but life's prime want."[90] Since the context of this claim is the discussion of the difference between the distribution of material goods under socialism and the distribution in a communist society, it is clear that the labor which, according to this passage, is to become 'life's prime want' is not simply production in the 'realm of freedom' .

By contrast, Marx does distinguish between activity in the 'realm of freedom' as opposed to labor in the 'realm of necessity' when - in the context of his definition of these two terms in Chapter 48 of Capital, vol. III- he makes clear that far from being "life's prime want" labor in the 'realm of necessity' would have to be reduced in a communist society to the minimum possible through 'the shortening of the working day.'[91] In short, the elaboration of Marx's distinction between the 'realm of necessity' and the 'realm of freedom' can allow us -once we shed Marx's teleological assumptions- to avoid Marx's unqualified and dangerous productivism by formulating a critique of the alienating reversal between means and ends, production and consumption without resorting to a static vision that would not seek infinite human self-development but would rather affirm

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[90] See MER, p. 531.
[91] Capital III, 959.

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the existing set of human needs "regardless of [the]... limited character" of human beings that this set of needs expresses. Thus this approach resolves the false dilemma between capitalism's alienated productivism, on the one hand, and the traditional, static form of production's subordination to consumption. This resolution becomes possible because in Marx's description of a non-alienated human society the productive moment could function not only as a means but also as a constitutive element of the ultimate end itself. Thus, production in the 'realm of necessity' is a means not to a consumption oriented towards the satisfaction of a static set of traditional needs but rather to a dynamic, dialectical interaction between production and consumption in the 'realm of freedom' which constantly enriches human life and furthers human self-development.

We have used Marx's distinction between a 'realm of necessity' and a 'realm of freedom' to clarify the enrichment of human life as the non-metaphysical and non-teleological meaning of the project to transcend alienation. We have also described the perpetual enrichment of human life as a dynamic process of human self-development driven by two dialectical processes, one between production and consumption in the 'realm of freedom' and the other between contrasting modes of appropriating the world aesthetically. Having discussed some of the implications of the first dialectic I would like now to briefly trace some of the implications of the latter dialectic. This latter dialectic is based on the transformation of difference and the conflicts that such a difference gives rise to into a driving force of human self-development. The same idea of a difference resolving itself into progress (with progress itself giving rise to new differences and contradictions) which is a central element of Hegelian dialectics already appears in Marx's theory of history as 'class struggle'. The articulation in Marx's theory of history of class struggle with the dialectic between the forces and relations of production is not

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entirely unambiguous. Indeed, class struggle and the dialectic between forces and relations of production almost appear as two separate, even independent, ways of interpreting history. Thus in Marx's classic summary of historical materialism in the 'Preface' to the Critique of Political Economy class struggle is conspicuous by its absence since, as Hobsbawm points out, "the word 'class' is not even mentioned." Hobsbawm's attribution, however, of this paradox to the fact that in the 'Preface' to the Critique Marx is "concerned... to establish the general mechanism of all social change" rather than with making a "statement about specific historical periods, forces and relations of production"[92] such as class-divided societies does not shed much light on this issue. By contrast, Marx's analyses in the Communist Manifesto as well as in The Poverty of Philosophy do imply a better articulation of these two principles for interpreting history. Indeed, in one instance in the latter book Marx relates the two principles by making class struggle the basis of the growth of the productive forces. There Marx (1963) claims that

> "[t]he very moment civilization begins, production begins to be founded on the antagonism of orders, estates, classes, and finally on the antagonism of accumulated labor and actual labor. No antagonism, no progress. This is the law that civilization has followed up to our days. Till now the productive forces have been developed by virtue of this system of class antagonisms" (61).

This link between class struggle and the growth of productive forces does add to the plausibility of Marx's theory of history by making the postulate of an autonomous growth of productive forces unnecessary. Indeed, the existence of class inequalities and exploitation could be seen as the potential sources of social conflict which could be alleviated through a growth of the productive forces and of wealth. This alleviation of social conflict would be possible if this growth were to translate into a general rise in the standard of living that could placate popular discontent and neutralize pressures for

[92] Hobsbawm (1965), 11.

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radical social change through the revolutionary overthrow of the class structure in question. Such an interpretation would also explain Marx's insistence that "[n]o social order is ever destroyed before all the productive forces for which it is sufficient have been developed." [93] Indeed, the reasoning behind such a claims could be that any class society would be likely to exhaust its productive potential insofar as such a growth of production would offer the most straightforward way of pacifying class struggle and preserving social order. When at some point the mode of production reaches its limits and cannot resort to the safety valve of further growth, it would become more difficult to neutralize class struggle and the pressure for a revolutionary overthrow of the established social order would mount. Such revolutionary social change would become possible if the alternative of "new, higher relations of production" exists thanks to a development of "the material conditions of their existence... in the womb of the old society itself."[94] As Marx tells us in such a moment "the main thing is not to be deprived of the fruits of civilization, of the acquired productive forces" and we could add here that what is equally important is not only to preserve what has been acquired but to realize the higher productive potential at hand since the realization of this potential could restore, at least for a time, social order through the neutralization of class conflict. While this outcome is possible when the option of 'new, higher relations of production' capable of supporting a further growth of the forces of production exists, Marx neither explains in his 'Preface' to the Critique of Political Economy why such an alternative option has to develop in the womb of the old society itself nor what would happen in the absence of such an alternative option. In the opening paragraphs of the Communist Manifesto where he declares "[t]he history of all

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[93] Marx (1969), 21.
[94] *Ibid*, 21.

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hitherto existing society [to be] the history of class struggles"[95], Marx does recognize that "a revolutionary reconstitution of society at large" is not the only possible outcome of class conflict within a given social order but it is not clear whether the alternative possibility he mentions, namely "the common ruin of the contending classes"[96] really is an alternative possibility. It is more likely that in the absence of 'new, higher relations of production' that have developed 'in the womb of the old society itself', class conflict would not be resolved through productive growth but rather through a class compromise taking either the form of economic redistribution or a repression deriving a minimal degree of legitimacy from the inevitably disruptive effects of violent class conflicts. Ironically Marx's claim that "the main thing is not to be deprived of the fruits of civilization, of the acquired productive forces" would be most compatible to the latter solution.

This last logical gap aside, it is clear that the articulation of class struggle and the dialectic between forces and relations of production does not only render Marx's theory of history more coherent and plausible but also more compatible to the structures of the Hegelian dialectic. Indeed, an interpretation of Marx's theory which would turn this articulation into its basis would supplement the dialectic between quantitative and qualitative progress -represented by the dialectic between forces and relations of production- with a more fundamental dialectic which would recognize difference and contradiction -in the form of class struggle- as the very conditions of possibility of this dialectic of progress. In addition to being responsible -as has just been discussed- for the quantitative growth of the productive forces, class struggle could also be presented as the

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[95] MER, 473.
[96] MER, 474.

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agent through which qualitative social development takes place. One could do this by applying Marx's discussion- in his 'Introduction' to the Contribution to the Critique of Hegel's 'Philosophy of Right' - of 'partial, merely political revolution' to that of the social revolutions through which the transition from one mode of production to the next is effected. As Marx tells us

> "[n]o class in civil society can play this part unless it can arouse, in itself and in the masses, a moment of enthusiasm in which it associates and mingles with society at large, identifies itself with it, and is felt and recognized as the general representative of this society. Its aims and interests must genuinely be the aims and interests of society itself, of which it becomes in reality the social head and heart. It is only in the aim of general interests that a particular class can claim general supremacy .... For one class to be the liberating class par excellence, it is necessary that another class should be openly the oppressing class. The negative significance of the French nobility and clergy produced the positive significance of the bourgeoisie, the class which stood next to them and opposed them"[97].

As this passage makes clear it is possible to see revolution under the leadership of one class the vehicle through which quantitative growth of the forces of production within a mode of production gives its place to qualitative social development through the transition to a mode of production which can support a further growth of the productive forces. The general interest in this further growth accounts for the alignment of the masses behind the class leading the revolution and gives the revolution in question a larger significance. There is a 'cunning of history' which is operative here insofar as the revolutionary class is not simply pursuing -through its revolution- its particular interest but also plays a progressive function within the underlying unified movement of history.

I have been pursuing this admittedly long parenthesis on class struggle both because it can help illuminate historical materialism and the logic behind it -a project in

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[97] See MER, p. 62.

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itself valuable- but also because it illustrates -once again- the contrast between the dialectic in its Hegelian teleological form and the open-ended dialectic which could operate in the 'realm of freedom' of a non-alienated society. Before we discuss this point a little further we should, however, point out that even this articulation of class struggle with the dialectic between forces and relations of production simply makes Marx's teleological vision a little more coherent and plausible without, of course, eliminating certain logical gaps altogether. In this sense, the insight -derived with the help of the submerged aspect of Marx's thought- that historical materialism as a comprehensive theory of history may involve a projection of modern capitalism's unprecedented dynamism would also apply even to a refined version which seeks to articulate class struggle with the dialectic between the forces and relations of production. Having developed Marx's hint -in The Poverty of Philosophy- concerning the possibility of achieving such an articulation, we can also note the criticism against such an attempt of articulation implicit in Hobsbawm's interpretation of the fact that Marx does not even mention the word 'class' in his summary of historical materialism in his 'Preface' to the Critique of Political Economy. As was noted above, Hobsbawm argues that class struggle does not have a place in a treatment of "the general mechanism of all social change" because it only applies to class-divided societies which have not always existed since they were a later development in human history. In this sense, even the attempt to render the teleological vision of history more coherent and plausible by making reference to the articulation between class struggle and the dialectic between forces and relations of production would still fall short of making a convincing argument concerning the necessary and unified character of human history since it would still be forced to have pre-class societies and the transition to class-divided societies unaccounted for.

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While the representation of class struggle and its interaction with the forces and relations of production as the driving forces of history may be based on a projection of modern capitalism's dynamism to the past, this projection is once again based on an actual process in capitalist society that must have inspired it. Both Marx and Engels point out the close connection between technological progress and the development of the forces of production, on the one hand, and the class struggle, on the other. For Engels science comes to the assistance of capital whenever there is an intense demand for labor by coming up with mechanical inventions which make it less dependent on scarce labor thus keeping this scarcity and the rise in wages it might lead to in check.[98] Similarly, Marx tells us that "[i]n England, strikes have regularly given rise to the invention and application of new machines. Machines were, it may be said, the weapon employed by the capitalists to quell the revolt of specialized labor."[99] In this sense, the articulation between class struggle and the dialectic between forces and relation of production may be more helpful as an explanation of the unique dynamism of modern capitalism than as the basis for a comprehensive theory of human history as a whole. While the refined version of historical materialism based on this articulation could as a heuristic tool or an ideal type be employed in the historical analysis of pre-capitalist societies as well, this articulation enriches above all our understanding of capitalist modernity by underlining the fact that its dynamism is not simply the result of capitalist competition in the market but rather of the interaction of this factor with the struggle between capital and labor in the production process. At the same time, its interpretation of historical materialism on the basis of the articulation of class struggle with the dialectic between forces and

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[98] Engels (1964), 225

[99] Marx (1963), pp. 167-8.

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relations of production would make historical materialism appear prophetic in an unexpected way. Indeed, the most salient characteristic of capitalism after Marx has not been the terminal exhaustion corresponding to the teleological aspect of historical materialism but rather its survival on the basis of its continued technological and productive dynamism. The idea that the continued development of the productive forces could neutralize class struggle through a rise in the standard of living of the masses seems to express at least one aspect of the reality of rich capitalist countries. Moreover, the degree to which teleological productivism may have vitiated Marx's evaluation of capitalism's long-term implications is illustrated by the reality of the ecological crisis which confronts us with the challenge to preserve not 'the fruits of civilization' or 'the acquired productive process' but rather Nature and human life from the threat that the continuation of capitalism's rapid multiplication of these 'fruits of civilization' and productive forces would surely involve.

Having discussed the teleological form that the dialectic takes in Marx's discussion of class struggle as a factor of historical development, I would like to contrast it briefly with its open-ended equivalent that would be operative in the 'realm of freedom' of an emancipated society. We have already discussed the dialectic between production and consumption in this 'realm of freedom' . This dialectic can be seen as the open-ended equivalent to a teleological scheme elevating the dialectic between production and human needs into a trans-historical principle and ignoring historical specificities such as the reversal -recognized by the submerged aspect of Marx's thought- in the relationship between production and consumption that capitalist modernity represents. The second dialectic which would be operative in the 'realm of freedom' of an emancipated society is a dialectic of difference. This dialectic, however, is not one of antagonistic difference but

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rather one of a constructive confrontation between alternative modes of appropriating the world aesthetically. This dialectic is therefore open-ended because it is not treated as the principle driving "[t]he prehistory of human society" to its end but rather as the process through which human life is constantly enriched and, therefore, as the meaning and content of what Marx might call human history proper. Another characteristic distinguishing this dialectic from its original teleological version is that its pursuit by people in full consciousness of its significance would not involve the teleological device of a 'cunning history' guaranteeing the dialectic's advancement -behind people's backs- of human self-development. We saw that the position of class struggle in Marx's theory of history does resort to such a device insofar as classes are not seen as pursuing their particular interest but also playing a role within the historical process of human self-development that they are not always fully conscious of. Such a philosophy of history has of course important implications for the Marxist conception of ideology insofar as the latter is 'false consciousness' in the very specific sense that it is only a partial truth that does not capture what Hegel tells us that the Truth should capture, namely the whole. This philosophy of history makes clear why Marx does not draw from his claim that "[t]he ideas of the ruling class are in every epoch the ruling ideas"[100] the pessimistic conclusion that class domination is immune to criticism or resistance but, on the contrary, affirming this fact as the necessary vehicle of historical progress and human self-development. Since "its aims and interests must genuinely be the aims and interests of society itself", the representation by a revolutionary class of "its interest as the common interest of all the members of society" does contain a kernel of truth. The truth of this representation does not stem -as the class in question would like to believe- from the fact

[100] See The German Ideology; MER, p. 172.

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that its ideas are "the only rational, universally valid ones"[101] but rather from the progressive function in the underlying movement of history that this class and its ideas play at that particular moment. Thus the very concept of ideology illustrates the unconscious form which the dialectic of difference takes in Marx's theory of history. By contrast to this antagonistic, unconscious dialectic, the dialectic of difference in the realm of freedom is both conscious and non-antagonistic insofar as individuals and cultural groups would approach cultural difference and alternative modes of appropriating the world aesthetically constructively, knowing that the confrontation of alternative modes of cultural and aesthetic expression can facilitate a synthesis that would allow the refinement of one's own mode of appropriating the world aesthetically. Being based on the conscious recognition of the contribution that cultural difference can make to the enrichment of people's life, this dialectic would represent the actualization of a form of human interaction in which "the free development of each is the condition for the free development of all."[102] Moreover, the conscious character of both the dialectic of difference and the dialectic between production and consumption within the realm of freedom also implies an important reversal signifying human emancipation and the transcendence of alienation. Instead of reducing human life and history into the vehicle through which the dialectic drives itself forward towards its *telos*, the two dialectics operative in the 'realm of freedom' would be nothing more than means that people would consciously employ in order to enrich their life and develop themselves.

Our reformulation of the dialectic in an open-ended, non-teleological form has two interesting implications. While the transformation of the teleological dialectic of

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[101] MER, 174.
[102] The Communist Manifesto; MER, p. 491.

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class struggle into an open-ended dialectic of difference implies a reconceptualization of the meaning of socialism, the reversal whereby the dialectic is no longer seen as a teleological process operating through the reduction of people into its unconscious bearers but rather as a means through which people consciously pursue the enrichment of human life in the 'realm of freedom' of an emancipated society amounts to a radicalization of the humanist vision. The meaning of this radicalization of the humanist vision follows from our critique earlier on of the metaphysical, teleological form which the vision of transcending alienation assumes in the Manuscripts. We have contrasted Marx's vision in the Manuscripts with Marx's later work where a more anthropocentric vision of this transcendence of alienation is attained. At the same time, however, we have argued that the 'secularization' of this vision does not go as far as to challenge the predominance of teleological assumptions in his analysis of human history. This is why it was necessary to begin the critique of this teleological element through a development of what we called the submerged aspect in Marx's thought which was centered not on the analysis of human history as a continuous, unified process driven towards the *telos* of human emancipation but rather on the unique dynamism of capitalist modernity that has -for the first time in history- made the project of radical human emancipation and the transcendence of alienation both meaningful and feasible. We tried to clarify the content of such a radical vision through an elaboration of Marx's distinction between the 'realm of necessity' and the 'realm of freedom'. An emancipated society implies the reversal of the various reversals between means and ends so symptomatic of alienation. Thus, the human subject recovers control over her natural and social object which now becomes from an external and threatening reality to a means to her self-development and the enrichment of her life. The radical humanism of this vision does not simply amount to its

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transformation of human beings and their life into ultimate ends but also to the identification of human emancipation with a society in which people can freely reinvent and develop themselves thus constantly enriching and redefining the meaning of being human. Thus this humanism does not simply imply- as in Marx's 'realm of necessity' - the achievement of the social "conditions most worthy and appropriate for their [people's] human nature"[103] but rather the constant development and enrichment of this 'human nature'. A contrast once again to the Hegelian dialectic might be useful here. Far from orienting itself to a process through which people actualize themselves by becoming who they really are and fully humanizing themselves, the radicalized humanism here discussed would affirm the dialectic between people's being and becoming as a never-ending process of human self-development and the enrichment of human life. Thus becoming would not be seen as simply a process which functions as a means to the realization of 'human essence' but rather as one pole in the dialectical self-development of human beings. In short, the orientation of this radical humanism to complete human autonomy leads it to reject as incompatible to such autonomy any conception of substantive human essence or nature as well as the imperative -stemming from this conception- to actualize such a human essence. Such a radicalized humanism replaces the orientation to human essence with the infinite dialectic -within the 'realm of freedom'- between people's being and their becoming. People's conscious and free pursuit of this dialectic would be based on the other two dialectics operative in the realm of freedom, namely the dialectic between aesthetic production and consumption and the dialectic of difference.

If the dialectic between people's being and becoming encapsulates the radicalization of humanism, the dialectic of difference within the realm of freedom could

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[103] Capital, vol. III, p. 959.

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be seen as the basis for reconeptualizing the meaning of socialism. If the teleological character of historical materialism as a theory which -based on the articulation between class struggle and the dialectic between forces and relations of production- sees history as a series of modes of production, each of which arises when the previous mode has reached its limits and can no longer support a further growth of the productive forces is done away with, then socialism assumes a significance broader than the narrowly economic one of being a mode of production. If the ultimate end of socialism is the enrichment of human life through the aesthetic appropriation of the world in a 'realm of freedom' in which 'the free development of each is the condition for the free development of all', then socialism appears as the form of society which transforms people into what Marx would call social beings. As pointed out in our discussion of the Manuscripts the transformation of people into social beings implies the development of "the need of the greatest wealth -the other human being"[104] and the transformation of the individual's relation to other people from a purely external, instrumental one to a relation in which the other individual is valued as an end-in-itself. Marx used in the Manuscripts the example of socialist workers who -in the course of their association for political activity- develop 'the need for society.' The elaboration of the content of the 'realm of freedom' of an emancipated society allows us to go a step further and argue that one of the reasons why an emancipated society would produce this 'need for society' would be precisely because association with other people would be a constant stimulus to the enrichment of every individual's everyday life. Thus one could go even further than Avineri's (1968) interpretation of Marx's concept of species-being as a restatement of "Kant's categorical imperative, implying that only when man sees other human beings as end and not as

[104] EPM, p. 144.

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means does he ['man'] behave like a Gattungswesen" (87) and argue that the transformation of people into social beings does not really imply the imperative or need to treat other people as ends-in-themselves but rather the recognition that other people can not only make a contribution - and thus even be a means- to the enrichment of an individual's life but also do so precisely because of their individuality and difference. Thus it is this individuality and difference -cultivated by the constructive confrontation (both on the individual level and on the level of whole cultural traditions) of alternative modes of appropriating the world aesthetically- which would really make 'the other human being' 'the greatest wealth'. The individual has become a social being not because her needs have evolved allowing her to recognize what she had not recognized before, namely that the greatest wealth is the other human being. This refinement of the need of the individual subject has, on the contrary, become possible precisely in a society which has allowed the cultivation of the individuality of her object, the other individuals, so that they have really become the greatest wealth.

This reformulation of socialism as a society facilitating the enrichment of human life by allowing people to become social beings rather than mutually antagonistic individuals implicitly contains a critique of what Laclau and Mouffe have referred to as Marxism's 'ontological primacy of class'. It does that because - by describing socialism as a society in which difference becomes transformed from a source of social antagonism to a 'public good' contributing to the further development of all different individuals and cultural traditions- it implies the abolition of all forms of social oppression. Once this general reformulation is kept in mind, Marx's privileging of one specific form of oppression, that stemming from class inequalities, can be understood as an aspect of the teleological productivism of his theory of history. More specifically, Marx's privileging

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of class inequality and struggle assumes a significance greater than that of a heuristic hypothesis concerning the factors shaping social development. This privileging only becomes fully understood if we recognize its function within a philosophy of history emphasizing class struggle and its articulation with the dialectic between forces and relations of production as the driving forces of a human history conceived as a unified, teleological process. Once we do away with this teleological assumption we can, however, avoid the temptation to see socialism as a mode of production arising when capitalism reaches its limits and can no longer support a further growth of the forces of production. Moreover, we can even recognize a certain tension in Marx's writings -not recognized by Laclau and Mouffe who manage in their otherwise interesting book on Hegemony and Socialist Strategy[105] the singular feat of attempting a deconstruction of the Marxist tradition without discussing the work of Marx himself- which allows us to make use of the submerged aspect of Marx's thought in our attempt to reach a more adequate conception of socialism. Thus Marx as a theorist of modernity can be used to criticize the predominant teleological aspect of his own thought as well as the tendency - stemming from this teleological aspect- to see socialism as basically a higher mode of production to be achieved through class struggle. In this sense, the development of this submerged aspect of Marx's thought allows us to see socialism not as the necessary *telos* of human history but rather as a possibility which emerged -for the first time- with the unprecedentedly dynamic modern capitalist society. This capitalist society would then be seen as providing the preconditions for rather that leading necessarily towards socialism.

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[105] Laclau, Ernesto and Mouffe, Chantal (1985) Hegemony and Socialist Strategy: Toward a Radical Democratic Politics. London: Verso Books.

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In short, the critique of the teleological aspects of Marx's thought has important political implications. It allows us to redefine socialism as something more than another mode of production, as a form of society which is by definition oriented towards the abolition not only of class inequality but all forms of social oppression and, finally, as a form of society which is not recommended because it can satisfy the productivist impulse even better than capitalism but rather because it can deliver us from the degradation of and threat to human life that this productivist impulse has come to represent. What this means practically is that this new meaning of socialism points to such an organization of the 'realm of necessity' as would make possible the enrichment of human life in the 'realm of freedom'. This organization of the 'realm of necessity' would have to be able to make use of the immense technological and productive resources created by capitalism in order to satisfy -with a minimum of human effort- both the basic material needs of every human being and to produce the material goods that the operation of the 'realm of freedom' would presuppose. Thus socialism points to an alternative use of the material and technological achievements of capitalism that would replace the brutal injustice and ecological danger implicit in capitalism's artificial perpetuation of scarcity with a virtual conquest of scarcity that would allow people to devote most of their time and energy to creative and self-fulfilling activity within the 'realm of freedom'. The vision of a rich human life for every individual within the realm of freedom would provide the common interest on the basis of which the 'realm of necessity' would be organized.

Unlike the 'realm of freedom' where difference does not pose a problem since each individual would experience it as a stimulus to self-development and as a challenge to enrich one's life, the 'realm of necessity' would have to negotiate in an egalitarian and democratic way differences in the interests and views of individuals which would be

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mutually exclusive rather than mutually enriching. However, the functioning of the 'realm of necessity' as a means to an enriched human life in the 'realm of freedom' would mean that the social regulation of the interaction between individuals would not represent the individual's reduction into a means to the reproduction of a social system that has escaped her control. Rather, this social regulation would provide the mechanism through which people would manage -for the first time in human history- to reverse this alienating reversal between means and ends, thus making the social order nothing more than a means to the ultimate end of a perpetual enrichment of human life. This vision is clearly incompatible to Agnes Heller's above-mentioned interpretation of Marx's vision of communism as a society of such homogeneity that each individual would embody the species so fully that the question of political decision-making would lose its urgency. Moreover, it is incompatible with the altruistic vision of 'From each according to his ability, to each according to his needs' because, as noted above, this vision does not distinguish labor in the realm of necessity from activity pursued for its own sake in the realm of freedom. Instead, the reformulation of socialism here outlined recognizes both the political and the economic spheres of social life as parts of a 'realm of necessity' which would have to negotiate partly opposing individual interests in an egalitarian and democratic way. The non-antagonistic character of a socialist society would therefore not stem from a complete absence of difference or competition but rather from the fact that the almost complete conquest of scarcity would make such competition in the 'realm of necessity' secondary when compared to the transformation of difference into a means of human self-development in the most important sphere of life in an emancipated society, namely the realm of freedom.

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It is worth pointing out here that once we do away with Marx's teleological productivism, we do not only have to stop seeing socialism as a mode of production but we cannot even identify it with one specific institutional framework that has to organize the realm of necessity in a specific way. Marx may not have been interested in drawing up detailed blueprints of the socialist society of the future but he was categorical about its dependence on some form of economic planning rather than on individual exchange through the market. Locating individual exchange in terms of his theory of history as a teleological succession of modes of production, Marx argues that "[i]ndividual exchange corresponds also to a definite mode of production which itself corresponds to class antagonism. There is thus no individual exchange without the antagonism of classes."[106] In the same way that class societies must eventually reach their limits and not be able to support a further growth of the productive forces, individual exchange must also become at a certain point incompatible to such further growth. Thus contrasting pre-capitalist societies in which a certain social balance was achieved through the subordination of production to consumption with modern capitalist societies which by reversing the relationship between production and consumption achieve rapid progress at the cost of great misery. Marx confronts us with a dilemma as stark as it is misleading when he tells us:

> "Thus, one or the other:
> "Either you want the true proportions of past centuries with present-day means of production, in which case you are both reactionary and utopian.
> "Or you want progress without anarchy: in which case, in order to preserve the productive forces, you must abandon individual exchange."[107]

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[106] Marx (1963), p. 78.
[107] *Ibid.* pp. 68-9.

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The productivist frame of mind, in which Marx's declaration of the incompatibility of individual exchange to a socialist society is embedded, does not only fail to foresee the undesirability of a never-ending productive development but even questions the feasibility of restoring in modern society the primacy of consumption over production. We have already shown how an elaboration of Marx's distinction between the 'realm of necessity' and the 'realm of freedom' can avoid such productivist weaknesses by subordinating production in the 'realm of necessity' to the consumption required for the satisfaction of every individual's basic needs as well as the operation of the realm of freedom. This reduction of production in the 'realm of necessity' into a means to the enrichment of human life allows the subordination of the economy to the political determination of social priorities. The political guidance of the economy of an emancipated society appears in Marx's discussion when he tells us that in the 'realm of necessity' of this society people would not only bring the whole productive process under their control but would also carry on production in accordance with two imperatives, the existence of working conditions "most worthy and appropriate for their human nature" and "the reduction of the working day."[108] The usefulness of the distinction between the 'realm of necessity' and the 'realm of freedom' as a corrective to the productivist bias of Marx's thought is shown by the fact that one of these political priorities could be the preservation of the natural environment, especially since the enrichment of human life without such preservation would be simply inconceivable.

Another interesting implication, however, of this distinction is that there is no reason to assume that the subordination -within the 'realm of necessity'- of production and the economy to political imperatives can only take the form of planning and has to

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[108] Capital III, p. 959.

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preclude the use of exchange in the market. Marx's contrast between socialist planning and individual exchange is misleading because it ignores the possibility of a non-capitalist society making use of the market. As Marx points out in Capital it is the monopolization of the means of production by a group of people which allows this group to function as a dominant class exploiting the rest of society through the extraction of surplus-labor.[109] It is clear that there is no inherent reason why the abolition of this monopolization, along with the human misery and undemocratic implications that this monopolization carries with it would have to take the form of a society of associated producers rather than, for example, an economic democracy consisting of different enterprises owned and democratically controlled by their workers while, at the same time, producing for a regulated market. Through the abolition of the right to inherit productive assets, such a society would be able to offer equal opportunities to all its citizens while at the same time achieving -through this equalization of the resources at each citizen's disposal- a radical democratization of the political system proper. It is clear that such an egalitarian, democratic society could -on the basis of the technology and productive forces already created by capitalist society- easily satisfy not only every individual's basic needs but also the requirements that Marx set up for the realm of necessity of an emancipated society, namely people's capacity to assume control over the productive process as a whole (something that could in such a system be achieved through political democracy and the state's regulation of the market), working conditions "worthy and appropriate for human nature" and "[t]he reduction of the working day." The fact that this economically and politically democratic society would -given our reconceptualization of socialism- would deserve -as much as a society of associated producers making use of

[109] Capital I, p. 344.

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democratic planning- to be called socialist, merely illustrates the fact -noted above- that socialism is neither a mode of production nor a socio-economic system at the same level of generality as capitalism. Socialism becomes tantamount to an emancipated, non-alienated society in which the almost complete conquest of scarcity has turned each individual's self-development into the precondition rather than an obstacle to every other individual's self-development. Socialism is therefore a society in which the sphere of society's material reproduction has indeed become the means to an enriched human life in a 'realm of freedom' based on the cultivation of difference. For this to be true it is clear that a much greater degree of equality and democracy is required than is possible under capitalism. However, it is also clear that as long as certain general conditions -such as the presence, on one hand, of democracy and equal rights and opportunities for all individuals and, on the other, the absence of class exploitation and great economic inequalities- are fulfilled, socialism does not so much refer to the exact internal organization of the realm of necessity including the political and economic system but rather to its function as a means to an enriched human life in a 'realm of freedom' and -more generally- a society "in which the free development of each is the condition for the free development of all." The exact internal organization of the 'realm of necessity' may vary. In the same way that the economic system could be based on economic democracy, democratic planning or a combination of the two, the political system could be based on representative democracy, forms of direct democracy or a combination of the two. The enrichment of human life within the 'realm of freedom' could provide the common interest on the basis of which a socialist organization of the 'realm of necessity' could take place. Needless to say that the exact form that a socialist society's internal organization of this realm of necessity- including the exact form of the economic and political system as well as the articulation

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of the two- would take place would itself have to be the result of democratic deliberation and negotiation.

In any case, even in his failure to recognize that the internal organization of a socialist society's 'realm of necessity' may involve a choice among alternative economic systems or institutional mechanisms structuring these systems, Marx proves to be a child of his times. If market socialism is not even entertained as a possibility, this is precisely because his experience of 19th century laissez-faire capitalism had led him to the identification of "industry based on individual exchange" in the market with "anarchy of production."[110] Marx was aware of and even analyzed the reasons for the eventual structural transformation of capitalism through the adoption of "forms which, by restricting free competition, seem to make the rule of capital more perfect."[111] However, the combination of Marx's teleological assumptions which led him to interpret such phenomena as symptoms of the coming dissolution of capitalism did not only amount -as was noted above- to a conflation between capitalism in general and competitive capitalism in particular. The other side of the coin was Marx's implicit conflation of market economy in general with free-market capitalism in particular. It is because of this conflation that Marx ended up with economic planning as an emancipated society's only mechanism of pursuing its economic goals and priorities.

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[110] Marx (1963), pp. 68-9.
[111] Grundrisse, p. 651.

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CHAPTER 2

DISENCHANTING THE IRON CAGE: AN EXPLORATION OF THE EMANCIPATORY IMPLICATIONS OF WEBER'S THOUGHT

1. Disenchantment, History and Social Structure in Marx and Weber

We have already discussed the tension traversing Marx's thought. We used the contrast between Marx as a philosopher of history and Marx as a theorist of modernity and argued that the latter Marx offers us the tools to reconceptualize the socialist emancipatory project without resorting to the metaphysical, teleological assumptions of the former Marx. Once this tension in Marx's thinking is recognized it becomes necessary to reevaluate the relationship between Marx and Weber. The more complicated picture of Marx's thought that emerges obviously also complicates our picture of this relationship. Weber's criticisms of Marx are then seen to apply to Marx the philosopher of history while Marx the theorist of modernity appears much closer to Weber's thought than Weber himself and most commentators ever since would have thought. Moreover, in addition to the parallels between Weber and Marx the theorist of modernity that one can discern, Marx's and Weber's thought complement each other in a very interesting way. More specifically, Weber's concept of the 'disenchantment of the world' traces the intellectual implications of Marx's recognition that modern capitalism provides the preconditions for transcending human alienation. In so doing, Weber's concept of disenchantment also provides a critique of the metaphysical aspects of Marx's thought. At the same time, however, the non-metaphysical reformulation of Marx's concept of alienation allows us to see that Weber's own concept of disenchantment may not be 'disenchanted' enough. Once we 'rationalize' Weber's concept of disenchantment -in the sense of developing its implications to their logical end- we will see that far from forming part of the 'darker face

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of modernity'[1], disenchantment is a precondition for human emancipation and the overcoming of alienation.

What follows is not intended as an exhaustive analysis of every aspect of Weber's thought. The aim of our analysis, further development and critique of certain central aspects of Weber's thought is to contribute to the reformulation of the Marxist emancipatory project. In the course of discussing Marx we identified a submerged moment in his thought that presented certain interesting parallels with Weber's analysis. Our discussion of Marx makes clear, for example, that Weber's warning that " all specifically 'Marxian' laws and developmental constructs –insofar as they are theoretically sound- are ideal types" and that "similarly, their perniciousness, as soon as they are thought of as empirically valid or as real (i.e., truly metaphysical) 'effective forces', 'tendencies', etc. is likewise known to those who have used them" (M, 103) is compatible to some of Marx's methodological statements in The German Ideology. There, Marx warns against any a priori determination of "the connection of the social and political structure with production" (MER,154), against any substitution of empirical observation and analysis by a philosophical "recipe or schema ... for neatly trimming the epochs of history" (MER, 155) as well as any teleological conception of history. We also saw, however, that Marx's abandonment of idealist philosophy in favor of historical materialism did not also imply an abandonment of the teleological structure and the metaphysical implications of the Hegelian dialectic. Thus in the same way that Hegel's philosophy of history postulated a 'cunning of reason' working through and unconsciously served by human action in history, Marx's historical materialism also implies a 'cunning of history' assigning human action a double meaning. To the extent

[1] Sayer (1991), 12.

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that the dominant tendency in Marx's thought is to see history as a unified, teleological process, human action and its interaction with given social and economic conditions are not merely attributed a causal influence over historical development but also a function within this larger historical process that unfolds itself through them. It is this function unconsciously fulfilled by the action of historical agents such as classes, which constitutes, moreover, the true meaning of this action. Thus in his summary of historical materialism in the 'Preface' to the Critique of Political Economy, Marx urges us not to explain historical development on the basis of the meaning that people themselves attribute to their action but, on the contrary, to derive the true meaning of this action and its ideological self-consciousness in terms of their place or function within the larger historical process.

It is precisely against this way of thinking that Weber's concept of the 'disenchantment of the world' is directed. Weber's identification of this disenchantment with the transformation of the world 'into a causal mechanism' rather than "a God-ordained, and hence somehow meaningfully and ethically oriented, cosmos" (FMW, 350-1) has implications not only for our view of the world as a whole but also for our view of human history in particular. When Weber tells us that "the empirical as well as the mathematically oriented view of the world develops refutations of every intellectual approach which in any way asks for a 'meaning' of inner-worldly occurences" it is clear that the warning can *mutatis mutandis* be applied to the analysis of historical occurences. "Meaning" does play a role in Weber's conception of historical and sociological analysis insofar as it is a constitutive element of all social action. However, this is not "an objectively 'correct' meaning or one which is 'true' in some metaphysical sense." Rather it is a 'subjective meaning' which "the acting individual attaches to his behavior" (ES, 4).

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In this sense, Weber's methodological principles can be seen as an attempt to adapt social and historical analyses to the reality of disenchantment. Since one of the specificities of social and historical analysis is that meaningful action belongs to its object of study, disenchantment does not imply the complete elimination of meaning from such analysis but rather the use of subjective meaning as a tool of causal analysis. Teleological action making use of certain means to reach a certain end is itself recognized as a tool of analysis which, however, derives its usefulness and legitimacy precisely from the fact that its function is the opposite of that of metaphysical teleology. Indeed, in the same way that disenchantment involves the replacement of the teleological conception of the world as "a God-ordained, and hence somehow meaningfully and ethically oriented, cosmos" with a causal one, disenchantment on the level of historical analysis would also have to involve a foregrounding of causality at the expense of teleology. This foregrounding takes the form of reversal whereby teleology is not seen as asserting itself through the causality of human action but, on the contrary, teleological human action becomes reduced into simply one form of historical causality. Thus in addition to its cosmological implications, disenchantment also has specifically historical implications which underline the obsolescence of the belief in any such thing as a 'riddle of history' that has to be solved, or a transcendent meaning underlying historical development that has to be deciphered.

In being critical of the teleological component of Marx's thought, this view is at the same time complementary to Marx's submerged, anti-teleological side. This anti-teleological side finds clear expression in Marx's criticism -in The German Ideology- of speculative distortions, whereby "later history is made the goal of earlier history, e.g., the goal ascribed to the discovery of America is to further the eruption of the French

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Revolution. Thereby history receives its own special aims and becomes 'a person ranking with other persons'..., while what is designated with the words 'destiny,' 'goal,' 'germ,' or 'ideal,' of earlier history is nothing more than an abstraction from later history, from the active influence which earlier history exercises on later history" (MER. 172). This passage is clearly in tune with Weber's 'disenchanted' conception of history. Marx distinguishes here the causal influence of earlier history on later history from a teleological conception of later history as the goal of earlier history. He makes clear that only the former causal connection between earlier history and later history is legitimate while his claim that the teleological conception of history turns history into a person makes clear that as a category teleology is only applicable to human action. The teleological conception of history becomes therefore recognized as a mystifying expression of the causal influence of earlier history on later history. Marx even contrasts the mystifying teleological conception of history with a conception that would qualify as 'disenchanted' according to Weber's criteria when he tells us that "[h]istory is nothing but the succession of the separate generations, each of which exploits the materials, the capital funds, the productive forces handed down to it by all preceding generations, and thus, on the one hand, continues the traditional activity in completely changed circumstances and, on the other, modifies the old circumstances with a completely changed activity"[2]. Thus, complementing the submerged aspect of thought with Weber's concept of disenchantment allows us to resist the teleological implications in some formulations of historical materialism and establish human action in the present as the bridge between the legacy of the past and the human goals for the future that motivate action in the present.

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[2] The German Ideology; MER. 172.

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The materialist element in such a conception would not take the form of an economic determinism but world refer to the fact -recognized by Weber even if he does not explicitly discuss it in his definition of social action in Economy and Society- that the "processes and phenomena which are devoid of subjective meaning, in the role of stimuli, results" (ES, 7) do not only 'favor or hinder social action' from without but may help constitute it from within through the social constitution of the acting subjects as well as their goals, beliefs, skills and so on. In this sense, Gerth and Mills present us with a false dilemma when they contrast Weber's interpretive sociology with structuralist approaches arguing that

> "[w]ere one to accept Weber's methodological reflections on his own work at their face value, one would not find a systematic justification for his analysis of such phenomena as stratification or capitalism. Taken literally, the 'method of understanding' would hardly allow for Weber's use of structural explanations; for this type of explanation attempts to account for the motivation of systems of action by their functions as going concerns rather than by the subjective intentions of the individuals who act them out."[3]

Indeed, even a structuralist explanation seeking to explain the reproduction of social systems would have to explain the mechanisms through which individuals and groups are made to act according to the functional imperatives of the system in question, thus explaining the motivation behind social action along the lines of Weber's interpretative sociology. Weber himself provides an example of such complementarity when he points out- in The Protestant Ethic- that developed capitalism is able to reproduce itself as well as the spirit of capitalism that it needs for its functioning even after the weakening of the religious forces that made the spirit of capitalism possible in the first place. Indeed, Weber points to the mechanism of competition in the market that makes action in

[3] Gerth and Mills' 'Introduction' to From Max Weber, p.57.

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accordance with the spirit of capitalism understandable as a matter of economic survival and -thus- as an instrumentally rational response to the structural logic of the market. Thus, far from being incompatible to structuralist analysis, Weber's interpretative sociology could actually provide such analysis with useful tools. Finally, one can cite Weber's discussion of legitimacy and his argument that a social order will be more likely to be stable if social actors consider it 'obligatory or exemplary' (ES, 31) rather than conforming to it out of self-interest or habit.

The false dilemma between structuralism and Weber's interpretative sociology -set up not only by Gerth and Mills but also by B.S. Turner- is based on a conflation between interpretative sociology and methodological individualism. It is the latter that can be considered the theoretical opposite of structuralism. Weber's discussion of interpretative sociology does not therefore amount to a general social theory in the sense of structuralism or methodological individualism but simply seeks to outline certain methodological principles that any legitimate, 'disenchanted' theorizing on society would have to observe. B.S. Turner uncritically accepts the contrast between structuralism and interpretive sociology and goes a little further by associating the former with "[s]ociology's preoccupation with fatefulness"[4] stemming from the "intransigence and facticity of social structures"[5] which constrain human action. B.S. Turner argues that this preoccupation with fatefulness is the distinguishing characteristic of sociology and encapsulates this argument very tellingly with "the cynical aphorism that, if economics is about scarcity and choice, sociology is about why those choices cannot be realized."[6] B.S. Turner's interpretation of sociological fatefulness as a result of social structures

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[4] Turner (1981), 27-8.
[5] Ibid, 104.

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existing independently of people, constraining their action and being responsible for the fact that we "we make history 'but not as we please'" seems plausible enough. What is more problematic, however, is his conflation of cause and effect when he tells us at a different point that "[t]hese structures in the economic, biological, political and other dimensions of social life may be variously described as 'independent social relations', 'social facts', 'unintended consequences', 'libidinous structures' or 'fate'."[7] Thus, Turner's association of social structure with fate implies for him that the contrast between sturcturalism and interpretive sociology is also a contrast between interpretive sociology and a sociology of unintended consequences. Recapitulating his argument in For Weber, Turner explains that

> "[t]he principal thesis of this study has been that, while Weber is formally committed to *verstehende Soziologie*, in practice his overwhelming sense of fate drives him in an entirely different direction. The main theme of Weberian sociology centers on the unintentional consequences of human action which Weber regards as either meaningless or malevolent. "Weber has been regularly criticized by Marxist sociologists (Poulantzas, 1976) for his apparently subjectivist and individualist approach to social phenomena. By contrast, this study has emphasized the determinist and structuralist aspect of Weber's sociology."[8]

As this passage makes clear, Turner uncritically accepts the undifferentiated contrast of the subjectivism of *verstehende Soziologie*, and methodological individualism, on the one hand, to a more determinist and structuralist perspective, on the other. Thus he does not recognize that even a determinist or structuralist perspective has to give an account of subjectivity and the mechanisms through which people's social action on the basis of subjective meanings makes a contribution to the reproduction of objective social structures.

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[7] Ibid. 27-8.
[8] Ibid. 104.
[9] Ibid. 352-3.

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The concept of 'unintended consequences' comes in handy here precisely because it does not represent the polar opposite to the social action on the basis of subjective meaning that Weber's interpretive sociology treats. Rather than being simply assimilated into objective social structure, the concept of 'unintended consequences' could be seen as the bridge between social action on the basis of subjective meaning and the reproduction of objective social structures. This is the case because any minimally adequate structuralist theory has to explain the specific way in which the reproduction and functioning of social structures emerges as the unintended consequence of social action on the basis of subjective meanings. Bourdieu's work would be a good example of such an effort to integrate the subjective meanings motivating social action into a structuralist analysis of society. More generally, the phenomenon of unintended consequences simply illustrates the fact that since social actors do not fully control their social environment, they are equally incapable of controlling the consequences of their action. A methodological individualist would be as likely to recognize this fact as a structuralist. Thus the assimilation of the recognition of unintended consequences into structuralism gives the misleading impression that such a recognition is incompatible to the theoretical framework of methodological individualism while, at the same time, forgetting that it is precisely the fact that social action on the basis of subjective meaning has unintended consequences, which usually makes the reproduction and functioning of social structures possible.

The tendency to conflate Weber's interpretive sociology with an anti-structuralist individualism is understandable if one confines oneself to the opening pages of Economy and Society, where Weber focuses on social action without making reference to the influence that structural factors exert on such action. Once we look at the totality of Weber's thought, however, we can discern a relationship between structure and rationalization, which is as central to his thought as it is complex. On the one hand, Weber clearly recognizes the determinism implicit in social structure. Moreover, the fact

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that - as Hennis makes clear- the determinism of social structure also includes the human type likely to prevail through a process of selection on the basis of the "personal qualities" which in any given social structure are "important to success" gives this determinism an existential as well as a causal significance[9]. The implications of social structure for the human type most likely to prevail is a recurring theme in Weber's work. This theme surfaces in very different contexts ranging from his inaugural lecture on 'The Nation State and Economic Policy'- all the way to his concern with the kind of political system most likely to produce capable political leadership and the dark vision in the closing pages of The Protestant Ethic. Central to this dark vision is the prospect of humanity's reduction - by the 'iron cage' of rationalized bureaucratic capitalism- into the 'nullity' of "specialists without spirit, sensualists without heart."

More generally, Weber does recognize the pervasive influence of material factors on human history. At the same time, however, he refuses to accept the primacy of material and especially economic factors and points out the circularity of a defense of economic reductionism, which interprets away instances that seem to disprove such reductionism by attributing the absence of the expected outcome to the intervention of accidental conditions. Rejecting as arbitrary the attribution of an autonomous logic only to the economic factor, Weber (1949) argues that the "political, religious, climactic and countless other non-economic determinants... which are 'accidental' according to the economic interpretation of history follow their own laws in the same sense as the economic factor. From a point of view which traces the specific meaning of these non-economic factors, the existing economic conditions are 'historically accidental' in quite the same sense" (70).

What this means is that the social structure comprised of the totality of economic and non-economic factors exerts its influence on any given sphere of life through the mediation of this sphere's autonomous logic. Thus Weber sees the evolution of the

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[9] Hennis (1988), 38.

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annunciation and promise of religions as driven by religious needs such as "[t]he need for an ethical interpretation of the 'meaning' of the distribution of fortunes among men." Much as Weber may recognize that extra-religious factors such as "a change in [its] socially decisive strata" of a given religion can have an influence on this religion which is "very obvious and sometimes... decisive" (FMW, 270), he also insists that there is an immanent logic to religious rationalization. Thus, for example, Weber provides us with a typology of the only 'rationally satisfactory' answers to the question of undeserved suffering which includes "the Indian doctrine of Kharma, Zoroastrian dualism, and the predestination degree of the deus abscondidus."

Weber's description of two other rationalization processes giving rise to two central aspects of the "specific and peculiar rationalism of Western culture", namely the rationalization of law and the bureaucratization of the state follows the same logic. Indeed, he sees the rationalization and formulation of law as primarily "conditioned ... by 'intrajuristic' conditions." He agrees that "general economic and social conditions" such as the "increasing significance of commerce" may have provided a stimulus for this rationalization and may have even had an indirect influence on the direction of rationalization but insists that "[t]he prevailing type of legal education... has been more important than any other factor" (ES, 775). As for the bureaucratization of the state, once again Weber traces it to a combination of political and other extra-political material sources. The main political factor pointing in this direction is, according to Weber "the increasing demand of a society accustomed to absolute pacification for order and protection ('police')" while other economically and technically determined factors include the rising social welfare functions of the state and its indispensability when it comes to providing public works and means of communication such as "public roads and water-ways, railroads, the telegraph, etc", which "can only be administered publicly" (ES, 973).

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What all this shows is that Weber's conception of social structure is more pluralistic than that of Marx. Rejecting the identification of this structure with the organization of one sphere of social life that Marx's concept of the 'mode of production' implied, Weber analyzes social structure in terms of the coexistence of different spheres of life, each of which develops according to its own immanent logic and internal imperatives as well as the influence of factors external to it. Moreover, the fact that Weber's conception of social structure is not monolithic has the interesting implication that what constitutes the general social conditions which -according to Weber- have an influence over every specific social phenomenon changes according to the nature of the phenomenon under discussion. The influence of general social conditions does not amount in this case to the influence of the unitary social structure over a phenomenon that by default becomes reduced into an epiphenomenon but rather to the influence of one part of the social structure over another. More specifically, the influence of general conditions refers to the influence of the social spheres extraneous to the phenomenon in question. If the phenomenon in question is political, the influence of 'general social conditions' refers to the influence of all spheres of life other than the political over a phenomenon that also develops according to the immanent logic and internal imperatives of the political sphere; if the phenomenon in question is religious, the meaning of 'the general social conditions' has shifted to all non-religious factors including the political ones, and so on.

Basing himself on Weber's early work, Scaff argues that it would be legitimate to talk about a Weberian structuralism. According to Scaff, "[t]he much abused name structuralism is deserved because Weber conceives of action as partially under the sway of material (that is, economic) forces external to the individual, even of 'developmental tendencies against which the individual is powerless,' and it is Weberian because it refuses to concede a monopoly in human affairs to economic rationality."[39] It is ironic here that in his attempt to underline the pluralist, non-reductionist character of Weber's

[39] Scaff (1989), 47.

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structuralism. Scaff rehabilitates structuralism's reductionist version by defining it exclusively in terms of economic forces. This contradiction aside, however, even the attempt to describe Weber's approach as a pluralist or non-reductionist structuralism would still not capture the full extent as well as the contradictory implications that such an approach has.

The fact that Weber repeatedly draws the parallel between the concentration of resources that the rationalization and bureaucratization of various spheres of social life such as the state, the army, the universities, and so on and the concentration of resources in capitalist societies makes it possible to see Weber's theory as in some way a generalization of Marx's analysis. Weber himself pointed out that the rationalization and bureaucratization of these different spheres of social life implied the separation of officials, soldiers and scholars from the means of administration, making war, and conducting research respectively much as capitalism involves the separation of workers from the means of production. Gerth and Mills have interpreted Weber's generalization of Marx's insight on the separation of workers from the means of production as "an attempt to 'round out' Marx's economic materialism by a political and military materialism."[11]

2. The Antinomies of Weber's Generalization of Marx

The question of whether Weber's generalization of Marx's analysis should be interpreted as a non-reductionist structuralism or a generalized materialism notwithstanding, it is important to point out here that a generalization of an argument does not affect its structural logic as well as the dilemmas or tensions that such a logic may involve. This being the case, it is not surprising that Weber's generalization of Marx's analysis ends up reproducing the internal tension which -as we have seen- characterized Marx's thought. This parallel in the structural logic of these two thinkers' theoretical analysis has been

[11] Gerth and Mills' 'Introduction' to FMW, 47.

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obscured in the past by the emphasis that has been habitually placed on the contrast between Marx's 'reductionism' and Weber's multi-causal explanations. On the most fundamental level, we could say that this parallel expresses the fact that -despite his progress in this direction- Weber never fully emancipated himself from the tension between a strictly historical analysis and the appeal to a transhistorical or meta-historical logic.

Even when commentators discuss this aspect of Weber's thought they tend, however, not to compare it with Marx's underlying assumption but rather to present it as Weber's response to the *Methodenstreit*, a major methodological debate at the end of last century between the Historical School of Economics in Germany and the emerging discipline of theoretical economics. Burger, for example, interprets the - central to Weber's methodology- "conception of the ideal type as an answer to the crucial question raised in this controversy [*Methodenstreit*], namely that concerning the methodological status of the generalizations of classical economics."[12] On the one hand, it is true that the concept of ideal type as used by Weber[13] does represent a progress since it allows a synthesis between the two poles of the *Methodenstreit*, namely historicism and the attempt to discover trans-historical economic laws. On the other hand, however, we are faced with the paradox that despite the progress which the transcendence of the false dilemma between historically situated analysis and trans-historical regularities represents, Weber seems to vacillate and to hold on to elements of Menger's trans-historical conception. Indeed, although Weber reverses Menger's claim -noted by Guy Oakes- that "[i]n relation to theoretical social science, history is only an 'auxiliary discipline'",[14] he doesn't clearly distance himself from Menger's related belief in trans-historical laws governing -as Burger notes- the different 'spheres or realms' of social life[15].

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[12] Burger (1976), 140.
[13] Roth in Bendix and Roth (1971) claims that the originator of the concept of ideal types was Jellinek.
[14] Guy Oakes' Introduction to Weber's Critique of Stammler: p. 140
[15] Burger (1976), 148.

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Postulating the existence of such trans-historical laws cannot but lead to the elevation of their discovery as the primary goal of social science. The practical implication of such an approach would be to fashion social science after the model of natural science reducing history into a multitude of facts from which these social laws are to be extracted. The consistent development of such an approach can only lead to a generalization for all social spheres of the view that - as Burger tells us about Menger- the "exact laws of economics are comparable to the laws of motion in classical mechanics."[16] Weber's retention of the belief in "the internal and lawful autonomy of the individual spheres" of value and social life is especially surprising therefore since the very logic of his approach to sociology is -as a number of commentators such as Burger(1976) and Tenbruck(1989) agree- to make theoretical social science and the law- like regularities described in 'ideal types' only a means to specific historical analysis.

Coming back to the question of structure, the tension in Weber's thought can be expressed as a dilemma between a social structure that becomes constituted out of a specific combination of social spheres with a pre-existing internal logic and a social structure that -being more than the aggregate of the various social spheres- helps shape the regularities prevailing in each of the individual spheres. The latter approach insists that the internal logic of each of these spheres is not trans-historical because it stems both from the historically specific form that each sphere has assumed at a given point of time and from the specific way it is articulated with all the different social spheres. This approach points out, therefore, that to postulate a trans-historical internal logic for the various spheres of social life is at best meaningless and at worst naturalizes the existing social order. This approach corresponds to Marx's criticism of Proudhon's a-historical analysis, who- as Marx argues in a letter to P.V. Annenkov- "falls into the error of the bourgeois economists, who regard these economic categories as eternal and not as

[16] Ibid. 18-9.

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historical laws which are only laws for a particular historical development, for a definite development of the productive forces" (MER, 140).

At the same time, the approach that postulates a trans-historical internal logic for the various spheres of social life can be seen as a generalization of Marx's meta-historical theory of economic development. In this sense, Weber's generalization of Marx's analysis does not simply take the form of rejecting mono-causal historical analyses but also of generalizing rather than abandoning trans-historical principles such as Marx's appeal to the kind of trans-historical economic lawfulness which - regulating the historical development from one mode of production to the next - was supposed to underlie and be more fundamental than the specific economic logics of the various modes of production.

Thus, Weber's attempt to generalize in a non-reductionist direction Marx's approach inherits from historical materialism this theory's ambiguity stemming from the fact recognized by Weber himself - that historical materialism can function both as a heuristic tool of concrete historical analysis and as a philosophy of history. To B.S. Turner's claim that Marxist "attempts to destroy economic versions of Marxism have often merely repeated Weber's own criticisms of the economism of Social Democratic Party theoreticians"[17] we should, therefore, add the qualification that Weber's own anti-reductionist generalization of Marx's approach ended up reproducing the tensions within Marx's thought. Thus, when B.S. Turner cites structural Marxism's abandonment of the trans-historical logic of an inevitable transition from one mode of production to the next[18] as an example of structural Marxism's convergence with Weber's contrast of "the logic of ideal type constructions and the truthful contingency of historical situations,"[19] he underestimates the ambiguity of Weber's thought while overestimating Weber's emancipation from a belief in trans-historical principles. Similarly, Roth's claim that

[17] Turner (1981), p. 14.
[18] Ibid. p. 15.
[19] Ibid. 25

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when Weber talks about "structures that follow 'laws of their own'...[he] refers not to any developmental scheme or any inherent laws of evolution but to institutionalized legacies and rationales – this is the core of Weber's structural approach"[26] obscures the fact that Weber does not present the relationship between the various spheres of social life as the result of the historically situated articulation of these spheres into a social totality. Instead of such a historically situated analysis, Weber hypostatizes these social spheres and their relationship by postulating a trans-historical tension between them. This tension is supposed to become increasingly obvious with the rationalization of the various spheres since, "the rationalization and the conscious sublimation of man's relations to the various spheres of values, external and internal, as well as religious and secular, have then pressed towards making conscious the internal and lawful autonomy of the individual spheres; thereby letting them drift into those tensions which remain hidden to the originally naïve relation with the external world." (FMW, 328)

We have to point out here that the relative weight of the two tendencies in Weber's thought is the reverse from that in Marx's case. Thus while historically situated analysis was recognized as a submerged aspect of Marx's thought, Weber does not only avoid the transformation of historical and social analysis into a philosophy of history but even provides us with a conception of methodology – as well as with the methodological tools that such a conception requires – which can prevent precisely such a transformation. The positive element in Weber's contribution does not consist, therefore, in the generalization of Marx's theory in a non-reductionist direction. As we have seen, this generalization simply reproduced the tensions in Marx's thought. This generalization is unambiguously positive only when accompanied by the above-mentioned 'rationalization' or 'disenchantment" of historical analysis which can control the temptation of indulging oneself in the pursuit of philosophy of history. Thus while Weber's theoretical contribution has to be recognized, it is also important to realize that

[26] Roth and Schluchter (1979), 177.

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Weber's failure to emancipate himself fully from a social scientific imaginary that appeals to trans-historical processes had important practical implications by affecting his diagnosis of modern capitalism and naturalizing both "the iron cage" of modernity and the human alienation of which this "iron cage" is symptomatic.

Moreover, as with Marx, the trans-historical element in Weber's thought can be attributed to its historically situated character, to the fact that Weber too was a child of capitalist modernity. If dialectical conceptions such as those of Hegel and Marx express the dynamic, forward-moving character of capitalist modernity, Weber's reference to 'the' internal and lawful autonomy of the individual spheres' represents a naturalization of the specific form that alienation assumes under modern capitalism. As with Marx, the tension in Weber's thought expresses itself in the fact that his emphasis on the unique character of capitalist modernity makes his trans-historical pronouncements appear as an illegitimate generalization and naturalization of social phenomena that characterize a specific form of human society. If it is capitalist modernity that Weber characterizes as an "iron cage," this is because it is above all under capitalist modernity that the individual is confronted with a number of institutional orders which seem to function independently of the individual and according to a logic that escapes people's control. Faced with this situation, the individual cannot but feel powerless recognizing no other choice than to adapt herself. In this sense, Weber's reference both to the centrality of bureaucracy in modern society and the 'soullessness' and 'intellectual proletarianization' of citizens under 'leadership democracy with a machine' (FMW, 113) serves as a reminder that the human alienation characteristic of modern capitalist society is not exhausted in the worker's alienation in the workplace.

The alienated individual's feeling of powerlessness becomes intellectualized by Weber and results in an affirmation of the reification of human activity as inevitable. His

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rationalization of alienation takes the form of interpreting the tasks of disenchantment and science not as that of abolishing gods but rather as the return from Christian monotheism into the peculiar polytheism of reified thought. As for those not willing to accept his reduction of reason to the recognition and acceptance of "what the godhead is for the one order or for the other, or better, what godhead is in the one or in the other order" (FMW, 148), Weber sternly calls them back to order. Addressing himself to all those who were not 'sober' enough to consider the First World War as "great and wonderful beyond all expectations"[21] but rather as the sign of bankruptcy of bourgeois civilization as well to all those who would not reduce human autonomy to the choice of which of the gods of the reified spheres of society to obey, Weber sings the praises of "measur[ing] up to workaday existence ... for it is weakness not to be able to countenance the stern seriousness of our fateful times" (FMW,). In treating reason not as a means to human autonomy but as a justification for the reduction of human autonomy into the acceptance of 'fate', Weber's thought comes to symbolize the intellectual bankruptcy of the bourgeois civilization it seeks to defend.

3. Rationalization and the Latent Materialism of Weber's Sociology of Religion

At this point, it might be useful for farther motivating our discussion of Weber to briefly compare the significance that this study attributes to Weber with that it attributes to Marx. On the one hand, Weber establishes the minimal methodological requirements that historical and sociological analyses have to respect. Indeed, Weber establishes comparative historical sociology in the course of his exploration of the constellation of historical and social factors and processes that give rise to the uniquely dynamic modern

[21] For Weber's enthusiasm at the outbreak of World War I, see Marianne Weber (1975), 525.

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capitalist society. Marx undoubtedly made a contribution to this project as well but with Marx this was a central concern only to the extent that it was embedded in a materialist philosophy of history. Marx's contribution, on the other hand, is to elucidate modern capitalism's unique dynamism and to draw the practical implications for human emancipation that this dynamism entails. Weber helps round out Marx's views of capitalist modernity and the different forms of alienation implicit in it but – because of his reproduction of the tension in Marx's thought – he fails to develop his critical insights to their logical end and thus ends up naturalizing the alienation underlying the 'iron cage' of capitalist modernity.

This will become clearer if we take a closer look at Weber's analysis of the rationalization process. In a definition of this concept that he provides, Weber tells us that

> "[O]ne of the most important aspects of the process of 'rationalization' of action is the substitution for the unthinking acceptance of ancient custom, of deliberate adaptation to situations in terms of self-interest. To be sure, this process by no means exhausts the concept of rationalization of action. For in addition this can proceed in a variety of other directions; positively in that of a deliberate formulation of ultimate values (Westrationalisierung); or negatively, at the expense not only of custom, but of emotional values; and, finally, in favor of a morally sceptical type of rationality, at the expense of any belief in absolute values." (ES, 30)

There is a number of interesting issues raised in this statement. For the time being, however, we can focus on the first two forms of rationalization mentioned by Weber. On the one hand, Weber cites the replacement of "the unthinking acceptance of ancient custom" by the "deliberate adaptation to situations in terms of self-interest." This form of rationalization clearly parallels Weber's concept of means-ends "instrumentally rational" action (ES, 24) insofar as the self-interest pursued can be identified as the end of the rationalized action in question, while deliberate adaptation to situations can be seen as the

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means through which the end is to be pursued. Similarly, the very term that Weber uses for the second form of rationalization (namely Wertrationalisierung) reveals this form's correspondence to Weber's concept of value – rational action. Such action does not so much orient itself to efficiency and to weighing alternative means against alternative ends so as to pursue the acting subject's self-interest as effectively as possible. Rather, it is oriented to ultimate values which are treated by the acting subject as ends-in-themselves to be pursued no matter what the cost for this subject or – for that matter – for anyone else. It is interesting that as Albrow points out[22] – the distinction so central to Weber's thought between instrumental and value rationality is parallel to Kant's distinction between hypothetical and categorical imperatives especially since – as was mentioned above – Marx's conception of alienation can be interpreted in terms of a reformulation of the categorical imperative.

Weber helps clarify the difference in the meaning of these two forms of rationalization when he discusses – in "Science as a Vocation" the practical significance of science for human life. There, he points out that science contributes both "the technology of controlling life by calculating external objects as well as man's activities" and "methods of thinking, the tools and the training for thought" (FMW, 150). Weber recognizes the practical character of both of these contributions by drawing a parallel between them and the utilitarian character of "[t]he American's conception of the teacher", according to which the teacher does nothing more than sell "his knowledge and his methods for my father's money, just as the greengrocer sells my mother cabbage." Pointing out that the technological contributions of science could be compared to a vegetable and the "methods of thinking, the tools and the training for thought" could be

[22] See Whimster and Lash eds. (1987), 169.

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compared to "the means for procuring vegetables", Weber accepts this comparison as legitimate and agrees to 'leave it at that for today."

However, Weber goes on to argue that "[f]ortunately...the contribution of science does not reach its limit" (FMW, 151) with this. Indeed, he goes on to present two additional contributions of science. The first one draws the practical and ethnical implications of the technological contribution of science while the second one draws the practical and ethical implications of its logical character, that is, of its provision of the tools and methods of thinking. More specifically, Weber describes the contribution of science in these two respects as the provision of the clarity and inner consistency that all human action which is even partially oriented to values requires. Science can contribute to inner consistency by virtue of its logical character, which allows the development of the logical and practical implications of the values that an individual commits herself to. This logical development implies a clarification of both the relationship and compatibility of different ultimate values with each other and the kind of 'practical stand' or goal that a commitment to one's own values logically requires. What Weber refers to as the contribution of science to clarity represents a different stage in an individual's or social agent's process of choosing what course of action to follow. While the dimension of inner consistency corresponds to the preliminary stage of classifying one's own set of values as well as determining the kind of practical goal that would be logically compatible to one's values, the dimension of clarity corresponds to the next stage of determining the kind of means that are empirically (rather than logically) necessary in order to fulfil the practical goal dictated by one's set of values.

Weber's discussion of science illustrates the difference mentioned above between instrumental and value rationalization. Instrumental rationalization points towards an

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increase in empirical scientific knowledge which allows the replacement of 'the unthinking acceptance of ancient custom' and inherited practices with an "adaptation to situations in terms of self-interest", which is not only deliberate but also ever more effective as it comes ever closer to "the objectively correct means" of adaptation to the situations in question.[23] It is important to mention here the distinction in Weber's thought – noted by Brubaker – "between the subjective and the objective rationality of action."[24] Weber (1949) himself explicitly refers to this contrast when – in the course of his discussion of 'The Meaning of "Ethical Neutrality" in Sociology and Economics' – he distinguishes between "a rationally 'correct' action, i.e., one which uses the objectively correct means in accord with scientific knowledge" (34) and a "subjectively 'rational' action", which refers not so much to the objective correctness of the means that this action employs but rather to the systematization and the rationalization of the intention and approach to the world that underlies the subject's action. This subjective rationalization can – once again – take the form either of the logical rationalization of the set of beliefs underlying the subject's action or a rationalization of conduct that brings the instrumental pursuit of any given end in line with the conduct logically dictated by the subject's own set of beliefs. Weber (1949) illustrates the difference between subjective and objective rationality by pointing out that "[m]agic, for example, has been just as systematically 'rationalized' as physics" (34). Even if magic appears – from our point of view – as scientifically incorrect, the fact that it has – especially in early human societies – played a role equivalent to the role that science and technology play in modern society means that it is as susceptible to subjective rationalization, as science and technology are.

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[23] Weber (1949), 34.
[24] Brubaker (1984), 5.

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Thus, for example, the system of ideas underlying magical practice may be rationalized through a development of its internal coherence and the removal of logical gaps or inconsistencies just as much as any scientific system of ideas. Similarly, magical practice can be rationalized by coming into line with the course of action logically dictated by the magical set of beliefs in the same way that technical action can be rationalized through its alignment with the logical implications of scientific and technological knowledge.

The example of the possible rationalization of magic is an instance of the larger process of the subjective rationalization of religious world-views leading up to the disenchantment of the world. In his sociology of religion Weber discusses this process and argues that part of its significance consists in making -along with other factors such as the rationalization of law and the rise of bureaucratic organization - the emergence of modern, rationalized capitalism possible. The identification of a process of subjective rationalization as one of the factors that helped bring about the disenchantment of the world emphasizes the instrumental aspect of religion that Weber himself recognizes. As we will see, this shift from Weber's interpretation of the rationalization of religious world-views as a process of value-rationalization to an interpretation of the same process that emphasizes the element of subjective instrumental rationalization has interesting implications that allow us to remove the weakness in Weber's analysis that the above-mentioned tension in his thought reveals.

To justify such a conclusion, we must, however, first discuss the stages of religious rationalization according to Weber. By providing a new interpretation of the significance of these stages, such a discussion will help illuminate the complementarity of Weber's thought to Marxist Critical theory. To begin with, Weber's account explicitly

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locates the this-worldly source of the religious impulse at the origin of the rationalization process. As he explains,

> "[a]t first the sacred values of primitive as well as of cultured, prophetic or non-prophetic, religions were quite solid goods of this world. With the only partial exception of Christianity and a few other specifically ascetic creeds, they have consisted of health, a long life, and wealth.... Only the religious virtuoso, the ascetic, the monk, the Sufi, the Dervish strove for sacred values, which were 'other-worldly' as compared with such solid goals of this world as health, wealth, and long life. And these other-worldly sacred values were by no means only values of the beyond. This was not the case even when it was understood to be so by the participants. Psychologically considered, man in quest of salvation has been primarily preoccupied by attitudes of the here and now."[25]

Weber proceeds to giving us a list of the various methods and religious states through which the 'virtuosos' of various religions have sought these other-worldly sacred values and argues that "these states undoubtedly have been sought, first of all, for the sake of such emotional value as they directly offer the devout" (FMW, 278). Thus, for Weber, the attainment of well-being in this world and the avoidance of suffering is a factor critical to the emergence and development of religion. Whether we talk about magic or salvation religions, people's turn to religion in an attempt to avoid suffering or in the hope of a redemption of the sins through which they had supposedly brought their suffering upon themselves expresses fear and people's original powerlessness when confronted with a world that they could not control. This powerlessness was, moreover, expressed both on a collective and an individual level. While – on the collective level – people turned to "[t]he tribal and local god, the gods of the city and of the empire" to take care of the interests of collectivity concerning "rain and...sunshine,...the booty of the hunt and...victory over enemies", "[t]he individual, in order to avoid or remove evils that concerned himself – above all, sickness – has not turned to the cult of the community, but

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as an individual he has approached the sorcerer as the oldest personal and 'spiritual' adviser" (FMW, 272).

The development of religion – as Weber sketches it – can be seen as people's attempt to confront and limit their powerlessness vis-à-vis a world they couldn't control. Thus, from the very beginning, "religiously or magically motivated behavior is relatively rational behavior" which pursues economic ends by "follow[ing] rules of experience." In this sense, Weber insists, "religious or magical behavior or thinking must not be set apart from the range of everyday purposive conduct" (ES, 400). Weber implicitly identifies magic as the first form of religious behavior. Magic involves a belief in the natural endowment of certain objects and persons with extraordinary powers that can produce a variety of desirable effects "in meteorology, healing, divination, and telepathy" (ES, 400). According to Weber, magic pursues such effects through methods that seek to arouse and make use of the extraordinary powers of certain charismatic individuals (magicians). In general, magic implies a belief in (certain) people's capacity to control and even use supernatural powers with a view to the attainment of human goals. Weber characterizes this view of the world as that of an 'enchanted' garden peopled by spirits which "may be coerced into the service of man" (ES, 422). Moreover, Weber argues that magic leads to a stereotyping of human activity since

> "[E]very purely magical act that had proved successful in a naturalistic sense was, of course, repeated in the form once established as effective. Subsequently, this principle extended to the entire domain of symbolic significance, since the slightest deviation from the ostensibly successful method might render the procedure inefficacious. Thus, all areas of human activity were drawn into this circle of magical symbolism. For this reason the greatest contrasts of purely dogmatic views, even within religions that have undergone rationalizations, may be tolerated more easily than innovations in symbolism, which threaten the magical efficacy

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[25] FMW, 277-8.

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> of action or even –and this is the new concept supervening upon symbolism - arouse the anger of a god or an ancestral spirit" (ES. 405).

This passage is interesting for two reasons. On the one hand, its last sentence introduces a new element signifying the exhaustion of the logic underlying magical practices. This is the case because a shift in the meaning of stereotyping to an unwillingness to arouse through innovation "the anger of a god or an ancestral spirit" is a sign of fear and weakness. The shift from stereotyped magical action as the insistence on a successful method of coercing the spirits to stereotyping as a way of preventing the anger of a god and the 'supernatural evils' that this might entail (GEH. 260) signifies a change in people's perception of the balance of power between them and the spirits. The shift from magic as a means of coercion of the spirits to magical action seeking to prevent the anger of the gods and spirits signifies an implicit recognition of magic's limited effectiveness when it comes to controlling the world. In this sense, the shift in the meaning of magical action simply confirms the persisting human powerlessness vis-à-vis nature that this action was originally supposed to overcome. The second interesting point in this passage is the fact that Weber seems to recognize that the practical interests underlying religious or magical behavior have a greater influence over the development (or lack thereof) of religion than does the immanent logic of religious rationalization. This becomes clear when Weber tells us that even rationalized religions would be more willing to sacrifice rationalization of religious doctrine by tolerating 'the greatest contrasts of purely dogmatic views' than to accept a change in magical symbolism that could threaten the underlying practical interests.

Putting these two points together we could, on the one hand, accept as a general principle that any minimally adequate conception of an immanent logic of religious

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rationalization has to be articulated in terms of the practical human interests underlying religion while, on the other, apply this general principle to the case of magic and its further transformation into what Weber seems to consider as religion proper. The original meaning of magic as coercion of spirits and their subjection to human purposes implicitly assigns magical practice a character, which – despite the limited technical effectiveness of magical methods – is basically instrumental.

With the shift in the meaning of magical stereotyping and its transformation into a means of avoiding 'supernatural evils', the space is created for a reinterpretation that gives the question of suffering an ethical twist. Calling such a reinterpretation a 'theodicy of good fortune', Weber describes it as "treating suffering as a symptom of odiousness in the eyes of the gods and as a sign of secret guilt" (FMW, 271). As Weber makes clear a little earlier, the secret guilt of "[m]en, permanently suffering, mourning, diseased, or otherwise unfortunate" was very often believed to consist in an insult to a god. Thus the limited success that magic could have in its attempt to control the material world and reduce human suffering could only be interpreted as human powerlessness when compared to the gods and spirits of the 'enchanted garden.' Such a rationalization -based on the experience of magic's limited effectiveness- gradually transforms the originally technical character of purposive magical action into an ethical one since it now seems that the best way to avoid suffering is to treat the gods and spirits in an appropriate, respectful manner that will not insult them and arouse their wrath. At this stage we can already observe the beginnings of the conception of an ethically meaningful world. Suffering is not experienced as a 'brute fact', which simply 'is' and happens without necessarily having an ethical significance (FMW, 354; ES, 506). The transition to a theodicy of good fortune implies that the question concerning the ethical meaning of human suffering is

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posed and recognized as legitimate. Weber explicitly recognizes this transition as a rationalization of magical beliefs, which provides a bridge between magic and salvation religion. As he tells us in Economy and Society

> "[W]henever the belief in spirits became rationalized into belief in gods, that is, whenever the coercion of spirits gave way to the worship of the gods who are served by a cult, the magical ethic of the spirit belief underwent a transformation. This reorientation developed through the notion that whoever flouted divinely appointed norms would be overtaken by the ethical displeasure of the god who had these norms under his special care..."
> "...Henceforth, transgression against the will of god is an ethical sin which burdens the conscience, quite apart from its direct results. Evils befalling the individual are divinely appointed afflictions and the consequences of sin, from which the individual hopes to be freed by 'piety' (behavior acceptable to god) which will bring the individual salvation. In the Old Testament, the idea of 'salvation', pregnant with consequences, still has the elementary rational meaning of liberation from concrete ills" (ES, 437).

According to Weber this first transition from magic to a theodicy of 'deserved' suffering was - once completed - already pointing beyond itself because "[a]s the religious and ethical reflections upon the world were increasingly rationalized and primitive, and magical notions were eliminated, the theodicy of suffering encountered increasing difficulties. Individually 'undeserved' woe was all too frequent; not 'good' but 'bad' men succeeded" (FMW, 275). The view that suffering must be the result of an individual's disobedience of the divine will or divine norms becomes increasingly implausible, thus necessitating an alternative interpretation. According to Weber, there are only three "rationally satisfactory answers to the questioning for the basis of the incongruity between destiny and merit: the Indian doctrine of Kharma, Zoroastrian dualism, and the predestination decree of the Deus absconditus" (FMW, 275). These three doctrines answer the question of theodicy with ideal typical logical consistency and

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– for that reason – are "in pure form...found only as exceptions." They do, however, specify the alternative directions in which religious rationalization could proceed.

A few comments are in order here. As we have seen, it is possible to discern behind Weber's discussion of the immanent logic of rationalization the practical project of eliminating or reducing human suffering. Instead, however, of further developing his historical analysis of rationalization in terms of this project, Weber repeatedly chooses to give his discussion of rationalization a dubious transhistorical, psychologistic and even metaphysical twist. First of all, in a passage worth quoting at some length because – despite its superficial similarity to the Marxist critique of the ideological functions of religion – it naturalizes ideology, Weber tells us that

> "[I]n treating suffering as a symptom of odiousness in the eyes of the gods and as a sign of secret guilt, religion has psychologically met a very general need. The fortunate is seldom satisfied with the fact of being fortunate. Beyond this, he needs to know that he has a right to his good fortune. He wants to be convinced that he 'deserves' it, and above all, that he deserves it in comparison with others. He wishes to be allowed the belief that the less fortunate also merely experience his due. Good fortune thus wants to be 'legitimate' fortune.
> "If the general term 'fortune' covers all the 'good' of honor, power, possession, and pleasure, it is the most genera formula for the service of legitimation, which religion has had to accomplish for the external and the inner interests of all ruling men, the propertied, the victorious and the healthy. In short, religion provides the theodicy of good fortune for those who are fortunate. This theodicy is anchored in highly robust ('pharisaical) needs of man and is therefore easily understood, even if sufficient attention is often not paid to its effects." (FMW, 271)

As this passage makes clear, Weber does not attempt to understand the theodicy or 'deserved' suffering as a historically situated phenomenon but rather prefers to present it as a trans-historical existential necessity arising from very general psychological needs with a 'highly robust' pharisaical content. The possibility that this first transition to a

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theodicy of suffering reflects the objective inability of magic to reduce human suffering is not even considered.

This is all the more surprising given Weber's allegiance to interpretive sociology. Indeed, had he applied interpretive analysis in this instance rather than resorting to an argument that comes dangerously close to trans-historical speculations concerning human nature, he might have realized than an obvious way to understand the transition from magic to theodicies of suffering would be as an understandable reaction to the incongruity between the expectation that magic could substantially reduce suffering and the objective inability of magical methods to attain such a goal. As it is, however, Weber rationalizes ideology because he anchors it not in specific social and historical conditions but rather in a supposedly pharisaical human nature. Moreover, Weber's rationalization of ideology also involves an uncritical acceptance of the conflation – implicit in the theodicy of deserved suffering- of the social and natural causes of human suffering. As Weber tells us, this theodicy provided a justification for the future of "the propertied, the victorious, and the healthy." It is clear that although the social element is not absent from illness, it is much more unambiguously present in other sources of suffering such as economic and political inequalities which are responsible for the fact that 'the propertied' and 'the victorious' are very often a small group ruling at the expense of the impoverished and powerless masses. That this subtle conflation between natural and social sources of human suffering contributes to the naturalization of ideology becomes obvious once we realize that, according to Weber's logic, the mere existence of biological differences between people, which implies that even in the freest and most egalitarian society imaginable some people would be healthier than others would guarantee – given the 'pharisaical' character of human nature – the persistence of ideology. This – perhaps

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exaggerated – example merely seeks to illustrate the absurd results that one might obtain if she accepts Weber's tendency to supplement his historical analysis of rationalization with speculations and generalizations laying claim to a trans-historical validity.

A similar criticism can be applied to Weber's discussion of intellectualism as one of the driving forces of religious rationalization. Indeed, Weber seems to resort once again to a psychologistic trans-historical generalization when he refers to "the metaphysical needs of the human mind as it is driven to reflect on ethical and religious questions, driven not by material need but by our inner compulsion to understand the world as a meaningful cosmos and to take on a position toward it" (ES, 499). As we have seen, however, the conception of an ethically meaningful world can better be understood as part of a process of religious rationalization that was motivated by the practical human interest in the reduction of suffering. As was pointed out above, this practical interest can – by itself and without reference to a supposed metaphysical need of the human mind – account for the religious rationalization leading from magical beliefs to the theodicies of 'deserved' suffering and then the theodicies seeking to account for the existence of 'undeserved' suffering in the world. Through his appeal to the 'metaphysical need for a meaningful cosmos', Weber seeks in effect to anchor his hypostatization of religion into a separate sphere with an autonomous logic in what sounds like a nebulous, trans-historical human nature.

Given his recognition of the practical, material motivation of magical and religious practices, it is all the more surprising that Weber suddenly shifts to an opposite idealist position that seeks to trace the autonomous logic of religious rationalization to a metaphysical need of the human mind. This reversal as well as the internal tensions in Weber's argument become apparent in Weber's claim that "the rationality, in the sense of

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logical or teleological 'consistency', of an intellectual-theoretical or practical – ethical attitude has and always has had power over man, however limited and unstable this power is and always has been in the face of other forces of historical life" (FMW, 324). Complementing his idealist appeal to the metaphysical need for a meaningful cosmos, Weber comes close to reversing his materialist conception of the religious impulse by interpreting the exposure of "[r]eligious interpretations of the world and ethics of religion...to the imperative of consistency" not in terms of the requirements of the practical project in which religious belief and practice were embedded but rather in terms of the power that "rationality, in the sense of logical or teleological 'consistency,' of an intellectual-theoretical or practical-ethical attitude has and always has had...over man." Weber's idealist reversal does not, therefore, see in this instance rationality as a tool that people use to attain their practical goals but rather as an attitude capable of subordinating people to its imperatives. Weber's recognition that this process is "limited and unstable...in the face of other forces of historical life" can only be read as an implicit admission of the meaninglessness of Weber's hypostatization of ideas. At the same time, this recognition also points to the fact that had Weber developed the implications of his materialist conception of religion, this awkward tension between a historically grounded materialism and a metaphysical idealism would never have arisen.

In the same way that interpretations of The Protestant Ethic have often failed to heed Weber's own warning not to replace an one-sidedly materialistic analysis with an one-sidedly spiritualistic one, there is sometimes the tendency among Weber scholars to present the rationalization of religion as the most fundamental of the rationalization processes that have taken place in the various spheres of social life. Tenbruck, for example, emphasizes the idealist elements in Weber's interpretation of religious

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rationalization arguing that it is this interpretation that guarantees the "thematic unity" of Weber's work. Criticizing Bendix for interpreting rationalization as a "historically fortuitous occurrence, the result of a series of particular events that consecutively have produced a specific outcome", Tenbruck argues that there is a structuring logic to rationalization which is provided by the immanent logic of the rationalization of religious beliefs and the process of disenchantment. Making Weber's belief in the power that rationality exercises over people the starting-point of his interpretation, Tenbruck argues that

> "Weber's important discovery...lay in the knowledge that rationalization in all its historical fragility was born from the compulsion of an inherent logic, which was situated in the irresistible drive towards the rationalization of religious ideas. Therefore, the process of rationalization is at heart an historical-religious process of disenchantment, and the stages and moments in the history of rationalization derive their unity from the process of disenchantment. Weber's discovery was not the identification of the separate events but a logic, the internal drive behind the whole sequence."[26]

As this passage makes clear, Tenbruck embraces the idealist aspect of Weber's analysis of rationalization while suppressing the tension -internal to this analysis – between an 'idealist' and a 'materialist' moment. Such an idealist approach does not further the kind of sociological and historical analysis that would explore the influence of religious and intellectual factors on human history without falling into the trap – which Weber recognized and warned us against – of replacing an one-sidedly materialistic with an one-sidedly spiritualistic approach.

Interestingly enough, one of Marx's formulations against idealist conceptions of history can – with suitable alterations – provide a more promising starting-point. Indeed, Marx tells us in The German Ideology that "[m]orality, religion, metaphysics, all the rest

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of ideology and their corresponding forms of consciousness, thus no longer retain the semblance of independence. They have no history, no development" (MER, 154-5). This insight can of course make a contribution to non-reductionist sociological and historical analysis only if dissociated from the deterministic logic of the base-superstructure schema and generalized to apply to all spheres of social life. Such a reinterpretation would imply not that ideology and religion do not have a history because they are only the epiphenomena of "the true source and theatre of all history" (MER, 163), namely the economy, but rather because no particular sphere of social life can be said to enjoy either an independent development or a trans-historical immanent logic. One can - as Weber has indeed done - trace ideal-typical regularities within the various spheres of social life but these cannot be assigned the status of an autonomous and trans-historical logic. Rather they can only be treated as heuristic tools for the analysis of the concrete articulation - as well as the dynamic social tendencies that such an articulation might entail - of the various social spheres within given social formations. Thus, the generalization of Marx's insight would imply that although one could talk about the history and the logic of development of a social formation viewed as a whole, it would be meaningless to assign ideology, religion, the economy or politics an independent history and an autonomous logic of development.

We have already pointed out that Weber's generalization of Marx's approach ends up reproducing the ambiguities and internal tensions in Marx's thought. This ambiguity could be removed only if this non-reductionist generalization is explicitly recognized on the historical level of concrete social formations rather than on a meta-historical or trans-historical level. This applies to the analysis of rationalization itself. We have already

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[2] See Tribe (1989), p. 56.

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seen that it is possible – on the basis of Weber's own analysis – to explain religious rationalization more satisfactorily in terms of an interaction between the practical, economic impulse to reduce human suffering and the internal logical coherence of religious beliefs than through an appeal to metaphysical needs of the human mind. Needless to say that in the historical analysis that forms part of his sociology of religion Weber repeatedly makes reference to an interaction between the various spheres of social life. Thus, for example, Weber points to a connection between 'the distinctive character' of Hebrew prophecy and the political pressure from the neighboring "great political powers of the time, the Great Kings" that the Israelites felt (ES, 450) while in an even more telling passage he attributes the emergence of "the personal, transcendental and ethical god" to its material and geographical context. In an analysis so materialist that it could have come from the pen of a Marxist historian, Weber tells us that

> "the personal, transcendental and ethical good is a Near-Eastern concept. It corresponds so closely to that of an all-powerful mundane king with his rational bureaucratic regime that a causal connection can scarcely be denied. Throughout the world the magician is in the first instance a rainmaker, for the harvest depends on timely and sufficient rain, though not in excessive quantity...
> "But throughout Mesopotamia and Arabia it was not rain that was the creator of the harvest, but artificial irrigation alone. In Mesopotamia, irrigation was the sole source of the absolute power of the monarch, who derived his income by compelling his conquered subjects to build canals and cities adjoining them, just as the regulation of the Nile was the source of the Egyptian monarch's strength. In the desert and semi-arid regions of the Near East this control of irrigation waters was probably the source of the conception of a god who had created the earth and man out of nothing." (ES, 448)

We have also seen that for Weber other aspects of rationalization such as bureaucratization and the rationalization of law are also seen as the results of the convergence of a variety of factors pertaining to different spheres of social life. In this sense, the rationalization of the different spheres of social life may appear in Weber's

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analysis as processes which developed to a large extent independently from each other but are certainly not processes which unfold strictly within the framework of one social sphere and which follow a trans-historical logic immanent in it. Thus the trans-historical element does not play as central a role in Weber's historical sociology as in Marx's theory of history. The negative effect of this trans-historical element for Weber's analysis is for that reason primarily felt not in his account of the origins of modern capitalism but in his evaluation of the prospects and challenges that – once established – this form of society poses for humanity. For this reason, Tenbruck's attempt to single out the outcome of the rationalization of one sphere of life as the most fundamental one fails to convince. Thus instead of trying – like Tenbruck does – to explain rationalization in general in terms of disenchantment, we have to follow the opposite route and explain disenchantment in terms of its position within and significance for the rationalization of the various spheres of social life under modern capitalism.

4. Disenchantment, the Emergence of Capitalism and the Transformation of Rationalization's Significance

The connection between capitalism and the 'disenchantment of the world' is an especially interesting issue because it raises a constellation of questions that illustrate both the critical potential of Weber's thought and his limited success in developing all the implications of this potential. According to Weber, the disenchantment of the world – completed with the Calvinist predestination doctrine – was one of the contributing factors to the emergence of modern capitalist society. Weber places such an emphasis on the predestination doctrine because with it "[t]hat great historic process in the development of religions, the elimination of magic from the world which had begun with the old Hebrew

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prophets and, in conjunction with Hellenistic scientific thought, had repudiated all magical means to salvation as superstition and sin, came here to its logical conclusion" (PE, 105). The importance of overcoming magic for the emergence of capitalism lies in the fact that magic often involves – as was pointed out above – a stereotyping of action, which – being characterized by a "deep repugnance to undertaking any change in the established conduct of life because supernatural evils are feared" (GEH, 260) – has a conservative influence. As Weber implies, this conservative influence of magic over economic action means that magic has a closer affinity to what he designates as a 'traditionalist' economic ethic than to what he refers to as 'the spirit of capitalism.' This spirit of capitalism is, in effect, nothing less than a reversal of the traditionalist ethic, which had always treated wealth and money as merely a means to the satisfaction of traditionally defined human needs. By contrast, Weber tells us,

> "The summum bonum of this [capitalist] ethic, the earning of more and more money, combined with the strict avoidance of all spontaneous enjoyment of life, is above all completely devoid of any eudaemonistic, not to say hedonistic, admixture. It is thought of so purely as an end in itself, that from the point of view of the happiness of, or utility to, the single individual, it appears entirely transcendental and irrational. Man is dominated by the making of money, by acquisition as the ultimate purpose of his life. Economic acquisition is no longer subordinated to man as the means for the satisfaction of his material needs. This reversal of what we should call the natural relationship, so irrational from a naïve point of view, is evidently as definitely a leading principle of capitalism as it is foreign to all people not under capitalistic influence." (PE, 53)

Weber presents the transition from the traditionalist economic ethic to the sprit of capitalism as the unintended consequence of the predestination doctrine. The interesting feature of predestination as one logical end-point of religious rationalization is that it does not try to rationalize away the existence of 'undeserved woe' in this world as an illusory appearance. The basic principle of the predestination doctrine is, in fact, the opposite,

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since it explicitly declares that individual salvation is not based on merit but rather on God's inscrutable and "absolutely free decrees, which have been settled from eternity" (PE, 103). Thus, the Calvinist predestination doctrine represents a subtle shift in the logic of religious theodicies. Instead of basing this logic on a belief in an ethically meaningful cosmos, the predestination doctrine rejects as meaningless any human protest to the injustice of a distribution of suffering or salvation that is not based on individual merit. Indeed, according to the logic of the predestination doctrine "[f]or the damned to complain of their lot would be much the same as for animals to bemoan the fact they were not born as men" (PE, 103). Weber recognizes that the shift that the predestination doctrine represents is one from an anthropocentric to a theocentric theodicy when he tells us that for Calvin "[t]o apply earthly standards of justice to His sovereign deities is meaningless and an insult to His Majesty, since He and He alone is free, i.e., is subject to no law." While originally religion expressed above all the practical human interest in and desire for the reduction of suffering, the rationalization effected by the predestination doctrine amounts to the affirmation of the inevitability of undeserved human suffering as the will of God. It is the sovereignty of God's will, moreover, which precludes 'all magical means to salvation' (PE, 105).

Magic, according to Weber, represented a primitive human attempt to control the world and coerce or influence spirits and gods in a way compatible to human interests. Once we take this materialist interpretation to its logical end, we can conclude that the rationalization that the predestination doctrine represents is not one that rationalizes the means through which the practical human interest in the reduction of suffering and the enrichment of life is pursued. Rather, it is a rationalization of human expectations given the objective material context that gave rise to religious theodicies up to the

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predestination doctrine. This objective material context was that of a limited technical mastery of nature which did not allow the elimination of undeserved human suffering. Thus it was a context of scarcity which did not allow the transcendence of social inequalities (one - and not the only - form of which would be class inequalities) resulting in the existence and unjust distribution of undeserved suffering. In this sense, the predestination doctrine expressed in a mystified form the fact that in alienated societies plagued by material scarcity, society becomes the transcendent subject which not only assigns individuals their life chances on the basis of birth - hence of chance rather than merit - but also tends to reduce them to the means through which it becomes reproduced.

Such a materialist interpretation is close to but in important ways also different from that advanced by Engels when he argued that "Calvin's creed was one fit for the boldest of his time. His predestination doctrine was the expression of the fact that in the commercial world of competition success or failure does not depend upon a man's activity or cleverness, but upon circumstances uncontrollable by him."[3] First of all, our interpretation recognizes that the dependence of an individual's 'fate' or chance is not a distinguishing mark of the capitalist economy only. On the contrary, one might say that this dependence of an individual's fate on chance may be even more pronounced in some pre-capitalist systems of stratification such as slavery or the caste system which may not allow any social mobility whatsoever. Indeed, even Marx recognizes that capitalist society does not completely rule out upward mobility for individual members of the working class since "in this bourgeois society every workman, if he is an exceedingly clever and shrewd fellow, and gifted with bourgeois instinct and favored by an

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exceptional fortune, can possibly be converted himself into an exploiteur du travail d'autrui"[28].

Secondly, our interpretation problematizes Roth's distinction between Engels' one-sided materialism and Weber's "much more profound and sympathetic interest in religiously inspired ethical conduct" which protects him from "put[ting] a one-sided spiritualist interpretation in place of [an] one-sided materialistic one."[29] Indeed, our interpretation of the predestination doctrine takes into account Weber's emphasis on the immanent character of religious rationalization without, however, forgetting the materialist impulse that - as Weber himself recognizes - inspired religious beliefs and practice in the first place. Moreover, rather than being treated as a spiritualist counterweight to one-sided materialism or a sign of a 'metaphysical' need of the human mind, this immanent rationalization of religious beliefs can itself be understood in terms of the materialist impulse to confront and reduce undeserved human suffering. In this sense, the contribution of Weber's sociology of religion may not consist in its providing a corrective to one-sided materialism but rather in the enrichment of the materialist understanding of religion that it makes possible. Thus our materialist interpretation of predestination does not follow Engels in his attempt to present this doctrine as an epiphenomenon of a specific mode of production. Rather, it locates it within a broader material context of pre-capitalist alienated societies based on scarcity as well as within the set of interpretations of undeserved suffering that could meaningfully and plausibly be held given this social and material context. The predestination doctrine could then be

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[27] Cited in Guenther Roth's 'The Historical Relationship to Marxism', chapter 12 of Bendix Reinhard and Roth Guenther (1971), Scholarship and Partisanship: Essays on Max Weber, University of California Press, pp. 243–4.
[28] Marx, Karl, 'Results to the Immediate Process of Production', see Appendix to Capital, p. 1079.
[29] Bendix and Roth, op. cit., p. 243.

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seen as one possible end-point of a religious rationalization process taking place within the framework of this social-material context because it amounted to an implicit coming to terms with the fact that the elimination both of undeserved human suffering and people's emancipation from transcendent and inscrutable to them processes that instrumentalized and subordinated them to their imperatives was not possible in that particular social-material context.

Our interpretation of the predestination doctrine so far has focused on the structuring logic of this doctrine, locating this logic in its broader social-material context. At this point, however, we have to move on beyond the underlying logic of the doctrine and briefly discuss the practical cultural consequences of this doctrine and, more specifically, its contribution to the emergence of capitalism and its spirit. As Bendix points out, Weber sees the emergence of capitalism as the unintended consequence of Puritanism[30]. Weber recognizes this unintended consequence of Puritanism in his suggestive formulation concerning the transformation of the care for external goods from 'a light cloak' on the shoulders of the Puritan saint to the 'iron cage' of modern capitalism. In a more general argument, Liebersohn[31] points to the understanding of the 'iron cage' as the unintended consequence of 'the Christian will to salvation' as symptomatic of a pervasive tendency in turn-of-the-century German sociology to view capitalism as 'a modern form of fate'. As we will see later on, however, Weber and his commentators have not articulated all the implications of this view of modern capitalism as Puritanism's unintended consequence. In any case, the thesis concerning the emergence of capitalism as an unintended consequence of the predestination doctrine

[30] Bendix, Reinhard (1962) *Max Weber: An Intellectual Portrait*. Garden City: Doubleday Anchor Books. 139–40.

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rests on the distinction between the purely logical implications of this doctrine and the way the psychological needs of the faithful led to a practical interpretation of the doctrine which deviated from its logical implications. As Weber tells us, the logical consequence of the predestination doctrine would be fatalism. The reaction that one would logically expect from an individual who believed that his destiny has been predetermined from eternity and cannot change on the basis of his actions in this world would be an acceptance of his pre-determined but unknown lot. The actual consequence of the predestination doctrine was not, however, passive resignation but rather increased, systematic activity in the world. This activity was spurred by the feelings of religious anxiety that – as a result of this doctrine – haunted the faithful (PE, 110). At a time when the question of the after-life had a much more prominent place than it does today, the individual behavior was likely to be haunted by the question 'Am I one of the elect?' and not be satisfied by the answer that Calvin's doctrine gave to this question. Rejecting the attempt to guess who the elect were on the basis of their conduct, the official doctrine pronounced that "[t]he elect differ externally in this life in no way from the damned; and even all the subjective experience of the chosen are...possible for the damned with the single exception of that finaliter, expectant, trusting faith. The elect thus are and remain God's invisible Church." (PE, 110)

The Calvinist reduction of people and their activity to 'a means to the glory and majesty of God' becomes important here because of the effects that its combination with Luther's concept of 'calling' introduced. According to Weber, Luther never managed to fully break away from a traditionalistic conception of the calling (PE, 85). His original

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[31] Liebersohn, Harry (1988) *Fate and Utopia in German Sociology: 1870-1923*. Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press.

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conception was in line with medieval Christianity's conception – as this was expressed, for example, by Thomas Aquinas – of activity in the world as a means to "the maintenance of individual and community" and thus as "the indispensable natural condition of a life of faith, but in itself, like eating and drinking, morally neutral" (PE, 159). According to Weber, later on in his life Luther "came to value work in the world more highly" considering it "a special command of God to fulfil these particular duties which the Divine Will had imposed upon him" (PE, 84). In this sense the acceptance of one's calling as a 'divine ordinance' that Luther preached had a traditionalistic character because it implicitly pointed to the individual's acceptance of his position within the God-created world-order. As Weber says, this notion of an individual's adaptation to the divine world order outweighed in Luther's work "the other [more in line with the Puritan inner-worldly asceticism] idea which was also present, that work in the calling was a, or rather the, task set by God."

Calvinism's instrumentalization of man, on the other hand, did foreground this second aspect turning labor from a means to a moral duty and 'the end of life' (PE, 159). Since people and human activity are supposed to be nothing than the means to the increase of God's glory, it becomes understandable that the sign of the faith characteristic of the elect that the believers would – in their anxiety – turn to would be the degree to which one's professed faith was a fides efficax leading to an objectively successful activity in the world that contributed to the increase of God's glory (PE, 114). Being the result of a rationalization process which – taking place in the context of people's incomplete technical mastery of the world and of society – is based on a feeling of human powerlessness, the predestination doctrine, led to a reinterpretation of human achievements as the result of mysterious, divine and charismatic forces. The use of fides

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efficax as a sign of election rests on the assumption that "the elect remain beings of the flesh, and everything they do falls infinitely short of divine standards" (PE, 113). If these hopelessly imperfect creatures can through 'good works' reshape the world in a way that adds to God's glory, this is not to be understood as a sign that people may not be so hopelessly imperfect after all but rather as a sign that the successful individual becomes a tool in the hands of God. If this individual is successful, this is a sign that his conduct is guided by a charismatic, super- and extra-human "power within himself working for the glory of God; that it is not only willed by God but rather done by God that he attained the highest good towards which this religion strove, the certainty of salvation." In this sense, the effectiveness of the *fides efficax* is not -strictly speaking – a human achievement but the result of a divine gift. Thus, as Weber points out in one of the endnotes to The Protestant Ethic,

> "Whoever is chosen is also called to obedience and made capable of it, teaches Bailey. Only those whom God calls to His faith (which is expressed in their conduct) are true believers, not merely temporary believers, according to the (Baptist) Confession of Hanserd Knolly." (PE, 231)

Moreover, one could add, only one of the elect could have the power not only to have "a specific type of conduct unmistakably different from the way of life of natural man" (PE, 153) that would be based on a ruthlessly systematic and "rational planning of the whole of one's life in accordance with God's word" but also to do so not in a monastery, away from the temptations generated by "the naturally spontaneous character of daily life" (PE, 154) but rather in the very midst of this daily life and its worldly activities.

The ironic result of the predestination doctrine with its translation in religious terms of people's materially and socially derived powerlessness vis-à-vis the world was to make possible what according to the premise of the rationalization process was

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impossible. Indeed, the Calvinist belief that the hopelessly imperfect human beings would only be capable of great works only if they were among the elect carrying a divine, super-human gift was precisely the inducement that allowed the anxious believers seeking for a sign of election to rationalize their conduct in a way that proved people's ability to achieve what - according to Christianity – was beyond their limited and imperfect nature. If human possibilities were thus revealed through the ironic mediation of a religious belief which required pushing such possibilities into the realm of impossibility, this can be attributed – as Weber tells us – to "[t]he combination of faith in absolutely valid norms with absolute determinism and the complete transcendentality of God" (PE, 126).

To label such a combination, however, 'a product of great genius' is more problematic since the element of intentionality that it seems to evoke comes dangerously close to its attribution to either a 'cunning of reason' or a 'cunning of history'. Instead of resorting to such metaphysical figures of speech we would do better to interpret this surprising effect of predestination doctrine as a positive rather than tragic – instance of the paradox of unintended consequences. This clarification is, moreover, not as cursory as it sounds since the interpretation of the significance of the predestination doctrine reveals interesting parallels to Marx's analysis.

First of all, we should point out that Weber's conceptualization of the outcome of the rationalization process in the West as – among other things – a generalization of the process – described by Marx – of the separation of the producers from their means of production also applies to religious rationalization. Indeed, the elimination of magical means to salvation renders the latter completely independent from the individual's autonomous actions, thus in effect separating the individual from the means of salvation. Once the idea of people affecting their salvation prospects through a conduct compatible

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to God's will is rejected as a presumptuous human notion which is incompatible to God's absolute freedom, it is clear that people become stripped of their traditional means of pursuing salvation. In fact, the religious rationalization effected by the predestination doctrine removes any residual human autonomy vis-a-vis God, through a reversal of the traditional direction of causality. To the extent that an individual's ethical conduct is no longer seen as determining but rather as being determined by her salvation status, this ethical conduct becomes transformed from a matter of quasi-teleological action to one of blind, quasi-mechanical causality. The paradoxical and unintended consequence of this transformation was an unprecedentally rationalized, methodical conduct of life that - as Weber argues in The Protestant Ethic - efficiently pursued the project of increasing God's glory. The result of this efficiency, however, is the creation of previously unimaginable wealth and technological development as well as the prospect of a drastic reduction of human suffering.

It is a major peculiarity of Weber's thought that in his refusal to interpret the effects of the predestination doctrine as a fortunate instantiation of the paradox of unintended consequences, he ends up both arresting the very rationalization process of which this doctrine forms a part and secularizing the Protestant ethic which the consolidation of capitalist society had -as Weber himself recognizes- rendered obsolete. Weber fails to follow the implications of the religious rationalization process to their logical end because he does not see that the wealth, the dynamic economic order and "the 'secularizing influence of wealth' (PE, 174) that, according to his analysis, the Protestant ethic helped make possible, all point in one and the same direction, namely the resolution of the religious problem and, thus, religion's raison d'être. Forgetting his own insistence on the thoroughly materialist character of the impulse underlying religion, Weber refuses to

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admit that once the religious rationalization process inadvertently helps create the material preconditions for the conquest of material scarcity, the next logical stage of such a rationalization process is nothing but the practical task of attaining a society that would make the conquest of scarcity the basis for the drastic reduction of undeserved suffering. If in the context of alienated societies condemned to material scarcity the immanent development of religious rationalization cannot but be in the direction of naturalizing and affirming the persistence of undeserved human suffering, the very fact that religious rationalization in one of its directions contributes to the change of this material context by revealing the possibility of conquering scarcity implies the transformation of the predestination doctrine from an end-point to a new beginning of the rationalization process. This new beginning is, moreover, more than a simple extension of the religious rationalization process since it implies a structural shift in the logic of this process and its reorientation from an intellectual naturalization and affirmation of undeserved human suffering to its practical abolition through political action.

In this sense, Weber's sociology of religion cannot simply be assumed to offer a refutation of Marx's thought. On the contrary, it comes up with conclusions which are compatible and complementary to the thought of Marx the theorist of modernity. This becomes once again clear when Bendix comments on – the central to the Protestant Ethic – paradox of religious asceticism leading to material wealth through a comparison between Puritanism and Confucianism. In a formulation that is strikingly similar to the contrast between modern capitalist society and the Antiquity which – as we saw earlier on – Marx sketches in the Grundrisse, Bendix tells us that

> "[I]n China, material welfare was exalted above all other goals in life and the political and economic teachings of Confucianism deliberately sought to maximize the well-being of the people. Yet in the absence of the

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> appropriate economic mentality Chinese economic policies did not achieve this end. Puritanism, which rejected the pursuit of wealth as an end, unintentionally helped create an economic mentality and a methodical way of life that led to an increase of wealth and jeopardized true religion...There is then a 'strange reversion of the "natural" relation between what men intend by their acts and what actually comes of them – the paradox of unintended consequences."[32]

It will be remembered that in the Grundrisse Marx contrasts the 'old view' – current in ancient society – according to which "the human being appears as the aim of production" with "the modern world, where production appears as the aim of mankind" (Grundrisse, 487-8). Similarly, in another passage from the same manuscript Marx praises "[t]he great historic quality of capital...to create this surplus labor, superfluous labor from the standpoint of mere use value, mere subsistence" while at the same time referring to the fact that "the severe discipline of capital, acting on succeeding generations [Geschlechter], has developed general industriousness as the general property of the new species" (Grundrisse, 325). Given all this we have yet another reason to concur with B.S. Turner when – as was noted above – he points out how ironic the fact is that Weber's Protestant Ethic has been treated by generations of sociologists as an anti-Marxist tract. Indeed, the very paradox of unintended consequences which – pointing to an asceticism that with its ruthless reduction of human beings into means to a transcendent cause leads through the rationalization of human conduct and discipline that it incites to the greatest production of material wealth imaginable – forms the basis of Weber's Protestant Ethic is already present in Marx, albeit in a text that Weber could not have known since it was not published until after his death.

5. Capitalist Alienation and the Existential Implications of Disenchantment

[32] Bendix, op.cit., 139-40.

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Like Weber, Marx had also tried to sketch the existential implications of this ascetic instrumentalization of human beings. However, while both Marx and Weber ask what the significance of this – central to the emergence and development of capitalist modernity – instrumentalization is for human life and the kind of human being likely to emerge out of this ordeal, their very different answers reflect their very different evaluations of the consequences and prospects of the rationalization process as this took shape in the West. Weber's inconsistent truncation of the rationalization process takes in this case the form of an affirmation of the kind of human being envisaged by Puritan asceticism. According to Weber,

> "The Puritan, like every rational type of asceticism, tried to enable man to maintain and act upon his constant motives, especially those which it taught him itself, against the emotions. In this formal psychological sense of the term it tried to make him into a personality. Contrary to many popular ideas, the end of this asceticism was to be able to lead an alert, intelligent life: the most urgent task the destruction of spontaneous, impulsive enjoyment, the most important means was to bring order into the conduct of its adherents." (PE, 119)

Marx, on the other hand, sees the capitalist dynamism based on an enforced asceticism that instrumentalizes human beings as leading to the creation of "the material elements for the development of the rich individuality which is all-sided in its production as in its consumption" (Grundrisse, 325). Marx's vision is more compatible to an approach that would seek to follow the implications of Weber's rationalization process to their logical end precisely because it goes beyond the false dilemma – that Weber implicitly presents us with – between, on the one hand, a traditionalist ethic in which the individual is oriented towards mere subsistence or – in any case – towards the reproduction of his existence in accordance with a traditional standard and model of life

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and, on the other hand, an alert, intelligent life worthy of what Weber would consider a true 'personality'.

As Weber tells us in Roscher and Knies personality is "a concept which entails a constant and intrinsic relation to certain ultimate 'values' and 'meanings' of life. 'values' and 'meanings' which are forged into purposes and thereby translated into rational-teleological action" (RK, 192). The reason why this concept of personality appears as the opposite of the traditionalist ethic is because it implies a deliberate and voluntary self-instrumentalization of the individual who is supposed to organize his life in accordance with the requirements of these transcendent values and not make the satisfaction of her needs the primary criterion guiding his conduct. Having failed to recognize the prolongation of the rationalization process as well as the shift in its logic that the effects of the predestination doctrine require, Weber throughout his life held on to a concept of personality that simply secularized and naturalized the reification of ideas implicit in the predestination doctrine. Weber's truncation of the rationalization process leads to an one-sided affirmation of asceticism precisely because Weber never had the chance to develop more fully the implications of his recognition - by the end of his life - of the materialist impulse underlying religion.

In this sense, Jeffrey Alexander may overestimate Weber's advance over the predestination doctrine when he encapsulates Weber's concept of disenchantment with the claim that "[o]nce God directed man; now man chooses his gods."[33] Although Alexander is right to argue that the personality Weber envisages involves a conscious choice – on the part of the individual – of the gods that she is going to obey rather than an

[33] See Whimster and Lash, eds., 192.

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obedience which can only be unquestioning since it follows a divine will inscrutable to the human mind, we have to add two qualifications to his formulations.

First of all, Weber's materialist understanding of the origins of religion implies that at the root of 'man's direction by God' was an admittedly ineffective attempt of powerless and fearful human beings, who – lacking the technical means to control their environment – tried to reduce their suffering by instrumentalizing gods through magic, behaving according to God's supposed will, and so on. Pointing this out has interesting political and theoretical implications since it allows to see not only modernity and its prospects but also Weber's political sociology in a different light. Indeed, insisting on the materialist impulse behind religion makes us aware of the practical human interests that underlie what appears to be people's unconditional obedience to abstract ethical doctrines and imperatives. Interestingly enough, Weber's insistence on a sociology that seeks to understand the subjective meaning of human action is in this instance not only compatible to a materialist approach but can even guard against the idealist reification of values that Weber does not always successfully avoid. Locating human belief in the unconditional duty to obey certain ethical demands in the context of a rationalization process sparked by the all-too-practical desire to reduce human suffering removes the trans-historical aura with which Weber endows such a belief. Thus by pursuing Weber's own discussion of rationalization to its logical end we show how inconsistent it is for Weber to adopt a standpoint guilty of idealist reification. At the very moment that the rationalization process leads – via the predestination doctrine – to the change of the material context that made unconditional obedience to the divine appear as the best strategy for reducing human suffering, it renders this strategy obsolete. The historically situated belief in the unconditional human duty to obey the divine will gives its place to the political task of

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attaining a non-alienated, egalitarian society that would consciously use the now feasible conquest of nature to drastically reduce undeserved human suffering.

Thus – and this is the second qualification to Alexander's formulation – the fact that at the origin of all religion – including the stage in which 'God directed man' – is to be found people's purposive and teleological attempt to reduce human suffering implies that the further pursuit of the rationalization process in the new material context that the culmination of this process in the predestination doctrine gives rise to cannot but point beyond even the stage in which 'man chooses his gods.' People's belief in an unconditional devotion and obedience to transcendent ethical principles or causes proves to be a parenthesis once the changed material context – with the overcoming of human powerlessness and the conquest of scarcity that it promises – allows the return from the logic of the categorical imperative and the unconditional human obedience to reified principles to the conscious, teleological and now effective fight against undeserved human suffering. By comparison to this logical completion of the rationalization process, it is clear that what Alexander refers to as man's choice of his gods still lies in the logic of obedience since this choice is a choice of what god the individual is to serve. The same becomes clear from Weber's own definition of personality, which reduces teleological action to the status of an executive organ pursuing the purposes that reified ultimate 'values' and 'meanings' of life supply to it. It is in this sense that Weber's failure to pursue the 'disenchantment of the world' beyond man's choice of his gods simply secularizes the logic of the predestination doctrine. Since, however, a simple secularization of the predestination doctrine cannot but leave its deep-seated, structural logic intact. Weber ends up naturalizing alienation through a reversal between means and ends that affirms people's subordination to the products of their mind.

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6. Alienation, Rationalization and the Structural Logic of Weber's Thought

In Weber's political sociology this idealist reification manifests itself in a concept of legitimacy that transforms the historically situated logic of obedience to transcendent ideal principles into a trans-historical constant. This concept refers to the fact that according to Weber, a social order cannot derive the assent and support of its subjects simply by catering to their self-interest. Although Weber recognizes that "every genuine form of domination implies a minimum of voluntary compliance, that is, an interest (based on ulterior motives or genuine acceptance) in obedience" (ES, 212), he points out that the stability of a social order depends on its being accepted by its subjects as being 'valid'. Here we have once again the dichotomy between conditional and unconditional or hypothetical and categorical imperatives that - as was noted above - Weber takes over from Kant. The validity of a social order implies that this order "is in some appreciable way regarded by the actor as in some way obligatory or exemplary for him" and that "its violation would be abhorrent to his sense of duty" (ES, 31). All in all, Weber not only rationalizes alienation in the form of people's subordination and unconditional obedience to the products of their mind but goes as far as to affirm it as the best guarantor of social stability. Thus, while undertaking a ranking of the different motives of obeying a social order in terms of their conduciveness to social order, he tells us that

> "[a]n order which is adhered to from motives of pure expediency is generally much less stable than one upheld on a purely customary basis through the fact that the corresponding behavior has become habitual. The latter is much the most common type of subjective attitude. But even this type of order is in turn much less stable than an order which enjoys the

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> prestige of being considered binding, or, as it may be expressed, of 'legitimacy'." (ES, 31)

Failing to see his secularization of Calvinist asceticism as a perpetuation of intellectual alienation. Weber cannot even entertain the thought that it may not be inevitable that society require the intellectual alienation of its members for its stability.

While as guilty of a naturalization of alienation as Calvinist asceticism, Weber's secularization of this religious world-view also expresses the specific characteristics that alienation assumes under modern capitalism. The secularization proper of Calvinism's reifying logic represents the shift in the locus of human powerlessness under capitalism. Having advanced humankind's technical mastery over nature decisively, capitalism does not do away with human powerlessness but rather gives it a social character. If the sublimation of people's traditional, pre-capitalist powerlessness vis-à-vis nature assumed the form of a view of the world as a metaphysical cosmic order, Weber's reification of the various spheres of social life simply expresses the fact that the socially induced suffering under capitalism cannot but lead to an articulation of the experience of alienation in social terms. Weber recognizes the difference, for example, between the way of experiencing crises in precapitalist societies and that under capitalism but -as Marx might say- one does not become immune to the reification of consciousness simply by recognizing its causes. Indeed Weber himself points to the material conditions underlying his own secularization and 'socialization' of reification when he tells us that "there is great difference between the fact that a Chinese or Japanese peasant is hungry and knows the while that the Deity is unfavorable to him or the spirits are disturbed and consequently nature does not give rain or sunshine at the right time, and the fact that the social order

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[under capitalism] may be held responsible for the crisis, even to the poorest laborer." (GEH, 217).

Tracing the implications of this important shift in social conditions, Weber draws an analogy between religion and socialism which can be read as a confirmation of our argument that with the rise of capitalism, the new end-point of the rationalization process can only be radical social change. Indeed, for Weber, the above-mentioned shift in the subjective experience of social crisis leads to a shift in the kind of practices people are likely to turn to for the alleviation or elimination of such crises. Thus continuing his contrast between the subjective experience of social crisis under pre-capitalist and capitalist societies respectively, Weber tells us that "[i]n the first case men turn to religion; in the second, the work of men is held at fault and the laboring man draws the conclusion that it must be changed. Rational socialism would never have originated in the absence of crises." Clearly Weber comes close to realizing that with the rise of capitalism, the rationalization process traced by his sociology of religion can only be pursued farther by becoming reoriented towards a non-alienated, egalitarian society that would allow a drastic reduction of undeserved human suffering and an immense enrichment of human life.

Despite the fact that his reification of modern capitalist society prevents the adoption of such a point of view, it has to be said that his implicit inclusion, on the one hand, of religion and socialism in the same rationalization process as well as, on the other, his materialist analysis of the original impulse give the best answer to the common dismissal of Marx's vision of the transcendence of alienation as a residual theological element that does not really have a place in Marx's materialist theory. It is a striking

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illustration of the complementarity between Marx's and Weber's thought that we can enlist Weber's sociology of religion not to criticize Marx but rather to defend him against a criticism that Sidney Hook very eloquently articulates when he argues that

> "the central notion of 'self-alienation' is foreign to the historical, naturalistichumanism of Marx. For it is a concept which is originally and primarily religious in nature, and derivatively, metaphysical. The basic 'existential predicament' of man is given by his Fall from Divine Grace in the Hebraic -Christian tradition and from Ideal Perfection of the One in the Greek philodsophical teradition. The human soul is alienated from God; salvation is the process by which this self-alienation is overcome."[34]

Along the same lines B.S. Turner argues that

> "[i]t is difficult to see how, indeed, the concept of alienation could, without loss of serious content, be used independently of some romantic , idealist or theological connotation... 'Alienation' ...cannot easily be incorporated within a neutral, technical terminology because these concepts draw their sociological validity from a theology of man."[35]

What the transcendence of alienation conceived in non-essentialist and non-metaphysical terms might involve I have already discussed in my elaboration of Marx's distinction between the realm of necessity and the realm of freedom. Here I would only like to add that Weber's materialist analysis of the impulse underlying religion shows that it is not Marx's vision of a non-alienated society which is not materialist enough but, on the contrary, its dismissal. This dismissal is based on a basically idealist conception of religion as the spiritual Other of material factors. Thus starting from a non-materialist conception of religion the same critics that dismiss Marx's vision for not being materialist enough ironically turn out to be -in this respect- less materialist than even Weber, the supposed nemesis of materialist reductionism. If the emancipatory Marxist project seeking a non-alienated society presents parallels to the religious concept of salvation,

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[34] Hook (1994), p.5.
[35] Turner (1981), p. 145-6.

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this is because –as Weber points out- the original meaning of this concept was a thoroughly materialist one, referring above all to salvation from undeserved human suffering. Thus Weber's sociology of religion can be see to offer support to the Marxist emancipatory project especially if we avoid following Weber in his truncation of the rationalization process and choose instead to pursue this process to its logical end. If we do this we can interpret the culmination of religious rationalization in the West into the Calvinist predestination doctrine as the turning-point that helped create the material conditions for human emancipation and the transition from religion as an 'opium of the people' that merely seeks to alleviate and sublimate the inevitability of immense human suffering to an abolition of religion that –given a new material context that removes the inevitability of such pervasive suffering- amounts to a "demand for [people's] *real* happiness".[59]

We saw that Weber's identification of the material conditions underlying his 'socialization' of reification brought him face to face with radical social change as the only way of drastically reducing human suffering and really bringing the rationalization process to completion. The reason why Weber did not take this logical step has to do with the fact that the structural logic of his thought simply reproduced and naturalized the alienated structure of modern capitalist society. In his identification of freedom and autonomy with the personality's choice of the god that she is going to serve, Weber unwittingly gives expression to the meager and sordid reality behind the bourgeoisie's high-minded pronouncements concerning liberty and freedom of choice. Weber's peculiar conceptualization of freedom in terms of submissiveness is of course only appropriate for a society reducing –for the vast majority of the population- freedom to the

[59] Marx, Karl. "Contribution to the Critique of Hegel's Philosophy of Right: Introduction." See MER, 54.

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freedom to choose in the market the master by whom one is exploited and whom one has to obey in the realm of production proper.

The reifying implications of his thought prevail even though Weber himself is lucid and honest enough to acknowledge the social conditions underlying his theoretical reification. Indeed, in a passage echoing Marx, Weber recognizes that

> "[i]t is in contradiction to the essence of capitalism, and the development of capitalism is impossible, if such a propertyless stratum is absent, a class compelled to sell its labor services to live; and it is likewise impossible if only unfree labor is at hand. Rational capitalistic calculation is possible only... where in consequence of the existence of workers who in the formal sense voluntarily, but actually under the compulsion of the whip of hunger, offer themselves, the costs of products may be unambiguously determined by agreement in advance" (GEH, 208).

This lucidity and honesty with which Weber depicts capitalist social relations illustrates the fact that if Weber naturalizes these social relations as well as the alienation associated to them, this is not because he belongs to that type of naive and crude apologists of capitalist society that thrives in more conventional liberal circles but rather because of the very structuring logic of his thought. Indeed, it appears as if even in its deviation from more conventional liberal discourses, Weber's thinking honestly expresses and becomes guided by the structuring logic of capitalist society. If Weber's reification of the spheres of social life expresses the individual's powerlessness when confronted with a social order that transcends her control and instrumentalizes her in accordance to its imperatives and if his identification of freedom with an individual's obedience to the god of her choice parallels capitalism's sordid reduction of freedom to a freedom to choose one's exploiter, the irreconcilable struggle between the different gods mirrors the centrality for capitalist society of an irreconcilable and ruthless inter-capitalist competition which does not lead to an outcome beneficial to all the parties involved since it leads to the

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annihilation -as Weber is once again aware- of "[w]hoever does not adapt... to the conditions of capitalistic success" (PE, 72).

Commentators have often pointed out the relevance of this point for Weber's relation to liberalism. Hennis, for example, argues that the

> "[b]elief that the heteronomy of ideals is soluble -through compromise,parliamentary discussion, or rational discourse- is the indestructible heritage and historical proprium of Liberalism. There is in my opinionno sense in talking of Liberalism in the absence of this belief, a belief which hardly moves mountains. 'Tragic' Liberalism or 'pessimistic' Liberalism are in the final analysis ... a contradiction in terms. *If one accepts that, then Weber was not a Liberal.*"[37]

Along the same lines Brubaker argues that Weber would deride any interpretation of

> "[t]he clash of value orientations ... as analogous to the clash of interests in a pluralistic political system or the clash of preferences in a market economy -as 'manageable' if not exactly benign. Neither conflicting political interests nor conflicting economic preferences can be reconciled through any scientific procedure. According to theories of the pluralistic polity and the market economy, however, they can be harmonized through the mediating institutions of representative government and the free market...(Some such neutral mechanism through which conflicts among value-orientations could be mediated is implied in the phrase'the marketplace of ideas'.)"[38]

It is precisely because of his lucid and honest assessment of capitalist reality that as these passages also demonstrate- Weber does not allow his thought to be tainted by the optimistic Liberal belief in an 'invisible hand' that turns competition into the guarantor of a general interest. Weber deviates from this dogma so central to the Liberal imaginary because he recognizes the importance of the fact that free market exchange between individuals is in capitalist society mediated by class inequality. Not being a naïve individualist Weber is, therefore, as removed from a traditional liberal affirmation of market as 'a very Eden of the innate rights of man' and as 'the exclusive realm of

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[37] Hennis (1988), 174.

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Freedom, Equality, Property and Bentham"[39] as Marx himself. Indeed, in a passage that could have been written by Marx himself, Weber shows the illusory character of the supposed freedom and equality underlying market exchange. Clearly aware that class inequality and the unequal distribution of property tend to turn this freedom and equality into a sham, Weber points out that

> "it is the most elemental economic fact that the way in which the disposition over material property is distributed among a plurality of people, meeting competitively in the market for the purpose of exchange, in itself creates specific life chances... Other things being equal, the mode of distribution monopolizes the opportunities for profitable deals for all those who, provided with goods, do not necessarily have to exchange them. It increases, at least generally, their power in the price struggle with those who, being propertyless, have nothing to offer but their labor or the resulting products, and who are compelled to get rid of these products in order to subsist at all... 'Property' and 'lack of property' are, therefore, the basic categories of all class situations." [40]

In this respect, we have to agree with Sayer's claim that both Marx and Weber "recognize the same basic conflict of class interests as fundamental to bourgeois society"[41] and that their agreement on this point may be much more important than "the very different economic theories -respectively, classical political economy and marginalism" at the basis of their analysis.

Given all this, we reach the slightly paradoxical conclusion that it may be Weber's uncompromisingly candid assessment of capitalist reality that may have contributed - through its subterranean influence on the structuring logic of his thought- to the naturalization of capitalist alienation. This paradox also accounts for the disconcerting ambiguity of Weber's regularly recurring dark pronouncements concerning capitalist modernity and its prospects. Some commentators, like Eden and Loewith -who characteristically contrasts Marx's attempt to provide a "therapy" for the alienation

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[38] Brubaker (1984), 67.
[39] Capital I, p.280.
[40] ES, p. 927.
[41] Sayer (1991), 104-5.

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endemic in capitalist society to Weber's simple 'diagnosis' [42]- are more inclined to attribute to Weber a resigned acceptance of modern capitalism's 'iron cage' that requires the search of "a freedom within the iron cage"[43]. Others would be more likely to agree with Bendix's and Mommsen's interpretation of the dark pronouncements that are interspersed in Weber's writings. According to Bendix[44], Weber's "political prognoses... rest on 'ideal type' projections which can claim logical, not historical validity" while Mommsen (1989) interprets such pronouncements as "a sort of self-denying prophecy that should help to prevent precisely the sort of outcome it forecast" (115). Such 'self-denying prophecies' could then be interpreted as a 'voluntarist'[45] attempt to swim -as Weber himself tells us- "'against the tide' of material constellations."[46]

I would argue that although it is this latter interpretation which better captures the manifest meaning of Weber's dark pronouncements, it is the former interpretation which better captures the paradoxical process whereby Weber's denunciation of the alienating reversal between means and ends implicit in modern capitalism's 'iron cage' ends up reproducing and naturalizing the very same alienation that it seeks to combat. This is because -as we have been arguing- the structural logic of Weber's strategy of resistance to the 'iron cage' has been stamped by capitalist reification. In this sense, Mommsen's and Hennis' interpretation of Weber's strategy of resistance as 'self-denying' and 'voluntarist' assumes a new meaning that they would probably be loath to acknowledge. From the idealist vision of a 'determined will' standing up for principles such as individualism and democracy even " 'against the tide' of material constellations" we move to the less exulted and more materialist sense of voluntarist and self-denying as self-defeating. Weber's strategy of resistance is self-denying because it seeks to criticize the very phenomenon that has provided its own theoretical presuppositions and voluntarist

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[42] Loewith, pp. 48-9.
[43] Ibid. p. 72.
[44] See Stammer (1971), p.160.
[45] See Hennis (1988), 186.
[46] 'On the Situation of Constitutional Democracy in Russia', p. 69 in PW.

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because its critical intention cannot but give way to the reified structural logic that allows its articulation. In this sense, Loewith's interpretation of Weber as seeking 'a freedom within the 'iron cage' comes closer to capturing Weber's paradoxical attempt to criticize the capitalist 'iron cage' in terms of a theoretical logic which itself bears the marks of this 'iron cage' than do the more optimistic interpretations of more conventional Weber scholars who tend to be even more oblivious of the fact that Weber's impasse can be traced back to the structural logic of his thought.

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7. The Tensions in Weber's Thought and His Ambivalence Towards the Enlightenment

Weber's candid assessment of capitalist reality did not represent an unambiguous advance over the naively optimistic outlook of more conventional Liberalism. The indirect incorporation of this assessment in the structural logic of his analysis precluded the immanent critique of Liberalism, thus also eschewing the utopian emancipatory content of this doctrine. Indeed, instead of criticizing capitalist society in terms of its own ideals and exploring the kind of society that would turn such ideals into reality, Weber's unwitting incorporation of the logic of capitalist society into the structure of his analysis ends up interpreting capitalism's failure to attain such ideals as a sign of the inherent defectiveness of these ideals themselves. Instead of seeing in the idea of an 'invisible hand' operating through the market a demand preserving- even in the midst of the theological connotations that this idea carries for Adam Smith- the emancipatory promise of a social order that serves rather than instrumentalizes people. Weber's recognition that this idyllic picture does not correspond to the reality of modern capitalist society leads him to a resigned acceptance of the reversal between means and ends effected by the capitalist iron cage.

Moreover, as was noted above, Weber's naturalization of capitalist alienation is effected through the generalization of the Marx who sees history as a contradictory process driven towards the *telos* of the transcendence of alienation. Thus to the extent that Weber's appeal to the autonomous, trans-historical logic of the various spheres of social life can be seen as a generalization of the conception of historical materialism as a meta-historical principle that not only locates historical and social phenomena in their material, economic context but also provides the trans-historical logic through which this

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economic context evolves from one mode of production to the next, we come up with the inescapable conclusion that if Weber's resigned pessimism when confronted with the alienation engendered by the 'iron cage' of capitalist modernity is simply the mirror image of the metaphysical optimism characteristic of Marx the philosopher of history, one cannot dismiss the latter without also dismissing the former. Thus if Weber's pessimistic outlook made -as Hennis tells us- both "[t]he liberal faith in time and the socialist sidelong look to historical regularities [seem] equally irresponsible to him"[47], this cannot simply be explained by reference to Weber's belief that "[m]an alone forges his fate."[48] Rather, Weber's dismissal of a naive future-oriented optimism for a resigned acceptance of the present is better explained by the fact that the subterranean impact of capitalist reality on the structure of Weber's thought led him to a reifying conception of society. By precluding the possibility of transcending alienation through radical social change, this conception also denied humankind's capacity to freely forge its fate.

The reified logic of Weber's analysis also accounts for a paradox that Eden implicitly acknowledges but cannot really explain in his discussion of the implications of Weber's thought for Liberalism. Indeed, Eden argues that Weber distances himself from the metaphysical natural law tradition by attempting "to detach liberal democracy from a standard of human rights grounded in nature"[49] and locates Weber's superiority to previous Liberal theoreticians such as Woodrow Wilson in Weber's adoption of "the principle that political philosophy is impossible."[50] At the same time, however, Eden also recognizes that the contribution of this attempt by Weber to detach liberalism from its original metaphysical underpinnings coexists in Weber's thought with a seemingly puzzling restoration of metaphysics in a different form. Eden does not recognize in this

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[47] Hennis, Wilhelm (1988) Max Weber: Essays in Reconstruction. London: Allen and Unwin, p. 186.
[48] Ibid. 186.
[49] Eden, Robert (1983), Political Leadership and Nihilism: A Study of Weber and Nietzsche, Tampa: University Presses of Florida, p. 188.
[50] Ibid. p. 217.

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paradox the influence of capitalist reification but it is precisely this reification that he tellingly describes when he tells us that

> "Weber's attempt to isolate the political as a distinct sphere within 'the total ethical economy of human life' seems to rest upon the empirical truth that 'We are placed into various life spheres, each of which is governed by different laws'. But in what sense is politics a distinct sphere? By whom are we placed in such 'spheres'? What is the status of the 'laws' that govern politics? Weber cites 'the Indian ethic's quite unbroken treatment of politics by following politics' own laws and even radically enhancing this royal art' ... What is the authority of the Indian caste system for the politics of the modern state? Unless Weber believes that there is a permanent natural order to which the wisdom of all the great religions has bowed - a belief of which there is not the faintest trace in Weber's scholarly writings- these 'historical precedents' are not evident."[51]

The solution to the puzzle that Eden so eloquently outlines is provided by our argument that Weber's association of disenchantment to the recognition of "the struggle that the gods of the various orders and values are engaged in"[52] amounts to a secularization or 'socialization' of the reification that already characterized the religious, metaphysical views of the world as a cosmic order.

In this sense, Weber's dubious progress over more traditional liberalism stems from the fact that -as Marx might say- having moved beyond traditional Liberalism's dependence on human alienation in its sacred form, Weber failed to take the next logical step of unmasking and exploring the preconditions for the transcendence of 'human self-alienation in its secular form.'[53] He could have done that through an immanent critique of Liberalism, which rather than naturalizing the social reification perpetrated by capitalism would explore the conditions under which this reification could be reversed through the achievement of a social order that really serves rather than instrumentalizing human beings. Even the fact, however, that Weber fails to recognize and attempt this next logical step of the rationalization process that he himself had sketched may not be

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[51] Ibid, p. 204.
[52] 'Science as a Vocation' in FMW, p. 148.
[53] Cf. Marx, Karl 'Contribution to the Critique of Hegel's Philosophy of Right: Introduction' in MER, p. 54.

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unrelated to the deep-seated influence that the logic of capitalist society appears to have had on his most fundamental theoretical assumptions.

We have seen how the culmination of the religious rationalization process in the West may have helped create -through its contribution to the emergence of capitalism- the material preconditions for the satisfaction of the impulse behind religion, namely the human desire to reduce material suffering. The fact, however, that without capitalism's dynamism the satisfaction of such a desire would be inconceivable should not make us forget that the actual satisfaction of this desire will only be possible in an egalitarian, non-capitalist society. Indeed, if capitalism's technological and productive dynamism creates the material preconditions for the attainment of an egalitarian society which could -for all practical purposes- be said to have achieved the conquest of scarcity, capitalism's own class nature ensures that -far from leading to such a conquest of scarcity- capitalism's dynamic logic actually has the opposite effect of perpetually and artificially reproducing scarcity. If Weber's thought is in every other respect stamped by the structural logic of capitalist society, it is not surprising that in this respect too capitalism's perpetual reproduction of material scarcity finds expression in the prominent position that scarcity occupies in Weber's thought. Almost fifty years after Marx had shown the untenability of naturalistic Malthusian arguments discussing the increase of population and its impact without taking into account the social context which both allows such an increase and determines whether it is sustainable, Weber insists that it is

> "the increase of population -whatever may be the economic organization of earth- which will in the future intensify the struggle for existence, the struggle of man against man; we conclude therefore that the gospel of struggle is a national duty, an unavoidable economic task for individual and for the collectivity of which we are not 'ashamed' and represents for us the sole path to greatness. We know well enough that the further development of the nation has to lead to the constitution of its future. We regard that however as an unavoidable consequence of historical development, and we believe that those nations which today fail to mobilize their economic future for national greatness do not in fact have a future."[54]

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[54] "Germany as an Industrial State" in Tribe, Keith ed. (1989) Reading Weber, London and New York:Routledge, pp. 218-9.

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The struggle between different gods -which as Weber assures us in 'Science as a Vocation' can be held to apply to the struggle between different national cultures- appears here in a raw materialist guise defiantly oblivious of any possibility to present itself in an idealistically sublimated form. Here it is different nations which are the warring gods and their war is described in words that are ominous indeed. Confirming our argument that Weber's reference to the supposed struggle between different gods is a sublimated expression of the ruthless inter-capitalist competition, Weber's claim that "those nations which today fail to mobilize their economic future for national greatness do not in fact have a future" bears an unmistakable similarity to his recognition -later on in The Protestant Ethic- that "[w]hoever does not adapt his manner of life to the conditions of capitalistic success must go under, or at least cannot rise."[55] In typical fashion, however, Weber naturalizes the ruthless struggle which is an unavoidable consequence of capitalist development by transforming it into the "unavoidable consequence of historical development" [my emphasis]. Transforming this struggle into a trans-historical existential necessity with a transcendent dignity borne out in Weber's rhetorically paradoxical flourish concerning a certain 'gospel of struggle', Weber predictably locates the basis of this struggle not in capitalism's necessary and artificial reproduction of scarcity and a surplus population but rather in the pressure that- "whatever may be the economic organization of earth"- the increase of population may be assumed to produce. In this instance, at least, the historicist character of Weber's thought- that Randall Collins points out[56]- is regrettably absent and his naturalization of capitalist alienation does not stem from the fact that "he was greater than his own methodology" and did not act on the tendency- present in his methodological writings- "to adulate the interpretation of history, and to downgrade theoretical generalizations"[57]. On the contrary, the trouble with this claim on the part of Weber is his failure to rise to the standards of his own methodology

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[55] PE, p. 72.
[56] See Collins, Randall (1986) Max Weber: A Skeleton Key, Sage Publications, p. 95.
[57] Ibid, pp. 140-1.

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by abstaining from the kind of trans-historical generalizations of dubious value that he had rightly criticized Marx for.

Thus if B.S. Turner is right to point out that "Weber rarely considered the positive unintended consequences of social change"[58], this is because in social life up to the present the very existence of unintended consequences of social action is very often the sign of people's lack of collective control over their social life. Thus once we recognize that in an alienated society the phenomenon of unintended consequences will inevitably be reflected through the prism of this society's alienation, it becomes easier to understand why a consciousness which- like Weber's - bears the stamp of the very alienation that it helps naturalize would selectively focus on the negative side of the paradox of unintended consequences. It is worth noting here that although Marx himself ended up secularizing a position which -by appealing to a metaphysical dialectic and the 'cunning of reason' underlying it- represented the exact opposite from Weber's position, he also pointed out to the material conditions underlying Weber's darker interpretation when he tells us in The German Ideology that "[t]his fixation of social activity, this consolidation of what we ourselves produce into an objective power above us, growing out of our control, thwarting our expectations, bringing to naught our calculations, is one of the chief factors in historical development up till now"[59]. Thus a reference to the material context of Weber's thought allows us to understand Weber's partiality for the dark side of the paradox of unintended consequences as well as his failure to appreciate the full implications of the most famous and salient for our purposes instance of this paradox, namely the unintended contribution of the religious rationalization process in the West to the creation of the material preconditions for human emancipation and the abolition of religion. As has been pointed out, Weber did not appreciate the full emancipatory significance of Puritan asceticism's contribution to the emergence of both a

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[58] Turner, Bryan S. (1992) Max Weber: From History to Modernity. London and NY: Routledge, p. viii.
[59] Marx, Karl and Engels Friedrich, The German Ideology, p. 53.

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subjective life-conduct and an objective social order that led to the rapid accumulation of material wealth because capitalism's compulsive as well as artificial reproduction of material scarcity was transfigured in Weber's thought into a naturalization of the very material scarcity that had -for the first time in human history- become potentially obsolete.

Weber's analysis of rationalization as well as the practical implications that he derives from it are colored by this naturalization of scarcity. Indeed, by obstructing an adequate evaluation of the demand for socialism, Weber's naturalization of scarcity did not only block from his view the only route to the true completion of the rationalization process but also made the prospect of such a completion appear in a very distorted light. Since this distortion is at the root of the bleakness of Weber's diagnosis on modernity, it is all the more surprising that commentators have tended to simply register or praise Weber's view without ever subjecting it to the criticism that it deserves. Loewith even compounds Weber's distortion with a distorted interpretation that makes Weber's conception of rationalization appear even bleaker than it really is. Indeed, referring to the effects of the rationalization process, Loewith argues that, for Weber,

> "every instance of radical rationalization is inevitably fated to engender irrationality. Weber specifically noted this in his reply to a criticism offered by Brentano. There he declared that it is in fact a matter of 'rationalization in the direction of an irrational way of life'. Only because of this - and by no means means 'for its own sake' - is rationalization a phenomenon which is specifically problematic and worth knowing about, rather than one phenomenon among many."[60]

Loewith manages in this passage to extract from one of Weber's notes to The Protestant Ethic the opposite meaning from the one that Weber was intending. Weber himself makes clear what this intended meaning is when he insists that "[i]f this essay makes any contribution at all, may it be to bring out the complexity of the only superficially simple concept of the rational"[61]. While Loewith leaves us with the misleading impression that

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[60] Lowith, Karl (1993) Max Weber and Karl Marx, London and New York: Routledge, p. 62.
[61] PE, 194.

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Weber attributes an objective and unconditional irrationality to the effects of the rationalization process. Weber's qualified affirmation of Brentano's comment seeks, on the contrary to dispute the meaningfulness of any belief in such an objective and unconditional rationality or irrationality. This is, after all, the meaning of Weber's insistence that "[a] thing is never irrational in itself, but only from a particular rational point of view."

Even the commentators, however, who do not share Loewith's misconception are hardly ever inclined to problematize Weber's ambivalence concerning the rationalization process. Thus, Brubaker argues, for example, that "Weber breaks decisively with the 'optimistic faith [of the Enlightenment] in the theoretical and practical rationality of reality'. In no sphere of life, according to Weber, has rationalization unambiguously advanced human well-being". To support this claim Brubaker offers a number of examples, one of which points to the fact that "[t]he extension of scientific knowledge, to be sure enhances man's rational control over social and natural processes. But while this control has made possible dramatic improvements in material well-being, it has also made possible the development of increasingly sophisticated techniques for the 'political, social, educational, and propagandistic manipulation and domination of human beings'"[62]. Brubaker's more nuanced account of the effects of rationalization reflects Weber's view that rationality is not a simple and monolithic concept and that- as a result- the rationalization process can be pursued in different directions and evaluated on the basis of different and often mutually conflicting criteria. At the same time, however, Brubaker's inability to offer a more critical account, which would go beyond the faithful registration of the manifest content of Weber's views on rationalization and its effects can be attributed to the fact that he fails to question Weber's implicit detachment of the rationalization process from the materialist basis of the process that Weber himself had

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[62] Brubaker, Rogers (1984) The Limits of Rationality: An Essay on the Social and Moral Thought of Max Weber. London: George Allen and Unwin, p.3.

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recognized. If the effects of the rationalization process have not been unambiguously advantageous to human well-being, this is indeed the result of the fact that -as Weber and Brubaker point out- the use of the achievements of such a process for the purpose of refining techniques of social domination is as likely as their use for the advance of human well-being. Weber's and Brubaker's detachment of the rationalization process from its material context prevents them, however, from seeing the radical implications that the outcome of the rationalization process in the West has for this conception of rationalization as an ambivalent process that inevitably involves agonizing choices between mutually exclusive possibilities.

More specifically, Weber's naturalization of scarcity prevents him from realizing that the -possibly accidental- convergence of the rationalization processes in the various spheres of social life into a dynamic capitalist society which creates the material preconditions for human emancipation implies a challenge to Weber's analysis of a seemingly trans-historical logic of the rationalization process. As was pointed out above, the now feasible drastic elimination of human suffering and abolition of alienation presents humankind with a de facto new material context that requires a structural reorientation of the rationalization process. More specifically, this new material context allows the retrospective recognition that Weber's seemingly trans-historical logic of the rationalization process is thoroughly historical since it corresponds to a historical period in which the abolition of alienation was impossible. Thus the possibility of abolishing alienation compels us to reconsider the pluralism of mutually exclusive alternatives that this alienation confronts us with. The now realistic possibility of drastically reducing human suffering and attaining a non-alienated society in which the self-development and happiness of each individual presupposes rather than negates the self-development and happiness of every other individual obviously renders obsolete both the whole multitude of theodicies and worldviews which can only offer a coherent idealist sublimation or naturalization of human suffering and the ambivalence stemming from the realization that

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in a socially divided society the achievements of rationalization may be made to serve not the general interest but the interest of the privileged group in a refinement of social domination. The very possibility of satisfying the materialist impulse underlying religion and the rationalization process makes the artificial perpetuation of immense human suffering objectively irrational. Thus the outcome of the rationalization process in the West creates a new material context which, in effect, restores the objective character of rationality that Weber's trans-historical claim concerning rationalization had disrupted.

Paradoxically enough, Loewith's deviation from the manifest content of Weber's thought proves once again to carry within it a deeper truth that escapes both Weber and his more conventional commentators. Tracing this deeper truth back to the materialist basis of religion and the rationalization process has allowed us, however, not only to reaffirm rationality's objectivity but also to do so in a way that avoids both Loewith's misinterpretation of Weber's own beliefs and the uncritical acceptance by more conventional commentators of Weber's trans-historical claims. Thus, rather than simply negating Weber's position through an appeal to its opposite, we see that both of the opposed positions are understandable and valid in their respective material and historical contexts.

The antinomic character of Weber's thought is borne out by the fact that the materialist moment in his analysis of rationalization implicitly points beyond the very alienation that the main thrust of his rationalization analysis serves to naturalize. In this respect too, the deep structure of Weber's thought matches the dialectical character of a capitalist reality which necessarily perpetuates the very alienation and scarcity that its own dynamism renders ever more obsolete. Given all that has been said so far, Weber's dark warnings about the 'iron cage' of modernity appear in a different light. It now starts to become clear that the tragic character of his thought may not stem from a disillusioned clear-mindedness that led Weber to either a resigned acceptance of the irresistible

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advance of the 'iron cage'- as Loewith claims[63]- or a voluntaristic determination to swim against the stream of bureaucratic rationalization 'while it is still day' -as Hennis[64] and most other commentators would argue. The tragic element in Weber's thought has to do instead with the fact that while Weber's candid assessment of capitalist reality and his recognition of the perverse reversal between means and ends effected by the 'iron cage' of capitalist modernity may have aroused in him the impulse to resist, the impact of capitalist reality on the structure of his thought managed not just to neutralize such a rebellious impulse but even to rechannel it in a way that naturalized the very object of its criticism, namely capitalist alienation.

Once we shift the terms in which Weber's stance is encapsulated from a sober, non-utopian determination to resist based on a disillusioned and clear-minded evaluation of modernity to a wish to resist that was tragically derailed by the impact of capitalist reification on the structure of his thought, we also avoid the misleading tendency of many commentators to locate -with Mommsen[65]- the antinomic character of Weber's thought in the relation between his concepts of charisma, on the one hand, and bureaucratization and rationalization, on the other. By interpreting the concept of charisma as Weber's "metaphysical vehicle of man's freedom in history"[66], such interpretations fail to recognize that Weber's charisma reflects the same alienation as the 'iron cage' and that -in this sense- far from constituting a counterweight or a form of existence opposed to the iron cage, charisma is nothing more than a reification of the concept of freedom engendered by the 'iron cage' of capitalist modernity itself. Weber may indeed argue that "in a revolutionary and sovereign manner, charismatic domination transforms all values and breaks all traditional and rational norms: 'it has been written, but I say unto you...'"[67] and conclude that for that reason "charisma is the specifically creative revolutionary force

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[63] Lowith, op.cit., p. 74.
[64] See Hennis, op.cit., p. 186.
[65] See 'Max Weber on Bureaucracy and Bureaucratization' in Mommsen, Wolfgang (1989) Political and Social Theory of Max Weber: Collected Essays, University of Chicago Press, p. 112.
[66] See Gerth and Mills' Introduction to FMW (p. 72).
[67] ES v., p. 1115.

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of history"[68]. At the same time, however, he also underlines the prominence of the duty to obey in any claim to charisma when he argues that "[c]harisma is self-determined and sets its own limits. Its bearer seizes the task for which he is destined and demands that others obey and follow him by virtue of his mission. If those to whom he feels sent do not recognize him, his claim collapses; if they recognize it, he is their master as long as he proves himself. However, he does not derive his claims from the will of his followers, in the manner of an election; rather it is their duty to recognize his charisma"[69]. As this passage makes clear obedience and human self-instrumentalization are central components of any charismatic domination. What is more, this obedience and self-instrumentalization are as applicable to the life and action of the charismatic leader as they are to the life and action of his followers. If Weber points to the personal character of charismatic loyalty when he sees it as "resting on devotion to the exceptional sanctity, heroism or exemplary character of an individual person, and of the normative patterns or order revealed or ordained by him"[70], he also makes clear that this charisma was not inseparable from its carrier since the latter "may lose his charisma, he may feel 'forsaken by his God'" or since" it may appear to his followers that 'his powers have left him'."[71] It is clear, therefore, that charisma transcends its carrier and it is to this transcendent quality rather than to the person of its carrier that allegiance is owed. According to Weber, charismatic leaders "practiced their arts, and they exercised their authority, by virtue of this gift ('charisma') and, where the idea of God had already been clearly established, by virtue of the Divine mission inherent in their ability."[72] When Weber tells us, therefore, that the bearer of charisma "seizes the task for which he is destined and demands that others obey and follow him by virtue of his mission", he makes clear that both the charismatic leader and his followers experience themselves as the tools of a transcendent,

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[68] Ibid. p. 1117.
[69] Ibid. pp. 1112-3.
[70] Ibid. p. 215.
[71] Ibid. p. 1114.
[72] Ibid. p. 1112

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possibly divine, mission. In this sense, the identification of the dichotomy between charisma and bureaucratic rationalization as a central antinomy in Weber's thought can only rest on a failure to recognize capitalist alienation as the common ground of these supposedly antinomic concepts. This uncritical presentation as antinomic of two concepts which both demonstrate the impact on Weber's thought of a society that depends on the instrumentalization of individuals to processes that transcend them and lie beyond their control demonstrates the lasting hold of Weber's naturalization of alienation on the interpretations of most of his commentators. Only the recognition that the 'submissive mentality' which -as Mommsen[73] points out- Weber attributes to legal-bureaucratic domination is also present in its supposedly antinomic counterpart[74], namely Weber's concept of charisma, can prevent us from placing our hopes for resistance to the iron cage of capitalist modernity on the rise of 'entirely new prophets'[75].

The other way out of the iron cage that Weber considers, namely 'a great rebirth of old ideas and ideals' is more promising since it can lead to the immanent critique of Liberal and Enlightenment ideals but Weber's unwitting naturalization of capitalist alienation prevented him from exploring such an alternative. Unlike, however, Weber's genuinely tragic predicament of feeling the need to resist the 'iron cage' of capitalist modernity but having his intention frustrated by the reification perpetrated on the structure of his thought by the object of his critique, Weber's more conventional commentators tend - through their misspecification of the tragic character of Weber's thought- to interpret Weber in a one-dimensional manner that removes the critical edge of his thought. A typical example of this general attitude is provided by Mommsen in a passage which hopes to encapsulate Weber's supposed advance over Enlightenment ideas. Transmogrifying Weber's failure to undertake an immanent critique of Enlightenment

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[73] 'Rationalization and Myth in Weber's Thought' in Mommsen, op. Cit., p.115.

[74] For Mommsen's uncritical acceptance of Weber's presentation of legal-bureaucratic authority and charisma as antinomic concepts, see Ibid. p. 112.

[75] PE, p. 182.

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into a cause for praise. Mommsen speaks for many of these Weber commentators when he argues that "[h]is [Weber's] attitude may be described as that of a thinker who has as it were thought through the principles of the Enlightenment to their ultimate conclusion and freed them from all naive hopes in the all-powerful force of rationality as a purely emancipatory factor."[76] In reality, of course, what Weber has thought to its ultimate conclusion is the nature of modern capitalist society. Thus, the naive hope that Weber is dispelling is not the Enlightenment hope for human emancipation through the attainment of a rational society but rather the traditional Liberal wishful thinking concerning the possibility of achieving such human emancipation on the basis of capitalism. Writing at a time that capitalism's maturity was leading humanity towards the unprecedented -for that time- barbarism of a world war, Weber's dark outlook exemplifies the predicament of a bourgeois civilization, which -in its inability or unwillingness to recognize that the actualization of its emancipatory Enlightenment ideals is only possible on the basis of its abolition- prefers to renounce these ideals instead.

These emancipatory Enlightenment ideals cannot, however, be suppressed without leaving a trace and it is such traces that make the immanent critique of Weber's thought possible. Even behind Weber's reifying appeal to charisma as a counter-weight to the 'iron cage' of capitalist modernity, it is possible to discern the same demand for human well-being that Weber himself placed at the origin of religion and the rationalization process. As Weber tells us, the charismatic leader's "divine mission must prove itself by bringing well-being to his faithful followers; if they do not fare well, he obviously is not the god-sent master."[77] At this point the important implications of Weber's naturalization of material scarcity become apparent once again. Weber's reifying appeal to charisma as a counter-weight to the 'iron cage' is possible precisely because of his failure to recognize that capitalism's own dynamism creates the possibility of its replacement by a more

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[76] See 'Rationalization and Myth in Weber's Thought' in Mommsen, op.cit, p. 144.
[77] ES, p. 1114.

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egalitarian society that would make capitalism's technological achievements the basis for conquering scarcity. Had he recognized it, Weber would have realized that the possibility of ensuring human well-being on the basis of a rational, egalitarian and technologically advanced society renders obsolete the pursuit of the same goal through religion or charismatic leaders. By failing to see, therefore, that capitalism's dynamism make the conquest of scarcity a realistic possibility, Weber proves equally incapable of seeing the transformation of human well-being from a 'divine mission' to a secular, political project that this possibility implies. Thus, Weber can also not see that the materialist side of his own analysis does not point to the nurturing of charisma as a counterweight to the dreaded iron cage but rather to a further rationalization of society which would - through the satisfaction of the materialist impulse underlying charisma- render such charisma obsolete.

We should point out here, moreover, that the demand for well-being lies at the basis of charisma not only for the non-charismatic masses but also for the charismatic individuals themselves. As Weber points out, the extraordinary charismatic states sought by the 'religious virtuoso' did not have a non-materialist significance contrary to the laity's materialist concern with 'health, long life, and wealth.'[78] To the extent that the search of such charismatic states was inspired- as Weber tells us- by 'attitudes of the here and now', this search has to be attributed a materialist significance complementary to the materialist concerns of the laity. Indeed, after going through a long list of the charismatic states sought by the virtuosos of various religions Weber concludes that these were quasi-orgiastic states, which "undoubtedly have been sought, first of all, for the sake of such emotional value as they directly offered the devout." Charismatic states in their original form appear as materialistically inspired activities which are not simply oriented to the securing of the means of survival but rather to "the intrinsic value of the respective states conditioned by them." In short, the materialist basis of such charismatic states is

[78] 'The Social Psychology of the World Religions' in FMW, pp. 277-8.

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none other than the human demand for a non-alienated activity which is not undertaken as a means to survival and thus experienced as a necessary evil but rather valued as an end-in-itself. Thus the materialist basis of religion and charisma involves more than the negative demand of reducing suffering since it also includes the positive demand for an enriched human life through activity in what Marx referred to as the 'realm of freedom.'

The attribution of the search for such states to religious virtuosos points to the fact that activity in the realm of freedom and the satisfaction that it entails can be refined through the elaboration of techniques of appropriating the world aesthetically. It also points to the fact that the taste of the 'realm of freedom' that the elaboration of such techniques made possible for the religious virtuosos also presupposed the confinement of the laity's aspirations to the 'realm of necessity'. The material reality lurking behind Weber's concept of charisma proves- interestingly enough- to be none other than economic exploitation. As was already noted, however, the immanent critique of Weber's own rationalization analysis underlines the fact that the historical outcome of the rationalization process in the West not only makes such economic exploitation obsolete but -in so doing- also points to the abolition of economic exploitation as the next logical stage of the rationalization process.

This has an interesting implication for the social relation that we have discerned behind Weber's concept of charisma. Indeed, if Weber's original distinction between the laity and the religious virtuosos makes an implicit reference to the fact that in a material context that does not as yet allow the conquest of scarcity, the taste of the 'realm of freedom' for the few presupposes a confinement to the 'realm of necessity' for the many. his naturalization of scarcity prevented him from recognizing the shift in the relationship between the laity and charismatic virtuosos implicit in the new material context brought about by the rationalization process in the capitalist West. The old opposition of interests stemming from the economic exploitation implicit in a social division of labor that assigned few to the 'realm of freedom' and the rest to the 'realm of necessity' is replaced

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by a potential convergence of interests once a new material context emerges, which produces the possibility of universal enjoyment of the 'realm of freedom' only to frustrate it through an artificial perpetuation of scarcity that reduces -once again- everyone to the 'realm of necessity'. Indeed, the new material context created by capitalism can potentially lead the 'charismatic virtuosos' -who in a secular, capitalist society seek a non-alienated activity in the 'realm of freedom' not as magicians or monks but rather as artists, intellectuals, writers, musicians and so on- to the realization that in the changed material context of a society that artificially perpetuates scarcity for everyone, their enjoyment of the 'realm of freedom' is best served not by the preservation but rather by the abolition of economic exploitation.

The contradictory tendencies that our immanent critique of Weber's thought has uncovered appears therefore as a special case of the contradictory effects that capitalism's own dialectical nature is bound to have on its intellectual stratum. If capitalism reproduces scarcity and alienation as necessarily as it creates the preconditions for their transcendence, it is not surprising that its intellectual stratum would vacillate between a conservative naturalization of and a radical opposition to alienation. It is also not surprising if these two contradictory moments coexist- as is the case with Weber- within the work of the same intellectual. It is, moreover, the coexistence of such contradictory moments which allows the analysis of a thinker's work to recognize in the dominant moment of this work the latent presence of its opposite.

Weber's naturalization of scarcity prevented him, however, from seeing the contradictory implications of the new material context for an intellectual's position in society. The fact that he adhered to the model -corresponding to the pre-capitalist material context that had not as yet made the conquest of scarcity possible- of a simple opposition of interests between intellectuals and the exploited masses is also borne out by the biographical information provided to us by his wife. Indeed, Marianne Weber show that this model may have also affected Weber's political beliefs when she tells us that

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> "[h]is sympathy for the struggle of the proletariat for an existence worthy of human beings had been so great for decades that he had often considered joining their ranks as a member of the Socialist Party, although he had always decided against it. One could be a 'Socialist'- as well as a 'Christian'- in all honesty only if one was prepared to share the way of life of the propertyless, at least to give up a cultured existence based on their labor. Since Weber's illness that had been impossible for him, and his scholar's existence simply depended on unearned income."[79]

Although one cannot but sympathize with an intellectual who hesitates to embrace Socialism because of his guilt feelings concerning the fact that his 'cultural existence' is based on the labor of the propertyless, it is clear that Weber would have proven more useful to the propertyless masses had he developed the potential socialist implications of his own analysis. Given what has already been said, it becomes clear that with capitalism the potential radicalization of intellectuals has to do with the fact that their interest in a non-alienated activity in the 'realm of freedom' becomes incompatible to the continued existence of a social division of labor that turns such an activity into the exclusive privilege of a small group of people. In this sense, Weber's affirmation of the view that the true meaning of the Reformation was not to do away with monks but rather to turn everyone into a monk[80] assumes another, less horrifying, meaning which Weber -once again because of his naturalization of scarcity- cannot acknowledge. This new meaning stems from the fact that the creation of the material preconditions for human emancipation indeed creates the possibility of everyone becoming a virtuoso of the 'realm of freedom' consciously orienting herself to the systematic refinement of her capacities for an aesthetic appropriation of the world.

We have seen, therefore, that far from constituting the counter-force to a rationalization process leading to the 'iron cage' of modernity, Weber's concept of charisma is characterized by the same ambiguity that characterizes his concept of rationalization. Although Weber's analysis of both concepts tends to naturalize

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[79] Weber, Marianne (1975) Max Weber: A Biography, John Wiley & Sons, p. 630.
[80] PE, p. 121.

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alienation, it also points -in a muted and subterranean way- to the possibility of an extension and reorientation of rationalization towards a society that would put an end to the alienation engendered by the 'iron cage' of capitalist modernity. If charisma is characterized by a human self-instrumentalization that applies both to the charismatic leader and her followers, it also hides within it the anthropocentric demand for both a reduction of human suffering and the enrichment of human life. In this sense, even the concept of charisma includes critical elements that could be used against Weber's paradoxical reduction of freedom into a free choice of one's master. Mommsen may be right to interpret in charismatic terms Weber's transfer of this concept of freedom into politics, especially given Weber's notorious definition of democracy as a political system in which "the people choose a leader in whom they trust. Then the chosen leader says, 'Now shut up and obey me.' People and party are then no longer free to interfere in his business."[81] At the same time, however, Mommsen does not attempt to go beyond the manifest content of Weber's concept of charisma and identify its dialectical ambiguity when he argues that

> "Weber did not hesitate to carry the plebiscitary leadership concept to its extreme conclusions. He did not stop at the thesis that the masses were 'politically passive' and that politicians set goals and then created support for their realization through the employment of demagogic methods. He was prepared to reduce the participation of the masses in the political process to a minimum -to the acclamation of the leader thanks only to their confidence in his formal leadership qualities. The people followed the leader because of his charismatic qualities and only secondarily because he pursued certain objective goals that corresponded to their wishes or, to be more precise, of whose desirability he had convinced them. Max Weber did not consider 'plebiscitary leader democracy' to belong to the legitimacy type of 'legal rule' but viewed it as an anti-authoritarian reinterpretation of 'charismatic rule!'"[82]

Mommsen's formulation seems to underestimate the nominalism of Weber's definition of charisma that Gerth and Mills[83], by contrast, acknowledge. As Weber points out the leader's charisma depends on his ability to prove this charisma by ensuring the

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[81] Cited in Gerth and Mills' "Introduction" to FMW, p. 42.
[82] Mommsen (1984), Max Weber and German Politics, University of Chicago Press, pp. 400-1.
[83] Introduction to FMW, p. 72.

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well-being of his followers. In this sense, the leader's charismatic qualities are not so much the means through while the leader manipulates his followers and ensures their acclamation but rather the result of his sufficient services to them. People do not, therefore, follow the leader because he has charismatic powers. The leader is said to have charismatic powers as long as he can 'prove' himself and ensure a following. As was pointed out above, the materialist analysis of the 'other side' of charisma gives us a very different picture since it gives expression not so much to the capacity of the leaders to manipulate their followers but, on the contrary, the expectation of the latter that the former serve their interests. All in all, if the concept of charisma can be seen not simply as the product of a reification engendered by the 'iron cage' but also as a subversive force pointing beyond this iron cage, this is not because of its irrationality. The materialist analysis of Weber's concept of charisma reveals it to be not an irrational counterweight to the bureaucratic rationalization of the 'iron cage' but rather as the paradoxical testimony to both the irrationality of the 'iron cage' and the need to pursue rationalization until a rational society is achieved. Not the least contribution of the concept of charisma is that it gives an oblique expression to the human search for an enriched life based on a non-alienated activity that is valued as an end-in-itself.

Approaching Weber from a psychoanalytical angle, Mitzman recognizes the hedonistic undercurrent in Weber's concept of charisma when he tells us that Weber's "extended celebration of charisma as an 'emotional life-force' antagonistic to the dreary construction of the 'iron cage' coincided with his coming to terms with his own emotional life-force', his erotic faculties." [84] Aware of the liberating side of charisma, Mitzman stumbles, however, because in his attempt to develop this side by implying a contrast between charisma and "that ethic of transcendence, self-renunciation, and mastery which had for a century served Europe as the moral backbone of bourgeois society and which

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[84] Mitzman, Arthur (1970). The Iron Cage: An Historical Interpretation of Max Weber. New York: Alfred A. Knopf.
p. 304.

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had earlier been the core of his personality and work."[85] he makes the same mistake as Weber. Equating the 'ethic of transcendence ... and mastery' with the ethic of self-renunciation, he naturalizes alienation by forgetting that it is the infinite development of the ethic of transcendence in the realm of freedom of a non-alienated society that still provides the best reason for the abolition of capitalism's artificial imposition and reproduction of human self-renunciation. By constructing the iron cage-charisma opposition along the lines of the Reason vs Eros and emotions dichotomy, Mitzman fails to realize that the liberating side of charisma consists in the dialectical complementarity of these two supposedly opposed poles that non-alienated activity in the 'realm of freedom' would make possible. In other words, it is the prospect of a harmonious cooperation between reason and sensuality that encapsulates the liberating undercurrent in Weber's concept of charisma.

8. Weber's 'Refutation' of Socialism

Having discussed the way in which the contradictory logic of capitalist society stifles the critical moment in Weber's thought, it is interesting to point out that Weber's naturalization of the 'iron cage' of capitalist modernity also leads him to the dismissal of a socialist alternative to this 'iron cage'. In a revealing section of Economy and Society Weber starts out by pointing that "[a]n economic activity in a market economy is undertaken and carried though by individuals acting to provide for their own ideal or material interests" and that "[i]n an economic system organized on a socialist basis, there

[85] Ibid. 296.

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would be no fundamental difference in this respect."[86] Based on this, Weber tries to demonstrate the difficulties that socialist planning would face since

> "in socialism, too, the individual will ... ask first whether to him, personally, the rations alloted and the work assigned, as compared with other possibilities, appear to conform with his own interests. This is the criterion by which he would orient his behavior, and violent power struggles would be the normal result: struggles over the alteration or maintenance of rations once allotted ... in short, appropriation processes of all kinds and interest struggles would also then be the normal phenomena of life ... The structure of interests and the relevant situation would be different, and there would be other means of pursuing interests, but this fundamental factor would remain just as relevant as before."[87]

It is Weber's naturalization of scarcity that turns the self-interested character of individual action into the 'decisive point' or the 'fundamental factor' undermining the feasibility and desirability of the socialist ideal. Had Weber recognized that in the context of an egalitarian socialist society capitalism's technological achievements could become the basis for the conquest of material scarcity, he would have realized that in such a different material context it might be precisely the self-interested character of individual action that would ensure that the struggles of appropriation would not play as prominent a role or take as fierce a form as they do under a society that perpetuates scarcity artificially. Indeed, in such a society it would be people's interest in focusing their energies and thought to non-alienated activity in the 'realm of freedom' that would prevent them from wasting their life trying to gain small advantages through petty politicking. Even if a socialist society were to be based on democratic planning rather than an economic democracy making use of the market, the mere conquest of scarcity would imply that people would have a self-interest in organizing the realm of necessity in as egalitarian a way as possible so as to avoid the disruption of their daily life and their activity in the realm of freedom by the potentially violent conflicts that an inegalitarian organization of the 'realm of necessity' would necessarily entail. The kind of economic war which characterizes capitalist society and which is very tellingly captured by the

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[86] ES, 202.
[87] ES, 203.

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metaphor of a 'rat race' would probably seem to the citizens of a non-alienated society as horrifying, meaningless and idiotic as real, military wars appear to most thinking citizens today. But then Weber might not be able to relate to such an argument since his naturalization of scarcity led him as far as to naturalize and glorify even literal military wars. In any case, the conquest of scarcity would entail such a drastic change of the underlying material context that our assumptions about everything would have to be reconsidered. Thus if Weber is right to point out that with socialism "[t]he structure of interests and the relevant situation would be different", he fails to realize that to the extent that this altered 'relevant situation' refers to the conquest of material scarcity, the persistence of the 'fundamental factor' of self-interested individual action takes a new, diametrically opposite significance by being transformed from the guarantor of social war to that of social peace.

In a socialist society making use of the market Weber's criticism would be even less convincing. Such a society could be seen as the practical implementation of the results that the immanent critique of Liberalism's appeal to the 'invisible hand' of the market would produce. We saw that Weber's candid assessment of capitalist reality led him to throw the baby of Liberalism's Enlightenment ideals along with the bathwater of its failure to admit that the fulfillment of these ideals was impossible under capitalism. Recognizing that the 'invisible hand' did not serve the general interest but perpetuated the capitalist's advantage over workers, Weber did not draw the conclusion that a social change was necessary that would turn into reality the vision of a social order that serves the general interest in a rich human life. Recognizing capitalism's frustration of Enlightenment ideals, Weber did not condemn capitalism but these ideals. Unable to emancipate himself from the reifying impact of capitalist reality, Weber could not recognize that a socialist society making use of the market would not try to eliminate the self-interested character of the individuals' economic action but would try to provide the

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structural context which would make the pursuit of individual interest compatible to the general interest in the enrichment of human life.

The structural context in question would involve the abolition of what makes capitalism an exploitative class society, namely the monopolization of the means of production by a small group of people. Creating the preconditions for a meritocratic society providing every individual with equal opportunities, a socialist society making use of the market would provide the egalitarian framework which -satisfying people's material needs with a minimum of exertion in the realm of necessity- could allow them to devote most of their life to non-alienated activity in the 'realm of freedom'. Moreover, the introduction of democratic institutions within the enterprise would allow people to have greater control over their daily lives while also discouraging the kind of submissive, passive contentment with one's reduction to a cog of a bureaucratic apparatus that Weber rightly despised. In this way, not only would Weber's fears concerning socialism's acceleration of humanity's rush toward the 'iron cage' be allayed but also people would be more likely to acquire the kind of technical and political skills they would need to hold the political system proper accountable. Thus the intellectual proletarianization of massified citizens contented with the passive acclamation of charismatic leaders would be combatted as a side-effect of the capitalist 'iron cage' rather than promoted as a form of resistance to it. Thus although Weber's dark warnings about the potential dangers of socialism may retrospectively sound prophetic given the Soviet experience, in reality what they point to is that a resistance to the iron cage is impossible without a deepening of democracy that allows the creation of autonomous and critical citizens.

Such a project may be compatible with the submerged, utopian aspect of Weber's thought but certainly goes against its main thrust. If Weber is right to deride the petty bureaucrat's obsession with security, he forgets that it is capitalism's artificial perpetuation of scarcity that keeps material security so high in the list of priorities of most subjects of the ever more obsolete capitalist system. Weber's thinking is immune to such

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realizations because the reifying impact of capitalist reality on the structure of his thought makes him mistake human self-instrumentalization for autonomy. Concluding the comments on socialism that I mentioned above, Weber tells us that "[I]t is of course true that economic action which is oriented on purely ideological grounds to the interests of others does exist. But it is even more certain that the mass of men do not act in this way, and it is an induction from experience that they cannot do so and never will."[88] Incapable of realizing that his conception of self-renunciation for the sake of an idea is a symptom of the very alienation that socialism is fighting against, Weber manages to turn people's refusal to accept such self-instrumentalization from a sign of hope to an argument against the viability of an emancipated, non-alienated society. In his acknowledgment of such a refusal -on the part of people- Weber unwittingly lets the critical element of his thought shine through. But the reifying impact of capitalist reality on the structure of his thought stifles this incipient insight and prevents Weber from acknowledging its true significance.

9. Weber's Secular Re-enchantment of a Disenchanted World

Hennis has pointed out that Weber's central interest was "[n]othing less than the requisite comprehension of the genesis of modern man"[89] while Loewith (1982) argues that Weber's work parallels that of Marx in that "[b]oth provide a critical account of modern man within bourgeois society in terms of the bourgeois-capitalist economy" (48-9). What I would like to add to this is that the superiority of Marx's evaluation of capitalist modernity's implications for human self-development over that of Weber stems from the fact that the same reifying impact of capitalist alienation on Weber's dismissal of socialism can also be discerned in his concept of personality. We have already pointed out that Weber's thought involves a secularization of reification which can be traced to the shift -recognized by Weber himself- from human powerlessness vis-a-vis nature to

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[88] Ibid. 203.
[89] Hennis (1988), pp. 43-4.

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human powerlessness vis-a-vis a social system escaping people's control. In addition to this 'secularization effect', however, Weber's reification also involves an impersonality that parallels the impersonal character that social domination assumes under capitalism. Once again it is Weber himself who points to the social conditions underlying his reification when he tells us that

> "[t]he typical antipathy of Catholic ethics, and following that the Lutheran, to every capitalistic tendency, rests essentially on the repugnance of the impersonality of relations which places certain human affairs outside the church and its influence, and prevents the latter from penetrating them and transforming them along ethical lines. The relations between master and slave could be subjected to immediate ethical regulations but the relations between the mortgage creditor and the property which was pledged for the debt, or between an endorser and the bill of exchange, would at least be exceedingly difficult if not impossible to moralize."[90]

In Weber's concept of personality, capitalism's impersonal form of domination takes the form of "[m]any old gods [who] ascend from their graves; they are disenchanted and hence take the form of impersonal forces."[91] As Marianne Weber makes clear, the 'intellectual and moral autonomy' of what Weber would consider a true personality does not imply human emancipation from the hold of such 'impersonal forces'.[92] Rather, it involves a self-instrumentalization, which is up-to-date with a capitalist social order that abolishes domination in its personal form only to reinstate it in another. Weber, his wife tells us, "denied the necessity of new forms of personal dominion and personal service for him and his kind. He acknowledged service and absolute devotion to a cause, an ideal, but not to an earthly, finite human being and its limited aims, no matter how outstanding and venerable that person might be."[93] For Weber, Marianne Weber tells us, a personality is characterized by an "unqualified dedication to a 'cause', no matter what this cause and the demands of the day' proceeding from it may be like." In Weber's own words, to meet these famed 'demands of the day' "is plain and simple, if each finds and obeys the demon

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[90] GEH, p. 262.
[91] 'Science as a Vocation', FMW, p.149.
[92] Marianne Weber (1975), 318.
[93] Ibid. 457.

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who holds the fibers of his very life."[94] The charismatic individual, the true personality ironically turns out to be the individual who can repress the healthy aversion to self-instrumentalization that Weber attributed -in a passage quoted above- to 'the mass of men.' Thus the autonomous individual who is a true personality is the one who continues to obey and takes pride in her choice of her masters even after both masters and the individual's obedience to them have become obsolete. Being a product of social system in which the individual's orientation to the 'demands of the day' leads to the perpetual reproduction of its impersonal domination, Weber cannot help confining the individual into eternal subjection to eternal gods incessantly struggling with each other.

Weber recognizes the compulsive dynamism stemming from the impersonal character of capitalist domination and knows that it is capitalism's impersonal, systemic logic that gives rise -even after the impact of Protestant religion fades out- to the kind of dynamism that the rationalization of conduct by Protestantism had also brought about. He fails, however, to consider the full implications of this analogy. If the Protestant ethic managed -through the accumulation of wealth that it engendered- to produce an unprecedented change in human life, why couldn't the dynamism of capitalist society make possible an equally radical change?

Marx, the theorist of modernity, picks the thread of Weber's argument where the latter -under the reifying impact of capitalist alienation- is forced to leave it. Indeed, being more aware of the contradictory character of capitalist reality, Marx the theorist of modernity is able to avoid Weber's vacillation between the demand for a repression of human nature and the imperative to develop it. Marx realizes that modern capitalism's instrumentalization of human beings, which is based on what Weber himself calls a "reversal of what we should call the natural relationship" "between wealth and human beings"[95] should not be seen as a simple and definitive negation of a traditionalist outlook

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[94] "Science as a Vocation", FMW, 156.
[95] PE, 53.

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that saw economic acquisition as only "the means for the satisfaction of his [man's] material needs."[96] Marx's recognition of the unprecedented dynamism that capitalism's instrumentalization of human beings generates does not lead him to the mistaken conclusion that human self-development is only possible through people's self-instrumentalization and repression of their nature and needs. In this sense, the vision of Marx the theorist of modernity points in the direction of a non-metaphysical utopian radicalism.

Such a radicalism is, on the one hand, the product of Weber's rationalization process since it consciously refuses to present itself as a philosophy of history that seeks to identify a meaning that supposedly underlies human history while, on the other, taking this rationalization process to its logical conclusion. This radicalism represents, therefore, an advance over both Marx the philosopher of history who would be inclined to see capitalist modernity as a necessary stage in the inherently dialectical and teleological historical movement and Weber who fails to realize that -its possibly contingent emergence notwithstanding- capitalism does make possible the radical, utopian visions of human emancipation current among Enlightenment or Enlightenment-inspired philosophers of history such as Marx. If the conception of a progressive dialectic moving from thesis to its antithesis and then to a higher synthesis was perhaps a mystified expression of the fact that capitalism did provide the material preconditions for the restoration -on a higher level- of a state where economic acquisition and material production are only "the means for the satisfaction of his [man's] material needs", this does not change the fact that the possibly contingent constellation of historical and social factors that allowed the emergence of capitalism did not only produce the negation of the natural relationship between wealth and human need but also the specter of the negation of this negation. It is this historical and material context which allows this radical vision to further develop and complete the move- noted by Charles Turner- "from a continuous

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[96] Ibid. 53.

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to a discontinuous relationship between culture and nature" as well as "the transformation of 'culture' from its pre-modern sense, as the cultivation of nature in Cicero's cultura animi, in which the idea of culture is inseparable from agri-culture, in which the cultivation of the soul is analogous to the cultivation of the soil, to everything which is added by human beings to nature by virtue of their own efforts, or as everything which contributes to the denial, repression or overcoming of a status naturalis, or barbarism"[97]. The radical vision that we have extracted from Marx the theorist of modernity implies that capitalism provides the material context that makes possible the transcendence of this dilemma through the immanent critique of what Turner refers to as the pre-modern concept of culture. It will be remembered that according to Marx, Antiquity may have considered "the human being as the aim of production" but did so "regardless of his limited national, religious, political character."[98] Thus if the fact that ancient societies did not effect a blatant instrumentalization of the individual allowed them to conceive culture in terms of a cultivation rather than repression of nature, this does not mean that this cultivation was either infinite or autonomous. The limited character that Marx ascribes to it points to the fact that this was not a cultivation pursued for its own sake but rather as a means to the creation of the 'citizens' or the kind of social subjects that the given 'national, religious, political' context required. As Marx points out, the dynamism of capitalist modernity creates the possibility of transforming capitalism's instrumentalization human beings and the repression of nature implied by what Weber called the reversal of the natural relationship between economic acquisition and production, on the one hand, and human needs, on the other, into the material basis for the infinite and autonomous cultivation of human nature in the 'realm of freedom' of an egalitarian, non-capitalist society having conquered material scarcity.

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[97] Turner (1992), 33-4.
[98] Grundrisse, 487-8.

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One possible explanation of Weber's failure to pursue the implication of his rationalization analysis in this direction points to the influence of German idealist philosophy and especially Kant's categorical imperative on his thinking. Marianne Weber, in fact, emphasizes the centrality of such an influence on both Weber's and her own general outlook when she tells us that

> "to thinking people the realization of the 'moral law' in their own actions and in the world appears particularly important- the orientation of life not to formal commandments but to the idea of a moral world-order, to 'tasks'. Above all others, the ethical ideal has an absolute dignity, and the ethical ideal is a norm one should obey, even at the expense of one's own happiness. Man's dignity demands the shaping of existence by a moral obligation [Soll] as well as a readiness to make sacrifices for it .
> "The Webers were aware of such views as a self-evident part of a conscious existence only in their homeland, which had been shaped by the categorical imperative. By comparison with the northern world, the sun-drenched, joyful life of the south seemed like a children's paradise to them. But they could not imagine a mature life that did not involve exertion in the service of new tasks, and the overcoming of obstacles."[99]

Such a point of view is plausible to the extent that Weber indeed seems to have shared Kant's idealist contrast between happiness and moral freedom. Thus, for example, Weber explicitly rejects the naturalistic and eudaemonistic ethics of Utilitarian philosophers and aligns himself with Kant by arguing that to live up to what is highest in them, people may actually have to renounce any natural tendency towards the pursuit of happiness. Renunciation takes the form of an orientation to the future and an altruism, which does not however seek to promote the well-being of future generations. As Weber tells us

> "certainly, only on the basis of altruism is any work in political economy possible. Overwhelmingly, what is produced by the economic social and political endeavors of the present benefits future generations rather than the present one. If our work is to have any meaning, it lies, and can only lie, in providing for the future, for out dependants.
> "The question which stirs us as we think beyond the grave of our generation is not the well-being human beings will enjoy in the future but what kind of people they will be, and it is this same question which underlies all work in political economy. We do not want to breed well-being in people, but rather those characteristics which we think of as constituting the human greatness and nobility of our nature."[100]

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[99] Marianne Weber (1975), 364.
[100] "The Nation State and Economic Policy" (PW, 15).

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For Weber, therefore, people can only attain 'the human greatness and nobility of [their] nature' by repressing their natural tendency - given expression according to Weber's analysis in The Protestant Ethic in traditional, pre-capitalist societies- to treat effort as a means to their well-being. In this way, Weber in effects adopts Calvinism's instrumentalization of human beings and does so at an age when - as he himself admits- such a religious doctrine has been rendered obsolete by the secularizing dynamic of capitalism.

One is therefore left wondering: how can a thinker who recognizes the obsolescence of the structural presuppositions of religious worldviews such as the Calvinist one reproduce these same presuppositions by merely secularizing the logic underlying Calvinism? Here the limitations of Marianne Weber's explanation become apparent: Weber's concept of disenchantment explicitly precludes the idea of ethical tasks that derive from a 'moral world-order.' According to Weber the disenchantment of the world transforms this world into a causal mechanism thus challenging "the ethical postulate that the world is a God-ordained, and hence somehow meaningfully and ethically oriented, cosmos."[101]

The explanation of the paradox whereby Weber reproduces the structural logic of a worldview that -as he himself admits- has been rendered obsolete by capitalism and the disenchantment process becomes clear once we examine the interrelationship between Calvinism, capitalism and disenchantment. Weber's reproduction in a secular form of a logic, the obsolescence of which he himself had pointed out, is understandable given, on the one hand, the structural similarity between the alienation engendered by capitalism and that exemplified by the Calvinist world-view and, on the other, the visible impact of capitalist alienation on the way Weber conceptualized the 'disenchantment of the world'. As far as the first point is concerned, the complementarity between the Protestant ethic and capitalism does not simply consist in the fact that the latter gives rise to an

[101] 'Religious Rejections of their World and their Directions' (FMW, 351).

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institutionalized dynamism that represents the objective equivalent of the dynamism that the Protestant ethic engenders through the rationalization of subjective human conduct. Underlying both of these effects is the same alienating reduction of human labor into a means serving not the ends and needs of the producer herself but rather those of a master external to her. If capitalism's structurally induced dynamism renders obsolete its religiously inspired subjective counterpart, this does not challenge but merely secularizes the form that the underlying alienated labor assumes. Before the human producer worked not to enrich her own life but to add to God's glory; now she works not for a divine but rather a human master, namely the capitalist. Thus reference to the material context of Weber's thought once again sheds light on this thought's seemingly paradoxical nature. If Weber continues to glorify human renunciation and self-instrumentalization even as he recognizes the intellectual bankruptcy of the Calvinist world-view that served as their original model, this is evidently because a capitalist society that has become mature enough to reproduce human alienation through a purely secular logic is also capable of inspiring a purely secular naturalization of alienation that no longer needs to rely on obsolete religious ideologies.

This naturalization of capitalist alienation is clearly operative in the way Weber formulates his concept of disenchantment. Indeed, when Weber tells us that as a result of this disenchantment we come to see the world as a causal mechanism, the world he is referring to is not simply the natural but also the social world. As we have already seen, Weber's concept of disenchantment implies a reification of the different spheres of social life, each of them having its godhead and operating according to its own impersonal logic. This reification effects a conflation between nature and society that fashions people's relation to the latter after the model of their appropriation of the former. In this sense Eden is right to point out the affinity between Weber's conception of empirical knowledge and Bacon's project.[102] Bendix, by contrast, underestimates the presence of

[102] Eden (1983), 161.

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this conception in Weber's thought when he distances Weber from the Durkheimian tradition of sociology which -being "Baconian or Saint-Simonian in inspiration"- "takes its cues from the natural sciences as nonscientists tend to interpret them: disciplines whose major goal is the discovery of general laws and whose principal utility consists in the power of control which the application of these laws is expected to put at man's disposal."[103]

These two diametrically opposed interpretations of Weber's work point of course to the internal tensions in this work that we have already noted. These tensions also find expression in Weber's concept of disenchantment because if one product of this disenchantment is Weber's concept of 'ideal types' developed in conscious opposition to any sociological search for natural laws of society, another product of Weber's interpretation of disenchantment is paradoxically enough the naturalization of social reality. This naturalization becomes clear when Weber seeks to clarify rationalization and disenchantment through the use of examples derived not only from the natural but also from the social world. Indeed, pointing that rationalization does not imply that people today "have a greater knowledge of the conditions of life under [which they] exist than has an American Indian or a Hottentot", Weber goes on to point out that the rider of a streetcar usually does not know and does not need to know "how the car happened to get into motion" and that similarly a person who makes use of money in her daily life would be equally incapable of giving a satisfactory answer to the question "How does it happen that one can buy something for money -sometimes more and sometimes less?" 'The savage' - Weber tells us- may even have a better understanding of the conditions under which he lives since he actually knows "what he does in order to get his daily food and which institutions serve him in his pursuit."

Once we keep these introductory comments by Weber in mind, his classic definition of rationalization and disenchantment that follows assumes a new meaning.

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[103] 'Two Sociological Traditions'. In Bendix and Roth (1971), 298.

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Clearly based on the model of natural scientific knowledge, Weber's definition gives expression to the reified consciousness generated by a capitalist society that confronts the powerless individual with its own nature-like autonomy. Disenchantment, according to Weber, means that the socio-natural world is governed by forces that the individual "could learn ...at any time" and which she could master through calculation. Rationalization and disenchantment do not therefore mean for Weber the abolition of the individual's subordination to autonomous social forces that have escaped her control. What they mean rather is that these forces are no longer 'mysterious' and 'incalculable'. Thus probing further Weber's clarification of disenchantment by reference to the fact that "[o]ne need no longer have recourse to magical means in order to master or implore the spirits, as did the savage, for whom such mysterious powers existed"[104], we can conclude that Weber's conception of disenchantment and rationalization does not criticize but rather secularizes alienation. Weber's concept of disenchantment points therefore to people's cunning adaptation to existing social reality as the predominant human attitude generated by an alienated society.

If Marx's appropriation -in his discussion of the labor process in Capital- of the Hegelian 'cunning of reason' pointed to Nature as an objective reality irreducible to the human labor that appropriates it and transforms it, Weber's implicit application of the same principle to people's relation to the social world points to the irreducibility of an alienated society having attained what Durkheim would call a 'sui generis reality' to the actions of its human subjects. Moreover, if Weber's inclusion of society to all the things that "one can, in principle, master by calculation" and 'technical means' also amounts to a broadening of Bacon's claim that one has to obey Nature in order to master it, this is because the mastery of society that Weber's concept of disenchantment claims to offer is in reality nothing more than an obedient adaptation to the alienated logic of capitalist society. Weber's concept of disenchantment naturalizes the capitalist alienation that

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[104] 'Science as a Vocation'. In FMW, 139.

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underlies it because in its conflation of nature and society it forgets that it is the inevitable irreducibility of the former to human effort that makes people's successful adaptation to it a form of human mastery over it. By interpreting this successful adaptation not as the material precondition for a non-alienated appropriation of society but rather as the model of people's relation to society, Weber reflects the experience of the individual capitalist who -even in her successful adaptation to the market- ends up reproducing the alienation that makes such adaptation necessary.

The impact of capitalist alienation on Weber's concept of disenchantment can also be discerned in some of the practical, existential implications that follow from the way he formulates this concept. In a passage that links the secular polytheism that -as Weber tells us- the disenchantment of the world brings about with the meaning of human life in modern society, Weber tells us that

> "[I]n almost every important attitude of real human beings, the value-spheres cross and interpenetrate. The shallowness of our routinized daily existence in the most significant sense of the word consists indeed in the fact that the persons who are caught up in it do not become aware of this partly psychologically, partly pragmatically conditioned motley of irreconcilably antagonistic values. They avoid the choice between 'God' and the 'Devil' and their own ultimate decision as to which of the conflicting values will be dominated by the one, and which by the other. The fruit of the tree of knowledge, which is distasteful to the complacent but which is, nonetheless, inescapable, consists in the insight that every single important activity and ultimately life as a whole, if it is not to be permitted to run as an event in nature but is instead to be consciously guided, is a series of ultimate decisions through which the soul -as in Plato- chooses its own fate, ie the meaning of its activity and existence."[105]

In the context of a modern capitalist society that has rendered the religious ascription of the meaning of human life obsolete, Weber tells us that it is up to the individual to prevent her life from "run[ning] as an event in nature" by recognizing the disenchantment of the world as a challenge to choose the "meaning of [her] activity and existence" through a choice of the 'God' she is going to serve. The fact that this passage leaves it up to the individual to choose their 'God' confirms Marianne Weber's view -mentioned

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[105] Weber (1949), 18.

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above- according to which it is the devotion to a 'cause' - irrespective of what this 'cause' might be- that is the essential thing for Weber. As Brubaker also argues "Weber affirms this form as a central moral ideal: every person, in his view, should orient his life to some central value. But while the form of the truly human life is fixed, the content varies widely. Weber's philosophical anthropology is silent about what the content of the truly human life is, and his moral philosophy is silent about what this content should be."[106] As if to prevent a humanity in the process of emancipating itself from the heteronomy of religious meanings from getting the wrong idea, Weber hastens to fill the newly created gap by threatening individuals with the specter of a meaningless and sub-human existence if they do not promptly exchange the old religious gods and masters with brand new, secular and impersonal ones. If the old religious concept of calling as a God-given task is no longer viable, a new secular version has to be invented. But why? Not because Weber has anything against genuine human freedom but rather because the structure of his thought is the product of a society that subverts alienation in its religious form only to reinstate it in its secular form.

Feeling the paradoxical continuity between these two forms of alienation, Weber admits that "the idea of duty in one's calling prowls about in our lives like the ghost of dead religious beliefs."[107] Weber seems to be momentarily puzzled by the fact that 'the idea of duty in one's calling' seems to have survived the dead religious beliefs that gave birth to it in the first place. His naturalization of alienation, however, prevents him from seeing this idea as a sublimated glorification of alienated labor. Thus Weber fails to denounce this idea as an integral part of an alienated society based on 'economic compulsion' and prefers instead to try to breathe new life into it by relating it 'to the highest spiritual and cultural values'. The result is -as Parsons tells us- a 'professional spirit'[108] investing one's role within the capitalist economy with a transcendent dignity.

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[106] Brubaker (1984), 96.
[107] PE, 182.
[108] Parsons (1949), 515.

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Alienation reaches new heights when the instrumentalized workers -who do not cease being instrumentalized workers just because they are not blue-collar workers working for wages or piece rates but rather fancy themselves as professionals with a calling while feeling elegant in the power-suits they bought with their first salary- are not even allowed to feel "destroyed in this alienation, seeing in it [their] own impotence and the reality of an inhuman existence"[109] but are instead expected to direct their 'disinterested ethical devotion' to their 'impersonal task.'

The degree to which Weber's elevation of the 'calling' or 'vocation' into the kind of transcendent principle that can provide an individual a meaningful and, thus, truly human existence is little more than a sublimated glorification of alienated labor is strikingly clear in 'Science as a Vocation.' Some of the most central elements of alienated labor are present in Weber's description of 'the inward calling for science' (SV, 134). These elements are, however, reinterpreted and attributed an existential significance that turns self-renunciation into the sign par excellence of human nobility and greatness. The fate of one's soul -a formulation that as we saw earlier refers to the ability of an individual to consciously lead her life in a meaningful manner- depends on her ability to renounce herself. As Weber himself tells us

> "[o]nly by strict specialization can the scientific worker become fully conscious, for one and perhaps never again in his lifetime, that he has achieved something that will endure. A really definitive and good accomplishment is today always a specialized accomplishment. And whoever lacks the capacity to put on blinders, so to speak, and to come up to the idea that the fate of his soul depends upon whether or not he makes the correct conjuncture at this passage of this manuscript may as well stay away from science" (SV, 135).

In his explanation of why it is self-renunciation that decides the fate of one's soul and the meaningfulness of one's existence, the parallel between Weber's worldview and alienated labor becomes clear. If one has to constrain oneself and 'put on blinders', this is because her activity is meaningful not through its contribution to the enrichment of her life but

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[109] MER, 133.

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rather through its contribution to scientific production. Instead of criticizing the alienating reversal whereby human life derives its meaning from its contribution to production rather than production deriving its meaning from its contribution to human life. Weber embraces it and turns it into an ethical imperative. A true child of a capitalist society characterized by a production for production's sake that reduces workers into means for the production of commodities and consumers into means for the realization and further accumulation of capital through a further expansion of production. Weber understandably comes up with the conclusion that the meaning of human life is to produce.

This last analogy between Weber's elevation of production into the meaning of human life and the subordination of both workers and consumers assumes an additional dimension, however, when we realize that Weber's argument not only naturalizes the sober anti-hedonistic asceticism characteristic of the young 19th century capitalism but also prefigures the colonization and instrumentalization rather than repression of human sensuality by 20th century consumerist capitalism. Indeed, while Weber scolds the youth of his day "trying to 'experience' life" (SV, 137) for really pursuing what has always horrified any good old idealist, namely 'sensation', Weber also tells us that the personality with a 'calling' which internalizes and willingly -rather than by force of economic compulsion- reproduces capitalist productivism does so in a state of 'strange intoxication' or "frenzy (in the sense of Plato's 'mania') and 'inspiration'." (SV, 135 and 136). It will be remembered that Weber himself recognized the intrinsic 'emotional value' of these originally quasi-orgiastic charismatic states as the materialist motivation behind them. In this sense, Weber's search for a meaningful human life in the personality serving a calling is not purely ascetic but already prefigures the shift from a young capitalist society whose Puritanical repression of human sensuality could still count on the support of religious meanings to a consumerist capitalism which can create enough meaning to keep motivating its subjects not through a repression of human sensuality but

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rather through its instrumentalization by capitalist productivism. Capitalism's artificial reproduction of scarcity here takes the form of the artificial reproduction of a social division of labor that confines some people to a 'realm of necessity' in which alienated labor in its classic Marxist form reproduces capitalist productivism under the pressure of economic compulsion and the 'personalities with a calling' who can sublimate their desire for a non-alienated activity in the context of an emancipated society's 'realm of freedom' in a way that reinforces rather than challenges capitalism's irrational productivism.

Thus, Weber explicitly and emphatically exorcizes the heretical thought that capitalism's creation of the preconditions for the conquest of scarcity implies the imperative to undertake an immanent critique of his concepts of rationalization and charismatic states. Capitalism's systematic frustration of the possibilities it constantly brings forth prevents Weber from admitting that the immanent critique of his concept of charismatic states implies the possibility of a non-alienated human life that would derive its meaning from its newfound status as an aesthetic project always in process and always valued as an end-in-itself. In a passage that shows his awareness concerning what it was that his naturalization of alienation was fighting against, Weber tells us that

> "[i]n the field of science only he who is devoted solely to the work at hand has 'personality'. And this holds not only for the field of science; we know of no great artist who has ever done anything but serve his work and only his work. As far as his art is concerned, even with a personality of Goethe's rank, it has been detrimental to take the liberty of trying to make his 'life' into a work of art. And even if one doubts this, one has to be a Goethe in order to dare permit oneself such a liberty." (SV, 137)

Trying to intimidate the young people radicalized by the butchery of a war that Weber was raving about only a few years earlier by reminding them their nothingness compared to the great German poet, Weber bluntly informs his audience that it would be too presumptuous for them, common mortals, to aspire to the 'realm of freedom'. But this is not all. After all, Weber's contrast between Goethe and his own audience is also a parallel. By accusing Goethe and the youth of his own day for harboring the same

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illusions. Weber chooses at a time that capitalism's violation of its false humanist promises had become blatantly obvious to reassert the 'dignity' of capitalist alienation as against the naive humanism of Goethe and his young followers. By reinterpreting art along the lines of alienated labor, Weber manages to enlist even an activity that quintessentially prefigures non-alienated production in an emancipated society's 'realm of freedom' in both his heroic defense of human self-renunciation and his equally fierce crusade against any conception of personality tainted by the terrible stain of sensuality. It is not art that is supposed to serve the enrichment of human life but rather the living artist who is supposed to 'serve his work and only his work.'

The validity of Weber's aesthetic judgement notwithstanding, the logic of his argument is indeed revealing. Since human life derives its meaning from production rather than vice versa, Weber feels compelled to denounce in advance any temptation to enrich human life by turning it into an aesthetic experience. If turning human life into a work of art enriches human life but negatively affects artistic production, so much the worse for human life. If Weber's reified consciousness reflects the individual's feeling of powerlessness vis-a-vis an autonomized social reality having escaped her control, Weber's personality emancipates herself from this feeling, only she does so not by abolishing the social reification underlying it but rather by transmogrifying this powerlessness into an ethical devotion to a god no less mysterious for its impersonal character. Unwittingly naturalizing capitalist alienation, Weber proves incapable of seeing that in a disenchanted world the transubstantiation of human powerlessness into human greatness and nobility is no longer 'worthy of man as man.' (SV, 135)

10. The Affinity of Marx, the Theorist of Modernity to Weber's Project

Our discussion of Marx and Weber has tried to shift the frame of reference that has structured the Marx-Weber debate for so long. Although there are important differences between Marx and Weber, the traditional discussion revolving around the materialism-

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idealism dichotomy for Marxists and the economistic reductionism-pluralistic nonreductionism for Weberians tended to obscure the strong parallels that also exist between Marx's and Weber's thought. The exploration of these parallels has led us to the conclusion that equally important to the differences between Marx and Weber are the internal tensions within the thought of both theorists. Once we realize this, the significance of the Marx-Weber debate changes. The task confronting us is no longer the polemical one of choosing sides and attacking one theorist in the name of the other. Instead, we are forced to recognize that if it is true that both theorists have made an indubitable contribution to our better understanding of capitalist modernity, it is also true that their insights were often embedded in a framework of metaphysical assumptions and untenable trans-historical generalizations. Our analysis has tried to show that it is possible to distinguish what is valid from what is problematic in both of these thinkers' analysis. Moreover, it has allowed us not only to criticize the problematic aspects of both Marx's and Weber's thought but also to understand them as historically situated products of capitalist modernity. In the process we have come to realize that the striking complementarity between Marx's and Weber's thought goes beyond the complementarity of their valid insights. If the diametric opposition in the two thinkers' outlook on modernity and its prospects was based on the diametric opposition of their respective metaphysical assumptions or trans-historical claims, this can be seen to illustrate the contrdictory nature of capitalist modernity itself. We have pointed out that the confident optimism of Marx's philosophy of history was based on the appropriation of a Hegelian dialectic that arguably reflects the dynamism of a capitalist society, which -in its negation of production for use- promised human emancipation through the creation of the material preconditions for a negation of the negation that would restore production for use on a higher and more dynamic level. At the same time, we have analyzed Weber's response to the 'iron cage' with its appeal to personalities who choose the gods they are going to serve as a product of the reification generated by the very same 'iron cage' of capitalist

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modernity that Weber hoped to criticize. Both products of a dynamic society that perpetually and artificially reproduces the very alienation that it makes ever more obsolete. Marx's optimism and Weber's pessimism are complementary in their opposition because the former focuses on the utopian possibilities that capitalism necessarily engenders while the latter gives expression to capitalism's compulsive frustration of these possibilities.

The tensions in Weber's thought become clear in the ambiguity of his concept of disenchantment. To the extent that this concept involves the view of the world as 'a causal mechanism' rather than as a 'somehow meaningfully and ethically oriented cosmos', it can allow us to avoid the pitfalls of philosophies of history such as that of Marx. To the extent, however, that Weber's concept of disenchantment is stamped by capitalist reification, it ends up with equally problematic trans-historical claims that naturalize the social world and its alienation. The parallel between a Nature that forces human beings to adapt to its causal mechanism if they are to survive and the causal mechanism of a capitalist economy which also ensures that "[w]hoever does not adapt his manner of life to the conditions of capitalistic success must go under, or at least cannot rise" prevents Weber from appreciating the full implications of a crucial difference between the natural and the social world. The difference is that Nature is irreducible to human activity and labor while society is a human product. This means that if in the case of Nature, the human mastery that Weber's concept of disenchantment points to has to take the form of adaptation, this is not the case with people's mastery of the social world. Indeed, while the irreducibility of Nature to human effort implies that in mastering nature people have to take the laws according to which nature operates for granted, people's mastery of their social world implies not a teleological adaptation to some unchangeable natural laws of society but rather the teleological formation of society itself in accordance with the human need for a reduction of human suffering and an enrichment of human life.

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Once, however, Weber's conflation of nature and society is criticized, it becomes necessary to add to Weber's narrowly technologistic conception of disenchantment a further, social dimension. This social dimension stems from the recognition that if people's mastery of the natural world can be achieved on the basis of calculation and technical means, people's mastery of their social world presupposes radical social change and the attainment of a non-alienated society. Thus, our analysis of the social roots of the framework structuring Weber's thought has allowed us to go beyond the uncritical characterization –on the part of Weber's commentators- of his presentation of disenchantment as part of 'the darker face of modernity.' Locating disenchantment in the context of a dynamic social order that created the preconditions for people's mastery over their natural and social world, we are able to recognize the anthropocentric and thus emancipatory significance of this concept. At the same time, we are able to account for the fact that Weber did not recognize the anthropocentric content of this concept since we have pointed out that the same society which made an anthropocentric vision of the world possible is also the society which perpetually refutes this vision practically. Thus, our analysis no longer sees this disenchantment as the frustration of a metaphysical need of the human mind and its demand that "life and the world have a coherent overall meaning" but rather as the demand to complete the rationalization process by satisfying the more fundamental human desire that this metaphysical need merely sublimates. This is the desire for the drastic reduction of human suffering and the enrichment of human life. The possibility of formulating the concept of disenchantment in a non-reified manner is also the possibility of satisfying this desire.

The non-reifying reformulation of Weber's concept of disenchantment allows us to accept Weber's methodological strictures against Marx, the philosopher of history, without fearing that in so doing we are also in effect betraying the radical emancipatory vision of Marx, the theorist of modernity. The ideal of a non-alienated, socialist society is reaffirmed without being, however, elevated into the necessary telos of human history.

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Instead, socialism comes to represent an emancipated human society that might have never become possible if a certain constellation of historical and social factors had not given rise to the unprecedentedly and even compulsively dynamic capitalist society. Indeed, we have argued that to the extent that Marx is a theorist of modernity rather than as a philosopher of history, he doesn't tend to emphasize the continuity of the historical process by seeing capitalism as simply one necessary stage within this process but tends to emphasize the discontinuity between capitalist and pre-capitalist societies with a special emphasis on the dynamism and unprecedented possibilities that capitalism brings with it. In this sense, the analysis of Marx, the theorist of modernity is not necessarily incompatible to the most valuable insight that Weber, the theorist of rationalization and the Protestant ethic has to offer.

We have more than once mentioned Weber' recognition of the materialist impulse underlying religion and the rationalization process and pointed out that it is this materialist impulse that allows us to see the Marxist emancipatory vision as an immanent critique of Weber's concept of rationalization that takes this concept to its logical conclusions. It is worth mentioning here a couple of additional examples illustrating the complementarity between Marx, the theorist of modernity, and Weber, the historical analyst of the rationalization process. There are moments in Marx's work that clearly prefigure some of Weber's major theses. Compare, for example, Weber's search for the constellation of historical factors that led to the emergence of capitalism with the criticism that Marx himself leveled against what he considered an attempt to turn historical materialism into a philosophy of history. Clearly prefiguring the Weberian project of comparative historical sociology, Marx cautions us that it is impossible to explain why capitalism developed when and where it did without taking into account the concrete historical context of otherwise analogous historical cases. In Marx's own words:

> "And so one fine morning there were to be found [in Rome] on the one hand free men, stripped of anything except their labor power, and on the other, in order to exploit this labor, those who held all the acquired wealth in their possession. What happened? The Roman proletarians became not

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> wage laborers, but a mob of do-nothings more abject than the former 'poor whites' in the South of the United States, and alongside of them there developed a mode of production which was not capitalist but based on slavery. Thus events strikingly analogous but taking place in different historical surroundings led to totally different results. By studying each of these forms of evolution separately and then comparing them one can easily find the clue to this phenomenon, but one will never arrive there by using as one's master key a general historico-philosophical theory, the supreme virtue of which consists in being super-historical."[110]

The compatibility between Marx, the theorist of modernity, and Weber, the theorist of rationalization and the Protestant Ethic, is also confirmed by the preconditions for the emergence of capitalism that Marx identifies in the Grundrisse. In the conditions that "have to have arisen, or been given historically, for money to become capital and labor to become capital-positing, capital-creating labor, wage labor", Marx does not only include the standard conditions that we normally associate to Marxist theorizing. These conditions are of course present and include the existence of a proletariat "separated from the conditions of living labor as well as from the means of existence", an original accumulation on the potential capitalist's side "of use values sufficiently large to furnish the objective conditions not only for the production of the products or values required to reproduce or maintain living labor capacity, but also for the absorption of surplus labor" and the existence of a "free exchange relation" which mediates production through the use of money (Grundrisse, 463). What is, however, especially interesting for our purposes is that to these three standard conditions, Marx adds a fourth one that clearly prefigures Weber's later discussion of the striking contrast between the spirit of capitalism and traditionalism. Indeed, according to Marx, one of the preconditions for the emergence of capitalism is that "one side -the side representing the objective conditions of labor in the form of independent values for-themselves- must present itself as value, and must regard the positing of value, self-realization, money-making as the ultimate purpose- not

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[110] Cited in Avineri, Shlomo (1968) The Social and Political Thought of Karl Marx, Cambridge University Press.
p. 152.

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direct consumption or the creation of use value" (Grundrisse, 464). By including the presence of a capitalist spirit in the preconditions for the emergence of capitalism, Marx in effect prefigures Weber's argument that although once established capitalism can produce the economic spirit or ethic it requires, the emergence of this spirit cannot be attributed to the capitalist economy itself since this economy might never have become possible without the prior emergence of this capitalist spirit.

Even in Capital Marx prefigures Weber's distinction of the spirit of rational modern capitalism oriented to the rational and systematic pursuit of profit as an end-in-itself from a traditionalist treatment of profit as a means to consumption or even from a compulsive "impulse to acquisition, pursuit of gain, of money, of the greatest possible amount of money", which "has been common to all sorts and conditions of men at all times and in all countries of the earth" (PE, 17). Indeed, Marx emphasizes the rational, systematic and continuous pursuit of wealth as an end-in-itself that distinguishes the capitalist from the common miser when -in the context of his discussion of M-C-M as the 'general formula for capital'- he tells us about the possessor of the money going through the M-C-M' cycle that

> "[t]he objective content of the circulation we have been discussing- the valorization of value- is his subjective purpose, and it is only in so far as the appropriation of ever more wealth in the abstract is the sole driving force behind his operations that he functions as a capitalist, ie as capital personified and endowed with consciousness and a will. Use- values must therefore never be treated as the immediate aim of the capitalist; nor must the profit of any single transaction. His aim is rather the unceasing movement of profit-making. This boundless drive for enrichment, this passionate chase after value, is common to the capitalist and the miser; but while the miser is merely a capitalist gone mad, the capitalist is a rational miser" (Capital I, 254).

Once we bring all these elements together, we come up with a very different picture of the relationship between the work of Marx and Weber than the more traditional sociological one that tended- as B.S. Turner points out- to treat The Protestant Ethic as an anti-Marxist tract. Indeed, given the recognition by Marx, the theorist of modernity, of the importance of examining the specific historical constellation that gave rise to

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capitalism when and where it did, of the radical discontinuity that the transition to the unprecedentedly dynamic capitalist society represents, of the contribution of a capitalist spirit to the emergence of capitalism and, finally, of the rational and systematic character of this spirit, it might not be an exaggeration to assert that the contribution of Marx, the theorist of modernity, is not just compatible to the orientation of Weber's research program towards the rationalization process and the Protestant ethic. More than that, Marx seems to have provided a rough outline of some of the more central tasks of this research program as well as an invitation to carry this program out.

The identification by Marx, the theorist of modernity, of the emergence of the dynamic capitalist order as the first great caesura in human history -which is assigned this status precisely because it raises the specter of an even more radical one, that of a non-alienated socialist society- implies more than a critique of the view of history as a dialectical, teleological and continuous in its discontinuity process. It also challenges us to look at capitalist modernity from a different angle. As far as the prospects of capitalism are concerned, this new angle can negatively be defined as precluding the undialectical optimism of any appeal to the inevitable collapse of capitalism under the weight of its internal contradictions. By the same token, the critique of the teleological certainties of Marx's philosophy of history that can be extracted from the work of Marx, the theorist of modernity, loses its purely negative significance once we realize that the negation it represents is a determinate one. Indeed, the positive counterpart to the negation of a teleological philosophy of history that Marx founded upon the metaphysical Hegelian dialectic is a truly dialectical understanding of capitalist society. This dialectical understanding can account for the metaphysical dialectic that it negates by discovering in it the trace of the utopian possibilities necessarily reproduced by a society that just as necessarily has to frustrate them. To the extent that capitalism's utopian possibilities are inseparable from its dialectical, contradictory structure, it is of course true that it is this dialectical, contradictory structure which accounts for even such limited

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plausibility as the dialectical philosophy of history may lay claim to. The attribution, however, of this plausibility to the retrospective projection of capitalist society's unique dynamism to its pre-capitalist past entails nothing less than the emancipation of this past from the shackles of this philosophy of history. Thus, the dialectical, contradictory structure of capitalist society appears as what it is, namely a unique, unprecedented state of affairs. As such, it cannot but feel compelled to search for its origins. Given the obsolescence of dialectical philosophies of history, however, such a search can only be conducted along the lines of Weber's genealogy of capitalist modernity. Thus the understanding of the dialectical and contradictory capitalist society also requires the exploration of the remarkable emergence of a dialectical reality from a pre-dialectical constellation of specific historical conditions and social processes.

We have seen that although the dialectical structure of capitalist modernity finds expression in the latent tension within both Marx's and Weber's thought, it does so in a non-dialectical manner. Indeed, we have often had to literally extract some of the critical aspects of both theorists' thought out of arguments couched in metaphysical or trans-historical terms. If these latter aspects often overshadowed the more critical ones, this can once again be attributed to the historically situated character of both Marx's and Weber's work. If Marx's metaphysically grounded optimism captured the historically progressive function of a youthful and dynamic capitalist society, Weber's one-sided emphasis on the opposite and darker pole of the dialectic gave expression to the historical moment of competitive capitalism's exhaustion as well as the sinister realities of imperialism and war that this exhaustion brought with it. Living at a time in which the triumph of world capitalism has made us equally aware of both capitalism's dynamism and its brutal inhumanity, we are perhaps better positioned to gauge the dialectical structure of a social order that creates the potential for a utopian future precisely through the starkness of its present. It is perhaps this social context that has allowed us to uncover the complementarity of the often repressed critical elements in both Marx's and Weber's

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thought. If the legendary 'anti-Marxist tract' par excellence traditionally attributed to Weber now appears as a research project practically invited by Marx's theorization of capitalist modernity and if Weber turns out to have discerned at the basis of this most idealist aspect of social life, religion, and its process of rationalization, the materialist impulse par excellence, one sees how much more this would be the case for the rationalization processes of more mundane aspects of social life such as law and political and social organization.

Our analysis of Marx and his theorization of capitalist modernity has allowed us to elaborate his vision of 'what can be' while protecting us from the temptation to vicariously enjoy this future possibility through its elevation into a historical necessity. Weber's contribution, on the other hand, did not simply consist in his exploration of the past that has made this future possible. Lucid enough to recognize the social conditions underlying the reifying thrust of his analysis, he gives the best explanation concerning his own inability to recognize the possibility of such a future when -in a "simple proposition, which is often forgotten", but which "should be placed at the beginning of every study which essays to deal with"[111] Weber's intellectual portrait- he tells us that "[t]he capitalistic economy of the present day is an immense cosmos into which the individual is born, and which presents itself to him, at least as an individual, as an unalterable order of things in which he must live" (PE, 54). Given the unquestionable validity of this insight, it is not surprising that Weber -who took pride in being an individualist "'against the tide' of material constellations" (PW, 69)- would end up with a sublimated naturalization of capitalist alienation. However, "nothing is gained by yearning and tarrying alone, and we shall act differently" from Weber. Instead of trying to "meet the 'demands of the day'"[112] on an individual basis, our analysis leaves us no other alternative than to recognize in the

[111] Cf. PE, pp. 77-8, in which Weber issues a warning concerning the study of rationalism.
[112] Cf. Conclusion to "Science as a Vocation" in FMW, p. 156.

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alienating nature of such demands the imperative to challenge them through the collective pursuit of radical social change.

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REIFICATION, RATIONALIZATION AND CAPITALISM'S 'DIALECTIC OF SCARCITY': A RECONCEPTUALIZATION OF THE MARXIST EMANCIPATORY PROJECT

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Volume II

A dissertation submitted to the Graduate Faculty in Sociology in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy, The City University of New York

2001

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CHAPTER 3
THE ANTINOMIES OF GEORG LUKACS: TOWARDS A HISTORICIST REINTERPRETATION OF 'TOTALITY' AND 'REIFICATION'

1. Reification and Lukacs's Synthesis of Marx and Weber

In the course of our critique of Weber's thought we have made implicit use of the insights of a thinker whose work we must now discuss more explicitly. This thinker is Georg Lukacs. Spanning many decades, his work is usually broken down into three distinct periods. During his first period Lukacs can be described as a non-Marxist critic of capitalist civilization. If Arato and Breines (1979, 28-9) can identify in this early work elements prefiguring his later Marxist positions, this is because the sense of despair and decadence that -as Arpad Kadarkay (1991; 40 and 58) seems to recognize- inspired Lukacs' early work were at least partly the result of a bourgeois civilization having reached its limits. Lowy (1979, 97) locates the early Lukacs within the broad intellectual movement of 'romantic anti-capitalism' which flourished in Germany at the end of the 19th and the beginning of the 20th century. Lowy refers to Toennies' Gemeinschaft und Gesellschaft as an exemplification of the romantic anti-capitalist mood. This tradition of thought tended to contrast the market quantification of all values perpetrated by capitalism with the supposedly concrete and qualitative values of pre-capitalist societies (34). By the end of the nineteenth century this contrast had been encapsulated into the opposition between Kultur and Zivilisation. "According to this view of things", Lowy tells us

> "the realm of Kultur was characterized by ethical, aesthetic, and political values, an individual way of living, and an 'internal', and 'natural', 'organic', and typically German spiritual universe; whereas Zivilisation referred to the originally Anglo-French, 'external', 'mechanical', or 'artificial' phenomena of material and technical-economic progress" (30).

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Lowy goes on to justify the term 'romantic anti-capitalism' he uses to describe this tradition of thought by recognizing in "the opposition between traditional 'organicity' and modern 'artificiality'" (34) the influence of romanticism. Lierbersohn (1988), covering the same tradition of thought, places more emphasis on this tradition's reaction against the modern fragmentation that this tradition's representatives saw as a departure from "the unity of ancient Athens and the age of Goethe" and from the "full and beautiful humanity" of such earlier eras (1). Where Lowy's and Liebersohn's accounts also seem to diverge is on the issue of the implications of this tradition's outlook. Lowy provides a one-sided interpretation of this tradition when he emphasizes its tragic character. In Lowy's view, the mark distinguishing Tonnies and the turn-of-the-century German sociologists from the romantic world-view was their realization that "the advent of capitalism was inevitable and that it was impossible to return to the 'organic' past." According to Lowy, therefore, the tragic character of this tradition consisted in its denunciation of a reality which -being inevitable- did not leave room for any alternatives. While this may be a plausible interpretation of Weber's work, it is less convincing in the case of Tonnies who -as Lierbersohn points out- looked forward to socialism as an extension of Gesellschaft that was, however, compatible with the restoration of community (35). Liebersohn captures this ambiguity in the very title of his book which sets tragedy (exemplified by the notion of an inescapable 'fate') side by side with utopia's more voluntaristic confidence in the existence of alternatives for human life.

Interestingly enough, Lukacs himself later on in his life offered an interpretation of Germany's turn-of-the-century intellectual milieu to which he himself had belonged.

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Written from an orthodox Marxist standpoint, Lukacs' The Destruction of Reason offers as undialectical dismissal of the intellectual tradition in question as that of Lowy. In this book he includes both his former teacher Simmel and Weber -to whose intellectual circle he had belonged while living in Heidelberg- in the chain of thinkers who allegedly contributed to the rise of irrationalist philosophies. Seeing the rise of irrationalism as partly a symptom of a capitalism in decline (61) and partly bourgeoisie's weapon in its ideological struggle against the proletariat and historical and dialectical materialism (7). Lukacs (1979) argues that irrationalist ideologies may have also contributed to the process which eventually was to lead to the rise of Hitler (32-3, 416-7). Lukacs goes as far as to describe nineteenth and twentieth century Germany as "the 'classic' land of irrationalism, the soil where it evolved in the most diverse and comprehensive ways and can hence be studied to greatest profit, just as England is where Marx investigated capitalism" (33). Lukacs links the peculiar strength of German irrationalism to Germany's late capitalist development. The function of this irrationalism was, according to Lukacs, to justify and even glorify Germany's backwardness, especially in the political domain, as a sign of Germany's unique and superior spiritual essence (58-9). From the point of view of the later Lukacs, therefore, distinctions such as the Kultur- Zivilisation one were of dubious value since their function was not so much to criticize capitalism but rather to affirm Germany's failure to attain Western bourgeois democracy.

The Destruction of Reason belongs to Lukacs' third period. Our critique of Weber's thought is, by contrast, indebted to the work of Lukacs' second period. This second period started with Lukacs' sudden conversion to Marxism in the immediate aftermath of the Russian revolution and culminated in History and Class Consciousness.

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Faced with the denunciation of this work by the official Communist movement -of which he himself was a member- Lukacs repudiated this work and returned to the more orthodox Marxist position of his third period. This repudiation notwithstanding, History and Class Consciousness retains its centrality for Marxist Critical Theory to this day. It is, therefore, on this work as well as on the other works of Lukacs' second period that this chapter will focus.

History and Class Consciousness and its central essay on 'Reification and the Consciousness of the Proletariat' represent a serious confrontation on the part of Lukacs with the thought not only of Marx but also of Weber. Indeed, the problematic of rationalization is at the heart of this essay as Lukacs makes use of it in his analysis of the contradictory dynamics of capitalist society. Early on, Lukacs discusses the rationalization of the labor process and argues that this rationalization involves "the progressive elimination of the qualitative, human and individual attributes of the worker" as the reduction of work "to the mechanical repetition of a specialized set of actions" follows from the breaking down of the labor process "into abstract, rational, specialized operations" (HCC, 88). Culminating in Taylorism "this rational mechanization extends right into the worker's 'soul': even his psychological attributes are separated from his total personality and placed in opposition to it so as to facilitate their integration into specialized rational systems and their reduction to statistically viable concepts" (HCC, 89). Thus the fragmentation of the object of production is accompanied by that of its subject. Lukacs refers approvingly to Marx's description of this situation as one in which "[q]uality no longer matters. Quantity is everything." And as if all this was not enough,

> "the mechanical disintegration of the process of production into its components also destroys those bonds that had bound individuals to a

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> community in the days when production was still 'organic'. In this respect, too, mechanization makes of them isolated abstract atoms whose work no longer brings them together directly and organically; it becomes mediated to an increasing extent exclusively by the direct laws of the mechanism which imprisons them" (HCC, 90).

It is interesting to note the dichotomies that seem to structure this analysis. Contrasting quality to quantity, mechanical to organic production, community to the atomization and isolation of the individual and specialization and fragmentation to the worker's soul and total personality, this passage seems to embody the romantically inspired anti-capitalism of Lukacs' youth. This impression becomes strengthened by Lukacs' explicit association of the organic and qualitative character of production to irrationality. Indeed, argues Lukacs, by resorting to "the mathematical analysis of work-processes" the principle of rationalization "denotes a break with the organic, irrational and qualitatively determined unity of the product." At the same time, however, we should be cautious not to let these unmistakable traces of Romantic influence lead us to any premature conclusions. As Feenberg (1981) is right to point out -both for Lukacs and the early Marx- Romanticism's influence on their thought should not be confused with 'a romantic protest against reason' (p. x).

If Lukacs is attacking the rationalization processes constantly shaping and transforming the face of capitalist society, it is because he sees such processes as fundamentally incoherent and irrational. In this sense Lukacs' conception of capitalist rationalization is more ambiguous and dialectical than that of Weber. Although the immanent critique of Weber's conception of rationalization allowed us to unearth its emancipatory elements, it is still the case that Weber's own vision of an 'iron cage' seemed to suggest a quite monolithic outcome for this rationalization process. Lukacs

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does not simply deny this vision but seeks to appropriate it as part of a more dialectical analysis of capitalist society.

Lukacs' dialectical appropriation of Weber rests on a synthesis of Weber's concept of rationalization with Marx's political economy, in general, and his concept of commodity fetishism, in particular. The result of this synthesis is Lukacs' concept of reification. Right at the very beginning of his essay on reification Lukacs not only acknowledges his debt to Marx's concept of commodity fetishism but also underlines the centrality of this concept to the analysis of capitalist society. Far from being a strictly economic issue, the problem of commodities is, according to Lukacs, much more than 'the central problem in economics' (HCC, 83). It is nothing less than "the central, structural problem of capitalist society in all its aspects." Nothing less is to be expected from the analysis of the structure of commodity-relations than "a model of all the objective forms of bourgeois society together with all the subjective forms corresponding to them." At another point in the essay, Lukacs illustrates his claim that the dialectical totality inheres in each of its aspects from which it can be retrieved through dialectical analysis by arguing that the first chapter of Capital "dealing with the fetish character of the commodity contains within itself the whole of historical materialism and the whole self-knowledge of the proletariat seen as the knowledge of capitalist society (and of the societies that preceded it)"(HCC, 170). Lukacs, however, does not only underline the importance of commodity fetishism. He also gives Marx's concept of fetishism a subtle twist that seeks to emphasize the affinity between commodity fetishism and rationalization. Thus in Lukacs' concept of reification, if "a relation between people takes on the character of a thing", this 'phantom objectivity' manages 'to conceal every

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trace of its fundamental nature' precisely because it "seems so strictly rational and all-embracing" (HCC, 83).

One may wonder at this point how Lukacs' analysis of modern capitalism is more dialectical from Weber's vision of modernity's 'iron cage'. After all the commodity fetishism argument which Lukacs turns into the cornerstone of his analysis is often thought to show not so much the intolerable conflicts and contradictions of capitalist development but rather capitalism's systemically produced opacity which tends to gloss over social contradictions and naturalize capitalist social relations. Moreover, Lukacs' own development of commodity fetishism through the concept of reification is meant to underline the individual's powerlessness when confronted with the capitalist mechanism. The transformation of society into an autonomous force that has escaped people's control accounts for what Lukacs calls 'the contemplative nature of man under capitalism' (HCC, 97). This centrality of the contemplative attitude simply expresses the fact that under capitalism individual action is reduced to little more than the successful adaptation of the individual to social reality. The individual becomes simply an observer of social reality and seeks not so much to actively appropriate and change this reality as to use its own properties and laws to her own advantage. Confronted with a social reality having transformed itself into a 'second nature', the individual is forced to exhibit the same cunning in her relation to society that -as Marx, following Hegel, had already pointed out- she used in her appropriation of nature in the course of labor (Capital I, 285). In the same way, however, that labor's use of natural laws leaves these laws unaffected, the 'contemplative' individual's use of the 'natural laws' of the capitalist economy perpetuates rather than challenges the alienation that these laws express.

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It should be clear by now that the contemplative attitude Lukacs refers to represents the diametrical opposite to the revolutionary unity of theory and praxis that Marx had demanded in the last thesis on Feuerbach. Indeed what Lukacs' analysis seems to suggest is that the opposition between interpreting the world and changing it is far from accidental. Turning Marx against himself, Lukacs' analysis of reification implies that Marx's criticism of philosophies that interpret rather than change the world seems to forget that it is not text-books that impress contemplation upon life but life upon the text-books (HCC, 104). In this sense, Lukacs goes a step farther than the critique of traditional contemplative materialism that Marx undertakes in his Theses on Feuerbach. Through this extra step Lukacs illuminates how this contemplative materialism is rooted in the individual's everyday experience in capitalist society. Thus Lukacs' analysis does not simply represent a reaction to the mechanical, fatalistic tendencies of Second International Marxism. Lukacs perceives in these tendencies the impact of capitalist reification and denounces the political implications of such an impact. By implicitly adopting the standpoint of the powerless individual the reified Marxism underlying Social Democratic political practice adopts a view of society that "corresponds to the elementary class interests of the bourgeoisie" (196). In the period of capitalism's decline, Lukacs warns, it is not so much the bourgeoisie as the hold of reification on its own consciousness that represents the proletariat's most dangerous enemy. It is for this reason that, according to Lukacs (1972),

> "[o]ur criticism should ... no longer be directed primarily against the bourgeoisie (on whom history has long since passed judgement), but rather against the right wing and the center of the workers' movement, against social democracy, without whose assistance capitalism would not have the slightest prospect in any country of overcoming, even temporarily, its present crisis" (62-3).

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If Lukacs is forced to warn against the contamination by reification of what used to be the revolutionary opposition to capitalism, this only goes to show the pervasiveness of this reification. Indeed, while making commodity fetishism the starting-point of his analysis, Lukacs sees reification as a more general phenomenon always extending and deepening its reach. Not only is reification "the necessary, immediate reality of every person living in capitalist society" (HCC, 197). Capitalism's reproduction and development is accompanied by an intensification of this reification. "Just as the capitalist system continuously produces and reproduces itself economically on higher and higher levels, the structure of reification progressively sinks more deeply, more fatefully and more definitively into the consciousness of man" (HCC, 93). This grim vision of a perpetual intensification of reification -which incidentally reminds one of Weber's vision of the 'iron cage' of capitalist modernity closing in on the individual- follow from Lukacs' insistence that the commodity form should not be seen as a purely economic question. Commodity fetishism, therefore, does not simply describe the individual's experience of commodity exchange in the market. It expresses rather the peculiar character of a modern capitalist society dominated by the commodity form. Although commodity exchange was present even in early pre-capitalist societies, Lukacs insists that the difference between the impact of the commodity form on these as opposed to capitalist societies is qualitative rather than quantitative. Commodity fetishism is "a specific problem of ... the age of modern capitalism". According to Lukacs, it is only under capitalism that the commodity form becomes "constitutive of ... society", influences "the total outer and inner life of society" thus "permeating every expression of life." In short, Lukacs implies, it is only under capitalism that the commodity structure

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manages "to penetrate society in all it aspects and to remold it in its own image" (HCC. 84-5).

The constitution of capitalist society according to the logic of the commodity implies, according to Lukacs, the presence of the contemplative attitude stemming from reification in every sphere of this society. In every sphere of social life the individual is faced with a rationalized system that seems indestructible and requires the individual's adaptation to its logic. The rationalization of these spheres turns them into partial systems operating according to laws which the individual cannot make use of unless she takes their existence for granted. Dismissing "the bourgeois legends of the 'creativity' of the exponents of the capitalist age", Lukacs insists that the "[t]he 'creative' element can be seen to depend at best on whether these 'laws' are applied in a 'relatively-independent way or in a wholly subservient one" (HCC. 98). This is the situation that the capitalist entrepreneur is confronted with in the market, the worker in the mechanized factory, the judge when interpreting the law and the member of the bureaucracy when carrying out her duties. In each of these cases the individual's activity does not only fall short of contributing to an autonomous production of the human world but even presupposes the giveness and unchangeability of this world. The reified reality of capitalist society compares to that of pre-capitalist society in the same way that production in 'the scientific and rational factory' compares to 'traditional and empirical craftsmanship' (HCC. 97). Unlike the 'rigid and immobile face' that "the ceaselessly revolutionary techniques of modern production turn ... towards the individual producer", "the objectively relatively stable, traditional craft production preserves in the minds of its individual practitioners the appearance of something flexible, something constantly

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renewing itself, something produced by the producers." As Martin Jay (1984)- following Adorno- has pointed out reification involves a forgetting or systemically induced repression of the fact that the social world is people's own product (228). It is this forgetting, moreover, that prevents the bourgeois individual from realizing that her activity is in reality a form of passivity. As Andrew Feenberg (1981) points out the burden of Lukacs' argument is that in capitalist society the individual "makes no essential contribution to the course of events but is exhausted in the more or less successful calculation [and- we should add here- execution] of what will happen in any case" (96). Using Marx against Engels, Lukacs himself had criticized the latter's view of industry and the scientific experiment as praxis rather than contemplation by insisting that capitalist society reduces the individual into nothing more than a 'puppet' and an "effect of the social mechanism, of which he is but one of the wheels" (HCC, 132-3). Thus having become 'the universal structuring principle' (HCC, 85) of capitalist society, the commodity leads to a universalization of the same contemplative reified consciousness. "The distinction between a worker faced with a particular machine, the entrepreneur faced with a given type of mechanical development, the technologist faced with the state of science and the profitability of its application to technology, is purely quantitative; it does not directly entail any qualitative difference in the structure of consciousness" (HCC, 98).

The affinity of Lukacs' analysis to Weber's concept of rationalization is expressed in two ways. In the first place, the generalization of the phenomenon of commodity fetishism that the concept of reification entails can be seen as Lukacs' response to Weber's generalization of Marx's analysis. Where Weber had presented the

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process of separating the workers from the means of production that Marx had described as one special case of the more general process of rationalization. Lukacs attempts to turn the tables on Weber by reinterpreting and appropriating Weber's rationalization analysis in a Marxist fashion. Pointing out that Weber had recognized both the similarity -from a sociological point of view- between the structure of the state and that of the capitalist enterprise and the indispensability of a rational, predicable legal system for capitalism, Lukacs concludes that "capitalism has created a form for the state and a system of law corresponding to its needs and harmonizing with its own structure" (HCC, 95). This reinterpretation of Weber's rationalization analysis is of course debatable. Arato and Braines (1979), for example, express their misgivings concerning precisely this point. Pointing out with Weber that some of the rationalization processes that Lukacs seeks to subsume to the dynamics of capitalism actually antedate capitalism, they do nevertheless entertain the possibility of a counterargument that would minimize the significance of chronological priority by arguing that "the dramatic extension of the rationalization of everything traditional in these [scientific, legal, political and ideological] spheres receives its tremendous impetus from capitalist-bourgeois society, which in turn needs the rationalization of all spheres" (121). This is a very important question but Arato and Braines do not pursue it much farther, contenting themselves with a rhetorical question rather than an answer: "can this [counter-argument]", they ask, "mean that natural science, law, parliamentary-party institutions, and political bureaucracy are nothing... other than the homologous forms of rationalization / reification pervading all of them?"

What Arato and Braines' rhetorical question does not entertain is the possibility that both the Weberian chronological objection to Lukacs' interpretation and the

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Lukacsian counter-argument may be correct. Entertaining and exploring this possibility is all the more fruitful since it allows us to discover in Lukacs' argument the same kind of tensions that we have already encountered in the thought of both Marx and Weber. It will be remembered that this tension stemmed from both Marx's and Weber's vacillation between a historically concrete theory of capitalist modernity and a more metaphysical philosophy of human history. Having already (in the previous chapter) undertaken an immanent critique of Weber's conception of the rationalization process, we can now see the deeper meaning of Lukacs' conflation of the origin and the function of pervasive rationalization. By turning the functional usefulness that the thoroughgoing rationalization of all spheres of social life has for the development of capitalism into the origin of such rationalization phenomena, Lukacs skirts the issue first discussed by Weber, namely the unique constellation of historical factors that allowed the emergence of modern capitalism. This neglect of the question of capitalism's origin makes it easier for Lukacs to conceal the tension between his recognition of capitalism's unprecedented uniqueness and a philosophy of history that postulates an underlying continuity of human history. As we have already seen, Lukacs locates capitalism's uniqueness in the complete restructuring of all aspects of human life according to the logic of the commodity form. Implicitly recognizing the discontinuity that this restructuring introduces into human history, Lukacs emphasizes that the difference between capitalist and pre-capitalist societies is not quantitative but qualitative. We have already encountered the same discontinuity between capitalist and pre-capitalist society in what we called the submerged strand of Marx's thought. While Lukacs' characterization of this discontinuity may not be identical to that of Marx, it is nonetheless closely related to

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it. Indeed, Marx's celebration of the unique and unprecedented dynamism of capitalist society stems from the fact that class domination under capitalism is mediated through inter-capitalist competition in the market. In other words, it is the logic of commodity exchange emphasized by Lukacs that gives class domination under capitalism its peculiarly impersonal and dynamic character. In this sense, History and Class Consciousness does not only restore the problematic of alienation to its rightful place in Marxist theory. Important as this contribution was, especially at a time when Marx's Economic and Philosophic Manuscripts of 1844 had not yet been published, History and Class Consciousness also preserved the submerged element in Marx's thought.

Lukacs' simultaneous allegiance to a conception of Marxism as a philosophy of history did not allow him, however, to pursue the full implications of this submerged element. One of the reasons for this failure on the part of Lukacs was his reconceptualization of the essence of Marxism. In the essay opening History and Class Consciousness Lukacs bases his answer to the question 'What is Orthodox Marxism?' on a sharp separation between 'Marx's individual theses' and his method of analysis. Indeed, Lukacs assures us that even if we were to accept for the sake of argument that later scientific research had invalidated every single of Marx's individual theses, we could still "accept all such modern findings without reservation and hence dismiss all of Marx's theses in toto- without having to renounce... orthodoxy for a single moment" (1). After insisting that 'orthodoxy refers exclusively to method', Lukacs further specifies what the distinguishing characteristic of this Marxist method is in his essay on 'The Marxism of Rosa Luxemburg'. There we read that "[I]t is not the primacy of economic motives in historical explanation that constitutes the decisive difference between

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Marxism and bourgeois thought, but the point of view of totality" (HCC, 27). Lukacs' emphasis on the totality is understandable to the extent that it seeks to undermine a fetishization of 'facts' that fails to recognize that an adequate evaluation of the meaning of these facts is only possible through a dialectical analysis that locates these facts within the larger social context and processes in which they are embedded. While pointing to the need of transcending the fragmented vision of a reified consciousness thoroughly entrapped within the horizon of the partial subsystem that confronts it each time, Lukacs' concept of totality becomes more than a conceptual tool in the emancipatory struggle against capitalist reification. If Lukacs can claim that "[t]he primacy of the category of totality is the bearer of the principle of revolution in science" (HCC, 27), this is because in his analysis the category of totality tends to function as nothing less than a metaphysical guarantee of the proletarian revolution's inevitability. Paraphrasing Lukacs himself, therefore, we could say that in his analysis the primacy of the category of totality is the bearer of the principle of philosophy of history.

Martin Jay (1984) has distinguished between a 'longitudinal' and a 'latitudinal' use of the concept of totality. The former use tends to see human history as a meaningful whole and has -for this reason- a diachronic character while the latter tends to analyze specific societies as synchronic structures in which each of the parts operates and interacts with the other parts in accordance with the position assigned to it in the whole. Both of these forms of totality are present in Lukacs' analysis. Moreover, both the longitudinal and the latitudinal discussion of totality by Lukacs tend to align themselves with the conception of Marxism as a philosophy of history. Indeed, while Lukacs' latitudinal discussion of totality conceives capitalist dynamics in terms of a deterministic

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crisis theory, the longitudinal counterpart of his theory presents human history as a unified process reaching its necessary completion in proletarian revolution and the eventual advent of communist society.

What makes History and Class Consciousness especially interesting for our purposes is the book's attempt to negotiate and synthesize the opposition between Marx's optimistic and Weber's tragic outlook. This opposition finds expression in the interplay between the concepts of reification and totality. While the former concept links up with Marx's concept of commodity fetishism to produce the haunting vision of a world reminiscent of Weber's 'iron cage', the concept of totality is entrusted with the function of restoring Marx's optimistic outlook by demonstrating the long-term non-viability of the reified world. While, moreover, Lukacs was right to attempt a resolution of the opposition between Marx and Weber that would privilege the position of the former even as it appropriated the insights of the latter, it has to be said that Lukacs' response to and appropriation of Weber was as problematic as the latter's original response to and appropriation of Marx. Arato and Braines (1979) point out the importance of Lukacs' exposure during the years leading up to World War I to the sociological critiques of reification that at that time were flourishing in Germany (203). Arato and Braines are right to point out the debt of these critiques to Marx's own analysis. If these sociological critiques of reification had neutralized Marxism's revolutionary impulses, this was because they tended to reify reification itself by obscuring the specific social ground of this phenomenon. Investing the analysis of reification with a trans-historical existential significance, such discoveries were as inadequate as Lukacs' attempt to restore their 'lost revolutionary dimension' through a return to what had preceded them. Indeed, Lukacs'

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retreat to a Marxist philosophy of history can only be seen as a regression to a pre-Weberian stage. It goes without saying that this regression was the logical result of Lukacs' failure to carry out an immanent critique of Weber's conception of the rationalization process.

2. The Antinomies of Lukacs's Concept of Totality

As we will see, the immanent critique of Weber's thought that we carried out in the last chapter leads to a reconceptualization of totality that allows us to move beyond both Marxism's optimistic philosophy of history and Weber's tragic pessimism. In such a 'disenchanted' approach, totality would not function as the cornerstone of an a priori scheme to which historical developments would have to be fitted. Orientation to totality would on the contrary seek to promote a respect for the complexities of historical developments. By exploring the complex interconnections between seemingly disparate phenomena and spheres of social life as well as the dynamic development and change of these interconnections, such a concept of totality would illuminate the arena in which emancipatory struggles take place. This 'disenchanted' concept of totality would, therefore, no longer lay claim to the exulted status of bearer of the deeper, unconscious meaning of these struggles. Instead, it would be recognized as a means to the more effective pursuit of these struggles. Already in his short monograph on Lenin, Lukacs seems to move in this direction. Even in this work, however, the influence of the Marxist philosophy on history on the concept of totality is still very strong. In the course of evaluating his book on Lenin, the later Lukacs seems to have moved much closer to a 'disenchanted' concept of totality. On the one hand, Lukacs explicitly identifies the

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theoretical orientation towards totality as a means of political practice. Acknowledging that "the totality of being as it unfolds objectively is infinite, and therefore can never be adequately grasped" (99), Lukacs insists that what from an abstract-theoretical point of view appears as a vicious circle "can- like the Gordian knot- be cut through practically". Thus the practical reconceptualization of totality breaks with what Martin Jay (1984) describes as a typical trait of intellectuals, namely "the hubris to believe that they might know the whole of reality" (12). Indeed, a practical orientation towards totality does not aspire to absolute methodological criteria for the exhaustive reproduction of the whole of reality on the level of theory. The purpose of this practical orientation is itself practical since as Lenin explains -in a statement that Lukacs (1971b) quotes approvingly- "the rule of comprehensiveness is a safeguard against mistakes and rigidity" (96).

What this implies is that the essential structure and dynamic tendencies of a given society which theory seeks to reconstruct in the form of a latitudinal totality have to be seen as a condition and means to political action. This contrasts with Lukacs' conception in History and Class Consciousness, which tends to reverse this relationship by turning history into a longitudinal totality. Investing history with a teleological structure, Lukacs insists that more than elucidating the conditions for political action, the standpoint of totality carries within it nothing less than the meaning of a human history seeking to reach fulfillment. The concept of totality is therefore not viewed as a subordinate element within a practical emancipatory movement but claims to unveil historical tasks that the struggling human beings have to recognize and implement.

In this sense, the very presence of a longitudinal totality in Lukacs' analysis cannot but compromise any attempt to come up with an adequate conception of

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capitalism as a latitudinal totality. Once the conception of history as a longitudinal totality introduces teleology into Lukacs' analysis, the conception of capitalism as a latitudinal totality cannot but be developed in accordance with the imperatives of this teleological scheme. These imperatives require a conception of capitalist development as a contradictory process which -through its recurrent crises- prepares the ground for the proletariat's attainment of an authentic, revolutionary class consciousness. In his attempt to develop this conception, however, Lukacs falls into an interesting contradiction. This contradiction stems from an inability to come up with an adequate synthesis of Marx and Weber and takes the form of a vacillation concerning the relative importance of the parts as opposed to the social whole.

On the one hand, Lukacs' insistence on totality as the essence of Marx's dialectical method is supposed to involve "the all-pervasive primacy of the whole over the parts" (HCC, 27). Whenever Lukacs attempts to further specify what this primacy implies for his analysis of capitalist society, he tends to embrace Marxism's traditional privileging of the economy. This becomes apparent, for example, in his essay, 'The Old Culture and the New Culture.' Here Lukacs (1973) contrasts communism to "the domination of the economy over the totality of life" characteristic of capitalism. The autonomization of the economy into "a process with... laws that are only perceived by human reason but cannot be directed by it" is moreover seen as a symptom of this domination (12). The same is true for the laws of political economy which far from being eternal and natural are specific to capitalist society. It is this specificity which accounts for the timing of the emergence of political economy as an independent science. Before the emergence of capitalism "economic science in the modern sense was

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impossible; and when the autonomy of the economy is ended, 'political economy' as an independent science also dissolves." What this analysis suggests is that the agent unifying capitalist society into a totality is its economic system. In 'The Old Culture and the New Culture' Lukacs had already declared that "[t]he development of society is a unified process." 'Reification and the Consciousness of the Proletariat' continues the exploration of the implications of this methodological postulate for capitalist society. As we have already seen this essay elevates the commodity from into the constitutive principle of capitalist society, thus further specifying the claim that it is its economic system that unifies this society. While the commodity principle effects a social integration of unprecedented intensity, its very nature implies that this integrating function is mediated by the fragmentation of "the whole life of society... into the isolated acts of exchange" between atomized individuals. Thus, Lukacs explains,

> "this isolation and fragmentation is only apparent. The movement of commodities on the market, the birth of their value, in a word, the real framework of every rational calculation is not merely subject to strict laws but also presupposes the strict ordering of all that happens. The atomization of the individual is, then, only a reflex in consciousness of the fact that the 'natural laws' of capitalist production have been extended to cover every manifestation of life in society; that -for the first time in history- the whole of society is subjected, or tends to be subjected, to a unified economic process, and that the fate of every member of society is determined by unified laws" (HCC, 91).

If, however, it is the laws of capitalist production that permeate and unify all the aspects of capitalist society, it must be these same laws which also account for capitalism's contradictions. Although the operation of these laws cannot resolve these contradictions, it does lead to a social and economic crisis that facilitates the proletariat's rise to revolutionary consciousness and praxis. It is these laws that account for the "blind power of the forces" which

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> "only advance 'automatically' to their goal of self-annihilation as long as that goal is not within reach. When the moment of transition to the 'realm of freedom' arrives this will become apparent just because the blind forces will hustle blindly towards the abyss, and only the conscious will of the proletariat will be able to save mankind from the impending catastrophe" (HCC, 70).

If the proletariat does not cease the moment, the persistence of the crisis with the 'infinite sufferings and terrible detours' that this entails 'completes the education of the proletariat'. Thus the crisis becomes the catalyst which helps the proletariat attain the class consciousness that impels it to revolutionary action as the only possible resolution to this crisis.

This may be the dominant conception of crisis in History and Class Consciousness but it is not the only one. The second conception represents an attempt on the part of Lukacs to appropriate Weber's rationalization analysis for Marxist crisis theory. The inadequacy of Lukacs's appropriation of Weber shows through, however, as this second conception actually contradicts the first conception with its affinity to the mainstream of Marxist political economy's crisis theories. Although reminiscent of Marxism's 'anarchy of the market' arguments, which in a sense it generalizes, the second conception of crisis does not so much focus on the contradictory dynamics of the economy proper as on the incoherence of the capitalist social structure as a whole. Unlike the first conception with its insistence on the commodity form as a constitutive principle of society and the subjection of every manifestation of life to a unified economic process with unified laws, Lukacs' second conception of crisis not only denies the existence of unified laws underlying the functioning of capitalist society but even turns this denial into its fundamental premise. While in the first conception fragmentation and atomization were the necessary forms of appearance of capitalism's

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unprecedented unification and integration of society, in the second conception it is rationalization's apparent intensification of social integration that conceals the fundamental incoherence of capitalist society as a whole. As Lukacs himself tells us "[t]his rationalization of the world appears to be complete, it seems to penetrate the very depths of man's physical and psychic nature. It is limited, however, by its own formalism" (HCC, 101). While rationalization gives rise to partial subsystems operating in accordance with 'strict laws', it is only the 'superficial observer' who gets the impression that "[a]ll these things do join together into... a unified system of general 'laws'." In reality the capitalist social system as a whole is fundamentally incoherent because the connection between the various rationalized subsystems is merely 'adventitious'. This fundamental incoherence becomes especially felt in times of crisis. Here, once again, Lukacs' account contradicts his first conception of capitalist crises. In line with the first conception Lukacs had argued that the apparent fragmentation of the social whole into separate parts was the result of capitalist reification. Quoting Marx approvingly Lukacs tells us that "[w]hen bourgeois thought 'transforms the different limbs of society into so many separate societies' it certainly commits a grave theoretical error. But the immediate practical consequences are nevertheless in harmony with the interests of capitalism" (HCC, 74). In this view the struggle for the attainment of the proletariat's authentic revolutionary class consciousness is a struggle against the fragmentation of the unified capitalist society that reification effects. "The superior strength of true, practical class consciousness lies in the ability to look beyond the divisive symptoms of the economic process to the unity of the total social system underlying it." It is this conception, therefore, that underlies Lukacs' emphasis on the

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standpoint of totality. The second conception of crisis, by contrast, undermines, in essence, the very meaningfulness and plausibility of this standpoint. Since in this conception the economy is presumably reduced to the status of just one of the rationalized partial subsystems and since the commodity form seems to be divested from its function of unifying and rendering coherent the effects of rationalization in the various spheres of social life, what we end up with is a conception of capitalist society as an uneasy and unmediated aggregation of different spheres of social life. In essence Lukacs reproduces here Weber's conception of separate spheres, each possessing its logic and its own 'god'. The supposed tension between the different spheres which Weber reifies into an irreducible existential necessity takes in Lukacs' second conception of crisis the form of a lack coordination between the different social subsystems.

Our discussion of Lukacs's second conception of capitalist crisis makes clear that the conception of the rationalization of the different parts of society as leading to the irrationality of the capitalist social whole is not simply meant as a normative critique of capitalist society. More than implying the alienating reversal between means and ends that enslaves people to the social relations they have unconsciously produced, this irrationality is described in functional terms to the extent that it is supposed to place capitalist society's status as a whole or totality in doubt. It is by adding this functional dimension to the irrationality of the whole that Lukacs avoids falling into a tragic - because impotent- denunciation of capitalism's normative irrationality along the lines of Weber's iron cage.

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All in all, Lukacs' consistent opposition to Weber's tragic pessimism is not the product of an adequate synthesis of Marx and Weber. Lukacs' invaluable insights into capitalist reification and the contemplative attitude that this reification entails notwithstanding, his account of rationalization ends up vacillating between a mechanical conception of capitalist economic development, which is closer to fatalistic Marxism than Lukacs would like to admit, and a conception of capitalist society that reproduces rather than challenges Weber's reification of the various subsystems into separate spheres of social life. If it is true that Lukacs' failure to achieve a viable integration of the rationalization problematic into the critical analysis of capitalist development expresses itself in the perennial return of the Marx vs. Weber opposition, it is equally true that a synthesis of Lukacs' contrasting theories of capitalist crisis could turn the synthesis of Marx and Weber's insights into the basis of a more viable conception of the capitalist totality.

More specifically, if Lukacs' first conception is valuable for its insistence on the analysis of capitalist society as a totality, Lukacs' second -more Weberian- conception serves as a warning against an economistic understanding of this totality. As we have seen, the economistic character that this totality assumed in Lukacs' scheme stemmed from his analysis of this totality in expressive terms. Having elevated the commodity into the universal, constitutive principle of capitalist society as a whole, Lukacs was bound to conclude that "the 'natural laws' of capitalist production have been extended to cover every manifestation of life in society" thus subjecting 'the whole of society' to these 'unified laws'. In this sense, the synthesis of the contradicting elements in Lukacs' discussion replaces the analysis of the capitalist totality in expressive terms with a

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conception foregrounding the articulation of the different social subsystems. Such an alternative conception would, however, also avoid the Weberian reification of the various subsystems into separate spheres of social life locked into eternal conflict. This latter conception, which simply reproduces expressionism in a pluralist form, fails to recognize that the interconnection between the various social subsystems precludes the conception of their internal logic independently from their functioning within the social totality. Lukacs' privileging of the commodity form could then be reinterpreted as an implicit recognition of the peculiar and compulsive dynamism produced by capitalism's reproduction of class divisions through the impersonal mechanisms of commodity exchange and inter-capitalist competition. Being the product of a complex constellation of historical factors that Weber sought to elucidate, the peculiar dynamism of capitalist economy inevitably exerts a great amount of pressure to the other social subsystems, necessitating the constant reconfiguration of the relationships between the different parts of the social totality. Requiring an intensification of social integration, this dynamism nonetheless represents an irreducible challenge to this integration, constantly unsettling it and demonstrating its precarious hold over humanity.

We see therefore that if Lukacs' analysis can help elucidate Weber's thoughts, the reverse is also true. We have seen that the impersonal domination of an autonomized and dynamic capitalist system leaves no alternative to the individual than to adapt to the logic of this system, thus using it to her own advantage. Lukacs shows, moreover, that this 'contemplative' attitude permeates all the spheres of social life as well as the consciousness of every individual in capitalist society. It is this process which accounts for Weber's reification of society into an aggregation of separate social spheres, each

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with its own peculiar logic and 'god'. We also saw, however, that the kernel of truth in Weber's reifying analysis could be used to achieve a reconceptualization of the capitalist society that would avoid Lukacs' economistic expressivism.

The confrontation of Weber's and Lukacs' thought proves equally instructive when we bring it to bear to Lukacs's analysis of history as a longitudinal totality. According to Lukacs, postulating such a totality is an essential requirement of the dialectical method. This method refuses to accept the fragmentation of reality into frozen facts that the reification generated by capitalism encourages. This refusal is not, however, meant to deny the necessity for any scientific exploration of reality to appeal to facts. It is to the unmediated use of facts that the dialectical method objects. To the extent that this undialectical use of facts bears the stamp of the fragmentation imposed by the capitalist division of labor (HCC, 6-7) as well as the domination of an autonomized capitalist economy over an individual impotently reduced to a 'contemplative attitude', it not only fails to capture reality adequately but also helps naturalize the social relations at its origin. In this sense, Lukacs argues, "when 'science' maintains that the manner in which data immediately present themselves is an adequate foundation of scientific conceptualization and the actual form of these data is the appropriate starting point for the formation of scientific concepts, it thereby takes its stand simply and dogmatically on the basis of capitalist society" (HCC, 7). Disengaging the facts from the historical process of which they are a product, this undialectical science ends up conceiving these facts as natural and eternal. Revealing capitalist society's "predispos[ition] to harmonize with scientific method", Lukacs accounts for the peculiar inversion whereby what is truly scientific appears unscientific while what is in reality unscientific claims for itself the

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monopoly of setting the standards of scientificity. Both the impression that dialectics is an 'arbitrary construction' and the misrecognition of "[t]he unscientific nature of this [dominant science's] seemingly so scientific method" are therefore not accidental. They are, rather, "illusions necessarily engendered by capitalism." Exemplifying the unity of theory and praxis that Marxist philosophy has always required, Lukacs not only points to the revolutionary political implications of the dialectical conception of reality but also goes as far as to identify the revolutionary character of the dialectic as the basis of its scientificity. Indeed, it is precisely its capacity to undermine the reified face that capitalist society turns on humanity that allows the dialectical method "to progress from these [conventional science's] 'facts' to facts in the true sense of the word" (HCC, 7).

The plausibility of Lukacs' insistence on the scientificity of the dialectic rests on his dissolution of facts into social processes embedded in specific historical totalities. Lukacs recognizes this when he tells us that

> "the essence of history lies precisely in the changes undergone by these structural forms which are the focal points of man's interaction with environment at any given moment and which determine the objective nature of both his inner and his outer life. But this only becomes objectively possible (and hence can only be adequately comprehended) when the individuality, the uniqueness of an epoch or an historical figure, etc., is grounded in the character of these structural forms, when it is discovered and exhibited in them and through them" (HCC, 153).

At the same time, however, Lukacs goes beyond seeing specific historical totalities as social structures which are the products of specific historical conditions and which imply certain structural regularities and tendencies that provide the framework for people's creation of their history. More than seeing in such social totalities a condition of human action that co-determines the course of human history, Lukacs reverses this relationship by assigning these social totalities a function within a human history reified into a unified

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process. Lukacs' justification of such an assumption is not very convincing since it rests on a false dilemma that represents a retreat from Lukacs' insistence on the conceptualization of societies as structured totalities. Presenting immanentist philosophy of history as the only alternative to the fragmentation of reified consciousness, Lukacs rejects in advance any opposition to the conception of history as a longitudinal totality by attributing it to "an illusion which is itself the product of the habits of thought and feeling of mere immediacy where the immediately given form of the objects, the fact of their existing here and now and in this particular way appears to be primary, real and objective, whereas their 'relations' seem to be secondary and subjective" (HCC, 154). In his identification of historical analysis that does not have any use for the idea of a longitudinal totality with unmediated thought, Lukacs ends up ignoring the presence of mediations in the conception of specific societies as structured latitudinal totalities. Any charge that this emancipation of such a structural historical analysis from the strictures of Marxist philosophy of history undialectically privileges facts over relations collapses once we refuse to accept Lukacs' false dilemma. Indeed, the conception of society as a structured totality does not need to be embedded within a philosophy of history to pay attention to relations. As a matter of fact, such a structured totality can only be conceived in terms of the various relations between its parts that help constitute it and give it its specificity.

Lukacs' charge that the absence of the standpoint of longitudinal totality makes an adequate account of social change impossible is also not very convincing. Following up on his false dilemma between philosophy of history and reification Lukacs argues that "[f]or anyone who sees things in such immediacy every true change must seem

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incomprehensible. The undeniable fact of change must then appear to be a catastrophe, a sudden, unexpected turn of events that comes from outside and eliminates all mediations" (HCC, 154). The truth of the matter is, however, that the specter of catastrophe is not exactly absent from Lukacs' theory of change. As he tells us with reference to capitalism's contradictory development according to 'natural laws' that lead it towards crisis

> "these 'natural laws' only determine the crisis itself, giving it dimensions which frustrate the 'peaceful' advance of capitalism. However, if left to develop (along capitalist lines) they would not lead to the simple downfall of capitalism or to a smooth transition to socialism. They would lead over a long period of crisis, civil wars and imperialist world wars on an ever-increasing scale to 'the mutual destruction of the opposing classes' and to a new barbarism" (HCC, 306).

What is perhaps even more interesting than the mere presence of the specter of catastrophe in Lukacs' theory is that this specter is -in accordance with Marxist crisis theory- seen as capitalism's endogenously produced possibility. This, of course, invalidates Lukacs claim that a theoretical appeal to the specter of catastrophe necessarily implies a conception of change as "a sudden, unexpected turn of events that comes from outside and eliminates all mediations." In the same way that the false dilemma between philosophy of history and the unmediated description of facts prevented Lukacs from recognizing that a dialectical, relational analysis of social reality does not require a philosophy of history to support it, here the same false dilemma lies behind his failure to admit that one can describe 'the logic' and dynamic tendencies of a certain society without having to resort to any teleological philosophy of history. From a conceptual point of view and independently of its substantive accuracy, Lukacs' own appropriation of Marxist crisis theory demonstrates the separability of the analysis of specific societies

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as structural totalities from that of the entire human history as a longitudinal totality. Indeed, one could in principle hold on to Lukacs' view of capitalism as subject to natural laws which -by driving it towards crisis and all kinds of disasters- organically produces a pressure of social change without, at the same time, endorsing Lukacs' philosophy of history. Having seen how Lukacs' contradictory conceptions of capitalist society as a totality provide the tools for a more adequate conceptualization of the standpoint of latitudinal totality, we now see that it is this reformulation of Lukacs' own imperative to analyze societies as totalities which - ironically enough- makes possible the critique of his assumptions concerning the indispensability of viewing human history as an even more comprehensive, diachronic totality.

3. Lukacs's Theories of Capitalist Crisis and the Reconceptualization of Totality

Lukacs' failure to acknowledge the separability of longitudinal and latitudinal totality has serious implications. What it expresses is the subordination -in Lukacs as well as in the work of Marx and other Marxist theorists- of the structural analysis of capitalism as a totality to the imperatives of an optimistic and teleological philosophy of history. More specifically, the deterministic analysis of capitalism as a system compulsively driven towards self-destruction can be seen as the specific form that the Marxism's general philosophy of history would take when analyzing capitalism, in particular. If this is the case, however, the emancipation of the standpoint of latitudinal totality from that of longitudinal totality makes possible a less deterministic, more open-ended analysis of human society, in general, and capitalism, in particular. This interpretation also allows us to qualify Arato and Breines' discussion of a certain ambiguity in Lukacs' answer to the

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question of capitalist crisis and collapse. According to these two authors, there is a difference between Lukacs' formulation of the problem in 1920 and that in 1922. In the former Lukacs "clearly implies that without proletarian revolution, capitalism will collapse, but the result would be in this case 'barbarism'." By contrast,

> "[h]is 1922 view seems to be that on the pure economic level, capitalism would always find a 'way out', and the success or failure of the class struggle would depend on the proletariat ... Thus, the process of capitalist development as described by Rosa Luxembourg receives a Leninist twist from Lukacs: the objective economic development yields not automatic collapse, but a situation in which the political-military struggle of the two classes decides the continuation or the destruction of the capitalist system" (150).

In response to the interpretation we should first of all point out that the specter of 'barbarism' is -in one form or another- present in both Lukacs' earlier and his later formulation of capitalist crisis and collapse. Secondly, a difference does seem to exist between the function that this specter of barbarism occupies in each of these formulations. Thirdly, although it is indeed true that the 1922 formulation of the problem is a little more open-ended, it is also true that it is in this rather than in the 1920 formulation that Lukacs identifies barbarism as the alternative to proletarian revolution. By contrasting Lukacs' two formulations along the lines of a mechanical opposition between necessity and freedom, Arato and Breines (1979) fail to recognize the function that the specter of barbarism plays in the first formulation. As we have already seen this function consists in the mediation of freedom and necessity. More specifically, the specter of barbarism in Lukacs' first formulation is not seen as a potential outcome or resolution of the capitalist crisis. Rather, barbarism appears in the form of a consolidated crisis which -as a result of the proletariat's ideological immaturity- "remains permanent, ... goes back to its starting-point, repeats the cycle until after infinite sufferings and

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terrible detours the school of history completes the education of the proletariat and confers upon it the leadership of mankind" (HCC, 76). Insofar as the proletariat's ideological immaturity ends up prolonging "this lengthy, painful and crisis-ridden process", it tends to be self-corrective because the pain and sufferings that this prolongation inflicts on the proletariat and the rest of humanity cannot but act as the catalyst leading to the completion of the proletariat's education. Thus capitalism's compulsive necessity gives rise to a situation which compels the proletariat to transform itself from an object into a subject and take the only step that represents a viable resolution of the crisis at hand. In opposition to an economistic fatalism that would make the inevitability of socialism dependent on a prior capitalist collapse conceived in mechanistic terms, Lukacs' earlier formulation of capitalist crisis seeks, in effect, to sketch out the process through which capitalism's mechanical necessity necessarily turns into its opposite, namely the proletariat's conscious revolutionary act of self-liberation. Thus Lukacs' appeal to 'historical inevitability' is a dialectical rather than a mechanical one[1]. In a genuinely dialectical manner Lukacs' philosophy of history sees human freedom as the necessary outcome of a historical process that embodies the dialectical unity of necessity and freedom. If the freedom manifested in the proletariat's revolutionary action is at the same time a recognition of necessity, the proletariat's execution of the task assigned to it by history does not imply the proletariat's instrumentalization by history but, on the contrary, the founding act of humanity's free and conscious creation of its history. Arato and Braines' misleading interpretation of Lukacs' 1920 formulation of the problem of capitalist crisis stems from their underestimation of the dialectical unity of necessity and freedom that this formulation

[1] See Meszaros (1972b), 101.

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attempts. Arato and Breines (1979) come close to an adequate description of Lukacs' 1920 analysis when they recognize that in his essay on 'Class Consciousness' Lukacs "projects the solution [to the capitalist crisis] from a combination of (1) the process of objective disintegration (collapse) of capitalism and (2) a voluntaristic agent (the class or the party) intervening near the end of this process to break through the reified consciousness and, finally, through the political institutions of capitalism" (132). While this formulation clearly recognizes the complementarity - in Lukacs' analysis- of the subjective and the objective factor or, in other words, of necessity and freedom, the dialectical unity of these two poles is not clearly articulated. The rise of the proletariat to class consciousness and revolutionary action is seen as nothing more than a moment in the objective process of capitalism's disintegration. In this way, however, Arato and Breines end up obscuring the fact that -according to Lukacs- the emergence of proletarian class consciousness out of capitalism's economic crisis has to be conceived in dialectical terms. Forgetting that, according to Lukacs, the transition from capitalist crisis to proletarian class consciousness may itself turn out to be a lengthy and painful educational process. Arato and Breines' account of this transition makes it more sudden and mysterious than it really is. Failing to perceive in this process the dialectical unity of necessity and freedom, Arato and Breines end up misrepresenting Lukacs' claim that "[a]ny transformation can only come about as the product of the -free- action of the proletariat itself" as a sign of voluntarism (139-140).

The implications of Lukacs' later formulation of capitalist crisis are also very interesting. Although Arato and Breines are right to point out that this formulation is more open-ended than the earlier one, they fail -once again- to identify the precise

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function and implications of the specter of barbarism. As Arato and Breines recognize the open-endedness of the later formulation stems from Lukacs' appropriation of Lenin's insight that "there is no situation from which there is no way out. Whatever position capitalism may find itself in there will always be some 'purely economic' solutions available" (HCC, 306). Moreover, Arato and Breines are right to interpret the implications of this insight as a shift of emphasis from the mechanical dynamics of the capitalist economy to a foregrounding of class struggle. At the same time, however, Arato and Breines underestimate the ambiguity of Lukacs' formulation when they conclude that "[h]is 1922 view seems to be that on the pure economic level, capitalism would always find a 'way out'" and that "the political-military struggle of the two classes [bourgeoisie and the proletariat] decides the continuation or the destruction of the capitalist system" (150). Indeed, when Lukacs acknowledges the capacity of a class conscious proletariat to block the implementation of purely economic solutions to capitalism's crisis, it is not clear that he sees the survival of capitalism as the alternative to the proletariat's revolutionary intervention. Lukacs chooses the following words to describe the alternatives confronting the proletariat at a time of capitalist crisis:

> "For capitalism, then, expedients can certainly be thought of in and for themselves. Whether they can be put into practice depends, however, on the proletariat. The proletariat, the actions of the proletariat, block capitalism's way out of the crisis. Admittedly, the fact that the proletariat obtains power at that moment is due to the 'natural laws' governing the economic process. But these 'natural laws' only determine the crisis itself, giving it dimensions which frustrate the 'peaceful' advance of capitalism. However, if left to develop (along capitalist lines) they would not lead to the simple downfall of capitalism or to a smooth transition to socialism. They would lead over a long period of crisis, civil wars and imperialist world wars on an ever-increasing scale to 'the mutual destruction of the opposing classes' and to a new barbarism" (HCC, 306).

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Once again, this analysis rejects any fatalistic or evolutionary concepts inclined to present the smooth transition to socialism as the inevitable result of capitalism's self-destruction. At the same time, he warns that a failure to act on the part of the proletariat will not mean the restoration of capitalism's 'peaceful' advance. Emphasizing, once again, that the proletariat's ideological immaturity can only lead to barbarism, Lukacs no longer sees this era of barbarism as a necessarily transitional stage in the process of the proletariat's self-formation into a class-for-itself. To the extent that the 'long period of crises' and the escalation of war that it involves would lead to 'the mutual destruction of the opposing classes', it appears that this 'new barbarism' does not form part of the lengthy and peaceful transition from capitalism to socialism but rather represents an outcome of the crisis which is distinct from both capitalism and socialism. This having been said, it is interesting to point out a certain symmetry between Arato and Breines' respective misrepresentations of Lukacs' two formulations of capitalist crisis.

In both cases, Arato and Breines make Lukacs' position seem more voluntaristic than it really is. While, however, in the first case it was the proletariat's coming to class consciousness and revolutionary action that was misinterpreted in voluntaristic terms, in the second case this same misinterpretation applies to Lukacs' evaluation of the bourgeoisie's capacity to take advantage of the proletariat's ideological immaturity. Indeed, Lukacs' insistence that this immaturity does not suspend the compulsive hold of the 'natural laws' that gave rise to this crisis in the first case but rather leads to a 'new barbarism' that would destroy the bourgeoisie along with the proletariat becomes transformed, in Arato and Breines' account, into its opposite. Rather than being destroyed as humanity spirals compulsively towards an era of barbarism, the bourgeoisie

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-in Arato and Breines' misrepresentation of Lukacs' analysis- manages to avert all this nastiness by restoring control and ensuring the continuation of capitalism.

The importance of Lukacs' later formulation of the question of capitalist crisis consists in the fact that -by virtue of its open-endedness- this interpretation points beyond the philosophy of history exemplified by Lukacs' earlier formulation. The implicit recognition of the possibility of an outcome of capitalist crisis other than proletarian revolution and socialism precludes the subordination of historical analysis to an a priori scheme predicated upon the necessary succession of specific historical stages. In other words, Lukacs' explicit distinction between the necessary onset of a crisis produced by the 'natural laws' of capitalist production, on one hand, and the indeterminacy surrounding the eventual resolution of this crisis, on the other, represents an implicit vindication of the standpoint of 'latitudinal', social-structural totality as opposed to that of a 'longitudinal' totality embracing the entirety of human history. Irrespective of its substantive sociological accuracy, Lukacs' 1922 conception of capitalist crisis represents an advance from the point of view of general social theory because it amounts to an implicit acceptance of the inadmissibility of all efforts to extend the applicability of the standpoint of totality beyond the boundaries of specific social systems.

We have seen, therefore, that the ambiguity – identified by Arato and Breines- in Lukacs' treatment of the question of capitalist crises has broader methodological implications since it expresses the opposition between a philosophy of history subordinating historical analysis to its imperatives and a social-historical analysis that makes use of the standpoint of totality to avoid both the undialectical fetishization of unmediated facts and the metaphysical reification of human history into a series of

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necessary stages. Needless to say, that -as was also the case with Marx- it was the former rather than the latter tendency, which was the dominant one. The elements prefiguring the second, less metaphysical tendency in Lukacs' analysis are more implicit than explicit, their implications remaining for the most part unexplored. Thus it is that after attaining -even implicitly- a standpoint that points beyond that of history as a 'longitudinal' totality, Lukacs proves incapable of consolidating his achievement. By failing to consciously articulate the new standpoint, Lukacs also fails to recognize the interesting result that, the application of this standpoint -derived from the analysis of capitalism's supposed death-throes- to the analysis of capitalism's origins would produce. This interesting result that Lukacs did not reach being the affinity between the use of the new standpoint to elucidate the origins of capitalism and Weber's research on the same issue, it is not surprising that we find Lukacs (1971b) declaring -in his monograph on the very person who motivated Lukacs' implicit discovery of the new standpoint in the first place, namely Lenin- that "Marxism is the only economic theory which demonstrates the inevitability of the rise of capitalism from the decomposition of the pre-capitalist world" (17-8).

4. 'Out-Hegeling Hegel' and the Subject-Object of History

In his 'Preface to the New Edition' of History and Class Consciousness written in 1967 Lukacs criticizes the philosophy of history inspiring that work but does so in a way that does not do justice to his original argument. More specifically, Lukacs argues that his conception of "the proletariat ... as the identical subject-object of the real history of mankind is no materialist consummation that overcomes the constructions of idealism. It

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is rather an attempt to out-Hegel Hegel" (HCC, xxiii). He notes the parallel between his conception of the proletariat's becoming the identical subject-object of history and Hegel's description of the process of self-development through which absolute spirit reaches its highest stage "in philosophy by abolishing alienation and by the return of self-consciousness to itself, thus realizing the identical subject-object" (HCC, xxii) while at the same time pointing out that unlike the 'purely logical and philosophical form' that this process assumed in Hegel's analysis, his own formulation was socio-historical from the start. This last difference notwithstanding, Lukacs dismisses the identification of the proletariat as the identical subject-object of history as a 'purely metaphysical construct'. In the later Lukacs' view, identifying the proletariat's rise into class consciousness with the realization of the identical subject-object of history forgets that "self-knowledge, however adequate, and however truly based on an adequate knowledge of society, i.e. however perfect" is not enough by itself to remove the alienation underlying the separation between subject and object. Pointing that Hegel's idealist identification of absolute spirit as the identical subject-object of history could not but lead to a conflation of alienation and objectification, he claims that in its uncritical adoption of the structural logic underlying Hegel's idealist vision History and Class Consciousness was guilty of the same error.

Although Lukacs is right to criticize his acceptance – in History and Class Consciousness- of the premises animating Hegel's idealist framework, he is wrong to imply that such an acceptance gave this work a more or less idealist character. First of all, the Lukacs of History and Class Consciousness never implied that the proletariat's attainment of self-consciousness was enough to achieve the unity between the subject and

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its object. After all, the whole point of this work was -as the later Lukacs himself recognizes- "to provide a philosophical foundation for the proletariat's efforts to form a classless society through revolution" (HCC, xxiii). Indeed, the proletariat's self-consciousness and understanding of 'society as a whole' which turn it into 'the subject and object of knowledge' derive their meaning in History and Class Consciousness from their contribution to the 'unity of theory and practice' that allows theory to perform its 'revolutionary function' (HCC, 2-3).

Downplaying the inseparability of the culmination of the historical process in proletarian class consciousness from the practical revolutionary task that this consciousness implied was not, however, the only way that the later Lukacs exaggerated the idealist character of History and Class Consciousness. His identification of proletarian class consciousness as the culmination of the historical process also downplays the materialist conception of the process that -in Lukacs's earlier view- made this culmination possible. If the emphasis on proletarian class consciousness as the culmination of the historical process was one of the distinctive traits of History and Class Consciousness, his account of the process leading up to this culmination is in line with traditional Marxism's materialist philosophy of history.

In this respect, the unqualified reference to the proletariat as 'the identical subject-object of history' can be misleading. Maurice Merleau- Ponty (1973) mentions, for example, an objection that the Hungarian Marxist Josef Revai raised against the vision of History and Class Consciousness. According to Revai,

> "The identical subject-object of the capitalistic society is not identifiable with the unique subject of all history, which is postulated only as correlative and cannot be embodied concretely... The modern proletariat that fights for communism is not

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> at all the subject of ancient or feudal society. It understands these epochs as its own past and as stages which lead to itself. Thus it is not their subject"[2].

Revai's objection is off the mark not because he is wrong to point the obvious fact that the proletariat could not possibly be seen as the subject of pre-capitalist societies but rather because Lukacs himself never saw it as such. The confusion surrounding Lukacs' identification of the proletariat as the identical subject-object of history stems from the impression - reinforced by the lack of precision characterizing the later Lukacs' description of the parallel between the vision of History and Class Consciousness and Hegel's philosophical vision- that the role the proletariat plays in that particular work by the young Lukacs is the same as that of absolute spirit in Hegel's philosophy. In reality, the equivalent of absolute spirit in the vision of History and Class Consciousness is not the proletariat but humanity. This becomes clear, for example, in Lukacs' interpretation of Marx's criticism -in his first thesis on Feuerbach- of the traditional materialism that conceived reality "only in the form of the object or of contemplation, but not as human sensuous activity, practice, not subjectively" (MER, 143). In Lukacs' interpretation, "[t]his means that man must become conscious of himself... as simultaneously the subject and object of the socio-historical process" (HCC, 19). Social reality is "the product, albeit the hitherto unconscious product, of human reality" (HCC, 48) while similarly it is 'relations between men' which represent the essence of socio-historical institutions. The uniqueness of the proletariat's position consists, then, in its being called upon to do in full consciousness what humanity had done in past either unconsciously or on the basis of a 'false consciousness.' This 'false consciousness' is not conceived as a mere illusion but rather as a necessary element that Lukacs integrates in his philosophy of

[2] See Merleau-Ponty (1973), 54.

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history by assigning to it a definite function. Specific instances of 'false consciousness' are always located by Lukacs within specific social-historical totalities of which they form a necessary part. At the same time, however, his insistence that viewing social phenomena as necessary is a fundamental principle of dialectical thought which acts as a shield against the Utopianism of petty-bourgeois reformers (Tactics and Ethics, 25) has a definite implication for this line of argument. Helping support the postulate of a unified historical process, the implication in question is that the different social totalities represent necessary historical stages, the function of which is to contribute to the unfolding of this underlying process. The same function is, moreover, shared by the ideologies expressing humanity's self-consciousness to the extent that they perform a necessary role within the social totality of which they form a part. Reminiscent of Hegel's 'cunning of reason', Lukacs' conception of false consciousness claims to identify the mechanism through which the meaning of people's historical actions transcends their conscious motivations by unconsciously furthering the historical process. Thus although the falseness of this consciousness consists in its "by-pass[ing] the essence of the evolution of society and fail[ing] to pinpoint it and express it adequately", Lukacs hastens to add that "[o]n the other hand, we may see the same consciousness as something which fails <u>subjectively</u> to reach its self-appointed goals, while furthering and realizing the <u>objective</u> aims of society of which it is ignorant and which it did not choose" (HCC, 50).

According to Lukacs, the feasibility and necessity of transcending 'false consciousness' represents the culmination of a historical process creating the materials preconditions for and the agent for this transcendence. If it is true that the proletariat's conscious introduction of the 'realm of freedom' depends on its rise to authentic class

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consciousness, it is equally true that the proletariat's standpoint could not have emerged without the entirety of a historical process unconsciously produced by humanity. As Marx (1969) had pointed out "[m]ankind thus inevitably sets itself only such tasks as it is able to solve, since closer examination will always show that the problem itself arises only when the material conditions for its solution are already present or at least in the course of formation" (21).

In its discussion of the 'realm of freedom' as the radically new task that the historical process assigns to the proletariat, History and Class Consciousness implicitly touches upon the distinction between alienation and objectification that -as we have seen- the later Lukacs was to refer to in his criticism of that work. The references in this work to this question bring out the dubious value of the later Lukacs' charge that History and Class Consciousness failed to draw a clear distinction between alienation and objectification. It is true that instead of making clear that reification is an alienated form of humanity's social objectification, History and Class Consciousness seems at times to treat reification and objectification as synonyms. Thus, for example, Lukacs in that work defines the 'realm of freedom' and the end of the 'pre-history of mankind' as the return of "the power of the objectified, reified relations between men ... to man" (HCC, 69). At another point, however, Lukacs refers approvingly to Marx's "reducing the objectivity of the social institutions so hostile to man to relations between men" and goes on to develop this point as follows:

> "to eliminate the objectivity attributed both to social institutions inimical to man and to their historical evolution means the restoration of this objectivity to their underlying basis, to the relations between men; it does not involve the elimination of laws and objectivity independent of the will of man and in particular the wills and thoughts of individual men. It simply means that this objectivity is the self-objectification of human society at a particular stage in its development; its laws

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> hold good only within the framework of the historical context which produced them and which is in turn determined by them" (HCC, 49).

Although at first glance this passage may seem to equate reification with objectivity thus justifying the later Lukacs' misgivings, a closer look will make clear that the whole point of this passage is to criticize the operation whereby reification turns 'the self-objectification of human society' into an autonomized objectivity. Lukacs here in effects revisits Marx's above-mentioned critique of traditional materialism and makes it clear that neither theoretical critique nor an adequate proletarian or human self-consciousness is enough to dispel this reification. As Lukacs makes it clear the recognition of human relations as the basis of the reified social objectivity 'does not involve the elimination of laws and objectivity independent of the will of man and in particular the wills and thoughts of individual men.' The contrast between this formulation and Lukacs' ambiguous characterization of the 'realm of freedom' sheds light on the relationship between alienation and objectification. The return of "the power of the objectified, reified relations between men... to man" then implies a shift from the transformation of society into an objectivity alien to the humanity objectifying itself in it to a society where humanity's self-objectification loses this alien character. This implicit but unmistakable contrast between a free, conscious and collectively controlled self-objectification of humanity and the alienation of this self-objectification into a reified objectivity is enough to demonstrate how misguided is the charge the History and Class Consciousness conflated alienation and objectification.

Along with the question of the relation between alienation and objectification, this discussion also clarifies the ambiguity concerning the identity of the identical subject-

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object of history. Having explained the sense in which it is humanity that Lukacs sees as this identical subject-object of history, we can now explain why it is that Lukacs at time attributes the same status to the proletariat. In the essay on reification Lukacs justifies his attribution of precisely this status to the proletariat by explaining that the proletariat is "the first subject in history that is (objectively) capable of an adequate social consciousness" (HCC, 199). If the political significance of this consciousness stems from its contribution to the proletariat's rise to revolutionary action, the philosophical correlate of this becomes clear given Lukacs' conception of the historical process as "an incessant struggle to reach higher stages of the truth and of the (societal) self knowledge of man" (HCC, 188). We have seen that in its initial stages human action fueled this process under the impact of 'false consciousness.' The true follower of Hegel's dialectical method that he is, however, Lukacs insists that "in so far as the 'false' is an aspect of the 'true' it is both 'false' and 'non-false'" (HCC, xlvii). Applied to the question at hand, the dialectical character of falsehood is expressed in the fact that the significance of 'false consciousness' transcends the substantive invalidity of all the claims and conceptions of the world that this false consciousness -in its various historical forms- has inspired. We have already noted that it is a functional significance that Lukacs ascribes to false consciousness. In a further specification of this significance Lukacs explains that

> "[I]n the period of the 'pre-history of human society' and of the struggles between classes the only possible function of truth is to establish the various possible attitudes to an essentially uncomprehended world in accordance with man's needs in the struggle to master his environment. Truth could only achieve an 'objectivity' relative to the standpoint of the individual classes and the objective realities corresponding to it" (HCC, 189).

The distinctiveness of the proletariat's position appears, therefore, as a convergence between the substantive validity and the functional significance of its social

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consciousness. Lukacs draws in this sense the epistemological implications of Marx's characterization of the proletariat as a 'universal class.' In liberating itself, Marx had declared, the proletariat liberates humanity as a whole. Using this idea as his starting-point, Lukacs strongly emphasizes that if this revolutionary act of self-liberation is to become a reality the rise of the proletariat to class consciousness is indispensable. More that that, the proletariat's rise to class consciousness represents the attainment not only of self-consciousness but also of a true consciousness of human history as a whole. From the proletariat's point of view, Lukacs informs us, "self-knowledge coincides with knowledge of the whole so that the proletariat is at one and the same time the subject and object of its own knowledge" (HCC, 20).

With the proletariat's rise to class consciousness and revolutionary action, humanity manages to attain both full control over its environment and a full knowledge of history and, thus, of itself. Humanity realizes that the social reality that confronts it is nothing but the unconscious product of human activity. Thus the standpoint of the proletariat allows humanity to become the subject-object of its knowledge. In other words, with the emergence and the development of the proletariat it becomes possible for humanity to recognize in the social-historical object of knowledge none other than itself. The significance of this subject-object of knowledge derives from its articulation with humanity as the subject-object of history. As we have seen already, Lukacs subordinates the development of human consciousness to the total historical process by assigning it a definite functional significance. In the same way that the false consciousness of dominant classes up and including the bourgeoisie was -in spite of its falsehood- assumed to promote the development of the socio-historical process, the proletariat's attainment of

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class consciousness is seen as the precondition for the fulfillment of this process. This parallel concerning the functional significance of both the false consciousness of the ruling classes in the pre-history of human society and the proletariat's authentic class consciousness has to be qualified, however, because the very shift of this functional significance from a false to a true consciousness has an important implication. While "[c]lasses that successfully carried out revolutions in earlier societies had their task made easier subjectively" (HCC, 71) by the fact that the unconscious character of their contribution to the development of the historical process made it possible for these classes to fulfil their historic tasks through the pursuit of their immediate interests, this is no longer true in the case of the proletariat. The proletariat can only carry out its mission consciously through an integration of its immediate interests within 'a total view' of the historical process that assigned to the proletariat this mission in the first place. As Lukacs explains,

> "This means that subjectively, i.e. for the class consciousness of the proletariat, the dialectical relationship between immediate interests and objective impact on the whole of society is located in the consciousness of the Proletariat itself. It does not work itself out as a purely objective process quite apart from all (imputed) consciousness- as was the case with all classes hitherto." (HCC, 71)

Thus, unlike 'all classes hitherto', the proletariat can no longer count on a Hegelian 'cunning of reason' to align the pursuit of its immediate interests with the fulfillment of its historic task. The proletariat has to recognize its task clearly and to undertake it consciously. In this sense, Lukacs' imprecise reference to the proletariat as the subject-object of history stems from the fact that the proletariat is the social agent through whose standpoint humanity can recognize itself as the true subject-object of history and through whose actions this subject-object can bring the socio-historical process to its completion.

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We should point out here that there is a certain asymmetry between the conception of humanity as a subject-object of history and that of humanity as a subject-object of its knowledge. This asymmetry consists in the fact that while the latter subject-object is a lasting one, the former one is not. This difference stems from the functional significance of consciousness in Lukacs' philosophy of history. Indeed, the reason why humanity's self-knowledge through proletarian class consciousness becomes imperative is because only on the basis of such a true consciousness is the transcendence of alienation possible. Such a transcendence implies, however, humanity's conscious and collective assumption of control over its own fate. Through this entrance into the realm of freedom, the proletariat ceases to be an object of the historical process, instead turning its history into its conscious and free self-objectification. Humanity's status as a subject-object of history is seen then to apply only to the pre-history of human society. It is only then that humanity creates its own history unconsciously in accordance with a process that transcends it. It is then that society assumes an autonomous existence with a structure and logic in which people are born, in accordance with which they are formed into social subjects and to which they have to adapt.

The implication of Lukacs' analysis is that the very idea of humanity as the subject-object of history has to be seen as historically situated. As noted above, the transition from the 'pre-history of human society' to the 'realm of freedom' also implies the transformation of humanity from an unconscious subject-object of history to a conscious subject collectively controlling society as a means to 'further human development'[3]. One of the expressions of this idea is to be found in Lukacs' claim that

[3] 'The Old Culture and the New Culture' in Lukacs (1973), 17.

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the transition to communism will put an end to the economic system's autonomization under capitalism. As he explains in 'The Old Culture and the New Culture',

> "the communist transformation of society... means above all the end of the domination of the economy over the totality of life. It thereby means an end to the impossible and discordant relation between man and his labor, in which man is subjugated to the means of production and not the other way round. In the last analysis the communist social order means the Aufhebung of the economy as an end in itself... Previously autonomous, a process with its own laws that are only perceived by human reason but cannot be directed by it, the economy now becomes part of state administration, part of a planned process, no longer dominated by its own laws".[4]

The economy's autonomization under capitalism represents -as this passage clearly shows- the domination of human subjects by the social relations they have themselves created. This subjugation of human subjects to the object in which they have objectified themselves is not unique to capitalism. In pre-capitalist societies too people are as much the products or objects of the historical process as they are its subjects. Capitalist reification appears as a special case of a more general phenomenon just as the contemplative attitude that Lukacs associates to it represents the special capitalist form of the necessity -present throughout the 'pre-history of human society'- for the human subject to adapt not so much society to her needs as herself to the requirements of her society. We have already noted the precondition for humanity's transcendence of this state of being an unconscious subject-object of history. The transition from this state to the 'realm of freedom' in which humanity becomes the conscious subject of its history becomes possible through the subject-object's rise into self-consciousness. This rise into self-consciousness only becomes possible through the proletariat's capacity to see

[4] Ibid. 12.

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through capitalism's reified appearances and translate this insight into revolutionary action.

Having made clear that for Lukacs it is humanity, which is the subject-object of history, we should pause for a minute to explore the full implications of this claim. This claim goes farther than simply pointing out that society and human history are both products of human activity. Its ambition is to identify a dialectic that turns human history into a diachronic, longitudinal totality founded upon the activity of humanity conceived as the subject-object of its history. Once this is clear, the following question arises: Under what conditions is humanity a meaningful sociological category? Was it a meaningful category in pre-capitalist societies? I think that the answer to this last question has to be negative. Similarly, isn't the conception of a subject-object of history itself historically situated? If this is indeed so, shouldn't we conclude that such a conception tells us more about the society of its origin than about the supposed totality of the historical process?

The very notion of humanity as the subject-object of a unified historic process only becomes conceivable in the context of a society that makes possible the transition to a 'realm of freedom' where humanity has become the conscious subject of its history. In other words, alienation -in the sense we have been using this concept in this study- becomes a meaningful concept only when the prospect of abolishing this alienation has become a realistic possibility. In this sense, the discovery of alienation in pre-capitalist societies is only meaningful from the standpoint of the capitalist society that has created the technological basis which -should it be reshaped and used in the context of an egalitarian and democratic socialist society- would allow the abolition of alienation and

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the subordination of the social order to a process of infinite human self-development that would allow the reconciliation between the enrichment of every individual's life, on the one hand, and the incessant cultivation of the collective human nature, on the other. In the absence of a capitalist society Lukacs' trans-historical dialectic would have been inconceivable and the only dialectic to be found in history would have been the one in line with the synchronic standpoint of determinate societies as totalities. This dialectic between people and their society -which simply points to the fact that people make history on the basis of conditions already in existence- is not more than a development of Marx's recognition that

> "Men make their own history, but they do not make it just as they please; they do not make it under circumstances chosen by themselves, but under circumstances directly found, given and transmitted from the past. The tradition of all the dead generations weighs like a nightmare on the brain of the living" (MER, 595).

It is clear that the synchronic dialectic and the standpoint of latitudinal totality that stem from this principle enunciated by Marx in The Eighteenth Burlier of Louis Bonaparte is more fundamental than any philosophy of history seeking to discover a trans-historical dialectic that comprehends the entirety of human history. What this means is that any such philosophy of history can only gain plausibility only to the extent that it can point to the mechanisms through which social totalities succeed each other in history driving the entire process towards its presumed telos. In History and Class Consciousness Lukacs neither performs this task nor seems particularly interested in it. As a matter of fact, he advances the opposite claim. We have seen, however, that Lukacs fails to provide a convincing justification for the claim that no synchronic social totality can be adequately understood unless integrated into the more comprehensive diachronic totality of a philosophy of history. We have also seen that Marx himself was torn between the

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standpoint of the synchronic dialectic and totalities, on the one hand, and that of philosophy of history, on the other. We saw that the analysis of Marx the theorist of modernity is compatible both to what we have come to call the 'standpoint of synchronic totality' and to Weber's researches into the origins of capitalism. We should point out here that Marx the 'philosopher of history' is consistent enough to provide a mechanism for the succession of the different social stages of human history. As Lukacs himself was to implicitly recognize a few years after he wrote History and Class Consciousness the standpoint of society as a synchronic totality also provides the main argument against the mechanism underlying Marx's philosophy of history. Indeed, when Lukas criticizes Bukharin's Historical Materialism in the name of a genuine Marxism that does not retreat into the ground of bourgeois, contemplative materialism, he is also undermining the plausibility of Marx's philosophy of history. What Lukacs does in his review of Bukharin's book is to reverse traditional Marxism's privileging of the forces over the relations of production. By arguing that the forces of production have to be explained in terms of the relations of production (and thus the social structure as a whole) rather than the other way round, Lukacs vindicates the dialectical standpoint of society as a synchronic totality while criticizing the monocausal explanation of mechanical Marxism. Lukacs does not, however, articulate the full implications of his critique of Bukharin. This partly stems from the fact that -underestimating the tensions in Marx's thought- Lukacs does not recognize that Bukharin's interpretation of Marxism is indeed in line with the principle underlying Marx's philosophy of history. This principle is most clearly and concisely articulated in Marx's famous 'Preface' to A Contribution to the Critique of Political Economy. This preface does assign the forces of production both a causal

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priority and a definite function within the economy of Marx's philosophy of history. Indeed, the dialectic between forces and relations of production guaranteeing both the eventual decline of each social stage in humanity's pre-history and the transition to the next, higher social level is predicated on the transformation of the growth of productive forces into an independent variable. In this sense, Lukacs' trenchant critique of the monocausal privileging of the forces of production has a double effect on the philosophy of history inspiring History and Class Consciousness. Indeed, not only does this critique invalidate the mechanism on which the social theoretical coherence of this philosophy of history depended but it also achieves this effect precisely by demonstrating its undialectical character. Interestingly enough, Lukacs' critique of Bukharin allows us to reverse the significance that History and Class Consciousness had attributed to the standpoint of history as a diachronic totality. Indeed, while History and Class Consciousness viewed the standpoint of diachronic totality as the since qua non of dialectical analysis, Lukacs' critique of Bukharin implicitly reveals the undialectical kernel within the pseudo-dialectical shell of the Marxist philosophy of history.

We should remind the reader here that the standpoint of society as a synchronic totality not only avoids basing itself upon a foundation provided by philosophy of history but also makes it possible to account for the logic underlying its discredited alternative. As was pointed out in our analysis of Marx, the assumption that the mere introduction of a new mode of production is sufficient to guarantee the continuous growth of the forces of production reflects above all capitalism's economic reality. If the introduction of capitalist social relations can indeed be seen as sufficient to guarantee the continuous and dynamic growth of the forces of production, this is not, however, because it is just a

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'new' mode of production but rather because of its specific structural logic. Interestingly enough, the generalization of the principle underlying capitalism's peculiar dynamism into a trans-historical principle of social change seems to be the mirror-image of a practice which -according to Marx and Lukacs- was endemic among bourgeois political economists. Indeed, a central reason for Marx's and Lukacs' criticism of bourgeois political economy was the latter's tendency to gloss over the historical specificity of the laws of capitalist production. The result of this tendency was -as Lukacs points out- "an apologetics for the existing order of things or at least the proof of their immutability" (HCC, 48). The laws of capitalist society were seen as the laws in accordance to human reason that had finally been discovered while similarly capitalist institutions were regarded as nothing less than the embodiment of 'eternal laws of nature.' This charge is central to Marx's discussion of commodity fetishism and to Lukacs' further development of this idea in his analysis of reification. It is ironic then that in the same way that bourgeois political economists reified the structure and lawfulness of capitalist economy Marx and Lukacs reified the principle underlying capitalist dynamism into a universal and trans-historical principle of social change. Lukacs' critique of Bukharin is once again useful here. One of the central weaknesses of Bukharin's approach, Lukacs argues, is its uncritical adoption of a model of science associated to 'bourgeois, natural scientific materialism".[5] Thus when applied to the analysis of history and society, Bukharin's approach "frequently obscures the specific feature of Marxism: that all economic or 'sociological' phenomena derive from the social relations of men to one another. Emphasis on a false 'objectivity' in theory leads to fetishism." This criticism applies to the trans-historical mechanism of social change underlying Marx's philosophy of history.

[5] 'Technology and Social Relations'. See Lukacs (1973), 51-2.

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Since 'the social relation of men to one another' are not trans-historical but always have to be analyzed in their historical specificity, the very ambition to provide a trans-historical mechanism of social change cannot but lead to a separation between social phenomena and social relations. In short, Lukacs implicitly recognizes, any attempt to found a philosophy of history upon a trans-historical principle of social change does not break with fetishism but rather reproduces it in another form. It is in this respect that the theory of history outlined in the 'Preface' to Marx's Critique and implicitly adopted by Lukacs can be seen as the mirror image of the bourgeois political economy they both seek to denounce. Rather than taking their critique of fetishism to its logical conclusion, Marx's and Lukacs's theoretical accounts choose instead to enlist the ostensible object of their criticism to their cause. Their exposure of bourgeois political economy's fetishism as a means to the naturalization of capitalist reality does not, therefore, take them farther than the reappropriation and transformation of this fetishism into the guarantee of human history's attainment of its socialist telos. In their inability to prevent the coloring of their perception of human history by the experience of their capitalist social context, both bourgeois political economists and radical critics of their works such as Marx and Lukacs simply demonstrate the validity of an insight offered by none other than the later Lukacs himself. As Lukacs (1979) points out in a comment that is obviously in line with the dialectical standpoint of society as a synchronic totality,

> "The more genuine and significant a thinker is, the more he will be a child of his time, his country and his century. For every fruitful and really philosophical proposition -however strong the effort to place it sub specie aeternitatis- is concrete; i.e., in content and form it is determined by the social, scientific, artistic, etc., exigencies and strivings of its age... Whether and how far the philosopher concerned is aware of this connection is a secondary problem" (102).

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It is clear, therefore, that the Marxist philosophy of history ends up subordinating its insight into capitalism's creation of the unprecedented opportunity to abolish alienation to the reified conception of a unified historical process. Once this philosophy of history is put to the side, what remains is the historical method that focuses on the dialectic between people's activity and struggles, on the one hand, and the social totalities that provide the framework in which this activity and these struggles take place. This dialectic is the only reality until the constellation of historical conditions that gives rise to capitalism and the prospect of transcending alienation raises at the same time the prospect of replacing this dialectic with humanity's conscious and collective control of its society. We saw that Lukacs tries to establish an artificial continuity between the pre-history of human society where the dialectic between human activity and social structure prevails and the realm of freedom in which the social order is subordinated to the needs of humanity. The artificiality of this attempt on the part of Lukacs is demonstrated by his dependence on the notion of humanity as the subject-object of history. This notion shows the artificiality of Lukacs' philosophy of history because -like in the case of alienation- the meaningfulness of humanity as a sociological category is historically situated. It is capitalism's dynamism and expansiveness which has put an end to the isolation between different and independently developing human societies. By giving rise to a global society, it is capitalism that makes humanity a sociologically meaningful concept. The fact that humanity becomes a meaningful sociological concept only with the emergence of certain definite social and historical conditions introduces an element of radical discontinuity that obviously undermines the conception of humanity as the subject-object of a unified historical process.

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5. Scientific Formalism, the Contemplative Attitude and the Antinomies of Bourgeois Thought

Lukacs' inability to go beyond philosophy of history stems from his failure to come to terms with and undertake an immanent critique of Weber's analysis of rationalization. This failure finds expression in Lukacs' analysis of the antinomies of bourgeois thought which set the stage for the presentation of Marxist philosophy of history as the only possible resolution of these antinomies. The fact that Lukacs does not take full advantage of Weber's insights does not mean, however, that there are not parallels to be found in the accounts of these two thinkers. It is interesting, for example, that -in line with Weber's emphasis on the centrality of rationalization phenomena in modern society- Lukacs' exposition of the antinomies of bourgeois thought takes the form of an exploration of the limits of rationalist thought. Moreover, Lukacs also echoes Weber when he insists that rationalism cannot be seen as a homogenous phenomenon that can be defined once and for all. Since rationalism has taken various forms depending on the historical context at its basis, it defies a trans-historical definition. As a result, Lukacs accompanies his characterization of rationalism as a general tendency of human thought with a specification of the distinctive trait of modern rationalism:

> "rationalism existed at widely different times and in the most diverse forms, in the sense of a formal system whose unity derives from its orientation towards that aspect of the phenomena that can be grasped by the understanding, that is created by the understanding and hence also subject to the control, the predictions and the calculations of the understanding... What is novel about modern rationalism is its increasingly insistent claim that it has discovered the principle which connects up all phenomena which in nature and society are found to confront mankind. Compared with this, every previous type of rationalism is no more than a partial system" (HCC, 113).

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Similarly to Weber's conception of a rationalization process that -reaching its peak in modern capitalist society- manages to restructure every sphere of human life, Lukacs locates the distinctiveness of modern rationalism in its expansiveness and claim to comprehend the totality of natural and social phenomena. At the same time, however, Lukacs insists that this claim on the part of modern rationalism is illusory. The illusory nature of this claim crops up again and again in the history of bourgeois thought taking the form of a contradiction between form and content. The formalism of bourgeois rationalism renders its attempt to comprehend the totality of reality futile. Indeed, by separating form and content this formalism turns the content that its rational forms of knowledge were supposed to comprehend into an instance of irreducible irrationality. The rational necessity that the appeal to the model of knowledge as a formal system implies ends up foundering against the contingency of the facticity that is the object or content of this knowledge. As Lukacs explains, "the principle of systematization is not reconcilable with the recognition of any 'facticity', of a 'content' which in principle cannot be deduced from the principle of form and which, therefore, has simply to be accepted as actuality" (HCC, 117).

The formalism of bourgeois thought is exemplified by the elevation of mathematical methods into "the guide and the touchstone of philosophy, the knowledge of the world as a totality." The fact that such quantifying methods create their rational forms only on the basis of an artificial homogenization of their contents is never questioned. "The question why and with what justification human reason should elect to regard just these systems as constitutive of its own essence (as opposed to the 'given',

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alien, unknowable nature of the content of those systems) never arises. It is assumed to be self-evident" (HCC, 112). This uncritical acceptance of mathematical methods is not accidental. Indeed, the purpose of Lukacs' reconstruction of the antinomies of bourgeois philosophy is "to sketch the connection between the fundamental problems of this philosophy and the basis in existence from which these problems spring and to which they strive to return by the road of the understanding. However, the character of this existence is revealed at least as clearly by what philosophy does not find problematic as by what it does." In other words, bourgeois thought's conception of reality stems not only from the substantive contents that this thought uncovers but also from the very form that its search for knowledge-contents assumes. This abstract, quantifying form fails to adequately comprehend the content of its knowledge and has to resort to variations on the theme of the Kantian 'thing-in-itself.' If, however, bourgeois philosophy finds itself incapable of breaking through the form of thought that led it into an insuperable contradiction between form and content, this is because this form of thought is itself necessarily engendered by the capitalist social context in which it emerges. Thus when contrasting modern and medieval thought, Lukacs includes in the differences modern thought's "demand that mathematical and rational categories should be applied to all phenomena (in contrast to the qualitative approach of nature philosophy..." (HCC, 113). Both the plausibility and the limitations of bourgeois mathematical formalism, Lukacs seems to suggest, derive from "the very success with which the economy is totally rationalized and transformed into an abstract and mathematically oriented system of formal 'laws'" (HCC, 105). As for the methodological significance of the interpretation of society in terms of such laws, Lukacs goes farther than seeing the identification of

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such laws as the application "to society [of] an intellectual framework derived from the natural sciences." One of the problems of such a claim is, of course, the uncritical and a-historical assumption that mathematical formalism provides the 'natural' methodology of natural science. Insisting that 'nature is a social category', Lukacs seems to suggest that the interpretation of social laws as an extension of the natural scientific framework to the realm of society represents a reversal perpetrated by capitalist reification. The ambition to conceptualize social laws and research along the lines of the laws of nature and natural science naturalizes society by turning its relationship to nature upside down. Instead of seeing the quantitative formalism of modern natural science as the expression of capitalist society resting on the subordination of qualitative use-value to quantitative exchange value, the abstraction of human labor accentuated by its reduction to quantifiable elements and the autonomization of a market economic system escaping the control of human beings and operating according to law-like regularities, the attempt to analyze society in natural scientific terms turns society into a kind of a-historical second nature. This is precisely the meaning of the critique of liberal political economy that Marx undertook in his discussion of commodity fetishism. In his 'critique of political economy' Marx is not simply interested in a narrowly economic critique and development of the theories of liberal political economy. More than that, he seeks to demonstrate that these 'narrowly economic' weaknesses or contradictions of classical political economy stem from the very form in which bourgeois political economists expressed even their scientifically valid insights. As he puts it in Capital,

> "Political Economy has indeed analyzed value and its magnitude, however incompletely, and has uncovered the content concealed within these forms. But it has never once asked the question why this content has assumed that particular form, that is to say, why labor is expressed in

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> value, and why the measurement of labor by its duration is expressed in the magnitude of the value of the product. These formulas, which bear the unmistakable stamp of belonging to a social formation in which the process of production has mastery over man, instead of the opposite, appear to the political economists' bourgeois consciousness to be as much a self-evident and nature-imposed necessity as productive labor itself" (Capital I, 173).

Thus while bourgeois political economists may have attained -at least to some degree- a scientific understanding of the law of value, they never asked themselves why the content of economic production has assumed the form of a process mediated by natural laws. By not questioning the conditions of possibility of such a form, bourgeois political economists failed to see its historical specificity. In this sense, bourgeois political economy's appeal to natural economic laws is justified only by virtue of the fact that this appeal accurately expresses the alienated nature of the capitalist economy. At the same time, however, its failure to recognize in capitalist alienation the historical ground of its discoveries leads bourgeois political economy to an unwarranted universalization of the form in which the really universal content of human production is manifested under capitalism. What results from all this is the naturalization of alienation.

Representing a development of Marx's analysis of commodity fetishism, Lukacs' claim concerning the social origins of modern science's methodological framework is based on the same dialectical attitude that Marx exhibited when confronting bourgeois political economy. Like Marx, Lukacs recognizes the substantive scientific contributions that bourgeois thinkers -working within the horizon of capitalist reification- may have made. His intention is not so much to dispute the validity of natural scientific results as to point out the potentially dangerous implications of the failure to recognize the social embeddedness of the scientific method. In the absence of such a recognition it becomes

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hard to avoid the pitfalls of bourgeois political economy first discussed by Marx. If a given scientific method is separated from the social context in which it arose and of which it forms an integral part, it becomes difficult to resist the temptation of adopting the dialectical opposite of this position. What this opposite involves is an a-historical appeal to the scientific method. This a-historical scientific method effects a reversal since rather than recognizing its own historical and social grounding, it presents itself as the only valid method of all knowledge, thus extending its jurisdiction over historical and social reality as well. Lukacs makes clear that it is to this methodological reversal rather than to the substantive findings of natural science that he objects when he tells us that

> "When the ideal of scientific knowledge is applied to nature it simply furthers the progress of science. But when it is applied to society it turns out to be an ideological weapon of the bourgeoisie. For the latter it is a matter of life and death to understand its own system of production in terms of eternally valid categories: it must think of capitalism as being predestined to eternal survival by the eternal laws of nature and reason" (HCC, 10-11).

Similarly, Lukacs recognizes the contribution that both social and scientific reification made to humanity's struggle with Nature:

> "the social development and its intellectual reflex that was led to form 'facts' from a reality that had been undivided (originally, in its autochthonous state) did indeed make it possible to subject nature to the will of man. At the same time, however, they served to conceal the socio-historical grounding of these facts in relations between men 'so as to raise strange, phantom powers against them'" (HCC, 184).

What he also points out, however, is that one of the symptoms of capitalist reification is the embeddedness of genuine scientific insights into a contradictory framework that prevents science from attaining a genuine understanding of its object. The contradiction between form and content that plagues the formalistic rationalism structuring bourgeois

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thought in general ends up insinuating itself in each of the individual disciplines in particular. Indeed, Lukacs describes modern scientific development as a process in which

> "the more intricate a modern science becomes and the better it understands itself methodologically, the more resolutely it will turn its back on the ontological problems of its own sphere of influence and eliminate them from the realm where it has achieved some insight. The more highly developed it becomes and the more scientific, the more it will become a formally closed system of partial laws. It will then find that the world lying beyond its confines, and in particular the material base which it is its task to understand, its own concrete underlying reality lies, methodologically and in principle, beyond its grasp" (HCC, 104).

Lukacs goes on to illustrate this claim with reference to political economy and jurisprudence. In the former, the formalism of bourgeois political economy is expressed as an attempt to describe the operation of the economic system in terms of a set of purely quantitative relations. The result is a marginalization of use-value, which is held to lie beyond the purview of political economy. The problem for bourgeois political economy, however, is that the qualitative nature of things as use-values is not thereby decreed out of existence but, on the contrary, comes to haunt those who have neglected it. The limitations of quantitative formalism become especially obvious in view of the question of crisis. Economic crises cannot be analyzed in purely quantitative terms because they often arise from incongruities in the economic system that can be traced back to the irreducibility of the qualitative factor exemplified by use-value. Thus Lukacs refers to Hilferding's critique of purely quantitative models of economic reproduction. Such models, Hilferding argues,

> "overlook the fact that there are qualitative conditions attached to these quantitative relations, that it is not merely a question of units of value which can easily be compared with each other but also use-values of a

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> definite kind which must fulfil a definite function in production and consumption. Further, they are oblivious of the fact that in the analysis of the process of reproduction more is involved than just aspects of capital in general, so that it is not enough to say that an excess or a deficit of industrial capital can be 'balanced' by an appropriate amount of money-capital. Nor is it a matter of fixed or circulating capital, but rather of machines, raw materials, labor-power of a quite definite (technically defined) sort, if disruptions are to be avoided" (HCC, 106).

The separation between form and content is even more clear in jurisprudence. Lukacs cites here the shift from natural law with its "assumption that the formal equality and universality of the law (and hence its rationality) was able at the same time to determine its content" (HCC, 107) to a more historicist perspective that sees law as a purely formal system with an extra-legal content of a social-political nature.

Its formalism leads modern science into a paradoxical situation. The orientation towards abstract, formal laws encourages the self-transformation of individual sciences into closed partial systems but the tension between form and content that this formalism implies confines the underlying reality that these sciences are supposed to study beyond the boundaries of such closed systems. The fragmentation of reality into reified closed systems thus frustrates even the desire to understand the reality of each of the fragments. Once again we find that the adequate understanding of the parts is impossible without the conceptualization of reality as a totality. Even when the need may be felt for a philosophical synthesis that would challenge the state of fragmentation produced by scientific formalism, its satisfaction if prevented by the fact that "[t]he specialization of skills leads to the destruction of every image of the whole" (HCC, 103). Tom Bottomore and Martin Jay, among others, have objected to Lukacs' methodological definition of Marxism in terms of the standpoint of totality by pointing out that this standpoint has

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been widely used in non-Marxist social theoretical discourses as well. Such an objection takes Lukacs' thesis a little too literally and fails to recognize that Lukacs recognized the presence of synthetic or totalizing impulses in bourgeois thought. Lukacs' point is "[n]ot that the desire for synthesis is absent; nor can it be maintained that the best people have welcomed with open arms a mechanical existence hostile to life and a scientific formalism alien to it" (HCC, 109). Similarly Lukacs does not deny that "[p]hilosophy can attempt to assemble the whole of knowledge encyclopedically (see Wundt)." What he argues is simply that a serious challenge to the reification and fragmentation that modern scientific formalism helps reproduce "is not feasible on the soil of bourgeois society." Thus the question is not so much whether an orientation towards society as a whole is present in bourgeois thought but rather what the exact nature of this orientation is. Bottomore (1972) may be right to point out that "sociologists have used the category of 'totality' since the inception of their discipline in the works of Saint-Simon, Comte and others" (63). The problem, however, is that Bottomore does not really explore the differences between Lukacs' and the sociological concept of totality. The meaning of the standpoint of totality for Lukacs lies in its indispensability for seeing through the reified appearances of capitalist society. Lukacs conceives the question of totality in a very specific way, which is not necessarily the same as that of sociologists. His point is not that bourgeois thought is incapable of creating theories that claim to treat society as a whole. What he claims is that -to the extent that it is predicated on the standpoint of the bourgeoisie- such an appeal to totality will be more likely to reproduce rather than challenge the reification and fragmentation generated by capitalist society. An exploration of the sociological tradition that -as Bottomore points out- has embraced a

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certain conception of society as a totality would probably confirm Lukacs' claim. Although such an exploration would be beyond the scope of this study, it would certainly be a worthy project for anyone who would criticize Lukacs' identification of the standpoint of totality as a distinctive mark of Marxism.

Moreover, Lukacs' whole analysis of the antinomies of bourgeois thought makes it abundantly clear that he does not believe that Marxism is the only theoretical tradition trying to comprehend reality as a whole. Rather, his point is that bourgeois rationalism's attempts to encompass the whole of reality in a philosophical system inevitably end up foundering against insurmountable contradictions. Since the aspiration to understand reality as a totality is already present in modern rationalism, it is clear that it is not this aspiration which constitutes Marxism's uniqueness. Marxism's uniqueness lies not so much in its adoption of the standpoint of totality as in its ability to fulfil the theoretical requirements implicit in this standpoint. In this sense, Lukacs' exposition and critique of the antinomies of bourgeois thought amounts to an immanent critique of modern rationalism, thus concretizing and developing Engels' claim -in his essay on Feuerbach- that the working-class movement is the true heir of Classical German philosophy.
We already saw that the development of modern science illustrates -in Lukacs' view- the function of the Kantian concept of the 'thing-in-itself' as a residual category that represents an irreducible element of irrationality that rationalism fails to integrate as part of its system. Indeed, in Lukacs's analysis of modern science we encountered both of the limitations of modern rationalism that Kant's 'thing-in-itself' encapsulates. We saw that modern science reproduces both the tension between content and form within individual disciplines and the failure to combat fragmentation through a totalizing view across

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scientific disciplines. Moreover, the tension between form and content represents, according to Lukacs, the pole of yet another contradiction central to modern rationalism. More specifically, the tension between form and content implies the reduction of facticity or content of knowledge to an irrational given that cannot be dissolved into the rational forms of a philosophical system. This presents a problem for modern rationalism to the extent that -according to Lukacs- one of its fundamental premises is precisely the non-givenness of the world. Lukacs uses two examples here to illustrate this fundamental premise of rationalism. First, he refers to Kant's 'Copernican Revolution' that reversed the relationship between knowledge and its object by suggesting that philosophy could only advance if it abandoned the traditional, dogmatic claim that human knowledge conformed to its object and recognized instead that -to the extent that all human knowledge of reality was mediated by human reason- it is actually the object of knowledge that has to conform to the structure of human reason. Lukacs goes on to trace this idea of "rational knowledge as the product of mind" back to Vico's claim that people could achieve knowledge of history rather than nature because they have created the former but not the latter. According to Lukacs, then, modern philosophy is based on ontological and epistemological assumptions that complement each other. On the one hand, "modern philosophy... refuses to accept the world as something that has arisen (or e.g. has been created by God) independently of the knowing subject, and prefers to conceive of it instead as its own product" (HCC, 111) while, on the other hand, it seems to adopt- in one form or another - "the idea that the object of cognition can be known by us for the reason that, and to the degree in which, it has been created by ourselves" (HCC, 112).

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The idea that reality is not given but created by us prefigures the resolution of the antinomies of bourgeois thought. The process of resolving these antinomies, however, could at most be started within bourgeois society. Lukacs has in mind here Hegel's dialectical method and the foregrounding of the principle of history that this method implies. The attempt to integrate history into the rationalist system represented a genuine advance over the belief of eighteenth century materialists who considered history "an eternal and indestructible limit to human reason in general" (HCC, 143). The only way that the formalist rationalism of bourgeois thought could deal with concrete contents is by subsuming them to a system of abstract, quantitative laws. Since "it is of the essence of such a law that within its jurisdiction nothing new can happen by definition", formalist rationalism inevitably comes up with a static and a-historical view of reality. The determinism of the vision of the world in terms of formal, quantitative laws turns change into a mystery to be resolved through a resort to the opposite of such a formalistic determinism. Fatalism demands the voluntarism of such mysterious devices as the appeal to 'great individuals' as its complement and in so doing also illustrates the opposition between subject and object that formalistic rationalism incessantly reproduces. Thus,

> "The impossibility of comprehending and 'creating' the union of form and content concretely instead of as the basis for a purely formal calculus leads to the insoluble dilemma of freedom and necessity, of voluntarism and fatalism. The 'eternal, iron' regularity of the processes of nature and the purely inward freedom of individual moral practice appear at the end of the Critique of Practical Reason as wholly irreconcilable and at the same time as the unalterable foundations of human existence. Kant's greatness as a philosopher lies in the fact that in both instances he made no attempt to conceal the intractability of the problem by means of an arbitrary dogmatic resolution of any sort, but that he bluntly elaborated the contradiction and presented it in an undiluted form" (HCC, 134).

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The comments on Kant's thought that Lukacs offers us here are also representative of his dialectical view of Classical German philosophy as a whole. The contribution of this tradition consisted -according to Lukacs- in its clarification and elaboration of the contradictions of formalistic rationalism. This tradition seems to represent, therefore, the best intellectual expression of a process of capitalist crisis that was not to set in until at least half a century later. Kant and Hegel, in particular, could be seen as turning points in this process, the former because of his honest portrayal of the contradictions that had led bourgeois thought into an impasse and the latter because he was able -despite his failed attempt to resolve these contradictions- to provide the methodological foundation for the emancipation of rationalism from the formalist straitjacket. While Kant unwittingly brought to the fore the limits of bourgeois thought, Hegel managed -through his challenge of formalist rationalism's separation of form and content- to create an opening for Marxism's later use of the standpoint of totality to resolve the antinomies of bourgeois thought. According to Lukacs,

> "Hegel in his Phenomenology and Logic was the first to set about the task of consciously recasting all problems of logic by grounding them in the qualitative material nature of their content, in matter in the logical and philosophical sense of the word. This resulted in the establishment of a completely new logic of the concrete concept, the logic of totality - admittedly in a very problematic form" (HCC, 142).

Putting an end to the subordination of 'the quality and the concreteness of contents' (HCC, 144) to the logic of abstract, formal systems of thought restores reality's dynamism allowing the recognition of history as an arena in which contents shed their aura of immutability and present themselves in their true state of constant change and development.

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The principle of history allows Lukacs to attempt a resolution of the antinomies of bourgeois though through the use of the principle of reality's 'createdness' rather than givenness. The antinomies between form and content, subject and object, freedom and necessity, and so on, can be presented as symptoms of the limitations of rationalist formalism that can only be transcended through historical development and the proletariat's revolutionary praxis. What is surprising in this interpretation is that the coexistence -within modern rationalism- of both formalism and the principle of humanity's creation of reality does not lead Lukacs to explore what these two elements of modern rationalism may have in common. In fact, even his account of this coexistence is not fully articulated. The paradoxical result is that the principle of 'the human creation of reality' ends up appearing as both the cause of modern rationalism's reifying formalism and the principal weapon against it. We have already discussed Lukacs' attempt to combat the reifying appearances of capitalist society through an appeal to the human activity and the social relations concealed behind these appearances. What we have not discussed, however, is Lukacs' attribution of the fact that "the methods of mathematics and geometry (the means whereby objects are constructed, created out of the formal presuppositions of objectivity in general) and, later, the methods of mathematical physics become the guide and the touchstone of philosophy, the knowledge of the world as a totality" to "the idea that the object of cognition can be known by us for the reason that, and to the degree in which, it has been created by ourselves" (HCC, 112).

This last claim on the part of Lukacs involves a reversal of dubious value. Instead of seeing mathematical methods as a means to the practical appropriation and creation of reality, Lukacs associates it with the idea that knowledge is actually the result of our

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creation of reality. This reversal is accompanied by a conflation of reality as it is as a result of our creation and as we appropriate it conceptually in the course of creating it. Rather than treating these two aspects of the world as identical instances of the human creation of reality, one has to recognize that they constitute two different stages in the process of this creation. More specifically, the intellectual appropriation of the world through concepts and ideas -however elementary these may be- is a precondition for people's practical appropriation and creation of their world. As Lukacs himself recognizes when pointing out the historical function of quantitative reification, the mathematical and geometrical methods have -through their contribution to technological development- played a crucial role in people's creation of their world.

More specifically, the ideal character of mathematical and geometric concepts that can be developed through the use of formal logic into ever more complicated conceptual systems can be seen as precisely the means through which reality- especially that of Nature- can be appropriated practically. If this last statement, however, does not really settle the question this is because it is the exact character of the appropriation of reality that scientific formalism makes possible which is here the crucial point. Lukacs' contrast between scientific formalism and the recognition of the human creation of reality is predicated on his association of scientific rationalism to the contemplative attitude. According to Lukacs this contemplative attitude too implies a practical appropriation of reality which, however, involves an adjustment to and a use of a reality that is implicitly experienced and treated as basically given and immutable. Such a practical appropriation contrasts to an appropriation that actively produces and changes the reality confronting humanity. Unlike the contemplative attitude which- according to

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Lukacs- reduces human actors into an object of the social process, into mere vehicles through which the underlying social reality reproduces itself. it is only the latter form of practical appropriation which is compatible to the transformation of humanity into the conscious subject of its own history and social life.

While this distinction between a human activity that merely reproduces humanity's alienated subjection to an autonomized social process and a non-alienated activity that would allow humanity to gain control over its collective life is very valuable indeed, the identification of scientific formalism with the former, contemplative attitude is much more problematic. In his 'Preface to the new Edition' of History and Class Consciousness the later Lukacs himself seems to recognize this. Distancing himself from his earlier view of both economic activity and the scientific method as instances of the contemplative attitude. Lukacs admits that

> "It was quite wrong to maintain that 'experiment is pure contemplation... the creation of a situation in which the natural forces under investigation can function 'purely', i.e. without outside interference or subjective error, is quite comparable to the case of work in that it too implies the creation of a teleological system, admittedly of a special kind. In its essence it is therefore pure praxis. It was no less a mistake to deny that industry is praxis and to see in it 'in a historical and a dialectical sense only the object and not the subject of the natural laws of society.' The half-truth contained in this sentence... applies only to the economic totality of capitalist production. But it is by no means contradicted by the fact that every single act in industrial production not only represents a synthesis of teleological acts of work but is also itself a teleological, i.e. practical, act in this very synthesis" (HCC, xx).

As this passage makes clear the exact function of scientific formalism depends on the specific articulation of human teleology and the nature-like regularities that the action of the social agents making use of this formalism instantiates. The later Lukacs implicitly admits that the treatment of scientific formalism in History and Class Consciousness was

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too undifferentiated when he criticizes this work's beginning of "its analysis of economic phenomena not with a consideration of work but only of the complicated structures of a developed commodity economy" (HCC, xx).

Lukacs' foregrounding of the question of work as a way of avoiding the weaknesses of History and Class Consciousness implicitly recognizes that scientific formalism's identification of lawful regularities is as compatible to an activity that creates and changes reality as it is to a 'contemplative' activity signifying little more than a passive adjustment to this reality's requirements. The two opposing positions on this question could be clarified through a reference to Bacon's recognition that it is only by obeying nature that humanity can master it. More specifically, the conception of work as contemplation would emphasize the obedience to nature that work presupposes while the opposite position would focus its attention on the change of natural reality that this obedience to nature makes possible.

Thus the former view would point out that work merely makes use of natural laws which it accepts as given and unchangeable while the latter view would point out that the immutability of natural laws does not mean that work does not actually change nature. Far from signifying a passive adaptation to natural reality, the abstract, quantitative laws of scientific formalism are important tools in the change, cultivation and even destruction of nature in accordance with the needs and interests of various human groups.

It would be interesting to note here the difference between Lukacs' dismissal of industry and the scientific experiment as contemplation, on the one hand, and Marx's treatment of the same question in The German Ideology. Marx discusses some of the same issues that Lukacs was to revisit and does so from a standpoint very similar to that

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of Lukacs. Thus, for example, Marx criticizes Feuerbach's mere "contemplation of the sensuous world" from the standpoint of "the practical materialist" who is interested in "revolutionizing the existing world, of practically attacking and changing existing things" (MER, 169). Interestingly enough, however, Marx's development of a standpoint that clearly prefigures that of History and Class Consciousness leads him to a conclusion that is diametrically opposite to that of Lukacs. Instead of exemplifying contemplation, industry and natural science are seen by Marx as the very vantage point from which Feuerbach's contemplative materialism is to be criticized. Emphasizing that industry does not take reality for granted but rather produces it, Marx takes Feuerbach to task for not seeing "how the sensuous world around him is, not a thing given direct from all eternity, remaining ever the same, but the product of industry and of the state of society." Marx goes on to show how industry transforms the natural world reminding Feuerbach that when the latter refers to "objects of the simplest 'sensuous certainty'" such as a cherry tree, he is not talking about an unmediated natural reality but rather a product of "social development, industry and commercial intercourse" (MER, 170). Indeed, Marx explains, "[t]he cherry-tree, like almost all fruit-trees, was, as is well known, only a few centuries ago transplanted by commerce into our zone, and therefore only by this action of a definite society in a definite age it has become 'sensuous certainty' for Feuerbach." Similarly, it is the human transformation of nature that is exemplified by the changes in urban and rural landscapes produced by human industry and the social relations in which this human industry is embedded:

> "And so it happens that in Manchester, for instance, Feuerbach sees only factories and machines, where a hundred years ago only spinning-wheels and weaving-looms were to be seen, or in the Campagna of Rome he finds only pasture lands

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> and swamps, where in the time of Augustus he would have found nothing but the vineyards and villas of Roman capitalists" (MER, 170-1).

Moreover, natural science itself is recognized as an integral -if derivative- element in the process through which Nature is transformed. Dismissing as illusory the conception of a contemplative, 'pure' natural science, Marx continues the passage above with these words:

> "Feuerbach speaks in particular of the perception of natural science; he mentions secrets which are disclosed only to the eye of the physicist and chemist; but where would natural science be without industry and commerce? Even this 'pure' natural science is provided with an aim, as with its material, only through trade and industry" (MER, 171).

Marx's discussion in The German Ideology makes abundantly clear that the unqualified equation of scientific formalism to the contemplative attitude is problematic. If Lukacs is right to attribute the formalism of modern science to an impersonal capitalist logic which -based on the quantification of all realms of social life- abstracts from the qualitative uniqueness of the objects exchanged and the labor producing them, he is not equally right in the conclusions he draws from this fact. Far from representing a passive adjustment to natural reality, scientific formalism turns out to be the functional complement of the capitalist economy by mirroring not only the latter's abstract character but also its dynamic consequences. The revolutionization of Nature to which natural science has contributed should obviously be seen as an accentuation and acceleration rather than a negation of the human creation of reality. The cult of undialectical immediacy that Lukacs attributes to scientific formalism simply does not square with the fact that natural science has become one of the main mechanisms through which nature becomes mediated by human activity. Marx had already pointed out that with the birth of humanity nature in its immediacy became part of an irretrievable past:

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> "nature, the nature that preceded human history, is not by any means the nature in which Feuerbach lives, it is nature which today no longer exists anywhere (except perhaps on a few Australian coral-islands of recent origin) and which, therefore, does not exist for Feuerbach" (MER, 171).

By now, of course, the great strides of modern science have found a use even for such remnants of unmediated nature as the coral-islands that Marx refers to. As if to illustrate Marx's claim that "[t]he discovery of ... the manifold uses of things is the work of history" (Capital I, 125), natural science has transformed the desert islands in question into potential sites of experimental atomic explosions. The growing capacity of natural science to mediate nature culminates under mature capitalism into the possibility of mediating nature into inexistence.

In the same way that the formalism of natural science can serve as a means of explaining and controlling concrete natural phenomena thus enabling us to transform the natural world, the application of this formalism in social science does not necessarily lead to a passive adjustment to the existing social reality. It may sound surprising given our extensive discussion of the reifying elements in his thought but it is Weber who provides us with a model of how scientific formalism could be applied in a non-reifying way to explain social and historical phenomena. Weber achieves this through the concept of 'ideal type' which -rather than naturalizing social reality through a naive identification of social reality with scientific formalism's abstract models- recognizes scientific formalism as merely a means to the analysis of concrete social phenomena. The usefulness of 'ideal types' consists in their ability to elucidate the structural logic of different forms of social life while at the same time taking into account the concrete historical context in which the social processes associated to this structural logic unfold. Representing nothing more

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than a methodological starting-point, ideal types allow us to analyze concrete social and historical situations in the same way that geometry's ideal shapes allow us to measure concrete plots of land and the laws of physics formulated in terms of 'ideal' conditions allow us to explain and control natural phenomena not occurring in these ideal conditions. To the extent that the intention of ideal types is not to make reality fit into the straitjacket of abstract models but rather to turn such models into a means to the exploration of each social and historical situation's uniqueness, it is clear that ideal types should be seen as an invaluable tool of both historical and political analysis. Indeed, the contribution of ideal types to the understanding of the specific forms that typical social processes assume in different historical contexts makes possible not only a retrospective understanding of the outcomes of past social processes but also a better analysis of the conditions confronting social and political action in the present. In this sense, ideal types can be part of an analysis that avoids both the trap of utopian voluntarism and the fatalistic powerlessness implicit in the contemplative attitude. As long as scientific formalism is recognized as a subordinate element of or a means to concrete social and political analysis of specific historical situations, its introduction into the realm of social science need not signify a capitulation to reifying models of thought that lead to a passive adaptation to existing social reality. Far from being inseparable from an acceptance of the status quo, the scientific formalism exemplified by Weber's ideal types is actually an essential precondition for any realistic political strategy seeking to subvert this status quo. Gramsci once labeled the Russian Revolution as the 'revolution against Capital.'[6] It would perhaps be more accurate to say that what made the Russian Revolution possible was the non-dogmatic use of Marxist analysis as an 'ideal type' that could not provide

[6] See 'The Revolution Against Capital' in Gramsci (1977).

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ready-made answers but had to be applied in a way that kept the historical and social specificity of Russian conditions in mind. The degeneration of the Russian revolution soon after it had brought the Bolsheviks into power does not change the fact that the Bolsheviks' 'unorthodox' use of Marxist analysis did allow them to take full advantage of the revolutionary potential in World War I Tsarist Russia. What this degeneration does show, however, is that if Russia's conditions made the Bolshevik revolution possible they also implied that -in the absence of a world or, at least, European proletarian revolution- this revolution was doomed to failure.

Weber had already pointed out the usefulness of Marxist insights as long as these insights are treated as ideal typical tools of concrete historical analysis rather than being reified into an all-encompassing philosophy of history. It should be clear by now that such a demystification of Marxist analysis is equally essential for the formulation of an adequate strategy for radical social change. The treatment of the Marxist tradition as a veritable mine from which valuable insights into typical social processes can be drawn comes to complement and concretize the replacement of a philosophy of history exemplified by the conception of history as a longitudinal totality by a concrete structural-historical analysis treating social formations as synchronic totalities. With this shift of perspective, Marxism becomes transformed from a theory which -having at last solved the riddle of history- is in a position to dictate or reveal to the proletariat the practical implications of its social and historical position to a subordinate element within an emancipatory practical project which draws from it in order to formulate its goals and determine the most adequate strategy for pursuing these goals.

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6. The Reifying Thrust of Lukacs's Critique of Reification

Having challenged Lukacs' identification of scientific formalism with the contemplative attitude, we need to discuss briefly what the true source of this attitude is. Lukacs himself sums up the contemplative attitude with the following words:

> "man in capitalist society confronts a reality 'made' by himself (as a class) which appears to him to be a natural phenomenon alien to himself; he is wholly at the mercy of its 'laws', his activity is confined to the exploitation of the inexorable fulfillment of certain individual laws for his own (egotistic) interests. But even while 'acting' he remains... the object and not the subject of events" (HCC, 135).

This passage makes clear that the contemplative attitude involves the replacement of a collective standpoint from which to experience social reality by an individual one. The individualization of humanity under capitalism obscures the fact that social reality is humanity's collective product. If social reality and its change are produced by the activity of collective social actors such as classes, the individualization of people's life, activity, and experience of social reality cannot but contribute to the reproduction of the existing social reality. Seeing themselves as nothing but individuals, people cannot but experience society as a pre-existing and alien reality that requires their adaptation to its requirements.

It is, therefore, this foregrounding of an individual standpoint at the expense of a collective one and not scientific formalism per se which produces the contemplative attitude's passive adaptation to the existing social reality. As we have seen, the raison d'etre of scientific formalism lies in its contribution to the effective practical appropriation of reality. It is the standpoint from which this practical appropriation is undertaken that determines its meaning. From the standpoint of the bourgeois individual

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engaged in commodity production scientific formalism enhances the individual's capacity to predict the trends of the market and thus to take advantage of the economic system's logic for personal advantage. From the collective standpoint of an oppressed group or a class, on the other hand, the effective appropriation of social reality presupposes not the individual's acceptance and shrewd adaptation to this reality's logic but rather a challenge to this logic through the collective pursuit of fundamental social transformation. The scientific formalism which the individual standpoint translates into the contemplative attitude's successful adaptation to the prevailing social order can -if wielded by a collective actor- turn, therefore, into the basis for the formulation of a radical oppositional strategy.

Lukacs' undifferentiated treatment of scientific formalism illustrates a crucial weakness in his proposed resolution of the antinomies of bourgeois thought. His failure to entertain the possibility of a redeployment of scientific formalism by emancipatory collective actors stems from the formulation of his critique of bourgeois thought as an immanent critique of rationalism. What is ironic about this formulation is that its structuring logic bears the stamp of the very contemplative attitude that Lukacs claims to unmask and criticize. More specifically, the contemplative attitude insinuates itself in Lukacs' analysis in the form of a misinterpretation of the distinction between system-oriented rationalism and scientific formalism. As we have seen, Lukacs encapsulates the antinomies of bourgeois thought by portraying scientific formalism as a form of rationalism that inevitably reflects the limitations of the bourgeois standpoint. These limitations take the form of insurmountable contradictions that make impossible the comprehension of all reality in a unified system. Lukacs takes up this challenge arguing

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that its fulfillment presupposes revolutionary action on the basis of the proletariat's unique standpoint. As we have seen, it is the foregrounding of the principle of history which allows -according to Lukacs- the solution of such perennial autonomies as that between 'form' and 'content', on the one hand, and 'subject' and 'object', on the other.

Despite the elegance of its proposed solution, it is not clear that Lukacs' conception avoids the pitfalls of the bourgeois modes of thought that he seeks to criticize. Lukacs' attempt to resolve the antinomy between form and content, for example, appeals to history as the only principle that can serve as the basis for 'a logic of contents which change' (HCC, 144). As we saw in the discussion of Lukacs' philosophy of history, however, the idea of a logic underlying the changing historical contents involves the kind of fetishism that Lukacs was later to attribute to Bukharin. By implicitly presupposing a trans-historical principle of social development, Lukacs' philosophy of history disengages social change from the concrete historical context and set of social relations in which this change occurs and commits the worst formalist 'sin' imaginable. More specifically, Lukacs ends up interpreting the changing social contents in terms of an underlying 'logic of change' rather than recognizing that the form in which the social wholes that represent the contents of human history change can only be understood as a result of the dynamic tendencies -or lack thereof- within these contents. We saw, for example, in our discussion of Marx that the dialectical method which Lukacs presents as the indispensable precondition for the resolution of the antinomies of bourgeois thought is best understood as an expression of capitalist modernity's peculiar dynamism. As a matter of fact, Lukacs himself recognizes that the identification -so central to dialectical thought- of an immanent meaning of reality is historically situated when he presents the

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shift from transcendental to immanent explanations as one of the major differences between the medieval and the modern outlook (HCC, 113).

Our earlier discussion of Weber's conception of the rationalization process makes the meaning of this shift in outlook clear. Indeed, we saw that the point of view of transcendence can be interpreted as the sublimation of the materialist impulse at the root of the rationalization process. This sublimation of the desire to abolish or at least drastically reduce undeserved human suffering was the best that could be accomplished in a pre-capitalist historical context that made the fulfillment of this desire impossible. With the emergence of the dynamic capitalist society, on the other hand, the fulfillment of this desire emerges for the first time in history as a realistic possibility. As the need to sublimate the desire for the reduction of undeserved suffering becomes obsolete, so does the conception of the world as a cosmic order with a transcendent meaning that made this sublimation possible in the first place. The move away from the metaphysical-transcendental point of view comes, therefore, to express humanity's newly acquired capacity to overcome its powerlessness vis-à-vis nature and to complete its appropriation of reality for its own benefit and self-development. This qualitatively new relation between humanity and its reality cannot but lead to a reversal on the level of theory of the relative importance of the two poles. From the reduction of humanity to a subordinate aspect of an all-encompassing cosmic order we move to the view of reality as the object through the appropriation of which humanity can actively and consciously pursue its own self-development.

Having explained the way in which the move from a transcendental to an immanent point of view is historically situated, we should take a closer look at the precise

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meaning of capitalist modernity's immanent outlook. By giving rise to the possibility of a drastic reduction of undeserved suffering and an infinite process of human self-development, the dynamism of capitalist modernity turns its own abolition into the only rational objective of human action. Falling prey to a dialectic that is as tragic as it is compulsive, capitalism tries to exorcise the specter of its obsolescence through a continual development that renders it ever more obsolete. This is not the whole story however. If capitalism's obsolescence consists in the artificial reproduction of scarcity, this artificial reproduction of scarcity is- in turn- the reason why capitalism can turn its dynamism into a source of legitimation. Paradoxically, it is by continually deferring the fulfillment of its promise that capitalism has for so long and with such remarkable success managed to secure the reproduction of the conditions of this deferment.

This remarkable success notwithstanding, it is clear that this is an extremely tenuous situation for the capitalist social order. The imperative to abolish capitalism which emerges as the immanent meaning of capitalism's own dynamic is also the demand -as Lukacs himself points out- for people to transform themselves from objects to subjects of the social process. What this implies, however, is people's treatment of reality as nothing more than a set of material conditions that their emancipatory action has to take into account, as a means to their goal of self-development and a richer human life. It is here that Lukacs fails. By conceiving his project as a continuation and fulfillment of the rationalist vision, he manages to turn even 'immanence' into a metaphysical principle.

The metaphysical character of 'immanence' in Lukacs' analysis therefore emerges as the result of his inability to fully explore and appropriate the implications of

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Weber's rationalization analysis. To the extent that it was inspired by the Hegelian dialectic's combination of immanence and the rationalist problematic, Lukacs' project was doomed from the beginning. Having failed to draw the full implications of his insight concerning the historically situated character of immanence, Lukacs proves unable to recognize that the decline of the transcendental standpoint is the result of the decline of the very same historical conditions that also gave rise to rationalism's ambition to comprehend reality as an all-encompassing system. Thus Lukacs' recognition of the shift from the transcendental to an immanent standpoint does not lead him to break with the conception of an overarching reality encompassing humanity as a subordinate element but simply adds to it a dynamic, historical dimension. Instead of seeing reality, therefore, as nothing more than a set of conditions the appropriation of which can lead to human emancipation, Lukacs turns reality into a trans-historical process asserting itself through human action.

In any case, his attempt to resolve the antinomies of bourgeois thought through the articulation of immanence, on the one hand, and the rationalist problematic, on the other, leads Lukacs to locate the emergence of an immanent meaning of reality not in the specific historical and social context of capitalist modernity but rather in human history as a whole. The result is a philosophy of history that ends up diluting Lukacs' insights into the specificity of modern capitalist society. Although the historical uniqueness of this society is at times recognized, the great caesura that it represents for human history tends to be obscured by the underlying historical continuity that Lukacs' philosophy of history requires.

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Lukacs' underestimation of the degree of discontinuity that the transition from pre-capitalist society to capitalist modernity represents is not, however, the only reason for the uneasy coexistence in his thought of the quintessentially modern standpoint of immanence and rationalism's metaphysically inspired ambition to comprehend every aspect of reality into a unified system. By seeing the meaning of reality as immanent in history Lukacs is capable of presenting Marxism and the class conscious proletariat's revolutionary action as the continuation and fulfillment of the rationalist project but fails to integrate in his scheme the transcendental standpoint that preceded immanence. Thus while he recognizes the association of the two competing intellectual standpoints with two different phases of human history, he does not go far enough in tracing shifts in the structural logic of intellectual outlooks to changes in the structural logic of human societies. It is for this reason that he fails to realize that the emergence of an immanent meaning of reality can in retrospect be recognized as an unprecedented shift in human outlook that would have been impossible in the absence of an equally drastic rupture in the structural logic of the society underlying this outlook.

Interestingly enough, the contradictoriness of his project to reconcile the standpoint of immanence with the rationalist vision can best be explained through a Lukacsian interpretation of Lukacs' own argument. Such an interpretation can reveal a trace of capitalist reification in Lukacs' own critique of reification. Lukacs' analysis in effect duplicates the 'contemplative' relationship to reality by assigning to this reality a logic underlying and fulfilling itself through human action. In the same way that the individual's action in capitalist society is merely the vehicle through which the imperatives of this society are satisfied the revolutionary action of the proletariat turns

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out to be nothing but the means through which the imperatives of the historical process are brought to fulfillment.

We should point out here that our identification of a trace of reification in Lukacs' analysis is not meant to deny that the latter's emphasis on an authentic class consciousness as the necessary precondition for the proletarian revolution does represent a critique of the mechanistic economism prevalent among Second International Marxists. We would claim, however, that the way Lukacs envisages the resolution of the antinomies of bourgeois thought does require the reifying implications of mechanistic economism for its conceptual coherence. Indeed, Lukacs' appeal to a unified historical process as the arena in which the dualistic dichotomies plaguing bourgeois thought become superseded goes beyond the identification of human emancipation and the transcendence of alienation as a historically situated human project. Investing the success of this project with an aura of inevitability, Lukacs' emphasis on class consciousness appears at times not so much to negate as to qualify and smooth over the rough edges of economistic determinism. Lukacs (1972) himself admits as much when he explains that

> "the transition from the old to the new society is a necessary consequence of objective economic forces and laws. For all its objective necessity, however, this transition if precisely the transition from bondage and reification to freedom and humanity. For that reason freedom cannot be regarded simply as a fruit, a result of historical development. There must arise in the development a moment where freedom itself becomes one of the driving forces" (66).

As this passage shows the function of Lukacs' philosophy of history is to establish a continuity between the reifying determinism of capitalism, on the one hand, and both what precedes it and what succeeds it, on the other. At the same time, however, it is also

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the case that the implications of Lukacs' scheme are different depending on whether it is the continuity between pre-capitalist and capitalist society or that between capitalist society and socialist revolution which is the object of analysis.

The implications of continuity in the first case end up undermining the meaningfulness of Lukacs' concept of contemplation. We have already seen that this concept is meant to evoke the passive character that the individual's activity in capitalist society inevitably assumes. This activity does not create reality but is merely reduced to a means of this reality's reproduction. As Feenberg points out, the implication of the contemplative attitude is that the individual is reduced to merely doing what would have happened anyway. Lukacs' attempt to turn history into a longitudinal totality generalizes this state of affairs seeing it, in effect, as characteristic of the entirety of human history. This, however, undermines the ability of Lukacs' philosophy of history to fulfil its intended function. This function consisted in the demonstration that -despite capitalism's reifying appearances- social reality is nothing but a human product which, for that reason, is not natural and eternal but subject to change. If Lukacs' scheme fulfils this function only inadequately this is because the very choice of philosophy of history as the form through which this function is to be fulfilled contaminates the idea of humanity's creation of its reality with the very specter of contemplative passivity that this idea sought to exorcise. The teleological character of Lukacs' conception of history as a unified process is obviously not the best way to combat the contemplative attitude's reduction of human action to the execution of what would have happened anyway. Ironically, the means through which Lukacs sought to demystify the operation and logic of capitalism ends up mystifying even the part of human history that precedes capitalism.

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We see, therefore, that Lukacs' analysis was so rooted in its capitalist social context that even its insight into the reifying thrust of this context was not enough to ensure that its answer to this thrust would be free of reifying distortions. In this sense, Lukacs' trajectory proves parallel to that of Marx the philosopher of history. Indeed, Lukacs' immanent philosophy of history followed the tendency to project back to the past the logic of capitalism, a tendency which -as we have seen-was already present in Marx's philosophy of history. In the same way that Marx turned capitalism's dynamic logic into a trans-historical principle of social change, Lukacs mistakes the immanent meaning of the unprecedented situation created by capitalism with a meaning which -although only recognizable with the advent of capitalism- is seen as immanent in the development of human history as a whole.

Thus Lukacs' misunderstanding of the standpoint of immanence lands him in the same difficulties that he had criticized in Hegel. Despite the seemingly materialist character of Lukacs' dialectic, his conception of the human creation of historical reality implies the same ambiguity concerning the identity of the creator. Parallel to Hegel's vacillation concerning the relationship between the World Spirit and the spirit of individual peoples, Lukacs' scheme too implies the instrumentalization of the specific classes of specific modes of production by a trans-historical process carried forward by humanity conceived as a trans-historical agent. In a passage that makes it clear why the later Lukacs could criticize History and Class Consciousness for attempting 'to out-Hegel Hegel' Lukacs himself provides us with the argument to be used against his own scheme. One need only replace the 'World Spirit' with humanity and the 'spirit of a people' with

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class to get a concise formulation of one of the crucial weaknesses in Lukacs' argument. Indeed, in the passage in question Lukacs criticizes Hegel by pointing out that

> "the spirit of a people only seems to be the subject of history, the doer of its deeds: for in fact it is the World Spirit that makes use of that 'natural character' of a people which corresponds to the actual requirements and to the idea of the World Spirit and accomplishes its deeds by means of and in spite of the spirit of the people. But in this way the deed becomes something transcendent for the doer himself and the freedom that seems to have been won is transformed unnoticed into that specious freedom to reflect upon laws which themselves govern man, a freedom which in Spinoza a thrown stone would possess if it had consciousness" (HCC, 146).

According to Lukacs Hegel's attempt to remedy the devious shortcomings of such an approach through a resort to the concept of 'the cunning of reason' failed in view of its inability 'to discover the identical subject-object in history' and to see history as 'the living body of the total system.' As we have seen, however, Lukacs' own claim to have identified the identical subject-object of reality is as mythological and incoherent as Hegel's vision while his attempt to fit history into a total system is precisely the source of his problems.

Having pointed out the remarkable parallel between Lukacs' scheme and that of Hegel it is important to add a qualification to this parallel. Indeed, all the discussion up to this point should make clear that when Lukacs discusses how "the deed becomes something transcendent for the doer himself" and how human consciousness is confined to a state where the most that can be achieved is the ability "to reflect upon laws which themselves govern man", it is the pre-history of human society that he is talking about. In this sense, Lukacs does not naturalize a social state in which people find themselves subjugated to social laws beyond their control. At the same time, however, it has to be pointed out that the conception of social laws which -in one form or another- is required

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by his representation of human history as a unified process does affect the way he discusses the transition from capitalist reification to revolutionary social change.

In a nutshell, we could say that Lukacs' failure to make a clean break with the economic determinism of traditional Marxist theories of crises stems from the impact of reification on his understanding of the standpoint of immanence. It is because of this impact that this standpoint is stripped from its historically situated character leading to the mystification of the common experience of unintended consequences of human action into the metaphysical conception of the 'cunning of reason'. This conception generalizes the contemplative attitude's passivity of human activity by seeing history and the emergence of capitalism not as the largely unintended consequence of the appropriation by specific social groups of a specific constellation of social and historical conditions but rather as the necessary outcome of a historical process driven forward by a trans-historical subject which only makes use of the various historically situated social groups. If the contemplative attitude under capitalism stems from the reduction of the individual into a mere bearer of capitalist economy's systemic logic, the contemplative attitude in Lukacs' scheme takes the form of a reduction of social groups to mere bearers of a historical logic which "becomes something transcendent" for them. Thus the mystification which the standpoint of immanence suffers in Lukacs' hands becomes clear in its partial restoration of the alternative transcendental point of view it was supposed to replace.

It is this weakness in his analysis that thwarts Lukacs' intention to turn the discussion of class consciousness into a means to the emancipation of Marxist thought from the bane of capitalist reification. Indeed, the proletariat's authentic class

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consciousness is held to consist -not in small part- in the recognition of both the historical logic discussed above and the tasks that this logic is supposed to imply for the proletariat. Thus we are led to the conclusion that the standpoint which Lukacs presents as immanent -even though not as yet fully realized- in the proletariat is not a source of resistance and subversion of capitalist reification but rather the latest form that this reification assumes.

Given all this, it is not surprising that -as our discussion of Lukacs' theories of capitalist crises has shown- Lukacs repeatedly has to resort to traditional Marxism's deterministic vision of capitalism's inevitable economic collapse. As is also the case with numerous other versions of Marxism, this economic determinism has important political implications insofar as it tends to lead to a particular conception of the social agent to undertake and lead the revolutionary transformation towards socialism. We have seen that traditional Marxism's economic determinism is intimately related to a philosophy of history that seeks to found its belief in the necessity of socialist revolution upon a trans-historical theory of social change. It is only such a theory that can provide any attempt to depict the entirety of human history as a unified process with a modicum of conceptual coherence and thus plausibility. Once the mechanism of social change is identified with the eventual onset of insurmountable economic contradictions, it becomes clear that all of the structural elements of the philosophy of history in question have to assume an economic character. Indeed, if economic contradictions are to be found at the root of a social system's insurmountable crisis, the primary task of revolutionary change is to reorganize the economic system and the social relations upon which this system is founded. To the extent, moreover, that it is class relations that seem most proximately connected to the operation, development, and eventual decline of economic systems,

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classes become the privileged agents of revolutionary change. Thus history becomes reinterpreted as a series of stages defined by their economic systems and the class relations and conflicts corresponding to them.

It becomes clear therefore that our extended discussion of the Marxist philosophy of history has more than a purely academic value. What is at stake is not simply the accuracy of our understanding of the past but the conceptualization of the vision and social base of the emancipatory struggle against alienation. It also becomes clear that our insistence in the first chapter that socialism cannot be understood as little more than an alternative economic system is closely connected to our critique of that tendency in Marxist theory that hopes to provide nothing less than a complete philosophy of history. The unraveling of this economistic philosophy of history cannot but be completed with the reconceptualization of the likely social agent(s) of radical change. This reconceptualization has of course to be in line with the non-economistic understanding of socialism we argued for in the first chapter. If we see socialism as a society which has abolished all forms of social oppression making room for a rearticulation of the 'realm of the necessity' and the 'realm of freedom' in which the democratic reorganization of the former would allow humanity's infinite self-development in the latter, we already start getting a new picture. To start with, it becomes clear that it is not only the working-class that has an interest in the realization of such a society. Since the victims of all different forms of social oppression would benefit from it, it becomes clear that the working class loses its privileged position in the struggle for socialism.

At a time when 'identity politics' has almost become a household term, one might wonder whether there are elements in the structuring logic of the present society that

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could facilitate the transformation of all the oppressed groups' abstract common interest into a concrete emancipatory strategy based on a coalition of all these groups. In the chapter on Weber we discussed a crucial structural contradiction in capitalist society that touches on this question. We are referring of course to the fact that capitalism artificially reproduces scarcity even as it creates the technological preconditions for its conquest. Scarcity becomes a crucial question because the attitude that the various oppressed groups adopt towards it can make the difference between a divisive squabbling between oppressed groups aiming at as high a proportion of the crumbs conceded to them by the really privileged groups and an emancipatory coalition against capitalism which would recognize that putting an end to the artificial reproduction of scarcity is the necessary precondition for the abolition of all social oppression and the infinite pursuit of human self-development.

Capitalism's dialectic of scarcity provides us with another vantage-point from which to examine Lukacs' discussion of reification and totality. More specifically, this dialectic shows us that -even after the rejection of Lukacs' philosophy of history and his privileging of the proletarian standpoint for implicitly reproducing the reification they seek to condemn- it is still possible to make use of concepts such as the contemplative attitude and the naturalization of social relations as part of a more viable understanding of capitalist society.

7. Organized Capitalism and the 'Rationalization' of Reification

One of the main weaknesses in Lukacs' argument stems from the fact that this argument's premise can only be understood as historically situated in a socio-economic

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context that capitalism has in the meantime surpassed. More specifically, Lukacs' development of the reification thesis is best suited to analyze the premises of classical bourgeois political economy and the stage of liberal competitive capitalism. Living at a time when this model of capitalist development had started reaching its limits, Lukacs could already discern some of the changes that were ultimately to be consolidated into a new, more monopolistic and 'organized' form of capitalism. Lukacs' teleological assumptions, however, led him to the same path that -as we saw in the first chapter- Marx had taken when interpreting liberal capitalism's signs of evolution. Refusing to even consider the possibility that such changes could eventually be consolidated into a new and -at least for a time- coherent stage of capitalism Lukacs too chose to interpret them as unmistakable signs of capitalism's irreversible bankruptcy. Indeed, interpreting attempts to facilitate capitalism's evolution into a new stage as 'an unfailing sign of decay' of a bourgeoisie whose "power to dominate has vanished beyond recall". Lukacs dismisses the movement towards a more monopolistic and 'organized' form of capitalism as a purely transitory phenomenon. In his view

> "When capitalism was still expanding it rejected every sort of social organization on the grounds that it was 'an inroad upon such sacred things as the rights of property, freedom and unrestricted play for the initiative of the individual capitalist.' If we compare that with current attempts to harmonize a 'planned' economy with the class interests of the bourgeoisie, we are forced to admit that what we are witnessing is the capitulation of the class consciousness of the bourgeoisie before that of the proletariat. Of course, the section of the bourgeoisie that accepts the notion of a 'planned' economy does not mean by it the same as does the proletariat: it regards it as a last attempt to save capitalism by driving its internal contradictions to breaking-point" (HCC, 67).

We have already seen that the belief that any attempt to resolve capitalist crises can only result to the exacerbation or return of these crises on a higher level is part and parcel of a

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deterministic economism that helps to provide the Marxist philosophy of history with a scientific aura. The passage just quoted takes us a step farther because it helps clarify the connection between Lukacs' philosophy of history and his characterization of the standpoint of the bourgeoisie. As we have seen this standpoint is exemplified by the contemplative attitude which -mirroring the experience of the individual in the capitalist market- turns social reality into a second nature which the individual cannot change but can only adapt to. The fact that Lukacs' philosophy of history precludes the development of capitalism beyond its liberal-competitive stage also implies therefore that his conception of the bourgeois standpoint and the reification that this standpoint embodies is also valid only within that particular stage. Thus the consolidation of the new, monopolistic and organized stage of capitalism does not only challenge Lukacs' philosophy of history but also implies the need to update his understanding of reification. Lukacs' claim that the bourgeoisie's talk of the socialization of the economy represents a 'capitulation of the class consciousness of the bourgeoisie before that of the proletariat' becomes with the restructuring of 20th-century capitalism along such reformist lines a retrospective admission that his analysis of the structure of bourgeois thought is not compatible with the new stage of capitalism that did - despite Lukacs' own predictions- manage to consolidate itself.

Indeed, although the emergence of the new stage of capitalism did not by any means put an end to the illusory character of the dominant ideology, one has to admit that the new illusions that organized capitalism brought with it seem to be predicated on premises that are not just different from but indeed diametrically opposed to the form of capitalist reification that the contemplative attitude represents. If this contemplative

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attitude bears witness to the powerlessness of the individual when confronted with an autonomized economic system capable of imposing its logic upon her, the state's growing intervention and regulation of the economy - clearly prefigured by those bourgeois circles which, as Lukacs tells us, sought in socialization a remedy to liberal capitalism's crisis- is more compatible to a legitimation that -from a superficial point of view- can claim to be invulnerable to and indeed completely in line with Lukacs' strictures against capitalist reification.

Indeed, one of the remarkable features of organized capitalism seems its ability to appropriate Lukacs' critique of liberal capitalist reification in a way that turns this critique into a legitimation of a new form of capitalist reification. If Lukacs' critique took issue with liberal capitalist reification's concealment of the fact that society is nothing but a human product that can be changed and consciously shaped through collective human action, organized capitalism seeks to legitimize itself not by concealing humanity's capacity to create its social reality but by affirming it in a way that does not see humanity's free and conscious creation of society as a revolutionary task but rather as an already existing reality. The growing influence of the state on the operation of the capitalist economy, the integration of the working-class into the polity through the recognition of labor unions and the emergence of working-class parties, the attainment of universal suffrage and the introduction of a welfare state are all interconnected features of organized capitalism which create the appearance that contemporary society is indeed the product of humanity's conscious, free and democratic collective action. As Perry Anderson (1976-7) points out, the distinctiveness of contemporary capitalism's self-legitimation lies in

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> "a belief by the masses that they exercise an ultimate self-determination within the existing social order. It is ... credence in the democratic equality of all citizens in the government of the nation - in other words, disbelief in the existence of any ruling class" (30).

We should point out here, however, that Anderson's intention in this passage is not to contrast the legitimating ideologies of capitalism's two stages. Rather than making distinctions internal to capitalism, Anderson is more interested in establishing the difference between capitalist and pre-capitalist (especially feudal) forms of ideological legitimation. His appeal to parliamentary democracy as a justification for his claim that "[t]he consent of the exploited in a capitalist social formation is thus of a qualitatively new type" seems to suggest an a-historical conflation of capitalism and democracy. Indeed, one should not forget that even in some of the most advanced capitalist countries parliamentary democracy and universal suffrage did not become an integral element of capitalist development until after the consolidation of organized capitalism. In this sense, the argument that parliamentary democracy represents the 'normal' form of capitalism's ideological legitimation proves guilty of an error that is the symmetrical opposite of that of Lukacs. Indeed, while Lukacs equated capitalism with liberal, competitive capitalism thus precluding the possibility that a new stage of capitalism could emerge out of the decline of its liberal, competitive stage, Anderson's claim seems to equate capitalism with its present, organized form, thus making the opposite teleological error of forgetting that this later form of capitalism might never have arisen if the crisis of liberal, competitive capitalism had been resolved in a different way (for example, through the proletarian revolution that Lukacs was hoping for).

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Given all this, it becomes clear that a critique of contemporary capitalist society cannot content itself with a discussion of the contemplative attitude but also has to address its opposite, namely the appearance that the reality of advanced capitalist societies is produced on the basis of people's democratically expressed collective will. One only has to point out the great and growing economic inqualities around the world to see how illusory capitalist democracy really is. It is quite obvious that the concentration of wealth and productive resources in the hands of a relatively small group of people gives them enough of a disproportionate amount of power over democratically elected governments as to transform the average citizen's right to vote into a cruel joke. Indeed, global capital possesses a vast arsenal of weapons it can and has in the past wielded against governments that follow social and economic policies that do not meet its approval. Ranging from military intervention and coups against democratically elected reformist governments to the financing of pliable political forces; the mediation of international economic organizations such as the International Monetary Fund and the World Bank; the use of debt to blackmail entire countries into submission; the use of the media to transmogrify these practices into noble causes such as the pursuit of freedom (often through the support for brutal authoritarian or even quasi-fascistic dictators), economic development and progress; and - perhaps most importantly- the use of investment strike, the mere specter of which can do wonders for teaching governments and the citizens who are called on to elect them to become more 'realistic', 'pragmatic' and 'moderate' in their expectations and aspirations, this arsenal makes it possible -more often than not- for global capital to put democracy on hold for as long as material scarcity is the order of the day.

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Thus we have once again come back to the question of capitalism's dialectic of scarcity. It is this dialectic that accounts not only for the emergence of the struggle against alienation as the immanent meaning of capitalist modernity but also for a reconstitution of reification that makes both the recognition and the realization of this meaning more difficult. This new form of reification does not perform its legitimizing function by directly portraying capitalist society as natural, unchangeable and eternal. Helping to purge some of the metaphysical residues in this portrayal of capitalist society by classical political economy, this new form of reification can be seen as a historically situated rationalization of reification itself. As we have seen, Lukacs' analysis of reification had liberal, competitive capitalism as its referent and source of inspiration. It was above all at this stage that the market reached a maximum degree of autonomization stemming from its perception as a self-contained system with in-built mechanisms for mediating social relations in a continuous and orderly fashion. The discovery and practical introduction of the market as a form of social totalization allowed the conceptualization of capitalist society in terms of a more or less secularized version of the view of reality as an all-encompassing cosmic order. It is this continuity between an essentially pre-modern metaphysical world-view and the standpoint created by liberal competitive capitalism which accounts for both the metaphysical elements in classical political economy and Lukacs' attempt to resolve the antinomies of bourgeois thought through the fulfillment of rationalism's ambition to comprehend reality as a unified system. In this sense, Lukacs' scheme was as indebted to the standpoint of liberal competitive capitalism as it was critical of it. His insistence that capitalist society be seen as a human product that has to be analyzed dynamically may have implied a criticism of

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the static and non-anthropocentric character of metaphysical systems but did not effect a full break with their structuring logic. Indeed, although Lukacs was right to emphasize that social reality is a human product which is not static but subject to change, his failure to realize that such a recognition is a necessary but not sufficient condition for seeing through capitalist reification stemmed from his equation of capitalism with liberal, competitive capitalism.

This is the case because the restructuring of reification that organized capitalism brought with it is not only compatible with the recognition of the human origin and dynamic character of social reality but is even founded upon the basis of this recognition. The relationship between capitalism's dialectic of scarcity and this restructuring of reification stems from the fact that under organized capitalism scarcity becomes the site par excellence of the blurring of the boundaries between society and nature that allows reification's naturalization of social reality. Scarcity actually plays this reifying role through an appropriation of the human origin and dynamic character of social reality that turns them from a challenge to a source of reification.

Scarcity provides the horizon of human experience in contemporary capitalist society much as the contemplative attitude the horizon of individual experience in liberal competitive capitalist society. While capitalism may raise the specter of a radically different, more rational society that would use capitalism's technological achievements to conquer scarcity, satisfy human needs and enrich people's everyday life, the continual reproduction of scarcity that capitalism also entails means that it is above all scarcity which constitutes people's lived reality and which therefore shapes their experience of this reality, their attitudes and priorities and their relations to other people. The fact that

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the irreducibility of scarcity under capitalism constitutes the subjects of this society into who they are understandably tends to reduce the specter of an emancipated society beyond scarcity to an abstract, utopian idea that –even when exposed to it- people cannot quite relate to their existence in the present.

Indeed, although the irreducible presence of scarcity in capitalist society cannot but be experienced as an oppressive or -to be more precise- unfortunate reality, it is precisely people's constant struggle with scarcity that makes it harder for them to envisage the meaning of an emancipated society beyond scarcity. Finding themselves in a precarious state requiring the devotion of most of their time and energy to securing the means to survival, the more or less propertyless masses cannot but find the quasi-aesthetic vision of infinite self-development in an emancipated society's 'realm of freedom' as hopelessly abstract and incomprehensible. Illustrating its hold over the horizons of human experience, capitalism's artificially reproduced scarcity proves therefore capable of reconciling humanity's discontent with the imperatives of its persistence.

This is not all however. These problems are compounded by the fact that contemporary capitalism's structural logic seems to undermine the very meaningfulness of the vision of a society that has conquered scarcity. Indeed, one of the symptoms of the integration of the working class into the mainstream of advanced capitalist societies was the rise of consumerism. This rise of consumerism to an essential precondition for the smooth reproduction of capitalist society has produced a revolutionization of the capitalist subject's need structure comparable to capitalism's revolutionization of the production process. The result is an incessant, conscious and manipulative multiplication

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of human needs. Capitalist dynamism has historically been able to sustain itself not just through the extension of its reach to new territories and markets but also through an ever more intense colonization of human nature.

The meaning of this dynamic is, however, ambiguous. A new contradiction appears as the capitalist system's spontaneous tendency to neutralize and render innocuous the dialectic of scarcity that it compulsively generates can only succeed at the cost of giving rise to a new contradiction. Interestingly enough, the two poles of this contradiction are drawn along the lines of the opposition between nature and society. While capitalist reification tries to reestablish itself by interpreting consumerism as a sign of the insatiability of human nature, critical theory cannot but respond that this so-called 'human nature' is as much a human product and thus subject to change as external Nature itself. Thus the very presence of an extensive, thriving sector of the capitalist economy which nurtures consumerism by aggressively bombarding the general public with commercials and advertisements gives rise to conflicting interpretations that reflect the difference between the individualist standpoint and that of critical Marxist political economy. By analyzing consumerism as the joint product of the insatiability of human nature and the individual's pursuit of self-interest, mainstream economics tends to push the embeddedness of consumerism in a very specific socio-economic context to the background. Thus the infinite and manipulative multiplication of needs for commodities is itself de-historicized allowing this perpetually reproduced scarcity to appear not as the result of a historically determinate social process but rather as an existential constant.

For this reason, it is around the question of scarcity that the reified character of contemporary economic thought revolves. Incidentally this is a point that more often

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than not is ignored in the attacks against marginalist economics routinely leveled by the few remaining Marxist economists clinging to their orthodoxy. Tending to treat Capital and Marx's other economic writings as textbooks of economics rather than critiques of political economy, orthodox Marxist economists do not pay enough attention to the implications of the fact that Marx's intention was not simply to replace the falsity of bourgeois economic thought with his own correct theory of capitalism's functioning and development but also to show that the categories and logic of bourgeois economic thought simply give expression to the form in which capitalist social relations appear to its individual 'bearers'. Once this latter aspect of Marx's analysis is recognized, the simple rejection of marginalist economics in the name of Marx's immanent development of classical political economy cannot but be interpreted as a failure to apply historical materialism's insight into the social-historical embeddedness of human thought to Marxism itself. The result is a violation of the spirit of Marx's analysis that prevents his orthodox followers to recognize in the shift of the forms of bourgeois economic thought a parallel shift in the structure and logic of the capitalist society underlying these forms. Proving themselves more a-historical than the intellectual representatives of the capitalist status quo that they hope to criticize, the adherents to Marxist economic orthodoxy simply ignore the obvious fact that to the extent that Marxist analysis constitutes a critique of political economy, it has to evolve along with the object of its critique.

The transformation of bourgeois economic thought's reification is also its rationalization. Having broken with the metaphysical reverence for the natural laws moving the 'invisible hand' of the market, mainstream economic theory develops in a manner fully consistent with Weber's conception of ideal types. As Marx himself made

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clear the critique of bourgeois economic thought's reifying thrust is not to be confused with a wholesale rejection which would deny that this thought has anything of value to offer. Thus Marx argued that by taking the concept of value for granted, classical political economy did manage to reach all the scientific insights that its bourgeois standpoint made possible. What classical political economy could not have done, on the other hand, was to thematize the social and historical significance of the concept of value. Thus its naturalization of capitalist social reality stemmed from its failure to perceive that the fact that "labor is expressed in value" (Capital I, 174) is not "as much a self-evident and nature-imposed necessity as productive labor itself" but rather the mark of a historically specific and changeable "social formation in which the process of production has mastery over man, instead of the opposite" (Capital I, 175).

In the same vein, it could be argued that the critique of the reification perpetrated by contemporary mainstream economic theory does not presuppose that all the ideal types developed by this theory are invalid and useless. Taking for granted the presence of material scarcity in capitalist society, mainstream economics does manage to develop certain theoretical tools that could help understand the workings of capitalist markets. At the same time, however, mainstream economics shares the shortcoming of classical political economy that -as we have seen- Marx was the first to articulate and criticize. More specifically, contemporary mainstream economics turns material scarcity into an unexamined foundation. This weakness of mainstream economics is also related to its failure to probe into the social and historical dimension of the concept that exemplifies the new standpoint that marginalist economics introduced into economic theory. This concept is of course that of utility. Given the fact that marginalist economics consciously

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attempted to turn consumer preferences into a foundational element of economic theory, it is all the more remarkable how complacently it has tended to take such preferences for granted, treating them as a given fact which -although fundamental to the operation of capitalist markets- is supposed to originate outside the economic system. The result is the integration of consumer preferences into a basically individualist framework of economic analysis. Failing to recognize the degree to which consumer needs and preferences are endogenously produced by the capitalist economy, mainstream economics naively affirms the sovereignty of the consumer. Thus the alienation and degeneration of humanity's infinite capacity for self-development and an autonomous cultivation of its needs and collective nature that consumerism represents is transformed by mainstream economics into its opposite, namely the capacity of capitalist markets to provide an efficient means to the satisfaction of humanity's insatiable needs. Having driven the analysis of its fundamental concept beyond the confines of its theoretical domain, mainstream economics manages to transmogrify the socialization of scarcity that its artificial reproduction by capitalism implies into human society's most efficient line of defense against a scarcity presented as an irreducible fact of life.

We see therefore that in contemporary capitalist society reification assumes a different form than the one described by Lukacs. The naturalization of capitalist society no longer has to appeal to a vision of society as an unchangeable total system, which is experienced by its subjects as a 'second nature'. The latter conception, which amounts to little more than a secularization of the traditional metaphysical view of the world as an all-encompassing cosmic order, is replaced by the non-metaphysical conception of the world as a reality that people appropriate and change in the course of pursuing their

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objectives. No longer experienced as an unchangeable 'second nature', capitalist society is now seen as an effective instrument of change aimed at the control and mastery of nature.

In this sense, if mature capitalism's dialectic of scarcity creates a potentially explosive contradiction, it also gives rise to new forms of mystification that revolve around the obfuscation of the boundaries between society and nature. We already pointed out that capitalism's artificial reproduction of scarcity can be seen as a socialization of scarcity. It is clear that the meaningfulness of this last concept stems from the fact that the level of technological development made possible by capitalism has so advanced humanity's technical mastery over nature as to remove the natural character that scarcity had in pre-capitalist societies. Although from an analytical point of view this distinction between an unmediated, 'natural' scarcity and an artificial, socially induced scarcity is clear enough, this distinction is not necessarily felt by the victims of scarcity in capitalist society. The sufferings that this scarcity inflicts on capitalism's victims are not any less painful just because their origin is social rather than natural. Thus the objective socialization of scarcity is not necessarily a part of the individual's everyday, subjective experience. Indeed scarcity's social aspect is harder to recognize because it is not directly visible or experienced but has to be deduced indirectly. This is so because the only way that scarcity's social aspect can make its presence felt is through a reality that does not yet exist, namely a rational society that would allow the use of capitalism's technological achievements to satisfy human needs and provide the material preconditions for humanity's self-development. In this sense, the everyday experience of scarcity that the average individual has in capitalist society proves

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complementary to the reifying naturalization of material scarcity perpetrated by mainstream economics. Foregrounding capitalism's capacity to create the technological preconditions for the alleviation of material scarcity while obscuring the relationship of capitalist dynamism to the complementary process whereby scarcity is constantly and artificially reproduced, this experience gives credence to the ideology of linear and gradual progress. The persistence of material scarcity is not recognized for the mark of capitalism's obsolescence and irrationality that it really is but becomes interpreted as the mere instantiation of a linear process leading asymptotically towards the complete conquest of this scarcity. The powerful hold of the reification generated by organized capitalism over our understanding of the workings of capitalist society becomes especially obvious when the undialectical thinking that this reification engenders leads even the most brilliant mainstream economists to the most grotesque and extravagant conclusions. One need only point to arguably the greatest theorist of mainstream economics, Keynes, who -as Heilbronner (1986) tells us- in one of his books expressed the belief that

> "by the year 2030... the economic problem might be solved -not just the immediate crimp of depression, but the economic problem itself, the age-old fact of Not Enough to Go Around. For the first time in history, mankind -British mankind, at any rate- would have emerged from a struggle against want into a new milieu in which everybody could with ease be given a generous helping at the communal table" (288).

Being already closer to the year 2030 than to the time of Keynes' book in question we cannot but smile at the thought of everybody being "given a generous helping at the communal table". What we have experienced instead is the coexistence of rapid technological development, on the one hand, and both growing economic inequality and

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the decimation of those welfare states that organized capitalism had made possible, on the other.

At the same time, the claim by Keynes that Heilbronner mentions shows a differentiation within the camp of mainstream economic thought. Keynes could be seen as a representative of the left wing of this camp. Made up by left liberals and social democrats this group of thinkers would tend to subscribe to a linear, gradualist conception of progress which -ignoring the socialization of scarcity effected by capitalism- would envisage the future as a march towards greater prosperity, more equal opportunity and a more just society always coming closer to the promised land beyond scarcity. The right wing of this camp would of course not reject the left wing's equation of capitalist development with progress but would be less likely to share its utopian visions. Being more concerned with ensuring that no one but capitalists can be a free rider, this right wing would naturalize scarcity in an even more direct way. The difference between these two wings can also be illustrated by their respective views concerning the so-called 'economic problem.' While the right wing would see this economic problem as an irreducible fact of existence, the left wing would project its resolution into a future that will of course never arrive. In both cases the reification of the dialectical logic of capitalist social developments into a quasi-natural, technical process provides the theoretical basis for the ideological justification of the status quo.

This analysis allows us to see Lukacs' critique of Social Democratic reformism in a different light. We have already seen Lukacs' reference to the discussions in certain bourgeois circles of his time concerning socialization. Interpreting such discussions as a sign of "the capitulation of the class consciousness of the bourgeoisie before that of the

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proletariat" Lukacs notes with evident surprise that this supposed capitulation seems to coexist with its opposite. Indeed, Lukacs tells us in a parenthetical note that "[a]s a strange counterpart to this we may note that at just this point in time certain sectors of the proletariat capitulate before the bourgeoisie" (HCC, 67). This is only one of the many instances in which Lukacs denounces the betrayal by reformist Social Democrats of the proletariat's revolutionary mission but what makes it especially interesting in retrospect is its illustration of the constraints that Lukacs' teleological philosophy of history imposed on his understanding of the dynamic tendencies of capitalist society. We have already seen that the very fact that the bourgeoisie could contemplate the possibility of socializing the economy challenges Lukacs' claim that reification implied the experience of capitalist society as natural, eternal and unchangeable. We have also seen that Lukacs refused to even consider the possibility that the bourgeoisie's new-found interest in questions of socialization might presage the emergence of a new stage of capitalism. It is this a priori refusal that accounts for Lukacs' embarrassing as well as puzzling conclusion that somehow both the bourgeoisie and the proletariat had managed to capitulate to each other. In retrospect, it is of course clear that reformist Social Democracy's 'capitulation' to the bourgeoisie was not so much the opposite of but rather the complement to the enlightened bourgeoisie's 'capitulation' to the standpoint of the proletariat. Indeed, the integration of the working class into the polity and the mainstream of capitalist society that was mediated by the rise of the reformist Social Democratic and Labor parties as well as by the recognition of the workers' right to organize themselves into labor unions as a means to improving the conditions and rewards associated to the alienation of their

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labor power was as central an element of organized capitalism as the state's growing intervention in the economy presaged by the bourgeoisie's discussion of socialization.

Given all this, we cannot but re-evaluate the meaning of the phenomena observed by Lukacs. Such a re-evaluation makes it possible not only to understand the truth behind the puzzling paradox that -as we have just seen- Lukacs is forced to recognize but also to explain why Lukacs chooses not to explore the source and implications of this seemingly paradoxical phenomenon. First of all, it would be interesting to discuss some of the implications of Lukacs' paradoxical conclusion for his discussion of reification. To begin with, capitalism's crisis seems according to Lukacs both to allow wide sectors of the bourgeoisie to emancipate themselves -at least partly- from the ideological impact of reification while making the class that -according to his own account- is uniquely positioned to see through this reification susceptible to a Social-Democratic reformism that bears the stamp of reification by "artificially cancel[ing] out the mediations so laboriously won and forc[ing] the proletariat back into its immediate existence where it is merely a component of capitalist society and not at the same time the motor that drives it to its doom and destruction" (HCC, 196). It is clear that the implications of this paradox represent the symmetrical opposite position to the one that Lukacs seeks to develop in History and Class Consciousness.

Why does Lukacs, then, not choose to explore this paradox farther? Why does he fail to recognize and interpret the fact that the paradox he refers to in passing seems to challenge one of the most fundamental premises of his argument? The answer -which the benefit of hindsight makes easier to recognize- to these questions is that the resolution of this paradox leads to the challenge of another, even more central premise of Lukacs'

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argument, that concerning the character of human history as a unified historical process driven towards its socialist telos. While Lukacs was right to interpret phenomena such as the First World War, the Russian Revolution and the bourgeoisie's interest in the socialization of the economy as signs of capitalist crisis and the end of an era, he was wrong to assume that this crisis could only be resolved through a proletarian revolution. We have seen of course that even within Lukacs we can find the elements for a non-deterministic, open-ended conception of historical development. We have also shown that Lukacs' theory of capitalist crisis is not homogeneous and have located within it a submerged strand that challenges the teleological assumptions that inform the predominant aspect of Lukacs' analysis. The resolution of the paradox in question that we are proposing is fully compatible with the submerged, non-teleological and open-ended strand in Lukacs' thinking.

An obvious implication of this more open-ended strand of Lukacs' thinking is that although a period of deep, structural social crisis can only be a transitional period eventually leading to a new social structure capable -at least for a time- of functioning well enough to restore social order and stability, the new structure that emerges from the period of social conflict and turmoil cannot be determined in advance since it is a function of both the reactions of different social groups to this crisis and these groups' interaction with each other. It is for this reason that Lukacs' emphasis on class consciousness constitutes a valuable contribution to the Marxist tradition. The clarity of the social consciousness of the different groups as well as the reshuffling of the field of power that a deep, structural social crisis implies are both crucial factors that will help decide the exact form that the resolution of the crisis will take. Applying this analysis to

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the capitalist crisis that served as an inspiration for the writing of History and Class Consciousness we can make our recognition that proletarian revolution was not the only possible outcome of this crisis the basis for the resolution of Lukacs' paradoxical claim.

As both Marx and Lukacs recognize, the internal dynamics of competitive capitalism led both to a gradual evolution of its structure and a series of economic crises. The effect of both of these phenomena could not but challenge the form of reification that -according to Lukacs- was organically produced by the structural logic of capitalist society. On the one hand, the gradual evolution in the structure of 19th century capitalism that was mediated and encouraged by the regularly recurring cycles of economic crisis could only undermine the appearance of the economic system as unchangeable and eternal. Thus, although Marx may have started Capital with the analysis of commodity fetishism that underlies Lukacs' elaboration of all the ramifications of capitalist reification, he went on to show that competitive capitalism's internal logic ended up producing its opposite, namely a centralization of capital that rendered capitalism ever more monopolistic. This long-term development was not only facilitated by competitive capitalism's recurring cyclical crises. The more this development advanced, the more the obsolescence of competitive capitalism's socio-economic framework became felt and the more cyclical crises became upstaged by the signs of a deeper, structural crisis. With the shift from 'normal', routine cyclical crises to a more permanent state of structural crisis, the very function of economic crises itself shifted. While in the phase of competitive capitalism's development cyclical crises had a 'cathartic' function that helped restore the conditions for renewed accumulation on an expanded basis, the onset of structural crisis after competitive capitalism's maturation and gradual transformation into an incipient

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monopoly capitalism eventually led to a series of reforms that consolidated the evolution of capitalist economy's structure by bringing the social-institutional framework of the economy in line with the new reality.

Understandably, the structural evolution of capitalist economy could not but be accompanied by a shift in the forms of consciousness engendered by it. In the same way that this evolution of capitalist economy challenged the appearance of social reality as unchangeable and eternal, the conscious political transformation of capitalist economy's social-institutional framework put in effect an end to the contemplative attitude that Lukacs associated with capitalist reification. Given all this, it becomes possible to decipher the puzzling paradox pointed out but not explored by Lukacs. The 'enlightened' bourgeoisie's talk about socialization and the reformist Social Democracy's simultaneous 'capitulation' to the bourgeoisie no longer appear as a paradoxical shift of positions between a bourgeoisie condemned by its social position to an inability to extricate itself from the immediacy of its standpoint and a proletariat composed of workers who also "by virtue of [their] class situation" are all "orthodox Marxist[s]- however unconscious of the fact [they themselves are] initially". As we have seen Lukacs' paradoxical identification of the bourgeoisie's and the proletariat's mutual 'capitulation' to each other rested on the assumption that liberal, competitive capitalism's crisis could only be resolved through a proletarian revolution. Once we discard this assumption, this paradoxical mutual capitulation can be reinterpreted as both a sign of the decline of liberal capitalism's form of reification and a partial convergence of class outlooks that created the potential for a new ideological 'consensus' which could help consolidate a new, restructured form of capitalism.

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We have already seen that the replacement of competitive liberal capitalism by organized capitalism did not lead to the abolition of reification but only to a change in its form. We have also seen that the new form of reification revolves around the question of scarcity and that the Social Democratic narrative ended up representing merely the left-wing of organized capitalism's reification. The reification characteristic of Social Democratic discourses did not consist therefore in the representation of capitalism as a natural, unchangeable and eternal social order but rather in the obfuscation of the socialization of scarcity effected by capitalism. Placing its hopes on capitalism's economic and technological dynamism, it tends to transform scarcity into a natural, technical reality that can be gradually contained and reduced through the redistribution of the fruits of capitalist growth. The result is an undialectical ideology of progress which - by concealing capitalism's dialectic of scarcity- ends up portraying capitalism as an unambiguously progressive force. The fact that it is precisely capitalism's progressive historical function which has -with the maturation of the capitalist system- turned it into the ground of its obsolescence falls out of view. What remains is the mirage of a 'capitalism with a human face' based on a conquest of scarcity that keeps receding into the distant horizon the more we attempt to approach it through successive technological revolutions.

In this sense, Lukacs (1972) is more right than he himself realizes when -in delineating radical Marxism's relation to Social Democracy- he argues that

> "[o]ur criticism should... no longer be directed primarily against the bourgeoisie (on whom history has long since passed judgement), but rather against the right wing and the center of the workers' movement, against social democracy, without whose assistance capitalism would not have the slightest prospect in any country of overcoming, even temporarily, its present crisis" (62-3).

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[1] See Lukacs (1972), 77.

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What makes this declaration especially interesting is that it can be interpreted as representing the beginnings of an adequate realization of Social Democracy's true meaning. Here Social Democracy is not seen as a capitulation to the bourgeoisie but as a force taking its place. Indeed, the bourgeoisie is seen as completely bankrupt and dependent on social democracy for "overcoming, even temporarily, [capitalism's] present crisis." This is the closer that Lukacs comes to realizing that the true meaning of Social Democracy may not consist in keeping the working-class entrapped into the reified forms of consciousness generated by liberal competitive capitalism but in helping capitalism restructure itself not only socially and economically but also ideologically.

In most of his other discussions of reification and Social Democracy, by contrast, Lukacs fails to heed his own advice. Instead of recognizing that what makes Social Democracy the enemy is the contribution it can make to the restructuring of both capitalism's socio-economic structure and the reification that this structure engenders, Lukacs discerns in Social Democracy the ideological impact of liberal capitalist reification. Thus by obscuring the stakes and nature of the social struggles ushered in by the crisis of liberal competitive capitalism, Lukacs unwittingly contributes to the materialization of that resolution of the crisis which he considered not only undesirable but also impossible.

8. Rethinking 'Imputed Consciousness': Capitalism's Dialectic of Scarcity and the Reconceptualization of Emancipatory Politics

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More generally, Lukacs' failure to even consider the possibility of a reconstitution of capitalist reification on a new basis prevents him from realizing the full ideological implications of capitalism's dialectic of scarcity. Capitalism's creation of the technological preconditions for the conquest of scarcity renders -by virtue of the fact that it raises the specter of a non-alienated society allowing both the enrichment of every individual's life and the infinite development of the collective human nature- obsolete a social life based on the intersection of numerous conflicts among different social groups. By creating the possibility of a radically different society genuinely compatible to humanity's general interest and beneficial to every single human being living in it, capitalism creates an unprecedented convergence of interests between the oppressors and the oppressed. This realization leads to an interesting qualification of Lukacs' discussion of class consciousness. This discussion is based on the contrast between the actual consciousness of the various individual members of a class and an ideal-typical rational consciousness adequate to an individual's class position. Lukacs explains the meaning of his ideal-typical concept of 'imputed consciousness' in the following words:

> "By relating consciousness to the whole of society it becomes possible to infer the thoughts and feelings which men would have in a particular situation if they were able to assess both it and the interests arising from it in their impact on immediate action and on the whole structure of society. That is to say, it would be possible to infer the thoughts and feelings appropriate to their objective situation... class consciousness consists in fact of the appropriate and rational reactions 'imputed' [zugerechnet] to a particular typical position in the process of production. This consciousness is, therefore, neither the sum nor the average of what is thought or felt by the simple individuals who make up the class. And yet the historically significant actions of the class are determined in the last resort by this consciousness and not by the thought of the individual - and these actions can be understood only by reference to this consciousness" (HCC, 51).

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What is striking about this passage is that although its introduction of the concept of an imputed class consciousness is meant to undermine liberal capitalist reification's hold on the consciousness of the proletariat, it unwittingly perpetrates the kind of reification revolving around scarcity that -as we have seen- characterizes organized capitalism. This is the case because -as was noted above- capitalism's creation of the technological preconditions for a non-alienated, classless, non-oppressive society creates a radically new situation that implicitly poses a challenge to the traditional assumption that the interests of the oppressors are necessarily opposed to those of the oppressed. The validity of this traditional assumption presupposes a set of historical conditions in which the existence of scarcity is inevitable. Under such circumstances, it is clear that the privileged way of life of the oppressors indeed presupposes the poverty and material deprivation of the oppressed. With the eclipse of such circumstances, on the other hand, it becomes possible to attain a non-alienated society that would benefit all individuals independently of the social group they belonged to under capitalism.

In this sense, although it is true that the counterfactual assumption upon which Lukacs bases the ideal-typical concept of imputed class consciousness does indeed have interesting and useful implications, these implications are not the ones Lukacs has in mind. The unprecedented situation created by capitalism implies a shift whereby the individual's rational evaluation of her 'objective situation' and 'the interests arising from it' would no longer point towards her alignment with the standpoint of the class or social group to which she belongs but to a standpoint which -transcending that of class or other particularistic social groups implicated in relations of domination or rivalry- would realize the harmonization of universalism's concern with humanity's common good with

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the individual's interest in the limitation of unnecessary suffering and the enrichment of everyday life. Thus the manner in which Lukacs uses the concept of an 'imputed' class consciousness to contrast the consciousness of the proletariat to that of the bourgeoisie does not only fail to resist the new form of reification that organized capitalism would later on bring to the fore but also ends up adopting this reification's fundamental premises.

Thus, Lukacs' failure to draw the full implications of material scarcity's transformation under capitalism into an obsolete reality leads him to an analysis of bourgeois consciousness that turns its relationship to reification upside down. Instead of attributing to capitalist reification the bourgeois individual's inability to recognize the compatibility of socialist society to her interest as a human being, Lukacs claims that the bourgeoisie's semi-conscious defense of reification can be explained by its class interest. According to Lukacs,

> "The tragic dialectics of the bourgeoisie can be seen in the fact that it is not only desirable but essential for it to clarify its own class interests on every particular issue, while at the same time such a clear awareness becomes fatal when it is extended to the question of the totality. The chief reason for this is that the rule of the bourgeoisie can only be the rule of a minority. Its hegemony is exercised not merely by a minority, but in the interest of that minority, so the need to deceive the other classes and to ensure that their class consciousness remains amorphous is inescapable for a bourgeois regime. (Consider here the theory of the state that stands 'above' class antagonisms, or the notion of an 'impartial' system of justice.)
> "But the veil drawn over the nature of bourgeois society is indispensable to the bourgeoisie itself. For the insoluble internal contradictions of the system become revealed with increasing starkness and so confront its supporters with a choice. Either they must consciously ignore insights which become increasingly urgent or else they must suppress their own moral instincts in order to be able to support with a good conscience an economic system that services only their own interests" (HCC, 65-6).

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As this passage makes abundantly clear, Lukacs' topsy-turvy conception of the relation between reification and bourgeoisie's class interest leads him to forfeit the main theoretical achievement of his concept of reification, namely the possibility it affords us to analyze ideology's contribution to the reproduction of the oppressive and alienating capitalist reality structurally rather than moralistically. In the passage just quoted the conception of reification as a systemically induced and, thus, necessary form of appearance of capitalist reality tends to give its place to the more crude conception of ideology as a ruling elite's hypocritical deception of the oppressed masses.

The correct conception of the connection between reification and class interest emerges from the 'hidden' pole of the dialectic of scarcity, namely this scarcity's perpetual and artificial reproduction by the structural logic of capitalist society. Individuals living in capitalist society are constantly engaged in a struggle with scarcity that takes the forms of competition and conflict. These two forms are of course not interchangeable and it makes a lot of difference which of the two forms of struggle leaves its imprint on the individual's consciousness. Traditional Marxism and Lukacs have used this distinction between competition and conflict as the starting-point for the elaboration of the concept of class consciousness. Indeed, the idea of competition is seen as the selection of a more individualistic outlook that abstracts from the inegalitarian social relations that underlie the invididuals' competition in the market. The alternative to the outlook of a rugged individualism with its emphasis on self-sufficiency is that of a class consciousness which recognizes that in capitalist society competition tends to reproduce the social and class positions that the competing individuals had at the outset and thus the social handicap imposed on individuals coming from underprivileged backgrounds. This

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alternative outlook leads to the conclusion that the interest of the members of the working class and other oppressed groups lies in collective action aimed at the overthrow of the social structures responsible for the perpetuation of their misery.

Despite their important differences, both of these outlooks presuppose that the success of any party to the competitive or conflictual struggle can be attained at the expense of the rival. In the same way that the individualist standpoint implies that the successful capture of a job by an individual or a market by a firm implies the disappointment of other individuals' or firms' objectives, the alternative Marxist standpoint would see the conflict between the oppressors and the oppressed as a zero-sum game where the victory of the proletariat is the defeat of the bourgeoisie and vice versa. These two outlooks capture well both the consequences of capitalism's perpetual reproduction of scarcity and the likely forms of consciousness that this reproduction of scarcity is likely to foster. At the same time, however, the symmetry between these two opposing outlooks poses a special problem for Marxism. The individualist outlook seems to be better suited to its legitimizing function than the Marxist outlook is to its revolutionizing one. Indeed, the adoption of scarcity as the unthematized premise of both outlooks cannot but naturalize and consecrate an obsolete society's transformation of scarcity into a social-compulsive phenomenon. Retracing in this respect the steps of traditional Marxism, Lukacs ends up doing what he had explicitly warned against. Failing to identify the true meaning of Social Democracy, Lukacs proves equally guilty of trying to fight bourgeoisie on its own terrain.

The result of this failing is a segmentation of or -to use Lukacs' own terminology- an antinomy within Marxist thought. On the one hand, we have the alienation and

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scarcity of capitalist society which establish conflict as a central form of social interaction while, on the other, we have a non-alienated society in which the conquest of material scarcity makes "the free development of each... the condition for the free development of all" (MER, 491). The problem with this juxtaposition is that it is accepted as a matter of course so that the complications for the conflict theoretical model that capitalism's creation of the technological preconditions of a radically different, rational society beneficial to all of humanity introduces fall out of view. Instead of trying to understand the mediation through which the transition from capitalism's conflict-ridden reality to a rational socialist society becomes possible, traditional Marxism simply assumes that this leap can be carried out on the basis of the logic of interaction dictated by capitalism and the scarcity that it continually reproduces. This assumption, however, not only fails to elucidate the preconditions for the transition to a more rational society but also obscures the very logic of the capitalist society at its basis.

All this means that the impact of capitalist reification is even more thoroughgoing than Lukacs imagines. Indeed, the function of reification is not so much to prevent the proletariat's attainment of the authentic class consciousness that would allow it to recognize its true interests but rather to constitute both proletarian and -perhaps even more importantly- bourgeois individuals into class subjects. Marx's analysis of individuals as "the personification of economic categories, the bearers of particular class-relations and interests" (Capital, 92) acquires, therefore, an additional dimension. It is not just that the individual's action is constrained by her social position and the interests that this position implies. More than that, the conflictual social interaction implied by capitalism's artificial reproduction of scarcity shapes the individual's everyday life and

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perception of social reality, stamping the individual as a class subject and circumscribing this individual's very ability to articulate her own interests.

Since the contribution of capitalist reification to the transformation of individuals into class subjects also applies to the formation of other identities along the lines of social oppression, it becomes clear that the logical conclusion of capitalist reification is a proliferation of particularistic social identities which -through their inability to recognize the universalistic emancipatory project that organically emerges out of the dynamism of capitalist modernity- reproduce alienation even as they think they are fighting oppression. The paradoxical result of this situation is that the very social movements which might cite traditional Marxism's subordination of non-class movements to the working-class struggle as one of the reasons for their mistrust of universalistic discourses are guilty of the same reification that led traditional Marxism to describe the struggle for socialism as a struggle between the bourgeoisie and the proletariat.

Another paradoxical reversal has to be mentioned here. Capitalism's dialectic of scarcity and its implications account not only for traditional Marxism's tendency to succumb to capitalism's reifying thrust but also for the possibility of turning -through its immanent critique- bourgeois ideology into a weapon deployed against capitalist reification. If the reifying elements in both Marxism and the theoretical discourses undertaken from the standpoint of social groups suffering from non-class forms of oppression signify the impossibility of immunizing oneself completely against capitalist reification, the critical elements in bourgeois thought stem from the fact that the preservation of an obsolete capitalist society does not even correspond to the rational, 'imputed' interest of the bourgeois individual. Martin Jay (1984) indirectly touches on

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the relation between class interest and the ability to depict social reality accurately when - in a reference to Lukacs' article on Moses Hess- he points out that

> "Curiously, Lukacs blamed Hess's deficiencies... on his non-proletarian background... How Marx, or Lukacs himself for that matter, had avoided this situation and come to 'participate -directly- in the process of production', Lukacs did not choose to explain" (126).

Our discussion above provides an explanation for the ability of bourgeois intellectuals to identify with the socialist cause while, at the same time, demonstrating that the transformation of the very existence of such intellectuals into a puzzle is only a result of the reified terms in which the question was posed in the first place. Similarly, our recognition that even the bourgeois individual's rational, 'imputed' interest points beyond the confines of capitalist society allows us to identify the true, materialist meaning of bourgeois political philosophy's realization that in a relation of servitude the master is as unfree as his slave. This meaning consists in the fact that with capitalism's creation of the prospect of a non-alienated society, the privileged position of the ruling class turns into the means of its subjection to reification and the functional imperatives of capitalist society. Meszaros provides an implicit but very pithy summary of the bourgeois individual's interest in the overthrow of the capitalist society securing her privileged class position when he correctly points out that

> "the issue at stake is just as much the emancipation of the particular individuals from their own class as that of the emancipation of the subordinate class from the ruling class. The 'other' to which the individual is subjected in an alienated society is not simply 'the other class', but also his own class -i.e. the constitution of human relations within class boundaries– in so far as it circumscribes the limits of his development" (Aspects of History and Class Consciousness, 105).

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We have seen so far that capitalism's dialectic of scarcity implies both a potentially explosive social contradiction and a breeding-ground for a new form of reification that seeks to counterbalance this contradiction. We have seen that this new form of reification revolves around the question of material scarcity and helps constitute the individuals living in capitalist society into class subjects. We have also seen that this form of reification can lead to the kind of naturalization of social conflict that -as was noted in the previous chapter- Weber was guilty of. It was also seen that such a naturalization tends to conceal the fact that capitalism's technological dynamism gives rise to a universal human interest in a more rational, socialist society. We have also seen that even Marxism is not immune to the influence of this new form of reification. More specifically, Marxism appears as the mix of both reifying and de-reifying, universalistic and particularistic elements. Indeed, while it recognizes the universalistic character of socialist emancipation, Marxism does so in a reified form. This lands Marxism into a contradiction insofar as the attainment of a universally beneficial social order appears as the result of a social conflict between two groups with opposed interests. The correlate of this contradiction is the elevation of the proletariat into a universal class, which amounts to nothing less than treating a particular social group as a stand-in for humanity. This accounts for the ontological primacy of the working-class that non-class emancipatory social movements can rightfully criticize traditional Marxism for.

We have also criticized Lukacs for his tendency to treat the reification of bourgeois consciousness as an outgrowth of the bourgeoisie's class interest rather than, on the contrary, seeing the constitution of human individuals into class subjects with interests circumscribed by the capitalist horizon as an effect of reification. Nonetheless,

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it is not our intention to deny that it is precisely the creative and non-dogmatic use of the theoretical tools provided by the Marxist tradition that can allow not only the comprehension of the dialectic between capitalist reification and contradictions but also the trenchant critique of the weaknesses of Marxist theory that emerge as the inevitable result of reification's permeation of every form of human life and expression under capitalism.

Given this discussion of the ways in which the new form of reification revolving around scarcity conceals the emancipatory potential inherent in capitalist dynamism, we should complete the picture by showing how in its turn this dynamism undermines the hold of capitalist reification on the consciousness of both humanity, in general, and the oppressed groups, in particular. This dynamism is a central ingredient in both the regime of reification growing out of liberal competitive capitalism and in that growing out of organized capitalism. The function, however, of this dynamism in each of these regimes is different from and indeed opposed to its function in the other. It is this difference that robs capitalist reification of its monolithic character and renders it as much a source of social contradictions as it is their illusory suppression.

It was capitalism's dynamism that defined the progressive historical function of the bourgeoisie while rendering plausible its claim to represent the general interest. While liberal capitalist reification may have engendered the individual's experience of capitalism as an unchangeable reality, the promise of capitalist dynamism meant that this experience of unchangeability did not lead to a feeling of passive and disillusioned resignation but rather to one of positive normative affirmation of capitalist society. By discovering in the invisible hand of the market a mysterious 'pre-established harmony'

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between the pursuit of individual self-interest and the attainment of the collective good. Adam Smith's analysis could plausibly interpret the reified experience of capitalism's unchangeability as the mark of the latter's rational and even 'natural' character. This unqualified belief in capitalism's compatibility with and promotion of the common good could not but be reinforced by the gradual consolidation of representative democracy and the attainment of universal suffrage in advanced capitalist countries.

The parallel rise of socialist ideology and the workers' movement quickly demonstrated, however, the illusory character of bourgeois ideology's optimism. With Marx the seamy side of capitalism was fully exposed, dissolving bourgeois society's claim to represent universal human interest in a way that did not simply dismiss but rather qualified capitalism's progressive function. It was in this that Marxist theory's de-reifying element consisted. While the idea that capitalism was promoting a universal human interest was demonstrably false, this naïve optimism of liberal capitalist reification had to be criticized immanently rather than merely negated if a truly emancipatory vision was to emerge. Without such an immanent critique one would end up with an one-sided emphasis on social conflict which would amount to the kind of naturalization of scarcity that -as we have seen- is characteristic of the form of reification engendered by organized capitalism.

If Marxist theory provides the tools for seeing through the new veil of reification erected by organized capitalism, its actual failure to fully translate this critical potential to a reality is to no small extent due to its failure to integrate completely the utopian element of liberal reification into its formulation of an emancipatory political strategy. Indeed, this utopian element survives in Marxist theory in the form of a conquest of scarcity in

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socialist society but simply falls out of view in Marx's conception of the political strategy that can make the transition from capitalism to socialism possible. Bourgeois thought, by contrast, has had more success integrating this utopian element of liberal reification but this integration is of course designed to achieve the opposite result, namely to neutralize this utopian element by making it compatible to the new form of reification revolving around the naturalization of material scarcity. More specifically, capitalist democracy's claim to serve the general interest is predicated on the denial of the only genuine universal human interest, namely the interest in a non-alienated society. Indeed, capitalist democracy's conception of general interest involves nothing more than a set of institutional mechanisms that disorient the oppressed masses by creating the semblance of a compromise between a variety of different social groups. It is clear that the so-called 'pluralist' analysis of the workings of capitalist democracy is fully in line with a naturalization of scarcity that reduces democracy into 'scarcity management.'

It is clear, moreover, that this conception of democracy as 'scarcity management' can be seen as the static instantiation of a broader conception of the dynamics of capitalist development which also seeks to domesticate the young bourgeoisie's naïve optimism given expression in the liberal capitalist form of reification. One need only think of how routinely the political and economic discourse of the ruling elites degenerates into trivial platitudes concerning the great, new horizons and opportunities that the information revolution and economic globalization supposedly bring with them. It is obvious that the only effect of such discourses is to naturalize existing material scarcity by projecting the elimination of the human suffering that this artificial reproduction of scarcity implies into a future that -predictably enough- never arrives.

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Marxism's failure to fully integrate the utopian element of liberal reification into its conception of emancipatory political strategy prevents it from mounting an adequate resistance to such naturalizing discourses. While recognizing the universalistic project of human emancipation that capitalism makes possible, Marxism seems to be confounded by the emergence of a universal human interest on the ground of an oppressive class society. As a result, it fails to realize that the prospect of a universal human interest does not only point beyond capitalist society but can also produce effects within it. Reflecting in its assumptions the reified reality of capitalist society, Marxism can only envisage the transition to socialism in a form that is as theoretically weak as it is politically dubious. Thus, for example, Marx has to resort to the self-contradictory attribution of the status of 'universal class' to a particular class in capitalist society, namely the proletariat. The contradictory character of this conception becomes amplified, moreover, by the fact that this supposedly universal class achieves capitalism only through struggle against another class, the bourgeoisie. Instead of locating capitalism's contradiction in its inevitable reproduction of both particular divisions and a newly created universal interest in a radically different society, Marxism attempts to attribute this contradiction to capitalism's particularistic class character. The uniqueness of capitalist society which consists precisely in its capacity to raise the specter of a universal human interest is, therefore, lost in the process. The struggle for socialism appears as simply a special case of a trans-historical truth. Marx's claim that "[t]he history of all hitherto existing society is the history of class struggles" applies as much to capitalism as it did to pre-capitalist class societies. The fact that capitalism's creation of genuinely universal interest in a non-

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alienated society brings a new element into the scene of perennial class struggle is simply not recognized.

The new element produced by capitalism's universalizing impact has implications both for the economically dominant class and the emancipatory struggle against capitalism. As far as the implications for the former are concerned, the new situation created by capitalism is expressed by the fact that the bourgeoisie creates the preconditions for its self-abolition as a class. Once capitalism has created the preconditions for a universally beneficial, non-alienated society, the bourgeoisie's dominant class position turns from the means whereby the bourgeois individual attains her interest to an obstacle. As a result, Lukacs' interpretation of the class standpoint of the bourgeoisie becomes more problematic. Although the potential for a weakening of the bourgeois standpoint is undoubtedly there, the source of such a weakening is not the one identified by Lukacs. As was pointed out above, Lukacs tends to attribute this weakening to the bourgeoisie's forced retreat into hypocrisy. Developing this point, Lukacs argues that

> "the fighting power of a class grows with its ability to carry out its own mission with a good conscience and to adapt all phenomena to its own interests with unbroken confidence in itself... from a very early stage the ideological history of the bourgeoisie was nothing but a desperate resistance to every insight into the true nature of the society it had created and thus to a real understanding of its class situation. When the Communist Manifest makes the point that the bourgeoisie produces its own gravediggers this is valid ideologically as well as economically. The whole of bourgeois thought in the nineteenth century made the most strenuous efforts to mask the real foundations of bourgeois society; everything was tried: from the greatest falsifications of fact to the 'sublime' theories about the 'essence' of history and the state. But I vain: with the end of the century the issue was resolved by the advances of science and their corresponding effects on the consciousness of the capitalist elite" (HCC, 66).

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Our analysis to this point makes clear that the real source for the bourgeoisie's contradictory and potentially untenable situation is other than a bad conscience or a lack of self-confidence. The potential weakening of the bourgeoisie stems less from the bourgeois individual's doubt concerning the ethical justification of her dominant class position than from her potential recognition that this position is not even desirable for her as an individual.

What this implies is a reversal of the relation between reification and interests that Lukacs postulates. As we saw this reversal allowed us to avoid the critique of one form of reification through the naturalization of another. Lukacs' failure in this respect stemmed from his inability to integrate the universalistic implications of capitalism into his conception of reification. Following in the footsteps of Marxism's unproblematized conception of social conflict under capitalism, Lukacs was as incapable as traditional Marxism of realizing that the fulfillment of the universalistic socialist project could only be the result of a universalistic political strategy. The result was a political strategy which -like the strategy of traditional Marxism- was as contaminated by the form of reification revolving around scarcity that characterizes organized capitalism as the reformist Social Democracy that this strategy was meant to criticize.

In the case of the political strategy favored by traditional Marxism and Lukacs the impact of reification proved even more pernicious than in the case of reformist Social Democracy. Indeed, while the impact of this reification on Social Democracy takes the form of a utopically optimistic conception of capitalist reality, traditional Marxism's reified strategy had even more deeply undemocratic implications. Not surprisingly, this reified political strategy ended up discrediting rather than realizing the socialist goal.

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Lukacs' biography with the later retreat towards a more 'orthodox'-in the usual sense of the word rather than the more specific sense given to the word in History and Class Consciousness- Marxist position has led commentators to raise the question of the relationship between Lukacs' work in question and the Soviet debacle. Thus, for example, Arato and Breines (1979) argue that

> "[a] groundbreaking manifesto of critical, humanistic Marxism, the book also provided a philosophy of the dogmatic and totalitarian Marxism it sought to avert. Against a backdrop of betrayal and compromise, here was an appeal to the critical role of intellectuals which simultaneously documented a leading intellectual's accommodation with a new house of power- the Soviet Union, for whose ideologies Lukacs had been the heretic par excellence" (ix).

Similarly, B.S. Turner (1981) points out that

> "[I]f the true, rational consciousness of the proletariat is not the sum of the actual consciousness of individual workers, then who is it that performs the crucial task of implanting, assessing and inferring the ideal typical consciousness of this revolutionary class? In Lukacs' Marxism, it is in fact the Party, which performs this role as mentor of class consciousness. The Party is the final arbiter of reason and truth. The irony of this conclusion to Lukacs' study was that, when the Party came to the conclusion that Lukacs' analysis of Marxism was incorrect, Lukacs was forced by his own logic to accept their verdict" (78).

Edifying as Turner's witticism concerning Lukacs' theoretically justified discipline to the Party may be, it does not really do much to elucidate the weakness in Lukacs' argument. Our analysis, by contrast, explains exactly how capitalist reification could deal socialism a severe blow by presiding over the attempt to create a socialist society. We saw that reified socialism's confusion when faced with the task to devise a strategy that would allow the transition from a class society based on scarcity to an emancipated society having conquered scarcity led to the self-contradictory and quasi-metaphysical elevation

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of the proletariat into the status of a 'universal class' or 'identical subject-object of history.' Once the device of treating a particular social group as a stand-in for humanity was introduced, the door was opened to a successive application of this 'substitutionist' principle. In the same way that the working-class and its dictatorship were supposed to stand for humanity as a whole, the revolutionary party could be made to stand in for the working-class until this process reached its logical culmination in the supreme leader's standing-in for the party.

In addition to recognizing the connection between the degeneration of the universalistic, emancipatory socialist vision into an alienating nightmare, on one hand, and the reproduction by traditional Marxist political strategy of a new form of reification, on the other, our analysis points in the direction of a genuinely universalistic and democratic strategy capable of avoiding this danger. This strategy keeps what is valid in Lukacs' conception of the standpoint of the proletariat while avoiding Lukacs' attribution of a universalistic status to the working-class. The valid element in Lukacs' analysis consists in his recognition that even though both the bourgeoisie and the proletariat are victims of reification, their capacity to see through this reification is conditioned by their respective social positions. Indeed, in Lukacs's view

> "The proposition with which we began, viz. that in capitalist society reality is -immediately- the same for both the bourgeoisie and the proletariat, remains unaltered. But we may now add that this same reality employs the motor of class interests to keep the bourgeoisie imprisoned within this immediacy while forcing the proletariat to go beyond it... For the proletariat to become aware of the dialectical nature of its existence is a matter of life and death..." (HCC, 164).

We have already criticized Lukacs' claim that the bourgeoisie's class interest prevented it from breaking with reification. The implication of our analysis has, on the contrary, been

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that the new horizons that capitalism's dynamism opens for humanity necessitates a shift of emphasis from class interest to the ways in which alienation and reification perpetuate the constitution of class subjects with class-derived interests even after class has become a historically obsolete reality. Apart from this, however, Lukacs' analysis in the passage just quoted basically reproduces Marx's insight in The Holy Family that

> "The possessing class and the proletarian class represent one and the same human self-alienation. But the former feels satisfied and affirmed in this self-alienation, experiences the alienation as a sign of its power, and possesses in it the appearance of human existence. The latter, however, feels destroyed in this alienation, seeing in it its own impotence and the reality of an inhuman existence" (MER, 133-4).

What our analysis has been seeking to do is to develop the full political implications of this insight. The failure of both traditional and Lukacs' Marxism to do so negatively affected their conception of socialist political strategy. This negative effect stemmed from the mistaken association of the epistemological advantage that its special social position afforded the working-class with a particularistic conception of socialist strategy.

As we have seen, capitalist modernity represents more than just another instantiation of the fact that human history is the history of class struggle. Indeed, while reproducing class struggle, capitalism also signifies its historical obsolescence. Creating a universal human interest in a non-alienated society, capitalism carries within itself the imperative to attain this society not through class struggle but rather through a universalistic, democratic project that fights against the alienation that the continuing meaningfulness of the concept of 'class' represents. Similarly, socialist universalism's struggle against all forms of social oppression is also a struggle against the reified realities of 'gender', 'race', and so on.

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Thus the extension of socialism's universalistic character to the level of political strategy challenges the 'ontological primacy' that both Lukacs and traditional Marxism accorded the working-class. The challenge of this 'ontological primacy' also requires the extension of our recognition of an epistemological advantage to groups that suffer from forms of social oppression other than class. The epistemological advantage of oppressed groups stems from the fact that the interests of their members that emanate from their constitution into class, race or gender subjects do not contradict or obscure their interest in universal human emancipation. To the extent that such emancipation presupposes the abolition of all forms of oppression, oppressed groups can come to recognize that the universally beneficial struggle for human emancipation is not only compatible with but even the logical extension of the day-to-day social struggles they wage on the basis of the interests immanent in the reified social identities imposed upon them.

This is clearly not the case for the socially and economically dominant groups. As Marx pointed out, these groups are more likely to feel affirmed in their alienation and to experience the protection of their particular group interests as the precondition for the continuation of their individual welfare. In this sense, the greater difficulty that privileged groups have in shedding their particular group identities and raising themselves to a universal human standpoint reflects the fact that in their case this act of self-transcendence is not in line with their everyday experience of alienated society but rather contradicts it.

Our shift of emphasis from group interests to reification implies that the struggle for an emancipated socialist society can no longer be seen as the special case of class or group conflict. The emancipatory project presents itself, rather, as the collective struggle

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of humanity to free itself from its subjugation to capitalism's compulsive logic. The perennial debate concerning the relative primacy of material or ideological factors present themselves as a complementary stages in a process that potentially leads to human emancipation. If it is the compulsive economic logic of capitalism which- through its dynamism- creates the technological preconditions for a radically different and emancipated society, it is also this logic which makes the struggle for socialism something more than a struggle between groups with opposed material interests. Indeed, by giving rise to a universal interest in socialism, capitalism's peculiar dynamism compels us to recognize the extent to which the struggle for human emancipation depends on a learning process. The fact that reification is recognized as constitutive of group interests rather than the other way round obviously leads to the foregrounding of cultural and ideological factors.

Concluding, we should point out that this analysis challenges Lukacs' interpretation of the 'antinomies of bourgeois thought'. Rather than exemplifying reification, bourgeois thought's inability to reconcile subject and object, freedom and necessity and so on appears as the expression of capitalism's fundamental contradiction. Indeed, we have seen that it is capitalism's compulsive dynamism which both reproduces the human subject's subjugation to an alienated society which is the object of her creation and raises the specter of this subject's liberation through an attainment of control over her social life. Thus it becomes clear that if Lukacs had to resort to a philosophy of history this was precisely because his analysis fails to develop the full implications of this dialectic. Because of its failure to explore the full implications of capitalism's 'dialectic of scarcity' Lukacs's analysis ends up mistaking undialectical economic determinism for

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a dialectical conception of capitalist contradictions. Thus while they continue to have relevance for any theoretical analysis aspiring to make a contribution to the emancipatory project, his concepts of totality and reification can only perform their necessary function only if stripped from the objectivist sense in which Lukacs develops them. What this involves, however, is a challenge of Lukacs' attempt to fulfil the rationalist project through an overarching system that only reconciles subject and object by reducing them into its subordinate moments. Lukacs' failure to break with determinism stems from the fact that such a solution is only a pseudo-reconciliation of subject and object. Indeed, the appeal to an overarching totality that encompasses both subject and object restores the primacy of the latter over the former by conceiving the process whereby subject and object become reconciled in objectivist terms. To the metaphysical vision of rationalism our analysis opposes a thoroughly historical conception of rationalization. The attempt to present the entirety of human history as a unified process driven towards the telos of reconciliation between subject and object is explicitly discarded. In its place steps the recognition that a specific and possibly contingent historical constellation created with capitalism an unprecedented form of subordinating the human subject to the social object of her activity. The peculiarity of this form stemmed from its dynamism. To the extent that it raised the possibility of reversing the alienating domination of the human subject by its object, this dynamism turned a non-alienated society into both a meaningful vision and the only rational next step for humanity. Thus capitalism's dialectic of scarcity strips the rationalization processes that Weber discusses from their local character. Thus our analysis not only embraces the demystification of Reason that Weber's conception of rationalization effects but also traces the implications of this demystification more fully

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than Weber himself had done. With capitalism's creation of a universal interest in an emancipated society, the only rational direction left for the rationalization process to pursue is the direction of radical social change.

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CHAPTER 4
HEGEMONY AND RATIONALIZATION: FROM CLASS STRUGGLE TO A UNIVERSALISTIC RECONCEPTUALIZATION OF THE EMANCIPATORY PROJECT

In the course of our discussion of Marx, Weber and Lukacs we reached a number of conclusions concerning the nature of capitalist modernity and the emancipatory political project that can be derived from it. We saw the various ways in which the reinterpretation of the work of these thinkers can make a contribution to the reconceptualization of such a project. Our analysis of Marx as a theorist of modernity allowed us to reinterpret the vision of a non-alienated society in non-essentialist terms. We did this by rejecting any conception inclined to present alienation as the driving-force of a unified, contradictory and teleological process encompassing the entirety of human history. Instead, we insisted that the concept of alienation -in the sense we use it- could only be seen as the historical product of capitalist society. Indeed, capitalism's unprecedented technological dynamism raised the prospect of a radically different society that would allow not only the drastic reduction of human suffering but also the attainment of human autonomy and the enrichment of every human being's everyday life. The emergence of such a prospect represented a radical break in human history. Implicit in this break was a reconceptualization of the manifest imperfections of social reality. These imperfections were now transformed from an unfortunate but inevitable fact of life to a historically obsolete phenomenon. It is this shift that allows the normative reinterpretation of such imperfections as symptoms of 'alienation'.

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In our discussion of Weber we explored the affinity of his analysis of rationalization to the non-essentialist conception of alienation. We saw that Weber's dark pronouncements concerning the 'iron cage' of modernity both gave expression to and naturalized the reality of capitalist alienation. At the same time, we pointed out that Weber's materialist interpretation of the religious impulse could, if pursued to its logical conclusion, be used to challenge his resigned acceptance of this 'iron cage'. Weber's identification of the desire to reduce undeserved human suffering as the origin of the religious impulse allowed us to divest the prospect of rationalization's completion from its dystopian character. By raising the prospect of a non-alienated society, capitalism's technological dynamism showed the actualization of this prospect to be nothing but the definitive fulfillment of the rationalization process.

We have also discussed Lukacs' conscious attempt to integrate Weber's account of rationalization into Marxism's analysis of capitalist modernity. In Lukacs' view the rationalization of capitalist society's individual subsystems is incapable of neutralizing the fundamental irrationality of capitalist society as a whole. This paradoxical aggregation of rationalized parts into an irrational whole finds expression into capitalist crises. We discussed the limitations and contradictory tendencies in Lukacs' conception of capitalist crises while also criticizing the function the proletarian class-consciousness is supposed to play in the resolution of such crises. Building on our previous discussions of capitalism's 'dialectic of scarcity', we showed that the universal human interest that this dialectic gives rise to renders problematic Lukacs' contrast between the bourgeois and proletarian standpoints. Reversing Lukacs' interpretation, we argued that it is not reified consciousness that should be explained in terms of class interest but rather the

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individual's identification with this class interest that should be explained in terms of reification. As we saw, capitalism's artificial perpetuation of scarcity gives rise to a form of reification that obscures the universal human interest in an alternative social order that would allow the conquest of scarcity. To the extent that it is intended to allow people to articulate their individual self-interest autonomously, the struggle against reification can be interpreted as a project of rationalization on the part of human subjects. It is such a subjective rationalization that provides the preconditions for the completion of the rationalization process through the attainment of a non-alienated society.

Gramsci's concept of hegemony bears witness to his appreciation of the importance of such a subjective rationalization. Although its political significance is indisputable and has often been discussed by Gramsci's commentators, this concept also has philosophical implications that are often overshadowed by one-sided political interpretations. In his discussion of philosophy in the Prison Notebooks, Gramsci challenges "the widespread prejudice that philosophy is a strange and difficult thing just because it is the specific intellectual activity of a particular category of specialists or of professional and systematic philosophers" (SPN, 323). Gramsci counters this prejudice by affirming that "all men are 'philosophers'." In this view, "apart from his own occupation, every individual carries on some intellectual activity: he is a philosopher, he shares a conception of the world and therefore contributes to sustain it or to modify it, that is, to create new conceptions" (PN II, 214-5). As Anne Showstack Sassoon (1987, ix) points out, however, such a view has to be sharply contrasted to populist left-wing interpretations of Gramsci that lead to the romanticization of popular culture. Alberto Maria Girese (1982) develops this point in greater detail in his article on 'Gramsci's

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Observations in Folklore.' His discussion makes clear Gramsci's rejection of a relativist viewpoint that would accept all conceptions of the world as equally valid or legitimate philosophies. In Gramsci's view, the object or content of one's reflections is not sufficient to determine their status in the hierarchy of world conceptions. Equally important are certain formal qualities that people's conceptions, as these are manifested in 'common sense' and folklore, often lack. Thus, far from embracing the standpoint of subordinate groups in an unquestioning manner Gramsci denies folklore "all the formal qualities of coherence, unity, consciousness, etc., which are typical of the hegemonic classes and their 'official' conceptions. Gramsci's esteem goes entirely to the latter, quite independently of the specific content of the conception in question or what social class it belongs to" (223).

After declaring that all men are philosophers, Gramsci himself points out that this affirmation is only a starting-point, which has to be farther specified. This further specification gives Gramsci the opportunity to make the above-mentioned distinction between the content and the formal qualities of world conceptions. Emphasizing this distinction through a series of rhetorical questions, Gramsci asks:

> "is it better to 'think', without having a critical awareness, in a disjointed and episodic way? In other words, is it better to take part in a conception of the world mechanically imposed by the external environment, i.e. by one of the many social groups in which everyone is automatically involved from the moment of his entry into the conscious world ... Or, on the other hand, is it better to work out consciously and critically one's own conception of the world and thus, in connection with the labors of one's own brain, choose one's sphere of activity, take an active part in the creation of the history of the world, be one's own guide, refusing to accept passively and supinely from outside the molding of one's personality?" (SPN, 323–4)

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The theme of rationalization is clear in this passage. The first possibility mentioned by Gramsci involves a kind of thinking that barely deserves the characterization (hence the quotation marks around the word thinking in the passage). Such thinking lacks coherence and systematicity. As such it is contrasted to a thinking that is more than an unconscious acceptance of a world-conception on faith. This latter form of thinking is truly autonomous to the extent that it is actively produced by the thinking subject. Through this critical process, this subject becomes 'one's own guide'. In so doing, the individual raises herself beyond the former state of a heteronomous thinking passively adapting itself to the influence and requirements of its social environment.

There is a clear connection between this passage and our rethinking of reification in the course of our discussion of Lukacs' History and Class Consciousness. We pointed out there that the capacity to see through reification does not depend on the assumption of an appropriate class standpoint but, on the contrary, presupposes one's resistance to her constitution into a class subject. To the extent that in the passage given above Gramsci contrasts the uncritical thinking mirroring one's social position to the autonomous and active thinking of the critical individual, Gramsci seems to agree with our position.

Gramsci, however, does not draw the full implications of this idea. More specifically, Gramsci fails to recognize that there is a tension between the formal preconditions for autonomous thinking that he lays out and the content of the Marxist alternative to the dominant conception of the world that he proposes. Indeed, the content of this alternative is not associated in Gramsci's mind with a resistance to the alienating constitution of people into class subjects. On the contrary, Gramsci chooses to remain loyal to the traditional Marxist identification of the working class as the natural carrier of

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critical consciousness. Faced with the fact that the working-class is not consistently critical or radical, Gramsci resorts to the -familiar from Lukacs and Marx- dualism contrasting a true and autonomous working class consciousness to an untrue and heteronomous one. In this respect, Gramsci is not so far from Lukacs' elevation of the claim that "[e]very worker is an orthodox Marxist - however unconscious of the fact he himself is initially" into "the unspoken premise of communist activity" (TE, 77-8). Indeed, in a passage that seeks to account for the occasional contradiction between the conceptions of the world held by the masses and their actual mode of conduct, Gramsci makes an oblique reference to the relation between spontaneity and class consciousness arguing that

> "the contrast between thought and action cannot but be the expression of profounder contrasts of a social historical order. It signifies that the social group in question may indeed have its own conception of the world, even if only embryonic; a conception which manifests itself in action, but occasionally and in flashes - when, that is, the group is acting as an organic totality. But this same group has, for reasons of submission and intellectual subordination, adopted a conception which is not its own but is borrowed from another group; and it affirms this conception verbally and believes itself to be following it, because this is the conception which it follows in 'normal times' - that is when its conduct is not independent and autonomous, but submissive and subordinate. Hence the reason why philosophy cannot be divorced from politics." (SPN, 327).

The allusion in this passage to the concept of hegemony makes clear that an examination of this concept could help us explore more fully the tensions in Gramsci's thought. The concept of hegemony was central to Gramsci's attempt both to theorize the structure and development of capitalism and to rethink the political strategy capable of overcoming it. Gramsci's project has given rise to a variety of interpretations. Many of the commentators have provided largely sympathetic accounts of Gramsci's contribution. Perry Anderson (1976-7), on the other hand, has provided a classic critique of the

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Gramscian opus while Laclau and Mouffe(1985) have tried to develop it in a post-Marxist direction. The controversy surrounding Gramsci's legacy, however, transcends the implicit debates between Gramsci's defenders and critics. Indeed, even within the ranks of his defenders, it is easy to discern diametrically opposed interpretations. An obvious instance in this respect is the controversy concerning the relation of Gramsci's thought to the Leninist tradition. On one side of this debate we find Buci-Glucksmann's (1980) insistence that the Prison Notebooks be read as a continuation of Leninism in a different historical context and Massimo Salvadori's (1979) claim that "Gramsci's theory of hegemony is the highest and most complex expression of Leninism"(252). By contrast, Paul Piccone (1983) emphasizes the debt of Gramsci's thought to the Italian neo-Hegelian tradition encompassing a diverse set of thinkers such as Spaventa, Labriola and Croce. In the same way that Buci-Glucksmann and Salvadori recognize a connection between Gramsci's thought and Leninism without conflating the two, Piccone's insistence that "Gramsci's own brand of Marxism is qualitatively different from Lenin's or any other version of Marxism-Leninism" (166) does not deny the existence of any connection whatsoever between Gramsci and Leninism. This becomes clear in the final pages of his book, where Piccone concludes that Gramsci's

> "outlook occupies the emancipatory side of a political oxymoron whose survival and continued success hinges on the rapidity with which the scientific-socialist, or Leninist, side is firmly abandoned... The Gramscian heritage lives on as an ethical vision trapped historically in an incompatible Leninist framework that grows evermore irrelevant and counterproductive in the face of modern-day realities." (200)

The disagreements among Gramsci's defenders notwithstanding, there is one issue in particular that tends to unite them all. Indeed, Buci-Glucksmann (1980), Piccone

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(1983), Showstack-Sassoon (1987), Femia (1981), Mouffe (1979), Paggi (1979) and most other commentators emphasize Gramsci's opposition to economistic Marxism with its mechanical interpretation of Marx's base-superstructure metaphor. Even here, however, the apparent consensus concerning the general orientation of Gramsci's reaction to Marxist economism is challenged by Bobbio's attribution to Gramsci of an idealist inversion of traditional Marxism's assumptions. Indeed, in his article on 'Gramsci and the Conception of Civil Society', Bobbio (1979) goes as far as to claim that

> "The really singular position that civil society has in Gramsci's conceptual system causes not one, but two inversions as regards the traditional interpretation of the thought of Marx and Engels: the first consists in the prevalence of the superstructure over the structure; whereas the second consists in the prevalence, within the superstructure itself, of the ideological moment over the institutional moment." (36)

This very general overview gives the reader an idea of the various ways in which his commentators have approached Gramsci. The irreducible complications that the question of interpretation raises for all 'readings' of any text or author become magnified in the case of Gramsci's Prison Notebooks. As Joseph Buttigieg, the editor of the first complete critical edition of the Prison Notebooks in English, points out the controversies surrounding the interpretation of this work are amplified by its fragmentary character. Buttigieg (1991) recognizes that Gramsci's prison environment implied a constraint on the expression of his thoughts that forced him to make use "of inventive circumlocutions and similar rhetorical strategies of disguise" (24). At the same time, however, Buttigieg challenges the assumption that the fragmentary character of the Notebooks too can be "attributed to the brutal conditions under which they were composed." In his view, such an assumption has often led to attempts to impose an artificial unity on these fragments

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through their rearrangement into 'a coherent whole'. Buttigieg seems to dismiss many of the above-mentioned controversies surrounding Gramsci's legacy attributing them to a schematic interpretative practice that

> "yields such products as the 'Leninist Gramsci,' or the 'Crocean idealist Gramsci,' or any number of Gramscis. Even the calls for 'liberating Gramsci' from various appropriations of him are frequently inspired by the conviction that one can go back to the fragmentary notebooks and reconstruct from them the one and only 'real' Gramsci." (63)

In Buttigieg's view, all these approaches fail to recognize the 'true significance of the Notebooks' fragmentary form. This form, Buttigieg insists, is only an expression of Gramsci's philological method. This method "requires minute attention to detail, it seeks to ascertain the specificity of the particular." Its neglect can lead to 'blunders' arising from a failure to respect history's 'infinite variety and multiplicity.'

Although Buttigieg's role as an editor justifies his warning against schematic readings of Gramsci, the implications of his warning have to be clarified. More specifically, his appeal to Gramsci's interest in the infinite variety and multiplicity tends to obscure the dialectical meaning that such an appeal would have had for Gramsci. For Buttigieg, Gramsci and his thought become an unreachable 'thing-in-itself' even for interpretive reconstructions that are carried out 'responsibly'. Buttigieg's appeal to the infinite variety of one's object of study does not therefore challenge the impulse to search for "the one and only 'real'" interpretation. What this appeal really objects to is the dogmatic temptation to present one's own interpretation as the definitive one. When Buttigieg warns us, therefore, it is in the name of an independently existing, inexhaustible, 'true' reality which has to be respected rather than be mutilated and distorted. Gramsci, on the other hand, explicitly rejects any conception that would see

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reality as a 'thing-in-itself' leaving its trace on the humanly observed phenomena. Instead, he argues that not only the interpretation but also the very existence of phenomena is the result of active human intervention and selection. Indeed, Gramsci tells us,

> "What are phenomena? Are they something objective, existing in and for themselves, or are they qualities which man has isolated in consequence of his practical interests (the construction of his economic life) and his scientific interests (the necessity to discover an order in the world and to describe and classify things, a necessity which is itself connected to mediated and future practical interests)." (SPN, 368)

Buttigieg's warning is probably to some extent inspired by the operation in many interpretations of Gramsci of the principle outlined in this passage. That the debates surrounding Gramsci's legacy are not a purely scholastic question is highlighted by the fact that the Italian Communist party tried in the past-war period to trace its parliamentarist strategy back to Gramsci's ideas. A number of commentators including Femia and Salvadori have criticized the PCI's interpretation of Gramsci. The obviously political nature of this debate, however, shows that Gramsci's historicism transcends the bounds of the philological method attributed to him by Buttigieg. By anchoring interpretation and knowledge in human interests, Gramsci's implicit conception of method allows us to pay attention to the particular without reifying reality into a 'thing-in-itself'.

The treatment of reality as a 'thing-in-itself' turns a non-schematic conception and an attention to the particular to an 'Ought' that human knowledge has to observe. By contrast, the recognition of the practical human interests underlying the search for knowledge turns Truth from an 'Ought' into a means to the successful pursuit of human

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projects. Bobbio (1979) adumbrates this idea in his article on Gramsci's conception of civil society when he argues that

> "the ethical-political moment, being the moment of freedom understood as consciousness of necessity (that is, of material conditions) dominates the economic moment through the recognition of objectivity by the active subject of history. It is through this recognition that the material conditions are resolved into an instrument of action and with this the desired aim is reached" (34-5).

As this passage makes clear, it is the misinterpretation of this idea that lies, moreover, behind Bobbio's paradoxical portrayal of Gramsci as an idealist who turns the Marxist framework upside down. What is less clear, however, is how Bobbio could interpret the view he attributes in this passage to Gramsci as an idealist one. If anything, the reduction of freedom represented by the ethical-political into nothing more than a recognition of a necessity derived from material conditions is more materialist than it is idealist. Bobbio's confusion can only be explained as the result of an uncritical acceptance of the dilemma between a deterministic materialism and a voluntarist idealism. This is the case because such a dilemma also leads to a dichotomy between mechanical causality and free teleological action. In so doing, however, this dilemma predictably undermines one's ability to account for a teleological human action undertaken on the ground and with full consciousness of the constraints imposed by material conditions. The only adequate account of such action is a dialectical one. Following the example of Marx who, in his more dialectical moments, affirms that although it is people who make history, "they do not make it just as they please" (MER 595), Gramsci explicitly challenges the rigid dichotomy between the weight of existing material conditions and the will to act in accordance with one's ideals. He does this by arguing that

> "the question cannot be posed in these terms, it is more complex. It is one, that is to say, of seeing whether what 'ought to be' is arbitrary or necessary; whether it is

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> concrete will on the one hand or idle fancy, yearning, daydream on the other. The active politician is a creator, an initiator; but he neither creates from nothing nor does he move in the turbid void of his own desires and dreams. He bases himself on effective reality, but what is this effective reality? Is it something static and immobile, or is it not rather a relation of forces in continuous motion and shift of equilibrium? If one applies one's will to the creation of a new equilibrium among the forces which really exist and are operative -basing oneself on the particular force which one believes to be progressive and strengthening it to help it to victory- one still moves on the terrain of effective reality, but does so in order to dominate and transcend it (or to contribute to this). What 'ought to be' is therefore concrete; indeed it is the only realistic and historicist interpretation of reality, it alone is history in the making and philosophy in the making, it alone is politics." (SPN, 172)

Gramsci therefore rejects the 'superficial and mechanical' political realism that passively accepts 'what is' as the unchangeable framework of one's action. His insistence that political action can change the conditions that underlie it does not, however, amount to the naïve voluntaristic belief that 'anything is possible'. To be effective, one has to analyze the exact configuration of forces in social reality. Only such an analysis can allow the political actor to draw conclusions concerning the course of action that will do the most to promote one's progressive goals. The fact that historical reality is the product of the dialectical interplay between material conditions and human action means, according to Gramsci, that only a political strategy that embodies this dialectic can be said to be truly realistic.

This analysis also helps clarify the distinction between the transformation of truth and method into an 'Ought', on one hand, and their treatment as a means to the pursuit of practical human projects, on the other. The rejection of schematic thinking and the attention to the particular that Buttigieg correctly attributes to Gramsci are themselves dictated by the practical function of knowledge. It is clear that only a very careful and nuanced analysis of the terrain on which the competing forces operate can allow an

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effective political intervention. What is more, this kind of insight is not to be expected from observers inspired by 'pure' and 'disinterested' love of knowledge. Gramsci makes this clear in his dialectical reconceptualization of the concept of prediction in social science and politics. Here, Gramsci challenges the unquestioned hegemony of the natural scientific outlook with its association of prediction to mechanical laws of regularity. More than that, he challenges the common assumption that 'objectivity' requires that one approach the object of her study without pre-conceived notions or extraneous motives. In Gramsci's view,

> "only to the extent to which the objective aspect of prediction is linked to a programme does it acquire its objectivity: 1. because strong passions are necessary to sharpen the intellect and help make intuition more penetrating; 2. because reality is a product of the application of human will to the society of things...; therefore if one excludes all voluntarist elements... one mutilates reality itself" (SPN, 171).

By contrast, Gramsci tells us, 'predictions made by people who claim to be 'impartial'... are full of idle speculation, trivial detail, and elegant conjectures."

If we have pursued the contrast of our interpretation of Gramsci's methodological assumptions to the one advanced by Buttigieg, this is because it is the former rather than the latter that more closely corresponds to our mode of analysis. Indeed, the intention of our study is not to provide an exhaustive account of the thinkers discussed that would do justice to every aspect of their thought and thus help us uncover the 'true' meaning of their work. Instead, our analysis is undertaken throughout with a view to the contribution that these thinkers can make to the formulation of a new democratic emancipatory project. As Gramsci might say, this is the 'programme' of our study and it is this programme that guides our approach to the objects of our study.

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We have seen so far that Gramsci's work has given rise to a number of controversies. We have also argued against the interpretation of such controversies as the manifestation of schematic readings that distort the 'true' meaning of Gramsci's thought. To be more precise, we have argued that undialectical reactions to schematic interpretations of the 'true' meaning of an author's work will -consciously or unconsciously, implicitly or explicitly- reproduce the same metaphysical appeal to this 'true' meaning. This methodological discussion has also allowed us to see that Gramsci's analysis represents a dialectical alternative to the rigid dichotomy between mechanical materialism and voluntaristic idealism. Having criticized Bobbio's transformation of Gramsci's reaction to economistic Marxism into a form of idealism, we should examine what Gramsci's alternative consisted in a little more closely.

Gramsci and the Base-Superstructure Model

Commentators have tried to encapsulate the nature of Gramsci's contribution in a variety of ways. Jacques Texier (1979), for example, responds to Bobbio's interpretation by describing Gramsci as a Marxist 'theoretician of the superstructures'. Derek Boothman (1995), on the other hand, argues that

> "while 'received wisdom' seems to regard him [Gramsci] as <u>par excellence</u> the theorist of the 'superstructure', ... it is more correct to consider him the theorist of the 'historical bloc' (and the conditions for its construction), within which the economic strand in his thought... takes its rightful place" (1iii).

In a similar vein, Paggi (1979) finds in Gramsci's work a general theory of Marxism. According to Paggi, this general theory "develops through a systematic confrontation with all of the doctrine's crucial points" (162). In so doing, it provides a comprehensive

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alternative to economistic Marxism's "interpretive scheme based on the relation of cause and effect between structure and superstructure" (153).

Some of these characterizations of Gramsci's work seem to be mutually incompatible. In reality, however, all three of them agree on the replacement of the mechanical cause and effect model linking base and superstructure by the more dialectical conception of social reality as a totality. In this sense, we encounter once again the conception of synchronic or latitudinal totality more fully explored in our earlier discussion of Lukacs. All three interpretations of Gramsci's conception of society as a totality locate the essence of this totality in the interconnection between different social spheres that it involves. At the same time, there is a certain degree of disagreement concerning the fate of the base-superstructure analogy in Gramsci's Prison Notebooks. Thus, although a number of commentators including Boothman and Texier agree that in Gramsci the conception of social totality often appears in the form of a 'historical bloc' articulating structure and superstructure, agreement does not extend to the question of the relative primacy of the two moments. Texier and Femia, for example, agree that Gramsci does not challenge but simply qualifies the primacy that Marxism has traditionally ascribed to the economic structure. In their view, Gramsci reacts to economistic Marxism by arguing that although "the infrastructure is indeed 'primary' and 'conditioning'" this does not mean that the superstructure is mechanically determined by the underlying structure. Gramsci is therefore seen as critical of an oversimplified model of the base-superstructure relation and supportive of the more nuanced view that the ultimate primacy of the structure does not preclude its reciprocal interaction with the superstructure.

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Other commentators, including Boothman and Paggi, argue that Gramsci's adoption of a standpoint of totality and concrete historical blocs represented an attempt to transcend the whole structure-superstructure problematic. Thus, for example, Paggi (1979) refers to reports of Gramsci's prison conversations with his comrades. According to this report, in his attempt

> "to break away from those who accused Marxism of mechanicism, fatalism, economic determinism, and economism, he suggested that they no long speak of economic 'structure' and superstructure', but only of an historical process in which all the factors took part. Only the predominance of that process was economic" (137).

The very formulation of this passage seems, however, to suggest that Gramsci's abandonment of the structure-superstructure distinction in his prison conversations may have primarily served a polemical function. Rather than a full-blown theoretical denial of the usefulness of the base-superstructure metaphor, such an abandonment appears more like a rhetorical device used by Gramsci to convey to his comrades the necessity of breaking with the mechanical interpretations of this metaphor prevalent at the time. Our interpretation, in this respect, seems to be borne by the fact that Gramsci himself makes use of the structure-superstructure metaphor in the Prison Notebooks. Although not mechanical, his use of this metaphor is, moreover, in line with traditional Marxist conceptions. In a passage specifying the constitutive principles of 'historical blocs', Gramsci tells us that

> "Structures and superstructures form an 'historical bloc'. That is to say the complex, contradictory and discordant ensemble of the social relations of production." (SPN, 366)

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A little later in the same paragraph, however, Gramsci adds a qualification aimed at preventing an overly mechanical interpretation of this model. Largely confirming Texier and Femia's interpretations of his attitude vis-à-vis the basis-superstructure metaphor, Gramsci rounds out his argument by affirming "the necessary reciprocity between structure and superstructure, a reciprocity which is nothing other than the real dialectical process."

Gramsci's adoption of a non-mechanical version of the base-superstructure model is also confirmed by his critique of Bukharin's Theory of Historical Materialism, a work that, as we have seen, Lukacs had also criticized for its mechanical outlook. It is not a coincidence that in the course of his critique, Gramsci repeatedly refers to Engels' famous letters to Bloch and Starkenburg. Indeed, it is in these letters and especially in the letter to Bloch that Engels explicitly articulates the modified version of the base-superstructure model that Gramsci endorses. In this letter Engels attacks all oversimplified, mechanical interpretations of this model and combines the logic of reflection with that of interaction. Indeed, responding to a criticism raised against historical materialism, Engels insists that "[I]f ... Barth [the critic in question] supposes that we deny any and every reaction of the political, etc., reflexes of the economic movement upon the movement itself, he is simply tilting at windmills" (MER, 765). Engels goes on, moreover, to attribute such a misunderstanding to the reduction of a dialectical relationship into simple, mechanical causality. According to Engels,

> "What these gentlemen all lack is dialectics. They always see only here cause, there effect. That this is a hollow abstraction, that such metaphysical polar opposites exist in the real world only during crises, while the whole vast process goes on in the form of interaction –though of very unequal forces, the economic movement being by far the strongest, most primeval, most decisive- this they never begin to see. Hegel has never existed for them" (MER, 765).

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The introduction of a degree of reciprocity between base and superstructure performs an important function to the extent that it allows a more coherent articulation of Marxist theory and socialist praxis. Indeed, the more dialectical version of the base-superstructure model represented a rationalization of Marxist theory to the extent that it did not seem to contradict the necessity of socialist politics. The more mechanical versions of Marxism, by contrast, were more vulnerable to the criticism that a belief in the inevitable advent of socialism made any political activity senseless. In Fundamental Problems of Marxism Plekhanov brings up a classic example of such a criticism when he refers to Stammler's argument that

> "if social evolution were to take place solely as the outcome of causal necessity, any conscious endeavor to collaborate in this evolution would be an obvious absurdity...
> "Either I regard a particular phenomenon as necessary, that is to say inevitable, and then I have no occasion to collaborate in its occurrence; or else my collaboration is necessary for the occurrence of the phenomenon, and if so we cannot term it necessary independently of my collaboration. Who tries to collaborate in the rising of the sun, which is necessary, that is to say inevitable?"(91-2)

To begin with, Stammler's comparison between social necessity and the movement of the sun illustrates the fetishism produced by any attempt to transplant the mechanical conception of causality from natural into social science. At the same time, however, it is interesting that Plekhanov is unable to provide an effective response to Stammler's facile criticism. This is not surprising since, as Gramsci points out, Plekhanov "relapses into vulgar materialism" (PNII 30-1). More specifically, Plekhanov describes Marxism as "contemporary materialism, the highest stage of development of that philosophy, that view of the universe, whose foundations were laid down in ancient Greece by

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Democritus, and in part by his predecessors, the Ionian thinkers."(1). In so doing, however, Plekhanov serves as an illustration of Gramsci's contention that in many conceptions of 'historical materialism' "greater stress is placed on the second word, whereas it should be placed on the first. Marx is fundamentally a 'historicist.'"(PNII, 153) This mechanical character of his Marxism forces Plekhanov to dismiss "the dualism characteristic of persons [such as Stammler] trained in the Kantian philosophy" in the name of a deterministic materialist conception. Plekhanov's response to the Kantian dichotomy between necessity and freedom requires him to strip Marx's insistence that people make their history but not as they please from its dialectical character. In Plekhanov's formulation,

> "history is made by men. Consequently human aspirations cannot but be among the factors of the historical movement. But history is made by men in one specific way and not in another, this depending upon a necessity ... That necessity being given, the aspirations of men, aspirations which form an inevitable factor of social evolution, are also given as consequences. These aspirations do not exclude necessity, but are themselves determined thereby. Consequently, it is a profound logical error to contrapose them to this same necessity".

If there is a logical error here, this is not Stammler's but Plekhanov's. Stammler's contrast is not between necessity and the aspiration that an end be achieved. His contrast is between necessity and the subject's contribution to the attainment of the necessary end. To pursue Stammler's original analogy, there is no contradiction between looking forward to the sun's rise and recognizing that this object of one's desire will inevitably come to pass. The contradiction that Stammler identifies is rather between action aimed at the attainment of an end and the belief that the attainment of this end is inevitable.

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As if recognizing the logical error of conflating aspirations and action, Plekhanov goes on to argue that human action is as subject to the dictates of economic necessity as human aspirations.

> "When a class longing for emancipation brings about a social revolution, it acts in a way which is more or less appropriate to the desired end; and, in any case, its activity is the cause of that revolution. But this activity, together with all the aspirations which have brought it about, is itself the effect of economic evolution, and therefore, is itself determined by necessity." (92-3)

In this model, however, it is not people who make their history on the basis of action subject to material constraints. Instead, human action is seen as the necessary consequence of an economic process, which therefore reduces human action into little more than a vehicle through which this process reaches its telos. The result is that mechanical materialism is forced to present the necessity of socialism as a causal rather than a rational one. Stammler is right to point out that from a strictly rational point of view, mechanical materialism removes the incentive to political action. The existence of such action can only appear as 'irrational', this irrationality itself being perceived as an economically determined result.

As Adamson (1980) points out the paradoxical relation between theory and practice implicit in the economistic Marxism of the Second International could not but produce schizophrenic effects within the socialist movement. The schism between objective social dynamics and subjective consciousness and praxis was simply irreducible:

> "If, like Kautsky or Luxemburg, one accepted these 'predictions' or sought to revise them within the deterministic framework of capitalism's inevitable collapse, political education did not have to be theorized at all; history would simply take care of itself. Of course, this did not necessarily mean that political education was ignored in practice" (113-4).

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Gramsci himself was aware of the paradox inherent in the growth of vigorous socialist political movements under the guidance of basically deterministic versions of Marxism. Interestingly enough, he compared this paradox to the one described in Weber's Protestant Ethic. In what seems to be a reference to this work, Gramsci argues that

> "The historico-cultural question to resolve in the study of the Reformation is that of the transformation of the concept of grace, which 'logically' ought to lead to the greatest amount of fatalism and passivity, into a real practice of enterprise and initiative on a world scale that was <instead> its dialectical consequence and formed the nascent ideology of capitalism. But we are now seeing the same thing happen as regards the conception of historical materialism; while for many critics there can 'logically' stem from it only fatalism and passivity, in reality, on the other hand, it gives rise to a flowering of initiatives and enterprises that leaves many observers astounded" (FSPN, 271).

All in all, the best that Plekhanov can do in his discussion of Stammler's criticism is to articulate the challenge that Marxist theory would have to meet if it wanted to respond to this criticism in a plausible and coherent manner. Indeed, in a last-ditch attempt to respond to Stammler's objection, Plekhanov explains that

> "If I am inclined to take part in a movement whose triumph seems to me a historical necessity, this only means that I consider my own activity likewise to be indispensable link in the chain of conditions whose aggregate will necessarily ensure the triumph of the movement which is dear to me" (93).

Plekhanov's mechanical outlook prevents him, however, from meeting the challenge that he clearly recognizes. It is this challenge that the above-mentioned rationalization of Marxist theory is designed to meet. Indeed, the modification of the base-superstructure scheme that provides for a certain degree of interaction between these two levels also allows the recognition to some extent of the subjective political and ideological preconditions for radical social change. Indeed, in the letter to Bloch, in which he

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articulates this modification, Engels points out that political development does not follow economic development in a simple and automatic fashion. Concerning, for example, "[t]he reaction of the state power upon economic development" Engels tells us that

> "it can run in the same direction, and then development is more rapid; it can oppose the line of development, in which case nowadays state power in every great people will go to pieces in the long run; or it can cut off the economic development from certain paths and prescribe certain others. This case ultimately reduces itself to one of the two previous ones. But it is obvious that in cases two and three the political power can do great damage to the economic development and result in the squandering of great masses of energy and material" (MER, 762).

In short, Engels argues, the economic process will be able to assert itself in the long-run but, in the meantime, political factors will determine the pace and smoothness with which economic factors will prevail.

The implications of this line of reasoning for the kind of objection raised by Stammler are obvious. In this model, even the affirmation of the inevitable replacement of capitalism by socialism does not remove the incentive to political action. The role of political action and consciousness is to make full use of the objective possibilities opened up by economic developments. The incentive to do this stems from the awareness that the longer it takes to form the adequate subjective counterpart to the objective economic conditions, the slower and more painful the transition to socialism will become. We already encountered this argument in Lukacs' analysis of capitalist crises. It will be remembered that, according to Lukacs, a failure on the part of the proletariat to see through reification and use capitalism's crisis to achieve revolutionary change can only lead to the return of this crisis on a higher level. In such a case, the ever greater suffering

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inflicted on the working class by consecutive and ever more intense crises would educate the proletariat 'the hard way' concerning its class interests.

In this model, therefore, political consciousness and action do not appear as the mechanical and even irrational results of the economic process. The necessity of such consciousness and action, then, is no longer a causal-mechanical one but rather a teleological-rational one. We have seen that Weber had already pointed out that it is often the human actions undertaken most freely and rationally which are the most necessary and predictable. Gramsci makes a similar point when he argues that

> "Automatism is in conflict with free will, not with freedom. Automation is a group freedom, in opposition to individualistic free will. When Ricardo said 'given these conditions' we shall have these economic consequences, he did not make economics itself 'deterministic' and neither was his conception 'naturalistic'. He observed that, given the collaborative and co-ordinated activity of a social group that, following certain principles accepted (freely) out of conviction, works towards certain goals, a development then occurs which may be called automatic and which may be considered as the development of certain recognizable laws that can be isolated using the methods of the exact sciences. At any moment a free choice is made according to certain basic orientations that are identical for a great mass of individuals or single wills, in so far as these latter have become homogeneous in a determined ethico-political climate. Nor is it the case that everyone acts in the same way; individual free wills are, rather, manifold, but the homogeneous part predominates and 'dictates law'." (FSPN, 179)

This discussion allows us to qualify Femia's contention that Gramsci's "theoretical originality revolves around his attempts to establish human subjectivity as a core element of Marxism." (1) It is clear by now that Gramsci's critique of mechanical Marxism creates an opening for the discussion of political consciousness and subjectivity as an integral element of Marxist theory and strategy. At the same time, however, to present this contribution as the mark of Gramsci's theoretical originality obscures the fact that Gramsci's critique of Marxist economism was part of a broader tendency within the

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Marxist movement. Gramsci himself was aware of this fact. Indeed, in a comment that commends Croce for the contribution to the struggle against the economistic outlook that his discussion of cultural and intellectual factors can make, Gramsci makes an oblique reference to Lenin, recognizing him as an important contributor to the anti-economistic Marxist tradition. According to Gramsci

> "Credit must therefore, at the very least, be given to Croce's thought as an instrumental value, and in this respect it may be said that it has forcefully drawn attention to the importance of cultural and intellectual factors in the organic life of civil society and the state, to the moment of hegemony and consent as the necessary form of the concrete historical bloc. That this is not futile is demonstrated by the fact that, in the same period as Croce, the greatest modern theoretician of the philosophy of praxis [i.e. Lenin] has -on the terrain of political terminology- in opposition to the various tendencies of 'economism', reappraised the front of cultural struggle and constrained the doctrine of hegemony as a complement to the theory of the state-as-force and as a contemporary form of the 1848 doctrine of 'permanent resolution'" (FSPN 357).

Other commentators also stress the importance of Lenin's contribution to the anti-economistic tradition within Marxism. Martin Jay (1984), for example, points out that "[t]he restoration of the concept of totality to its central role in Marxist theory must, therefore, be understood in relation to Lenin's repudiation of economism and determinism and his sensitivity to the interplay of social forces in the Russia of his day" (67). Similarly, Paggi (1979) sees in the critique of Bukharin's Manual contained in the Prison Notebooks the recognition, on the part of Gramsci, of the abandonment of "the Bolsheviks' interpretation of Marxist theory" (113). Gramsci's critique of Bukharin is therefore seen as a critique of an emerging economistic 'marxist-leninist' line. Paggi also correctly points out that "Plekhanov always loomed behind Bukharin." Indeed, Bukharin's (1969) attempt to present Marxism as a sociology is clearly prefigured by Plekhanov, who goes as far as to suggest that "[i]t is an extremely characteristic fact that

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the consistent opponents of the materialist interpretation of history feel it incumbent upon them to prove that sociology cannot exist as a science"(93).

Gramsci's critique of Bukharin's concept of Marxism as a "sociology" raises an important question concerning the status of sociology. This is a question that we have already encountered in the course of discussing the internal tensions traversing Marx's and Weber's work. As Gramsci points out, Bukharin's attempt to transform Marxism into a sociology is inspired by a concept of science that "is taken root and branch from the natural sciences, as if these were the only sciences, or science par excellence, as decreed by positivism" (SPN, 438). This approach leads Bukharin to a specific conception of the relationship between History and Sociology. More specifically, the former is treated as the source of the raw material that Sociology uses to formulate laws underlying historical development. The result is a very deterministic conception oriented towards prediction. Like Plekhanov, Bukharin (1969) argues that the human will is as determined by laws as any other social phenomenon and makes this argument the basis of his response to Stammler's above-mentioned objection. Once he subsumes all factors of social development into a deterministic system of laws, Bukharin ends up interpreting the inability to predict the future as a temporary phenomenon. Once our knowledge of social laws increases, Bukharin tells us, it will become possible to give these laws a mathematical formulation. In so doing, we will be able to know not only the direction but also the pace of historical development. With this, Bukharin argues, it will be possible to predict even the specific point in time when any social phenomenon occurs.

It is clear that this view contrasts sharply to that of Gramsci. As we saw earlier, Gramsci sees historical and theoretical analysis as a means to effective political

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intervention. For Bukharin, on the other hand, theoretical analysis provides a causal explanation of political action. For Gramsci, the analysis of the world is treated as the means to its change. For Bukharin, on the other hand, social change is subsumed under a comprehensive deterministic scheme describing how the world works. While Bukharin sees historical knowledge as a means to the formulation of sociological laws, Gramsci is closer to Weber's view of sociological models as means to historical analysis and the formulation of political strategies.

Bukharin also recognizes the practical character of science and even argues that the working-class needs such knowledge in order to engage in an effective struggle against the bourgeoisie and the other social classes. We have seen, however, that the mechanical version of Marxism that he endorses is unable to respond to the objection that it is irrational for a mechanical materialist to engage in political action. The irrationality of Bukharin's conception of revolutionary politics reaches its culmination with his distinction between theoretical and practical idealism. The former, according to Bukharin, refers to an idealist conception of the world while the latter has practical rather than ontological connotations. Explaining that a practical idealist is someone who remains faithful to his ideas and does not hesitate before the sacrifices that these ideas demand of him, he affirms that the communist who sacrifices his life is a practical idealist. In so doing, however, Bukharin ends up endorsing an alienating reversal between means and ends that was also present in Weber. This reversal leads to people's self-instrumentalization since it does not treat ideas as a means to the enrichment of human life but rather human life as a means to the realization of ideas. Gramsci, on the

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other hand, avoids this alienating reversal by defining science and rationality in terms of their practical contribution to human life. As Gramsci points out

> "scientific means 'rational' and, more precisely, 'that which conforms rationally to the end' to be attained, i.e. obtaining the maximum economic efficiency etc. by a rational (choice and) definition of all the operations and actions that leads towards the end.
> "The adjective 'scientific' is now extensively used, but its meaning can always be reduced to that of 'conforming to the end' in that this 'conformity' is rationally (methodically) sought after the most minute analysis of all the elements (right down to the tiniest details)" (FSPN, 283).

This passage makes the importance of rationalization for Gramsci once again clear. His insistence on a minute analysis of the tiniest details does not so much stem from a belief in an objective reality that should not be distorted. Its motivation is entirely practical. Gramsci's objection to the common-sense appeal to an objective reality is actually in line with our reinterpretation of Weber's analysis of rationalization. Indeed, his argument concerning the religious origin of the conception of an 'objective reality' comes to complement the metaphysical representation of the world as an ethically meaningful cosmic order that Weber had talked about. Criticizing Bukharin's appeals to the 'objective reality of the external world', Gramsci points out that

> "The public 'believes' that the external world is objectively real, but it is precisely here that the question argues: what is the origin of this 'belief' and what critical value does it 'objectively' have? In fact the belief is of religious origin, even if the man who shares it is indifferent to religion. Since all religions have taught and do teach that the world, nature, the universe were created by God before the creation of man, and therefore man found the world all ready made, catalogued and defined once and for all, this belief has become an iron fact of 'common sense' and survives with the same solidity even if religious feeling is dead or asleep" (SPN, 441).

If Gramsci's analysis can expose the religious origin of the conception of objective reality, our reinterpretation of Weber's rationalization analysis allows us to account for

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the structural logic of this religious origin. Indeed, the same feeling of human powerlessness that was underlying the view of the world as an ethically meaningful cosmic order is also operative here. In the absence of adequate technological development, people's tendency to define their world as an overarching order of which they constituted a subordinate element becomes understandable. In such a context, people's world appears as the world which people can at best discover and adapt to. If this conception of the world as an objective reality appears as a reification of people's relation to and appropriation of their world, this reification can now be understood as itself the expression of this practical relation in a given material and historical context. The rise of capitalism on the other hand, radically changes this context, thus also challenging the conception of the world associated to it. The unprecedented rapidity with which capitalism changes the human world as well as the crucial contribution of scientific and technical knowledge to this process clearly render obsolete the idea that 'man found the world all ready made, catalogued and defined once and for all.'

Materialism, Religion and Reification in *The Prison Notebooks*

We should point out here that Gramsci's critique of the common-sense appeal to the objective reality of the world is not only compatible to our reinterpretation of Weber's rationalization analysis but also takes this analysis a step further than Weber himself did. It will be remembered that for Weber the rationalization process reached its culmination with the replacement of the view of the world as an ethically meaningful cosmic order by a conception of the world as a causal mechanism. It is clear that Gramsci goes beyond this replacement of a theodicy by an ontology. As a matter of fact, it is such an ontology

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that Gramsci criticizes when he discusses Bukharin's Manual. By contrast, Weber's failure to problematize the conception of the world as a causal mechanism led to the series of reifying effects discussed earlier. Thus we saw, for example, how Weber's replacement of religious theodicies with an ontological outlook led him to the postulate of a variety of social spheres, each with its 'godhead', and how this conception was associated with the identification of a truly human life with human self-instrumentalization in the name of one abstract idea or another. We have also seen that in his failure to draw the full implications of his rationalization analysis Weber proved to be a true child of a capitalist society which, even through all the compulsive rationalization of individual social spheres that it encourages, retains its irrationality as a whole and stands in the way of rationalization's completion.

We have seen the advance over Weber that Gramsci's critique of the common-sense appeal to the objective reality of the world implies. At the same time, what has been said also shows that this advance is not fully articulated. More specifically, while Gramsci is right to criticize the naively objectivistic conception of reality, he is not fully aware of the true significance of the object of his critique. We saw that Gramsci attributed the objectivist conception of reality to an originally religious belief that "has become an iron fact of 'common sense' and survives with the same solidity even if religious feeling is dead or asleep." Interestingly enough, Gramsci's interpretation of the paradoxical survival of an idea even after the relative decline of the religion that gave rise to it is guilty of an error that had also been committed by Weber. It will be remembered that Weber had brought up a similar paradox in The Protestant Ethic. In that case the concept outlasting its religious source was that of the 'calling.' In attributing the

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persistence of the objectivist conception of reality to a form of cultural inertia. Gramsci proves as unable to see the changing function of this conception as Weber was with respect to the concept of calling. What both Gramsci and Weber fail to see is that the concepts outliving their original religious sources do so only by virtue of the role they perform within discourses that effect a new, secularized form of reification. We have seen, for example, that the persistence of the idea of calling in Weber's thought does not have the function of rationalizing a theodicy but rather of naturalizing capitalist alienation. While there is a clear continuity between the Calvinist concept of the 'calling' and that of Weber, the fact remains that these two concepts are distinct insofar as they form part of two distinct reifying discourses. The same is true in the case of Gramsci. The reification that Gramsci discovers in Bukharin's Manual is not the religious reification associated to pre-capitalist societies. Rather, it is the same reification that structures Weber's thought, the reification associated to competitive capitalism and brilliantly dissected by Lukacs. If the objectivist conception of reality is retained by the new, secularized form of reification, this is because the emergence of capitalism does not do away with human powerlessness but simply 'privatizes' it. What capitalism achieves is the replacement of humanity's collective powerlessness vis-à-vis nature with the private individual's powerlessness vis-à-vis a society that seems to operate according to a logic independent of anyone's control.

Gramsci's conflation of religious and secular capitalist reification undermines the coherence of his critique of mechanical materialism. This critique is not simply an intellectual refutation but seeks to give a historicist account of the rise of mechanical materialism. Following the example of Rosa Luxemburg and Karl Korsch, Gramsci

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attempts to explain mechanical Marxism as a response to the political and ideological imperatives facing the 19th century socialist movement. For Gramsci the historical reasons for the transformation of Marxism into a species of philosophical materialism

> "can... be looked for in the fact that the philosophy of praxis has been forced to ally itself with extraneous tendencies in order to combat the residues of the precapitalist world that still exist among the popular masses, especially in the field of religion.
> "The philosophy of praxis had two tasks to perform: to combat modern ideologies in their most refined form, in order to be able to constitute its own group of independent intellectuals; and to educate the popular masses, whose culture was medieval. This second task, which was fundamental, given the character of the new philosophy, has absorbed all its strength, not only in quantitative but also in qualitative terms. For 'didactic' reasons, the new philosophy was combined into a form of culture which was a little higher than the popular average (which was very low) but was absolutely inadequate to combat the ideologies of the educated classes. And yet the new philosophy was born precisely to supersede the highest cultural manifestation of the age, classical German philosophy, and to create a group of intellectuals specific to the new social group whose conception of the world it was" (SPN 392-3).

While, as we saw earlier, Gramsci criticizes mechanical materialism for failing to overcome religious conceptions, in this passage he suggests that such mechanical materialism may serve the necessary function of liberating the masses from the strong hold of religion. In interpreting the contrast between the mechanical versions of Marxism and the more refined and sophisticated forms of bourgeois ideology, Gramsci even goes as far as to suggest that "[i]t remains to be seen whether this form of cultural alignment of forces might not be an historical necessity, and whether one would not find similar alignments in past history" (SPN393). What Gramsci has in mind here is the contrast between Reformation and the Renaissance. Reinterpreting Croce's discussion of this contrast, Gramsci points out that despite its original lack of cultural sophistication when compared to the Renaissance, it was the Reformation that had a more lasting social

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impact. Gramsci uses Croce's contrast between the elitist, aristocratic nature of the Renaissance and the Reformation's "efficacity of cultural penetration" to explain this differential social impact. According to Gramsci this cultural penetration allowed the Protestant countries to resist effectively the counter-offensive of the Catholic Church that ended up swamping the Renaissance. By allowing "the Protestant countries to resist the crusade of the Catholic armies tenaciously and victoriously", the Reformation was able to succeed where the Renaissance failed.

> "The Lutheran Reformation and Calvinism created a popular culture and only in later periods did they create a higher culture; the Italian reformers were sterile in terms of great historical achievements. Modern philosophy is a continuation of the Renaissance and of the advanced phase of the Reformation, but its methods are those of the Renaissance; they are bereft of the popular incubation of the Reformation, which created the solid foundations of the modern state in Protestant nations" (PNII, 142-3).

Its intellectual and cultural refinement notwithstanding, the Renaissance was much more easily liquidated. Its aristocratic and elitist character, which left the life of the popular masses untouched, ensured the eclipse of the movement once its carriers, the intellectuals, were sent to the stake. At the same time that he describes bourgeois philosophy as a continuation of the renaissance, Gramsci compares Marxism to the Reformation:

> "they [the Renaissance intellectuals] submit in the face of persecution and the stake. The historical bearers of the Reformation are the German people, not the intellectuals. But this 'cowardice' of the intellectuals explains the 'sterility' of the Reformation in high culture, until a new group of intellectuals surfaced slowly from within the reformed popular masses - and then came the German philosophy of 1700-1800. Something similar occurs in the case of Marxism as well: it does not create a high culture, because the great intellectuals formed on its terrain do not emerge from within the popular classes but from the traditional classes, to which they return during the 'turning points' of history, or, if they remain with the popular classes, it is to prevent their autonomous development. The affirmation that Marxism is a new, independent philosophy is the affirmation of the

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> independence and originality of a new culture in incubation that will develop with the development of social relations" (PNII, 143-4).

Gramsci here reinforces his point that the mechanical versions of Marxism may represent a necessary stage in the historical movement. His references to the Reformation seek to convey the message that the manifest lack of sophistication on the part of popularized, vulgar Marxism does not preclude the doctrine's ability to bring about a new and higher culture. This higher culture is not immediately attainable since it can only emerge as the ultimate result of the revolutionary process. Immediately following the passage just quoted, Gramsci explains that

"[w]hat exists is a 'combination' of old and new, a temporary equilibrium corresponding to the equilibrium of social relations. Only when a state is created does the creation of a high culture become necessary."

The situation becomes further complicated by the fact that Gramsci's claim concerning vulgar materialism's contribution to the struggle against religion exists side by side with the belief that religion is itself 'crassly materialistic'. The argument that mechanical materialism helps undermine people's religious common sense seems to be contradicted by the claim that

> " 'Politically' the materialist conception is close to the people, to 'common sense'. It is closely linked to many beliefs and prejudices, to almost all popular superstitions (witchcraft, spirits, etc.). This can be seen in popular Catholicism, and, even more so, in Byzantine orthodoxy. Popular religion is crassly materialistic" (SPN 396).

So, collecting together Gramsci's various claims concerning the relationship between materialism and religion we get the following: mechanical materialism is akin to religion; mechanical materialism serves as a weapon in the struggle against religion; and religion is akin to materialism. We see, therefore, that Gramsci's critique of mechanical

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materialism presents itself as a set of contradictory assertions. However, our reinterpretation of Weber's rationalization analysis allows us to restore the coherence of this critique by accounting for these apparent contradictions. As we have seen, Weber himself recognizes the materialist impulse underlying religion and magic. Indeed, the desire to reduce suffering is elevated by Weber into a major driving force of the rationalization process. We have also seen, however, that the socialization of reification that capitalism entails transforms materialism from a mainspring of religion into its adversary. Since this socialization of reification does not, however, eliminate human powerlessness but simply reorients it from people's relation to Nature to their relation to a dynamic society operating according to its own autonomous logic, the opposition between mechanical materialism and religion is also a continuity. In both cases, people's practical relation to their world is not perceived as just that but conceals itself behind the reified appearance of an objective reality that it produces itself. To the extent that it gives expression to a new form of reification, mechanical materialism represents a revolt against religion. To the extent, however, that this new form is still a form of reification, mechanical materialism issues the same kind of appeal to 'objective reality' that was characteristic of religion.

Hegemony and the Political Implications of Critical Theory

We see, therefore, that our examination of Gramsci on the basis of the rationalization problematic allows us to see Gramsci in a different light. More specifically, our analysis allows us to recognize Gramsci as an important figure in Marxist Critical theory. This aspect of Gramsci's thought is usually ignored by most commentators who tend to

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identify this theoretical tradition with the works of Lukacs and the Frankfurt School. As a result, the only instances in which an analysis of Gramsci's thought appears side by side with an analysis of the other critical theorists are works treating 'Western Marxism', a broad category that encompasses all non-orthodox European Marxists of the twentieth century.

The affinity between Gramsci's thought and Marxist Critical theory is borne out by Horkheimer's 'Traditional and Critical Theory.' In this essay Horkeimer (1982), an early director of the Institut fur Sozialforschung in Frankfurt and a founding member of the circle of intellectuals that has come to be known as the 'Frankfurt School', attempts to outline the main differences between Marxist Critical theory and the prevalent conception of theory in the more mainstream social scientific community. The parallels to Gramsci's analysis in the Prison Notebooks are remarkable indeed. In the same way that Gramsci distances himself from Bukharin's uncritical adoption of the natural scientific method, Horkheimer points out, in his description of the 'traditional theory' that he wants to criticize, "that the various schools of sociology have an identical conception of theory and that it is the same as theory in the natural sciences."(191) Similarly, there is a parallel between Gramsci's objection to the conception of the world as "all ready made catalogued and defined once and for all" (SPN, 441) and Horkeimer's argument that

> "The whole perceptible world as present to a member of bourgeois society and as interpreted within a traditional world-view which is in continuous interaction with that given world, is seen by the perceiver as a sum-total of facts; it is there and must be accepted" (199).

The common adversary highlighted by Gramsci's and Horkheimer's parallel claims is none other than capitalist reification. This adversary may not be clearly recognized by

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Gramsci but, as we saw, it is only our reinterpretation of the rationalization problematic and its analysis of capitalist reification that can render Gramsci's critique of Bukharin more coherent. In the Frankfurt School, by contrast, this adversary is clearly recognized. The reason for this is that the founders of this school of thought assimilated and consciously reacted to the work of Lukacs. Indeed, in the course of describing the critical attitude that challenges the standpoint of traditional theory, Horkheimer (1982) argues that

> "The two-sided character of the social totality in its present form becomes, for men who adopt the critical attitude, a conscious opposition. In recognizing the present form of economy and the whole culture which it generates to be the product of human work as well as the organization which mankind was capable of and has provided for itself in the present era, these men identify themselves with this totality and conceive it as will and reason. It is their own world. At the same time, however, they experience the fact that society is comparable to nonhuman natural processes, to pure mechanisms, because cultural forms which are supported by war and oppression are not the creations of a unified, self-conscious will. That world is not their own but the world of capital." (207-8)

The conception of society as a totality, which is a human product but presents itself as a non-human natural process and a pure mechanism, comes, as we have seen, from Lukacs. Moreover, Horkheimer also agrees with Lukacs' view concerning the social alternative that becomes visible as soon as one pierces through reifying appearances. Critical theory, Horkeimer (1982) tells us,

> "considers the overall framework which is conditioned by the blind interaction of individual activities (that is, the existent division of labor and the class distinctions) to be a function which originates in human action and therefore is a possible object of planful decision and rational determination of goals" (207).

At the same time, however, Horkeimer does not share the faith in the revolutionary standpoint of the proletariat that was the hallmark of History and Class Consciousness. For Horkeimer (1982),

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> "There are no general criteria for judging the critical theory as a whole, for it is always based on the recurrence of events and thus on a self-reproducing totality. Nor is there a social class by whose acceptance of the theory one could be guided. It is possible for the consciousness of every social stratum today to be limited and corrupted by ideology, however much, for its circumstances, it may be bent on truth... the critical theory has no specific influence on its side, except concern for the abolition of social injustice." (242)

Critical theory, Horkheimer seems to suggest, cannot offer anything more than this admittedly 'negative formulation'.

It is at this point that a reinterpretation of Gramsci's thought can make a contribution to Marxist Critical Theory. Viewed through the lens provided by the problematic of rationalization we have developed, Gramsci's concept of hegemony points to a political project effecting the subjective rationalization without which the transition to a rational society is simply not conceivable. Gramsci manages to go beyond Horkheimer's 'negative formulation' by theorizing the subjective preconditions for this transition. In the history of Marxist thought the question of the transition to socialism has usually been linked to the question of capitalist crisis. We have seen the contrasting approaches to this question that mechanical materialism and the modified base-superstructure model implied. While the former implied a practical obliteration of the subjective factor, the latter tended to predicate proletarian revolution and the transition to socialism on the interaction between capitalism's crisis-ridden dynamics and the maturity of proletarian class consciousness. We have seen that one strand in Lukacs' conception of capitalist crisis illustrated the latter model by arguing that if class consciousness had not been attained by the time capitalism's crisis broke out and the moment for revolution were not seized this crisis would return on ever higher levels producing ever greater suffering and thus helping the proletariat recognize its true interests and historical

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mission. We have also argued that Gramsci seems to subscribe to the modified base-superstructure model. At the same time, however, his discussion of capitalist crisis is as traversed by tensions and conflicting tendencies as that of Lukacs. For this reason, Gramsci's theory of capitalist crisis too overflows the boundaries implicit in the modified base-superstructure model.

The fact that the modified base-superstructure model informs one strand in Gramsci's thought on capitalist crisis and revolutionary change becomes abundantly clear in the connection he sees between 'aversion on principle to compromise' and economism. Indeed, Gramsci attributes such an aversion to

> "the iron conviction that there exist objective laws of historical development similar in kind to natural laws, together with a belief in a predetermined teleology like that of a religion: since favorable conditions are inevitably going to appear, and since these, in a rather mysterious way, will bring about palingenetic events, it is evident that any deliberate initiative tending to predispose and plan these conditions is not only useless but even harmful" (SPN, 168).

After accusing the mechanical, economistic point of view of sheer mysticism, Gramsci effects a transition from the modified base superstructure model with its attention to time and uneven development to the concept of hegemony. In economistic modes of thinking, Gramsci tells us,

> "no account is taken of the 'time' factor, nor in the last analysis even of 'economics'. For there is no understanding of the fact that mass ideological factors always lag behind mass economic phenomena, and that therefore, at certain moments, the automatic thrust due to the economic factor is slowed down, obstructed or even momentarily broken by traditional ideological elements - hence that there must be a conscious, planned struggle to ensure that the exigencies of the economic position of the masses, which may conflict with the traditional leadership's policies, are understood" (SPN, 168).

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The effectivity of economic developments, Gramsci insists, is by no means guaranteed. To produce their full effects, they have to be supplemented by political action adequate to the situation at hand:

> "An appropriate political initiative is always necessary to liberate the economic thrust from the dead weight of traditional policies - i.e. to change the political direction of certain forces which have to be absorbed if a new, homogeneous politico-economic historical bloc, without internal contradictions, is to be successfully formed ... If the union of two forces is necessary in order to defeat a third, a recourse to arms and coercion (even supposing that these are available) can be nothing more than a methodological hypothesis; the only concrete possibility is compromise. Force can be employed against enemies, but not against a part of one's own side which one wishes rapidly to assimilate, and whose 'good will' and enthusiasm one needs." (SPN, 168)

Living in Italy in the aftermath of the Russian Revolution, Gramsci recognizes that, especially in non-industrial or partly industrialized countries where the peasantry was much more numerous than the industrial working class, socialist revolution could only result from an alliance of these two exploited classes. His reliance on the concept of hegemony bears witness to this recognition. This recognition, however, was facilitated, as Perry Anderson shows, by the fact that the concept of hegemony had already been in use for some time before Gramsci. More specifically, Perry Anderson provides a brief genealogy of the concept of hegemony following its various manifestations both in the Social Democratic debates before and the Comintern documents after the Russian Revolution. The continuity between the use of the concept in the Comintern and Gramsci's own use is especially striking.

The passage by Gramsci that we just quoted illustrates the foundation of his thought upon a series of dialectically conceived dualisms. Gramsci acknowledges in this respect his intellectual debt to Machiavelli by arguing that these dualisms correspond "to

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the dual nature of Machiavelli's Centaur- half animal and half-human. They are the levels of force and of consent, authority and hegemony, violence and civilization, of the individual moment and of the universal moment ('Church' and 'state'), of agitation and of propaganda, of tactics and of strategy, etc." (SPN 169-170). In another instance, Gramsci expresses the same idea through a similar but slightly modified series of dualisms:

> "Guicciardini's claim that two things are absolutely necessary for the life of a state: arms and religion. This formula of his can be translated into various other, less drastic formulas: force and consent, coercion and persuasion, state and Church, political society and civil society, politics and morals (Croce's ethico-political history), law and freedom, order and discipline, or violence and fraud" (FSPN, 17 and SPN, 170).

As Perry Anderson (1976-7) has argued the articulation of these dualisms is not consistent in The Prison Notebooks. According to Anderson the meaning and function of the concept of hegemony in the Notebooks fluctuate in a way that mirrors the existence of three different versions of the relationship between coercion and consent, state and civil society. Anderson (1976-7) sees, moreover, in "the variation between the versions... the decipherable symptom of Gramsci's own awareness of the aporia of his solutions" (25). The lists of dichotomies contained in the passages from the Notebooks that were quoted above associate the State with force and the civil society with hegemony and consent. The conception of 'hegemony' as the other of domination based on brute force is also borne out by Gramsci's contention that

> "a class is dominant in two ways, namely it is 'leading' and 'dominant.' It leads the allied classes, it dominates the opposing classes. Therefore, a class can (and must) 'lead' even before assuming power; when it is in power it becomes dominant, but it also continues to 'lead'." (PNL 136-7)

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Gramsci goes on to clarify the double relationship of the dominant class to the other classes by relating the new dichotomy between 'leadership' and 'domination' to the set of dichotomies including that between hegemony and force:

> "There can and there must be a 'political hegemony' even before assuming government power, and in order to exercise political leadership or hegemony one must not count solely on the power and material force that is given by government" (PNL 137).

In another passage, to which Anderson refers, Gramsci makes the same point even more strongly and clearly:

> "the supremacy of a social group manifests itself in two ways, as 'domination' and as 'intellectual and moral leadership'. A social group dominates antagonistic groups, which it tends to 'liquidate', or to subjugate even by armed force; it leads kindred and allied groups. A social group can, and indeed must, already exercise 'leadership' before winning governmental power (this indeed is one of the principal conditions for the winning of such power); it subsequently becomes dominant when it exercises power, but even if it holds it firmly in its grasp, it must continue to 'lead' as well" (SPN, 57-8).

Anderson refers to this passage to counter what he refers to as "[o]fficial interpretations of Gramsci"(45). Such interpretations, Anderson tells us, attribute to Gramsci the view that the working class could achieve cultural hegemony over society as a whole even "before becoming the ruling class politically" (45). In pointing to this text as well as in his more general analysis of Gramsci's Notebooks Anderson is reacting to 'reformist' readings of Gramsci that place an one-sided emphasis on consent while correspondingly downplaying the moment of force. Other commentators have issued similar warnings. Femia (1981), for example, criticizes the fallacies at the basis of "[i]nterpretations that view Gramsci as an apostle of a constitutional and 'gradual' path to socialism"(205). Similarly, Salvadori (1979) attacks the Italian Communist Party's justification of its post-

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war parliamentary strategy by arguing that "the strategy of the 'historical compromise', 'ideological pluralism', and the struggle for the 'democratic' transformation of the state, have nothing in common with the ideas of Antonio Gramsci." As part of his contrast between Gramsci's conception of hegemony and that of the PCI, Salvadori (1979) emphasizes that

> "a theory of the state, of social alliances, of the role of intellectuals, which culminated in a repudiation of the 'mobilization against capitalism and the bourgeois state' instead of thinking this mobilization in terms of the creation of a 'social base for the dictatorship of the proletariat and the worker state', cannot make claim to be Gramsci's own" (243).

All these accounts show convincingly that Gramsci's thought is not compatible to a Social-Democratic reformism hoping to institute Socialism through a strategy of ideological enlightenment aimed at countering the hold of the dominant ideology on the masses and achieving a parliamentary majority. At the same time, however, such accounts fail both to problematize the rigid dichotomy between force and consent and to recognize the extent to which this dichotomy is a product of capitalist reification. In their reproduction of capitalist reification, however, Gramsci's commentators follow Gramsci's own example. Perry Anderson's critique of Gramsci is, in this sense, a typical product of such a situation. Indeed, after pointing out the contradictory tendencies in Gramsci's thought, Anderson (1976-7) ends up criticizing Gramsci from a number of contradictory perspectives. The inconsistencies in Anderson's account are especially obvious in his discussion of the relative weight of force and consent in Gramsci's thought. One of Anderson's main points is that the dependence of capitalist society on ideological mechanisms that elicit the consent of the masses should not end up disguising the importance of force as capitalism's weapon of last resort in moments of crisis. In

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Anderson's view. Gramsci failed to achieve this fine balance between force and consent ending up with a view as one-sided as that of Machiavelli:

> "Gramsci adopted Machiavelli's myth of the Centaur as the emblematic motto of his research: but where Machiavelli had effectively collapsed consent into coercion, in Gramsci coercion was progressively eclipsed by consent. The Prince and The Modern Prince are in this sense distorting mirrors of each other. There is an occult, inverse correspondence between the failings of the two" (49).

At the same time, however, Anderson seems to recognize that Gramsci's analysis of mechanisms of consent is intended as a complement to rather than a substitute for the moment of force. Indeed, only two pages earlier than the passage just quoted Anderson points out that

> "Gramsci was acutely aware of the novelty and difficulty for Marxist theory of the phenomenon of institutionalized popular consent to capital in the West - hitherto regularly evaded or burked within the Comintern tradition. He therefore focused all the powers of his intelligence on it. In doing so, he never intended to deny or rescind the classical axioms of that tradition or the inevitable role of social coercion within any great historical transformation, so long as classes subsisted. His objective was, in one of his phrases, to 'complement' treatment of the one with an exploration of the other." (47)

Anderson is right to identify a certain ambiguity in Gramsci's conceptualization of the connection between force and consent. His interpretation, however, of the divergent conceptions of this connection in terms of the revolution vs. reform dichotomy is a little too simple. Part of the problem in Anderson's interpretation is his tendency to privilege the relation between State and civil society in Gramsci's Notebooks. Anderson extracts from the Notebooks three different models of this relation, one giving primacy to civil society over the State, another assuming a balanced relation between the two and a third effectively eliminating the distinction between the two altogether. By foregrounding the relationship between State and civil society, Anderson, however, fails to draw the

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implications of the fact that, as Femia (1981) points out, "[f]or Gramsci... the critical superstructural distinction is not so much civil | political or private | public as hegemony | domination" (28). All of the different models of the relation between the state and civil society that Anderson extracts are reducible to the insight that the reproduction of class society depends both on the use or threat of force and on an ideological hegemony capable of eliciting the consent of the masses. All the other dichotomies and definitions that Gramsci offers are merely means to the exploration of this fundamental insight. The meaning of terms such as State, civil society, hegemony, and so on is not fixed once and for all but is rather contextual. While this meaning may vary, it always retains within itself the trace of the force | consent dualism that is meant to elucidate. Anderson's failure to recognize the practical character of Gramsci's concepts occasionally leads him to gross distortions of Gramsci's definitions. In the course of his explication of the meaning of 'civil society' in Gramsci, Anderson cites a sentence from the Notebooks out of context and makes it the basis for a definition, which is not really borne by the section in which this sentence appears. To begin with, Anderson tells us that "[i]n Gramsci, civil society does not refer to the sphere of economic relations, but is precisely contrasted with it as a system of superstructural institutions that is intermediary between economy and State." This description of Gramsci's conception of 'civil society' sounds plausible enough since it seems compatible both to Gramsci's claim that "[b]etween the economic structure and the State with its legislation and its coercion stands civil society" and to other definitions of the concept dispersed in the Notebooks. Once we examine the relevant passage in greater detail, however, we end up with a move complicated picture. This picture, moreoever, confirms our argument that the meaning of Gramsci's various

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concepts is never fixed once and for all but rather depends on the function assigned to them in the economy of Gramsci's various arguments. In the relevant section Gramsci argues that

> " 'Homo oeconomicus' is the abstraction of the economic activity of a given form of society, i.e. of a particular economic structure. Every social form has its 'homo oeconomicus', i.e. its own economic activity. To maintain that the concept of homo oeconomicus has no value scientifically is just a way of saying that the economic structure and the activity conformant to it have undergone radical change, or that the economic structure has been so changed that the mode of economic behavior must necessarily change in order to become appropriate to the new structure... Between the economic structure and the State with its legislation and its coercion stands civil society, and the latter must be radically transformed, in a concrete sense and not simply on the statute-book or in scientific books. The State is the instrument for conforming civil society to the economic structure, but is necessary for the State to 'be willing' to do this; i.e. for the representatives of the change that has taken place in the economic structure to be in control of the State. To expect that civil society will conform to the new structure as a result of propaganda and persuasion, or that the old *homo oeconomicus* will disappear without being buried with all the honors it deserves, is a new form of economic rhetoric" (SPN, 208-9; FSPN, 167).

In this passage Gramsci sets up a parallel between civil society and the concept of 'homo oeconomicus'. Both are contrasted to the economic structure. A change in the latter requires, according to Gramsci, a corresponding change in both civil society and the 'mode of economic behavior' characteristic of the old economic structure's 'homo oeconomicus.' This parallel between civil society and 'homo oeconomicus' has led Quintin Hoare and Geoffrey Nowell Smith (1971) to an interpretation of this passage which is diametrically opposed to that of Perry Anderson. Indeed, Gramsci's location of civil society between the economic structure and the State does not imply, according to Hoare and Smith, the conceptualization of civil society as a superstructural element. While recognizing the presence of such a conceptualization in Gramsci's work, Hoare and Smith claim that this conceptualization is not consistent to the passage in question

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since "[h]ere civil society is in effect equated with 'the mode of economic behavior'." As a result, Hoare and Smith end up equating the conception of civil society in this passage with that of Marx. In so doing, however, they implicitly affirm the attempt to understand the role of civil society in terms of the base-superstructure model. This attempt provides therefore the underlying consensus on the basis of which the various debates and disagreements concerning Gramsci's conception of civil society take place. In its failure to identify the opening for a challenge to the traditional base-superstructure model that this passage provides, the disagreement between Hoare and Smith, on the one hand, and Perry Anderson, on the other, parallels the debate between Norberto Bobbio and Jacques Texier. Indeed, even Bobbio (1979), the commentator most insistent on Gramsci's innovation vis-a-vis the Marxist tradition, fails to consider the possibility of interpreting Gramsci's civil society independently of the base-superstructure distinction. As a matter of fact, Gramsci's supposed departure from the Marxist tradition reaffirms this distinction since in Bobbio's view the 'profound innovation with respect to the whole Marxist tradition' that Gramsci's theory introduces consists in the fact that "[c]ivil society in Gramsci does not belong to the structural moment but to the superstructural one" (30).

It is the discussion of 'homo oeconomicus' in the passage above that provides the opening for a challenge to the base-superstructure model. The relation of 'homo oeconomicus' to the economic structure is recognized here, 'homo oeconomicus' being defined as the mode of economic behavior most appropriate to a given economic structure. At the same time, however, the distinction between the two is preserved since their correspondence is understood not as the automatic consequence of a change in the economic structure but rather as a political project that has to be consciously and actively

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pursued. Thus the distinction between the economic structure and its 'homo oeconomicus' makes clear that the coherence of the former crucially depends on the attainment of a specific mode of behavior, on a specific kind of social and economic subject.

If 'homo oeconomicus' must, according to Gramsci, be distinguished from the economic structure, it can also not be seen as a superstructural element. This becomes clear as soon as we examine Gramsci's understanding of the Marxist conception of superstructure. For Marx, Gramsci tells us,

> " 'ideologies' are anything but appearances and illusions: they are an objective and operative reality; they just are not the mainspring of history, that's all. It is not ideologies that create social reality but social reality, in its productive structure, that creates ideologies. How could Marx have thought that superstructures are appearance and illusion? Even his theories are superstructure. Marx explicitly states that humans become conscious of their tasks on the ideological terrain of the superstructures, which is hardly a minor affirmation of 'reality', and the aim of his theory is also, precisely, to make a specific social group 'become conscious' of its own tasks, its own power, its own coming-into-being" (PNII, 157).

Superstructures are therefore understood as the terrain on which social groups interpret and gain consciousness of social reality and their position in it. The passage from the Notebooks quoted earlier, however, makes clear that the concept of 'homo oeconomicus' does not refer to the process of interpreting but rather constituting this social reality. The 'homo oeconomicus' does not therefore involve a set of beliefs concerning social being but rather a social and economic subject whose entire behavior represents an integral element of this social being. Gramsci's identification of 'homo oeconomicus' as a form of social being indispensable to the coherence of any given economic structure implicitly

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comes to qualify and complement Marx's conception of the relation between production and the being of individuals living in a given society. As Marx tells us,

> "The way in which men produce their means of subsistence depends first of all on the nature of the actual means of subsistence they find in existence and have to reproduce. This mode of production must not be considered simply as being the reproduction of the physical existence of the individuals. Rather it is a definite form of activity of these individuals, a definite form of expressing their life, a definite mode of life on their part. As individuals express their life, so they are. What they are, therefore, coincides with their production, both with what they produce and with how they produce. The nature of individuals thus depends on the material conditions determining their production" (MER150).

Gramsci would obviously agree with Marx concerning the influence of production on the individuals living in any given society. Indeed, Gramsci does not just identify the social reality's productive structure rather than its ideologies as the mainspring of history; he also points out that

> "The basic innovation introduced by Marx into the science of politics and history... is the demonstration that 'human nature', fixed and immutable, does not exist and that therefore, the concrete content (as well as the logical formulation?) of political science must be conceived as a historically developing organism" (PNH, 150-1).

At the same time, however, Gramsci's reference to the 'homo oeconomicus' points in the direction of a reciprocal influence and dependence between a mode of production and the type of human individual associated to it. While the being of individuals is clearly shaped by the social and economic structure in which they live, Gramsci's 'homo oeconomicus' is as much a precondition as it is an effect of the consolidation of a mode of production. If Gramsci's reference to the 'homo oeconomicus' implies a challenge to the base-superstructure model, this is because it points towards the replacement of this model with one based upon the interaction of social structure and social relations, on the

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one hand, and culture, on the other. The latter model is not reducible to the former because culture, like the 'homo oeconomicus', is not reducible to consciousness of social reality. Culture refers rather to an entire mode of life that can either facilitate or undermine the emergence and development of a given social structure. The insight latent in Gramsci's distinction between the economic structure and the 'homo oeconomicus' is that the consolidation of a structure requires that this structure and the social relations comprising it find in everyday culture their literal embodiment. It is this embodiment of social structure in everyday culture and not the ideological consciousness of social reality that allows this reality to be transformed into a 'second nature.' Thus, although a social structure having consolidated itself tends to produce the human type and culture it requires, this is not necessarily the case with a newly emerging social structure. Here the difference between a social structure-everyday culture and a base- superstructure model becomes clear. In the former model the change of the structure is not enough to guarantee a corresponding change in everyday culture. In the latter model advanced by Marx, on the other hand, it is assumed that "[w]ith the change of the economic foundation the entire immense superstructure is more or less rapidly transformed" (MER, 5).

It should be stated explicitly here that our intention is not to attribute to Gramsci a conscious replacement of the base-superstructure model with what we have called a structure-culture model. Rather, the latter model had to be extracted on the basis of insights and tendencies which, although present in Gramsci's work, were not fully developed by him. Thus, although Gramsci creates an opening for the transcendence of the base-superstructure problematic, he does not really manage to escape its hold on him.

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It is for this reason that even the elements in his thought that point beyond the base-superstructure model are sometimes couched in this model's terms. And it is also for this reason that Gramsci translates his recognition that a new economic structure cannot survive without a corresponding culture into the imperative that the state -once captured by the revolutionary coalition of social forces- pay attention not only to the transformation of the economic structure but also to the development of the superstructures. According to Gramsci,

> "The state must... be conceived of as 'educator' in so far as it does in fact tend to create a new type or level of civilization. How does this come about? Though it is essentially on the economic forces that one operates, though it is the apparatus of economic production that gets reorganized and developed, and though it is the structure into which innovations are introduced, one must not draw the conclusion that superstructural factors should fend for themselves, should be left to develop spontaneously." (FSPN, 272-3)

Gramsci's reference to the state's role as an 'educator' aimed at creating 'a new type or level of civilization' both shows the revolutionary state's cultural tasks and justifies Gramsci's insistence that superstructural factors should not be neglected. At another point in the Notebooks, however, Gramsci goes even further. The neglect of superstructural factors, he tells us, would not only leave part of the revolutionary State's tasks unfulfilled. It would also threaten this state's very viability, thus also endangering its ability to carry out the transformation of the economic structure. Affirming Rosa Luxemburg's argument that the aspects of historical materialism most likely to develop depend on the stage of the historical process and the tasks that this stage entails, Gramsci argues that

> "Still useful and stimulating in this regard, is the thought expressed by Rosa about the impossibility of dealing with certain questions of historical materialism insofar as they have not yet become actual for the course of history in general or

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> for the history of a particular social group. The corporate phase, the phase of hegemony (or struggle for hegemony) in civil society, and the phase of state power have corresponding specific intellectual activities that cannot be improvised arbitrarily. The science of politics is developed in the phase of struggle for hegemony; in the phase of state power, all the superstructures must be developed, or else the state will fall apart" (PNII, 197).

More generally, the ambiguity of Gramsci's position vis-à-vis the base-superstructure model simply reflects the ambiguity of his position vis-à-vis Marx's theory of history as a whole. The main thrust of Gramsci's argument can be understood in terms of the modified base-superstructure model discussed above. As was pointed out, this model reacted to the more mechanistic versions of Marxism by allowing the possibility of interaction between base and superstructure. This modification of the model assigned a new importance to 'superstructural' factors such as ideology and consciousness, on the one hand, and political action, on the other. This change stemmed from the fact that having eclipsed the mechanistic conception of an automatic alignment of superstructural factors to economic development, the modified base-superstructure model foregrounded the question of time. The foregrounding of time through the recognition of the uneven development of economic and non-economic factors, however, did not challenge the teleological assumptions of the Marxist theory of history. On the contrary, it allowed the rationalization of this teleological outlook. The appeal to uneven development removed the contradiction between the more mechanistic versions of teleology and the emphasis on revolutionary praxis and political action. Political and ideological work could now assume their rightful place without giving rise to voluntarist illusions. While capitalism's economic contradictions guaranteed its eventual replacement by socialism, the timing of this transition was seen to depend on the political and ideological maturity of the

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oppressed masses. Thus the role of ideological work and political action became to ease the birth pangs of a capitalist society bearing within its womb its socialist antithesis.

This line of reasoning, present in Lukacs' History and Class Consciousness, was also adopted by Gramsci. This is evident, for example, in Gramsci's distinction between structural, 'organic' crises, which are 'relatively permanent', and 'conjunctural' phenomena, "which appear as occasional, immediate, almost accidental." Gramsci goes on to specify the relation between organic crises and conjunctural developments as follows:

> "A crisis occurs, sometimes lasting for decades. This exceptional duration means that incurable structural contradictions have revealed themselves (reached maturity), and that, despite this, the political forces which are struggling to conserve and defend the existing structure itself are making every effort to cure them, within certain limits, and to overcome them. These incessant and persistent efforts (since no social formation will ever admit that it has been superseded) form the terrain of the 'conjunctural', and it is upon this terrain that the forces of opposition organize. These forces seek to demonstrate that the necessary and sufficient conditions already exist to make possible, and hence imperative, the accomplishment of certain historical tasks (imperative, because any falling short before an historical duty increases the necessary disorder, and prepares more serious catastrophes." (SPN, 178)

This passage combines the belief that capitalism's contradictory dynamics will lead to an incurable crisis with a rejection of the notion that once the crisis sets in capitalist collapse and socialist revolution will automatically follow. We also encounter here the argument, also advanced by Lukacs, that the failure to overcome the crisis through the overthrow of capitalism can only lead to the escalation of crisis and to ever greater catastrophes. It is here that the ideological and political factors become crucial since such catastrophic prospects can be prevented only through "a series of ideological, religious, philosophical, political, and juridical polemics, whose concreteness can be estimated by the extent to

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which they are convincing, and shift the previously existing disposition of social forces)" (SPN, 178).

Gramsci and Marx's Philosophy of History

It is interesting to point out there that this discussion of the relationship between structure and superstructure in times of crisis is explicitly placed by Gramsci himself into the context of Marx's broader theory of history. Indeed, Gramsci tells us, when examining this relationship, that

> "Two principles must orient the discussion: 1. That no society sets itself tasks for whose accomplishment the necessary and sufficient conditions do not either already exist or are not at least beginning to emerge and develop; 2. That no society breaks down and can be replaced until it has first developed all the forms of life which are implicit in its internal relations" (SPN, 177).

These two principles, to which Gramsci repeatedly appeals in the Notebooks, are a reference to Marx's famous 'Preface' to A Contribution to the Critique of Political Economy. There Marx had asserted that

> "No social order ever perishes before all the productive forces for which there is room in it have developed; and new, higher relations of production never appear before the material conditions of their existence have matured in the womb of the old society itself. Therefore mankind always sets itself only such tasks as it can solve; since, looking at the matter more closely, it will always be found that the task itself arises only when the material conditions for its solution already exist or are at least in the process of formation" (MER, 5).

Gramsci's repeated appeals to this line of reasoning signify his unwillingness or inability to break completely with Marxism's teleological outlook. The crucial assumption in this respect is the assumption that there is always a limit to the development of the productive

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forces that any given social order can bring about and that, therefore, this limit is bound to be reached sooner or later. As Marx claims in the same 'Preface'

> "At a certain stage of their development, the material productive forces of society come in conflict with the existing relations of production, or –what is but a legal expression of the same thing- with the property relations within which they have been at work hitherto. From forms of development of the productive forces these relations turn into their fetters. Then begins an epoch of social revolution" (MER, 4-5).

It is the application of this principle to capitalism that gives the Marxist theory of history its teleological character. Gramsci does not challenge this teleological character but simply attempts to further specify it by purging all mechanistic residues. If Gramsci criticizes, as was pointed out above, the 'belief in a predetermined teleology like that of a religion', it is economistic teleologies in particular that he has in mind. What he dismisses is not so much the inevitability of the transition from capitalism to socialism but rather the belief that this transition will take even in the absence of political and ideological maturity on the part of the oppressed masses.

Apart from its teleological implications, the principle that all social orders will sooner or later become incompatible to the further development of the productive forces fulfils another function in Marxist theory. This function, however, does not stem from the application of this principle to capitalist society but rather to pre-capitalist ones. More specifically, the application of this principle to pre-capitalist societies is what allows Marxists to see history as a continuous and unified movement. Indeed, the adoption of this principle provides the Marxist theory of history with the mechanism regulating the transition from one mode of production to the next. In so doing, however,

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this principle also secures the conceptual coherence of Marxism's understanding of history as the dialectical unity of continuity and discontinuity.

In earlier chapters we argued that Marx's foundation of his theory of history upon the assumption of a continuous development of the productive forces should be interpreted as a generalization and projection to the past of capitalism's compulsive technological dynamism. The same argument could be made concerning the view of historical development as the dialectical unity of continuity and discontinuity. Indeed, the best illustration of such a conception is the integration of economic crises into the process of capitalist development. Marx recognizes that economic crises can have a cathartic role to the extent that they can help reestablish the conditions of further accumulation disrupted by the immanent development of the capitalist economy. An economic crisis unleashes, according to Marx, a chain reaction that leads to a series of necessary adjustments. As a result of these adjustments

> "we go round the whole circle once again. One part of the capital that was devalued by the cessation of its function now regains its old value. And apart from that, with expanded conditions of production, a wider market and increased productivity, the same cycle of errors is pursued once more" (Capital III, 364).

The resolution of capitalist crises restores for a time the conditions for productive development until this development becomes arrested by a new crisis. "Crises", Marx tells us, "are never more than momentary, violent solutions for the existing contradictions, violent eruptions that re-establish the disturbed balance for the time being." (Capital III, 357) The resolution of the crisis is merely momentary because it does not really address the original source of the crisis. The inability to address the root of the problem bears witness to the contradictory dynamic whereby "[c]apitalist production

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constantly strives to overcome these immanent barriers, but it overcomes them only by means that set up the barriers afresh and on a more powerful scale." (Capital III, 358)

Even this brief examination of Marx's conception of capitalist crises points towards some very interesting conclusions. To begin with, there is a clear homology between this conception and Marx's more general theory of history. In both cases the continuity of social and economic development operates through the dialectical unity of continuity and discontinuity. This means, as we have seen, that even the moment of discontinuity represented by crisis is transformed into a mechanism that restores the conditions for the continuation of the underlying trend of productive development. These two cases are not equally coherent from a conceptual point of view, however. Here we are faced once again with the distinction between, on the one hand, historically determinate and, on the other, trans-historical generalizations. The conception of capitalist development as the dialectical unity of continuity and discontinuity can be and was demonstrated by Marx in Capital. However, while Marx's dialectic of continuity and discontinuity emerges in the case of capitalist development as the understandable consequence of capitalist society's structural logic, the same dialectic inevitably appears arbitrary and derivative when transformed into a foundation for a comprehensive theory of history.

The artificial character of Marx's homology between capitalism's discontinuous continuity and that attributed to human history as a whole becomes clear in Marx's explanation of his claim that "the true barrier to capitalist production is capital itself." Indeed, the true barrier, according to Marx, is that

> "capital and its self-valorization appear as the starting and finishing point, as the motive and purpose of production; production is production only for capital, and

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> not the reverse, i.e. the means of production are not simply means for a steadily expanding pattern of life for the society of the producers" (Capital III, 358).

Thus the dialectic of continuity and discontinuity stems from the fact that capitalist production is not production for use but rather production of commodities to be exchanged in the market. The result, according to Marx, is "an antithesis, immanent in the commodity, between use-value and value" that finds expression in the 'anarchy of the market' and the economic crises associated to the anarchic market structure. Since the capitalist economy is not organized on the basis of a rational plan by the producers, its functioning crucially depends on the operation of the 'law of value' that can often restore the continuity of capitalist accumulation only through the discontinuity of economic crisis.

We see, therefore, that the source of capitalism's dialectic of continuity and discontinuity is the same as that of capitalism's compulsive dynamism, namely the mediation of capitalist reproduction through competition in the market. For this reason, the contrast we discussed earlier between the unprecedentedly dynamic capitalist society and the more stable pre-capitalist societies is relevant to the question concerning the legitimacy of viewing all historical development as the dialectical unity of continuity and discontinuity. In our view, this conception of historical development only expresses the reality of capitalist society. We have already discussed that in contrasting capitalism to pre-capitalist societies Marx recognizes the orientation of the latter to production for use and to the constant reproduction of their conditions of existence. Capitalism's dependence on market competition, by contrast, means that even the pursuit on the part of capitalists of a constant reproduction of their social position impels them to a constant

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revolutionization of production and a reproduction of capitalism on an expanded basis. It is this inevitably expansive character of capitalism that constantly upsets the balance between production and consumption and leads to the alternation of periods of economic boom and economic crisis.

We have argued that the foundation of Marx's theory of history on the dialectic between forces and relations of production, on the one hand, and continuity and discontinuity, on the other hand, reflects the structural logic of capitalist society only. This does not mean obviously that before capitalism human societies were immune to the alternation of periods of prosperity and periods of crisis. What it does mean, however, is that the difference between the structural logic of capitalism and that of pre-capitalist societies also entailed a difference in the character of these societies' respective crises. Since the structuring logic of capitalism precludes a constant reproduction of social relations, any crisis is experienced as an interruption of development. In societies oriented towards a constant reproduction of their existence, a crisis simply signifies the development of a new situation that challenges the viability of a previously established equilibrium. In capitalism a crisis appears as an integral moment in society's continuous movement and development. In pre-capitalist societies oriented towards constant reproduction, by contrast, a crisis appears as the exceptional instance of movement from a no longer viable old equilibrium to a new one, based on a more adequate adaptation to the given society's environment.

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Class Struggle, Universalism and Gramsci's Concept of Hegemony

What has been said about Marx's conception of the dialectic between forces and relations of production can also be said about the role that his theory of history assigns to class struggle. As we saw in an earlier chapter Marx and Engels do identify the precise way in which class struggle contributes to the dynamism of the capitalist economy. Capitalism's dependence on a labor market means that labor power becomes as liable to the vicissitudes of the market as any other commodity. The fluctuation in its price that stems from labor power's reduction into just another commodity gives capitalists an additional incentive to mechanize the production process, especially in periods when the labor market is tight and wages start to increase. Moreover, the fact that machines are more pliable and less prone to resistance than workers makes the prospect of mechanization even more attractive for capitalists.

In his theory of history too Marx implicitly identifies the class struggle as a factor of historical development. As he says in the 'Preface', the onset of a conflict between forces and relations of production also signifies the beginning of 'an epoch of social revolution'. This revolution is spearheaded by the revolutionary class acting as the carrier of the new, more advanced mode of production and challenges the power of the class dominating the now obsolete old mode of production. In the Communist Manifesto, for example, Marx describes how the bourgeoisie carried out the revolutionary task dictated by the contradiction between forces and relations of production that developed within feudal society and points out that this process only prifigures the repetition of this revolutionary process by a proletariat responding to the developing contradictions of capitalist society itself. Thus class struggle, in the form of social revolution, appears as

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the mechanism through which the contradiction between forces and relations of production becomes resolved and the continuation of productive development becomes possible.

This homology between the contribution of class struggle to capitalist development, on the one hand, and general historical development, on the other, is however as untenable as the one constructed around the conception of social and economic development as the dialectical unity of continuity and discontinuity. The problem with both homologies, moreover, is that in extrapolating capitalism's structural logic into a comprehensive theory of history, they erase the radical discontinuity in human history that capitalism's emergence implies. In the case of Marx's conception of class struggle, this extrapolation leads to a reification that ends up naturalizing scarcity. This is understandable since the more or less hostile interaction between different classes in capitalist society is carried out on the terrain of scarcity that, as we have seen, this society artificially reproduces. The insistence on the artificiality, by which we mean its social rather than natural character, of scarcity under capitalism is not meant to deny its reality and effectivity. On the contrary, it is precisely this effectivity that accounts for the fact that the reified social subjectivities (including class) that correspond to the various forms of social oppression can persist even after the prospect of a non-capitalist society beyond scarcity has rendered them objectively obsolete. Our point, rather, is that the expectation that human emancipation can be attained on the basis of such reified subjectivities is a contradiction in terms. It is into precisely this trap that Marx falls when using his insights into class struggle as an element in a comprehensive theory of history. The extrapolation of the class struggle's contribution to capitalist development into such

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a comprehensive theory predictably turns the reified reality of capitalist society into a criterion for emancipatory political practice. Indeed, Marx's appeal to class struggle as the means to human emancipation implies a suppression of capitalism's genuinely dialectical nature. It is this dialectical nature that explains both the persistence and the obsolescence of class as well as all other forms of social oppression. By the same token, this dialectical nature explains both the persistence and the obsolescence of political struggles on the basis of the particularistic identities derived from these obsolete forms of social oppression. By integrating class struggle into a comprehensive theory of history that does not differentiate between this struggle's function in capitalist as opposed to pre-capitalist societies, Marx fails to draw the full implications of the progressive, universalistic side of capitalism's dialectical nature.

As we have seen, capitalism's universalistic character stems from its technological dynamism that raises the specter of a radically different society which, having conquered material scarcity, allows the infinite enrichment of both the collective human nature and the everyday life of every single individual. Since in such a society the enrichment of an individual's life would not depend on the exploitation and denigration of other individuals or social groups, all forms of social oppression would lose their raison d'etre. If the realization of an egalitarian non-capitalist society would allow the abolition of all forms of social oppression, the prospect of an infinite enrichment of human life that such a society would make possible creates a genuinely universal interest in its realization. It is for this reason that capitalism renders social oppression obsolete even before this oppression is abolished in practice.

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While, however, rendering obsolete all forms of social oppression, capitalism's structural principles manage at the same time to obscure this very obsolescence. The reason for this is that the principles which give capitalism its dynamism and, thus, its universalistic significance are, as we have seen, competition and the class struggle. This means that capitalism's creation of the technological preconditions for the conquest of scarcity is mediated by the action of social subjects constituted on the terrain of scarcity that capitalism also reproduces. With consumerist capitalism's systematic colonization and multiplication of human needs as well as with the growing environmental limits to capitalist growth, moreover, class inequality ceases to be the only cause of scarcity's reproduction. As it increasingly appears as the result of the insatiability of human nature and the finitude of natural resources, scarcity increasingly appears as an irreducible fact of nature. It is this transmogrification of a socially induced scarcity into a fact of nature that allows us to identify scarcity as a privileged site of capitalist reification.

Even Marx does not fully escape the thrall of this capitalist reification. Indeed, the impact of a reified conception of scarcity does not only underlie his identification of class struggle as the means to human liberation but also informs his specification of capitalism's immanent tendencies. In brief, Marx articulates the rational necessity of an egalitarian, non-alienated society but his articulation is circumscribed by the reified conception of scarcity. More specifically, Marx's expectation of an inevitable capitalist collapse is not an aberration but a necessary assumption once it is not recognized that scarcity is already rendered obsolete by capitalism. In the absence of this recognition capitalism becomes just another mode of production in the historical continuum. As such, it is as subject as any other mode of production to the life-cycle model that he

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derived through a generalization of capitalism's structural logic. Once the erasure of the radical discontinuity introduced by capitalism is combined with Marx's recognition that a non-alienated society presupposes the conquest of scarcity, capitalism itself has to be subjected to the model of historical development as the dialectical unity of continuity and discontinuity. Thus, as a result of the failure to recognize that capitalism creates a universal interest in the transition to a non-alienated society, the rational necessity of such a society is conceived in mechanical terms. Capitalism is simply understood as the mode of production immediately preceding the mode that does make the conquest of scarcity possible and is expected to fulfil its historical function consisting in its development of the productive forces until the inevitable moment of its crisis and replacement by a higher social stage more conducive to further social development. The attainment of an egalitarian, non-alienated society is not therefore seen as a rational, political project corresponding to the universal human interest created by capitalism but the necessary result of a mechanical process leading to capitalist collapse. Patterned after capitalism's structural logic, Marx's theory of history predictably reproduces the compulsive and mechanical character of capitalist development.

Attempts, such as those of Lukacs and Gramsci, to qualify the mechanistic character of the Marxist theory of history are therefore little more than partial ameliorations of the traditional model because they fail to uncover and challenge this model's structural logic. Indeed, both Lukacs and Gramsci take Marx's economic analysis for granted and assume that capitalism's economic contradictions are bound to produce severe structural crises. Their contribution consists, therefore, in exploring the political and ideological preconditions for taking advantage of such crises to overthrow

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capitalism. In this sense, Lukacs and Gramsci do not challenge the teleological character of Marx's theory but simply demonstrate that this teleology cannot be expected to prevail automatically.

Gramsci, in particular, recognizes that a viable emancipatory strategy seeking to overthrow capitalism has to adopt a universalistic language. At the same time, however, his adoption of Marx's theory of history does not allow him to draw the full implications of this insight. On the one hand, hegemony's universalistic character does not imply a recognition, on the part of Gramsci, of the radical discontinuity introduced by capitalism. The very general terms in which Gramsci describes it make clear that the universalistic character of a hegemonic project is not a distinctive feature of the struggle to replace capitalism with a non-alienated, socialist society. In a fragment exploring how the constellation of various economic, political and military factors can determine the resolution or outcome of a given situation, Gramsci even illustrates the stages leading to the formation and maturity of 'collective political consciousness' through what seems to be the case of the bourgeoisie's pursuit of a hegemonic bloc against the feudal social order. Indeed, Gramsci introduces his discussion of the political factors that have to be studied in conjunction with the conditions prevailing in the economic structure as follows:

> "A subsequent [to the economic base] moment is the relation of political forces; in other words, an evaluation of the degree of homogeneity, self-awareness, and organization attained by the various social classes. This moment can in its turn be analyzed and differentiated into various levels, corresponding to the various moments of collective political consciousness as they have manifested themselves in history up till now. The first and most elementary of these is the economic-corporate level: a tradesman feels obliged to stand by another tradesman, a manufacturer by another manufacturer, etc., but the tradesman does not yet feel solidarity with the manufacturer" (SPN, 181).

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Gramsci's illustration of the first stage of political consciousness through the lack of solidarity between tradesmen and manufacturers as well as his clarification that his typology of stages of political consciousness is based on the experience provided by 'history up till now' shows that this typology claims a more general validity that transcends the present moment and the tasks implicit in it. Thus the connection between hegemony and universalism, which represents the highest moment in this typology, is also not presented as the distinctive product of capitalist modernity. According to Gramsci's formulation of this connection,

> "A third moment is that in which one becomes aware that one's own corporate interests, in their present and future development, transcend the corporate limits of the purely economic class, and can and must become the interests of other subordinate groups too. This is the most purely political phase, and marks the decisive passage from the structure to the sphere of the complex superstructures; it is the phase in which previously germinated ideologies become 'party', come into confrontation and conflict, until only one of them, or at least a single combination of them, tends to prevail, to gain the upper hand, to propagate itself throughout society, bringing about not only a unison of economic and political aims, but also intellectual and moral unity, posing all the questions around which the struggle rages not on a corporate but on a 'universal' plane, and thus creating the hegemony of a fundamental social group over a series of subordinate groups. It is true that the state is seen as the organ of one particular group, destined to create favorable conditions for the latter's maximum expansion. But the development and expansion of the particular group are conceived of, and presented, as being the motor force of a universal expansion, of a development of all the 'national' energies." (SPN, 181-2)

The way in which the bourgeoisie struggled historically to establish a hegemonic bloc by making the transition from an orientation towards its more narrow, economic self-interest to a more universalistic programme is a recurrent theme in the Notebooks. This theme provides, moreover, the axis around which Gramsci's comparative analysis between Italy and other European countries revolves. Indeed, some of Gramsci's central concepts including 'hegemony' and 'passive revolution' are derived through the treatment of the

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modern French and Italian historical experiences as ideal-typical processes. Thus in a passage explicitly linking the bourgeoisie's struggle for the construction of a hegemonic bloc against the feudal social order with a comparative approach to the distinctiveness of Italy's development in the nineteenth century, Gramsci argues that

> "the bourgeoisie came into power by struggling against certain social forces with the help of other specific forces; in order to consolidate itself in the state, it had to dominate the former and obtain the active or passive consent of the latter. The study of the bourgeoisie as the development of a subaltern class must therefore examine the phases through which it acquired the support of those forces that have actively or passively helped it; without this support it would not have been able to consolidate itself in the state. The level of consciousness attained by the bourgeoisie in the various phases is, in fact, measured by both these yardsticks, not only by the yardstick of its separation from the class that used to dominate it ... The Italian bourgeoisie proved incapable of uniting the people, and this was one of the causes of its defeats and the interruptions in its development. In the Risorgimento, too, this narrow 'egoism' prevented a quick and vigorous revolution like the French one "(PNII 91-2).

Gramsci's comparative historical treatment of the degree of success that different national bourgeoisies had in forming a hegemonic bloc demonstrates an important tension in Gramsci's work. To the extent that it is exemplified by Gramsci's vacillation between a use of ideal types and the comparative historical approach, on the one hand, and Marx's theory, on the other, this tension links up with the Marx-Weber debate. An explicit recognition of the ideal-typical significance of his concepts and models would lead Gramsci towards a conception of the relationship between reality and human action very different from the relationship implicit in Marx's theory of history. Gramsci does come close to the former conception of this relationship when he dismisses the idea that "a statesman should only work within the limits of 'effective reality'" and declares that "[t]he active politician is a creator, an initiator" (SPN, 171-2). As Gramsci explains the politician should take into account existing reality without, however, treating this reality

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as definitive. This reality should be treated as nothing more than a starting-point which can, through political action that tries to exploit and strengthen the progressive forces and tendencies within existing reality, be transcended. The reason such a relationship to reality is closer to a historical approach making conscious use of ideal-typical models has to do with the fact that such an approach is less likely to fetishize its models since it consciously treats them as nothing more than conceptual tools, that is, as means to the intellectual and practical appropriation of reality.

Being based on the reified logic of the capitalist economy, on the other hand, Marx's theory of history tends to reverse this relationship seeing reality not as the means to human action but rather human action as the means through which this historical reality's immanent logic asserts itself. Indeed, even the unprecedented historical possibility of a radical emancipatory human action that capitalism creates is absorbed in this reified model. Marx's generalization of the logic of capitalist development into a comprehensive theory of history leads to the translation of capitalism's universalizing function into a conception of the entirety of human history as a process of universalization. Once history is interpreted as a unified process, everything in it assumes a broader function superimposed to its manifest reality. The crisis of any given society and its replacement by another is not simply analyzed in terms of the concrete historical conditions that undermined the viability of the former and led to the emergence of the latter but is interpreted as a necessary stage in the development of the human species towards the universalistic telos of a communist society. This abstraction from the concrete content and context of human activity, this treatment of very distinctive historical and social realities as equivalent moments of a unified process clearly

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reproduces the increasing abstraction of human activity inherent in capitalism's subordination of use-value to exchange value and concrete labor to abstract, homogeneous labor.

In Marx's model of history, it is classes that function as the carriers of this continuous process of universalization. Each time a rising class overthrows an obsolete mode of production and replaces it with a higher, it contributes to the advance of this process. Thus even the pursuit by classes of their self-interested objectives ends up serving the universal development of humanity. Once again illustrating the reproduction by Marx's theory of history of capitalism's structural logic, this appeal to a 'cunning of history' shows the influence not only of Hegel but also of Adam Smith. Indeed, this miraculous cunning of history emerges as nothing more than a generalization of the principle underlying Smith's invisible hand of the market.

To the extent that Gramsci adopts Marx's theory of history, he does not challenge but simply modifies this logic. In Gramsci's modified model, classes do retain the function of contributing to history's process of universalization. This contribution, however, is not automatic and unconscious but depends on the articulation of a universalistic ideology and practice capable of rallying other subordinate groups to the cause of the revolutionary class. To perform the tasks assigned to it by Marx's theory of history a revolutionary class has to go through the political process of building a hegemony over the other subordinate groups whose help it needs. However, Gramsci tells us,

> "the fact of hegemony presupposes that the interests and tendencies of those groups over whom hegemony is exercised have been taken into account and that a certain equilibrium is established. It presupposes, in other words, that the hegemonic group should make sacrifices of an economic-corporate kind; these

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> sacrifices, however, cannot touch the essential; since hegemony is political but also and above all economic, it has its material base in the decisive function exercised by the hegemonic group in the decisive core of economic activity" (PNII, 182).

Having retained Marx's basic theory of history, Gramsci also accepts the idea of a succession of modes of production, each of which serves the essential interests of a dominant class. At the same time, however, Gramsci makes clear that the pursuit of these interests force the revolutionary class to make some 'sacrifices of an economic-corporate kind'. It is such sacrifices that render plausible the universalistic ideology that the revolutionary class articulates in conjunction with the other dominated groups. Thus Gramsci complements Marx's idea that the pursuit by classes of their self-interest has a larger, universal significance with the insight that no revolutionary class will be able to pursue its historical interests without developing a universalistic ideology and practice.

The problem, however, with the universalism that seems to underlie both Marx's and Gramsci's conceptions of history is that it is not a thorough-going but only an approximate universalism. Here again the homology between capitalism's structural logic and Marx's theory of history becomes evident. Indeed, the parallel between the universalism implicit in Marx's appeal to a 'cunning of history' and that in Adam Smith's invisible hand of the market can be taken a step further. This parallel does not only consist in the identification by both thinkers of mechanisms capable of translating self-interested action by social groups or individuals into an outcome corresponding to the general social interest but also in the existence of human sacrifice on which the attainment of this 'general' interest is based. It is the necessity of such sacrifice that compromises the universalistic significance of the mechanisms through which, according

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to these two thinkers, self-interested action is made to serve the general good. We have already discussed the homology between the dependence of capitalist development on periodic crises and the foundation of Marx's theory of history on the basis of a dialectical unity of continuity and discontinuity. What we need to add here is that in both cases the restoration of development made possible through the resolution of the moment of discontinuity and crisis is not devoid of human cost. Thus Marx's demonstration that economic crises constitute an integral and normal part of capitalist development implies that the economic achievements made possible by the capitalist market are not universally beneficial since, even as far as capitalists are concerned, these achievements require the periodic reduction of individual capitalists to financial ruin. In accordance with the same logic, the restoration of productive development in Marx's general theory of history does not simply amount to a universally beneficial continuation of humanity's process of self-development since it requires the sacrifice of the old ruling class.

Here one should of course add the dependence of capitalist development on the immense suffering of the working-class which, as Marx points out in the Manuscripts, is barely alleviated by periods of capitalist 'prosperity'. This structural feature of capitalist development is also integrated in Marx's linear, progressive theory of history when he declares that

> "although this evolution of the species Man is accomplished at first at the expense of the majority of individual human beings and of certain human classes, it finally overcomes this antagonism and coincides with the evolution of the particular individual. Thus the higher development of individuality is only purchased by a historical process in which individuals are sacrificed" (cf. HCC, xviii).

As in the case of Marx, the universalistic element in Gramsci's conception of historical development is also partial. On the one hand, it should be remembered that the

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universalistic character of hegemony is only present in the relationship of the main revolutionary class to its allied classes and social groups. The relationship to opposed social forces and the old ruling class is according to Gramsci one of pure domination and thus contains the potential of suppression by force.

On the other hand, if we move beyond the simultaneous exercise by the main revolutionary class of domination over opposed classes and hegemony over allied classes and social groups to examine what the universalism of hegemony consists in, we will see that the answer lies in the willingness of this class to strike compromises of an economic-corporate kind. What Gramsci means by his reference to such compromises is that although the main revolutionary class responsible for the direction of the new mode of production would be the main beneficiary of the new society, it should not try to impose its interests in too myopic a fashion. To ensure the continuing allegiance of the classes and groups allied to it, the main revolutionary class should, according to Gramsci, not aim to appropriate for itself the entire surplus that the productive development brought about by the higher mode of production would make possible. Instead, it should be willing to concede part of this surplus to the classes and social groups allied to it.

With this conception of hegemony it is not only a general theory of history but even an emancipatory strategy that is patterned after capitalist reality. In Gramsci's case, moreover, this operation is not even implicit since he repeatedly uses the success or failure (in the case of Italy) of the bourgeoisie to establish a hegemonic bloc encompassing other subaltern groups, such as the peasants, as a guide to the articulation of an effective revolutionary strategy for the working-class and its allies. Perry Anderson (1976-7) recognizes Gramsci's tendency to treat the political tasks that the rising

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bourgeoisie had to face as analogous to those of the proletariat when he attributes to the Notebooks "a constant indeterminacy of focus, in which the bourgeoisie and the proletariat can often alternate simultaneously as the hypothetical subjects of the same passage - whenever, in fact, Gramsci writes in the abstract of a 'dominant class' ". According to Anderson, "[t]his procedure, foreign to any other Marxist, was of course dictated to Gramsci by the need to lull the vigilance of the censor" (20). The limitations of the attribution of Gramsci's political strategic thinking in this respect should be clear by now. As we have seen, far from being foreign to Marxism, Gramsci's 'indeterminacy of focus' merely helps to bring to light a central structural feature of Marx's theory of history, namely its constitution on the basis of a generalization of capitalism's principles of development. Anderson is aware of the serious risks inherent in "the unexamined premise that the structural positions of the bourgeoisie and the proletariat, in their respective revolutions and their successive states, were historically equivalent." However, his misspecification of the cause of Gramsci's misleading analogy between the position and tasks of the bourgeoisie and those of the proletariat prevents him from avoiding the danger that this analogy entails. This danger consists above all in the failure to draw the full implications of capitalism's universalizing function. Such a failure contributes, through the naturalization of scarcity that it often implies, to the reproduction of capitalist reification.

The mere fact that Gramsci seeks to pattern emancipatory politics after a model combining both the element of domination and that of hegemony demonstrates Gramsci's failure to perceive the truly universal interest in an egalitarian non-capitalist society produced by capitalism itself. This complicity in the naturalization of scarcity is,

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moreover, as operative in Gramsci's conception of the moment of hegemony as in that of domination. Indeed, a definition of hegemony in terms of compromises of an economic-corporate kind would be meaningless in the absence of an uncritical acceptance of scarcity as a given fact. Once scarcity is, however, disengaged from what we have been referring to as capitalism's dialectic of scarcity and simply becomes accepted as a given fact, the reifying implications of Gramsci's patterning of emancipatory politics after capitalist reality fall out of view.

The strategy of hegemony on the basis of economic-corporate concessions expresses capitalist reality because it is the unprecedented dynamism of capitalist economy that makes it possible for the bourgeoisie to keep for itself the lion share of the benefits while also rewarding extensive strata of the subaltern classes and social groups with potentially respectable increases in their material standard of living. While from a point of view that takes scarcity for granted this may appear as a generalizable strategy that could be used against capitalism, in reality such an attempt would only reaffirm the assumptions from which capitalism derives its legitimacy. Indeed, discussing such a strategy in abstraction from capitalism's dialectic of scarcity obscures the fact that the bourgeoisie's ability to gain consent through economic concessions crucially depends on capitalism's on-going artificial reproduction of scarcity. The moment Marxist theory concedes the reifying naturalization of scarcity it breathes new life into a dynamic capitalist society daily demonstrating its capacity to create immense wealth and technological development. Failing to recognize that capitalism's weakness does not lie in its ability to push the boundaries of scarcity back but rather in its artificial preservation of these boundaries, Marxist theory has had to place its hopes in capitalism's inability to

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develop the productive forces beyond a certain point. Accounting in this sense for the traditional Marxist fixation on a final, insurmountable economic crisis, the naturalization of scarcity also leads to the naturalization of social conflict. In this respect, it is ironic that Perry Anderson criticizes Gramsci both for allowing the moment of consent to eclipse the moment of force in revolutionary politics and for conceiving the position and tasks of the bourgeoisie and the proletariat as parallel to each other. In the absence of a full exploration of the misleading parallel that he correctly attributes to Gramsci, Anderson proves at least as susceptible to the risk inherent in this parallel as Gramsci himself.

Laclau and Mouffe's Reinterpretation of Hegemony

We have discussed the reification effects that become apparent once we examine Gramsci's conception of hegemony from the standpoint of capitalism's dialectic of scarcity. We have also seen that the universalistic element of hegemony identified by Gramsci can be traced back to the expansive pole of capitalism's dialectic of scarcity. Indeed, the capitalist dynamism inspiring Gramsci's strategy of hegemony is also responsible for the emergence of a truly universal interest in an egalitarian, non-alienated society. At the same time we saw that it was Gramsci's neglect of the regressive moment of capitalism's dialectic of scarcity that gave his concept of hegemony its reifying implications. Recognizing the inseparability of the two moments of capitalism's dialectic of scarcity can, by contrast, allow the development of the insight contained in Gramsci's concept of hegemony into the basis for a more viable emancipatory strategy.

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The claim that a reinterpretation of the insights contained in Gramsci's concept of hegemony could help us rethink emancipatory politics is not new. A notable attempt to turn the development and reinterpretation of 'hegemony' into the basis for a reformulation of socialism is provided by Ernesto Laclau and Chantal Mouffe's Hegemony and Socialist Strategy. Given the similarity between our project and the project pursued in Laclau and Mouffe's study, an overview of the strengths and weaknesses of the latter could help to motivate our discussion. Laclau and Mouffe conceive of their study as a response to the crisis of both traditional Marxist theory and a conception of radical politics which, they imply, corresponds to it. In a passage that seeks to provide an ideal type of traditional socialist politics in its various dimensions, Laclau and Mouffe (1985) declare that

> "What is now in crisis is a whole conception of socialism which rests upon the ontological centrality of the working class, upon the role of Revolution, with a capital 'r', as the founding moment in the transition from one type of society to another, and upon the illusory prospect of a perfectly unitary and homogeneous collective will that will render pointless the moment of politics. The plural and multifarious character of contemporary social struggles has finally dissolved the last foundation for that political imaginary. Peopled with 'universal' subjects and conceptually built around History in the singular, it has postulated 'society' as in intelligible structure that could be intellectually mastered on the basis of certain class positions and reconstituted, as a rational, transparent order, through a founding act of political character. Today the left is witnessing the final act of the dissolution of that Jacobin imaginary" (2).

Laclau and Mouffe's alternative conception of radical politics is developed through a systematic response to the characteristics of traditional socialist politics listed in this passage. In the course of this systematic contrast, hegemony is fleshed out and specified as the logic underlying this alternative conception of radical politics. Never being explicitly defined, the new meaning that Laclau and Mouffe attach to hegemony emerges

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as a super-concept encompassing the totality of concepts and arguments employed by the authors.

The ambiguity of Laclau and Mouffe's analysis is, however, heightened by the treatment of hegemony as both the symptom of an insurmountable crisis of the Marxist theory of history and as the seed of this obsolete theory's alternative. To begin with, Laclau and Mouffe argue that

> "The concept of hegemony did not emerge to define a new type of relation in its specific identity, but to fill a hiatus that had opened in the chain of historical necessity. 'Hegemony' will allude to an absent totality, and to the diverse attempts at recomposition and rearticulation which, in overcoming this original absence, made it possible for struggles to be given a meaning and for historical forces to be endowed with full positivity. The contexts in which the concept appear [sic] will be those of a fault (in the geological sense), of a fissure that had to be filled up, of a contingency that had to be overcome. 'Hegemony' will not be the majestic unfolding of an identity but the response to a crisis"(7).

By the end of their analysis, however, the authors seem to have changed their mind. Recapitulating their conclusions Laclau and Mouffe inform us that "[t]his book has been constructed around the vicissitudes of the concept of hegemony, of the new logic of the social implicit within it, and of the 'epistemological obstacles' which, from Lenin to Gramsci, prevented a comprehension of its radical political and theoretical potential"(192). Apparently something happens between page 7 and page 192 which is momentous enough to transubstantiate an ad hoc device which, being merely a response to the crisis of a bankrupt theory, originally lacks any 'full positivity' into a concept which is majestic enough to carry within itself both a 'new logic of the social' and a radical political and theoretical potential.

Laclau and Mouffe are most convincing when they point out that hegemony functioned as a corrective to an a priori historical scheme refuted by historical

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developments both in the East and in the West. The absence of a unilinear development towards a polarized society simplifying social antagonisms into a struggle between the bourgeoisie and the proletariat provides the social conditions that made the recognition of articulating different social struggles imperative. While the working class ceased to be seen as the only potentially revolutionary social force, its primacy in any hegemonic bloc was not challenged. Hegemony may have implied the recognition of alliances between class and non-class forces but, at least initially, reproduced the ontological primacy of class endemic in Marxism by postulating that such alliances could only be organized around the fundamental classes identified by the Marxist theory of history. Thus Laclau and Mouffe argue that for Gramsci

> "even though the diverse social elements have a merely relational identity- achieved through articulatory practices- there must always be a simple unifying principle in every hegemonic formulation, and this can only be a fundamental class. Thus two principles of the social order - the unicity of the unifying principle, and its necessary class character- are not the contingent result of hegemonic struggle, but the necessary structural framework within which every struggle occurs. Class hegemony is not a wholly practical result of struggle, but has an ultimate ontological foundation. The economic base may not assure the ultimate victory of the working class, since this depends upon its capacity for hegemonic leadership. However, a failure in the hegemony of the working class can only be followed by a reconstruction of bourgeois hegemony, so that in the end, political struggle is still a zero-sum game among classes. This is the inner essentialist core which continues to be present in Gramsci's thought"(69).

Laclau and Mouffe's conclusion concerning Gramsci reflects the general ambiguity of their overall argument pointed out above. While hegemony appears as a move away from the Marxist theory of history, this move again and again is left unfinished being always circumscribed by key assumptions of this theory that are never fully challenged. At the same time, however, this recurring contradiction in Laclau and Mouffe's critique of one Marxist thinker after another does not simply amount to a cyclical pattern. There

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is a directional developmental principle underlying Laclau and Mouffe's argument and it is this principle that allows hegemony to graduate from the negative status of an ad hoc device into the positivity attached to its newfound status of carrier of a new social logic with radical political and theoretical potential. This development principle is adumbrated from the very beginning in the author's claim that

> "Faced with the rationalism of classical Marxism, which presented history and society as intelligible totalities constituted around conceptually explicable laws, the logic of hegemony presented itself from the outset as a complementary and contingent operation, required for conjunctural imbalances within an evolutionary paradigm whose essential or 'morphological' validity was not for a moment placed in question... As the areas of the concept's application grew broader, from Lenin to Gramsci, the field of contingent articulations also expanded, and the category of 'historical necessity' –which had been the cornerstone of classical Marxism- withdrew to the horizon of theory"(3).

Thus despite their protestations to the contrary Laclau and Mouffe's analysis does present itself as the unfolding of the concept of hegemony and its political and theoretical potential. This structural feature of their argument merely bears witness to the fact that the authors of Hegemony and Socialist Strategy may not have emancipated themselves as fully as they think from the structural logic underlying the theoretical tradition they oppose. This failure on their part stems from the fact that they are content to build their argument on the basis of a mere description of the theoretical tradition they oppose. More specifically, Laclau and Mouffe's reduction of traditional Marxism's conception of socialism into an ideal type does not even attempt to identify the social conditions that have shaped its structural logic. The lack of full understanding that such an omission entails cannot, however, but take its toll on the critique founded upon it. Indeed, a critique that does not adequately comprehend its object is not only unjust to this object but also lacks self-clarity as to its own true significance. Thus it is that despite their self-

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understanding as the opponents of the essentialist rationalist tradition exemplified by Hegel and Marx, they produce a critique that reproduces this tradition's conception of the structural logic of development. This is ironic since Laclau and Mouffe have this to say about Hegel and Marx:

> "Hegel thus appears as located in a watershed between two epochs. In a first sense, he represents the highest point of rationalism: the moment when it attempts to embrace within the field of reason, without dualisms, the totality of the universe of differences. History and society, therefore, have a rational and intelligible structure. But, in a second sense, this synthesis contains all the seeds of its dissolution, as the rationality of history can be affirmed only at the price of introducing contradiction into the field of reason... In the Marxist tradition, this area of ambiguity is displayed in the contradictory uses of the concept of 'dialectics'. On the one hand, this has been uncritically introduced whenever an attempt has been made to escape the logic of fixation - that is to think articulation... On the other hand, 'dialectics' exerts an effect of closure in those cases where more weight is attached to the necessary character of an a priori transition than to the discontinuous moment of an open articulation" (95).

The structure of Laclau and Mouffe's argument seems, however, to belie their professed allegiance to "the discontinuous moment of an open articulation." If anything, the double function of the concept of hegemony as both a symptom of crisis and a seed of regeneration seems to suggest the opposite. It is as if the new paradigm had first developed in the womb of the old one. In a typically Marxist fashion the preconditions for development, as this is exemplified by the emergence of a new paradigm, are produced through a period of crisis. Failing to fully illuminate the structural logic of Marx's theory of history, Laclau and Mouffe are therefore condemned to reproduce it in the very form that their critique takes.

The result of this fundamental weakness is a pervasive confusion. This confusion manifests itself above all in the peculiar coexistence between a comprehensive rejection of every single thesis of the Marxist concept of socialism and an unconscious

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reproduction of the structural logic informing this concept. The provocative aphorism of George Lukacs, a prominent representative of the Hegelian Marxist tradition Laclau and Mouffe reject, inevitably comes to mind at this point. In 'What is Orthodox Marxism?' Lukacs has this to say:

> "Let us assume for the sake of argument that recent research had disproved once and for all every one of Marx's individual theses. Even if this were to be proved, every serious 'orthodox' Marxist would still be able to accept all such modern findings without reservation and hence dismiss all of Marx's theses in toto- without having to renounce his orthodoxy for a single moment. Orthodox Marxism, therefore, does not imply the uncritical acceptance of the results of Marx's investigations. It is not the 'belief' in this or that thesis, nor the exegesis of a 'sacred' book. On the contrary, orthodoxy refers exclusively to method" (HCC, 1).

This statement contains in a condensed form the fundamental insight of History and Class Consciousness. As Lukacs showed in this work the meaning of a theory or text is not exhausted by its manifest content but also depends on the socially conditioned form of consciousness to which it gives expression. It is this insight that allows us to see the limitations in Lukacs' own application of this insight in History and Class Consciousness. More specifically, his affirmation of the dialectical method as the sine qua non of Marxist orthodoxy stems from an underestimation of the degree to which the constitutive role of this method in Marxist theory reflects and reproduces rather than challenges capitalist reification. In any case, Lukacs' provocative aphorism leads us to an equally provocative conclusion. The fact that, in the structure of their argument, Laclau and Mouffe end up applying traditional Marxism's theory of change to the development of Marxist theory itself seems to suggest that the authors of Hegemony and Socialist Strategy are much closer to an 'orthodox' Marxist position than they, or anyone else for that matter, may have thought.

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Laclau and Mouffe's rejection of practically every aspect of the traditional Marxist concept of socialism demonstrates, moreover, that the paradoxical and unconscious character of their alignment with traditional Marxism leads to an inability to discriminate between the aspects of Marxism that are still valid, those no longer valid and, finally, those that need to be reconceptualized. The authors are undoubtedly right to criticize the 'ontological centrality' that Marxism has traditionally conferred on the working class. Their rejection of universalism and the vision of a rational society can, by contrast, only be seen as an example of 'throwing out the baby with the bathwater'.

Not surprisingly, however, the indiscriminate character of Laclau and Mouffe's critique of Marxist theory ends up undermining the theoretical coherence of the alternative paradigm founded upon it. According to Laclau and Mouffe, the alternative conception of politics derived from the reinterpretation of the concept of hegemony has a determinate historical ground. This ground is a social 'mutation' which unleashes a historical process that, "taking an expression from de Tocqueville", Laclau and Mouffe describe as 'democratic revolution'. Explaining their use of the term, the authors of Hegemony and Socialist Strategy tell us that

> "with this we shall designate the end of a society of a hierarchic and inegalitarian type, ruled by a theological-political logic in which the social order had its foundation in divine will. The social body was conceived of as a whole in which individuals appeared fixed in differential positions. For as long as such a holistic mode of institution of the social predominated, politics could not be more than the repetition of hierarchical relations which reproduced the same type of subordinated subject. The key moment in the beginnings of the democratic revolution can be found in the French Revolution... This break with the ancien regime, symbolized by the Declaration of the Rights of Man, would provide the discursive conditions which made it possible to propose the different forms of inequality as illegitimate and anti-natural, and thus make them equivalent as forms of oppression. Here lay the profound subversive power of the democratic discourse, which would allow the spread of equality and liberty into increasingly

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> wider domains and therefore act as a fermenting agent upon the different forms of struggle against subordination" (155).

It is important, first of all, to comment on the fact that this definition of the -central to Laclau and Mouffe's argument- concept of 'democratic revolution' is based on a radical contrast between the social order preceding and that following the French Revolution. The continuity between Laclau and Mouffe's argument and the traditional model of Marxist socialism that they oppose manifests itself here in a definition that reaffirms rather than challenges the conception of revolution "as the founding moment in the transition from one type of society to another" that the authors of Hegemony and Socialist Strategy attribute to the supposedly obsolete 'Jacobin imaginary'.

This inconsistency in Laclau and Mouffe's argument notwithstanding, the nature of the contrast between the social order preceding and that following the French Revolution is itself revealing. More specifically, Laclau and Mouffe's characterization of this contrast is very reminiscent of the radical contrast between capitalist and pre-capitalist societies characteristic of the submerged aspect of Marx's thought. In line with Marx's conception of pre-capitalist societies, Laclau and Mouffe seem to suggest that the structural logic of the social order preceding the French Revolution was one of constant reproduction of social relations. This is the meaning of their association of the theological-holistic 'mode of institution of the social' with a politics that "could not be more than the repetition of hierarchical relations which reproduced the same type of subordinated subject" (155).

Given this description of the social order preceding the French Revolution, one cannot help wondering about the factors that brought this social order to its demise. If

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the structural logic of a society is such as to point towards this society's regular reproduction, the interruption of this reproduction process that this society's failure and replacement entails clearly calls for an explanation. Laclau and Mouffe, however, do not provide such an explanation. To be sure, the absence of such an explanation has its positive side insofar as it reflects Laclau and Mouffe's rejection of all trans-historical theories of social change, including the Marxist one.

Indeed, Laclau and Mouffe's analysis implies a rejection of two key assumptions of the Marxist theory of history. The first assumption is that of the role of autonomously developing forces of production as the driving force of history. Laclau and Mouffe see this assumption as one of the central components of Marxism's irreducible economic essentialism. Dubbing its conception of the economy as 'the last redoubt of essentialism' (75) Laclau and Mouffe argue that it was this essentialist privileging of the economy that prevented Marxist theorists from uncovering the full potential immanent in the concept of 'hegemony'. In Laclau and Mouffe's interpretation of Marxist conceptions of hegemony,

> "Whether the working class is considered as the political leader in a class alliance (Lenin) or as the articulatory core of a historical bloc (Gramsci), its fundamental identity is constituted in a terrain different from that in which the hegemonic practices operate. Thus there is a threshold which none of the strategic-hegemonic conceptions manages to cross. If the validity of the economist paradigm is maintained in a certain instance- last though decisive, as it is the rational substratum of history- it is accorded a necessity such that hegemonic articulations can be conceived only as mere contingency. This final rational stratum, which gives a tendential sense to all historical processes, has a specific location in the topography of the social: at the economic level"(76).

According to Laclau and Mouffe, one of the conditions that must be satisfied if the economy is to fulfil the privileged role assigned to it is that "its laws of motion must be strictly endogenous and exclude all indeterminacy resulting from political or other

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external interventions." It is this imperative that underlies the conception of a historical process driven by the autonomous development of the productive forces. It is this imperative, moreover, that, according to Laclau and Mouffe, shapes Marxism's analysis of capitalism and its contradictions:

> "The contradiction between bourgeoisie and the proletariat is, therefore, the social and political expression of a primal economic contradiction, one which combines a general law of development specific to the capitalist mode of production. According to this view, if history has a sense and a rational substratum, it is due to the general law of development of the productive forces. Hence, the economy may be understood as a mechanism of society acting upon objective phenomena independently of human action" (77-8).

The confusion traversing Laclau and Mouffe's argument becomes here manifest in the contradiction between the substantive meaning of this claim and the function that this claim is assigned in the economy of the authors' argument. The function of this passage is to create a bridge between Marxism's general theory of history and its more specific analysis of capitalist society. This bridge is necessary for the authors since what they are attempting to do is to disprove Marx's general theory of history through a critique of a supposed weakness in Marxism's analysis of capitalist society. Bracketing for the moment the question concerning the validity of Laclau and Mouffe's latter critique, this is a paradoxical procedure given the authors' own recognition that the law of the development of the productive forces is more fundamental than the structural logic of any individual mode of production. Such a recognition implies that this fundamental law is located at a greater level of generality than the analysis of capitalist society. This being the case, the conclusion follows that such a law could not be adequately comprehended and refuted in any but its own level of generality. It is this requirement that the authors

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violate when they attempt to discredit Marx's general theory of history for its supposed dependence on the 'fiction' that capitalism reduces labor-power into a commodity.

Imperceptibly Laclau and Mouffe have therefore turned their critique of a fundamental law of historical development into a critique of Marxism's analysis of capitalist society. The illegitimacy of this slippage aside, even this latter critique of traditional Marxist analysis of capitalist society is not without its problems. Laclau and Mouffe's objection to the myth of labor-power as a commodity stems from the fact that "[l]abor power differs from the other necessary elements of production in that the capitalist must do more than simply purchase it; he must also make it produce labour." Labour power, in other words, is not a passive object that the capitalist could, after purchasing it, dispose of just as she pleased. The fact that labor-power always comes with a person attached to it means that the consumption of its use-value is not an automatic or unproblematic process. Since the people whose labor-power the capitalist purchases are capable of resistance, the extraction of labor from the labor-power purchased can give rise to social struggles within the production process. In this sense, the authors argue, the realm of production is as political as it is economic. Using this insight to criticize traditional Marxism's conception of capitalist and general historical development, Laclau and Mouffe go on to point out that

> "A large part of the capitalist organization of labour can be understood only as a result of the necessity to extract labour from the labour-power purchased by the capitalist. The evolution of the productive forces becomes unintelligible if this need of the capitalist to exercise his domination at the very heart of the labour process is not understood. This, of course, calls into question the whole idea of the development of the productive forces as a natural, spontaneously progressive phenomenon. We can therefore see that both elements of the economist viewpoint -labour power as a commodity and the development of the productive forces as a neutral process- reinforce each other"(78).

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Although Laclau and Mouffe are right to highlight the political moment of capitalist production, their assumption that this moment was absent from traditional Marxism's accounts is rather misleading. Equally misleading is the assumption that the recognition of capitalism's reduction of labour-power into a commodity is incompatible to the recognition of the political moment in capitalist production. As we saw in our discussion of Marx, both Marx and Engels clearly recognized at least some of the connections between class struggle and the development of the productive forces. It will be remembered that Marx identified workers' resistance and strikes as an incentive for capitalists to mechanize production while Engels argued that another incentive was provided by economic booms that temporarily raised wages, thus cutting into the exploitation rate and the capitalist profit. These examples show two things. First, classical Marxism was not only aware of the presence of a political moment in the capitalist production process. More than that, this awareness, far from being incompatible to the law of the development of the productive forces, allows the identification of specific social mechanisms that provide this law with its plausibility. Similarly, the function that the description of labour-power as a commodity had in classical Marxism was not to expunge but rather to heighten the political aspect of economic processes. It is precisely because it identified the reduction of labor-power into a commodity as the form through which class relations become mediated under capitalism that classical Marxism could see the capitalist's response to higher wages with mechanization as an expression not just of pure economic rationality but also of the class struggle.

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In this sense Laclau and Mouffe misspecify the reifying element in the Marxist theory of history when they suggest that 'the general law of development of the productive forces' rests on a view of the economy "as a mechanism of society acting upon objective phenomena independently of human action" (77-8). As we have been arguing, the social mechanism underlying this law does not operate independently of human action but, on the contrary, accounts for the alienated aggregation of individual human action into an impersonal and reified social dynamic that escapes the individual agents' control. Thus Laclau and Mouffe's failure to explore the precise mechanism through which the articulation of inter-capitalist competition and class struggle give rise to capitalism's reified social logic leads them to a topsy-turvy interpretation of the relationship between Marxism's general theory of history and its more specific analysis of capitalist society. In their attempt to discredit Marxism's theory of history through a critique of Marxism's analysis of capitalist society, they prove oblivious to the fact that it is precisely capitalism's systematically induced dynamism that provided the law of the development of the productive forces with its plausibility.

Recapitulating we can therefore say that although Laclau and Mouffe are right to criticize the dependence of Marx's theory of history on the assumption of a continuous development of the productive forces, they develop this critique in a confused and unconvincing manner. There is, however, a second key assumption of Marx's theory of history that Laclau and Mouffe rightly challenge. This assumption is exemplified by Marx's proclamation in the Communist Manifesto that "[t]he history of all hitherto existing society is the history of class struggles". The reasoning behind this proclamation is that social oppression cannot but lead to a struggle between the oppressors and the

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oppressed. Explicitly distancing themselves from such an assumption, Laclau and Mouffe reject any

> "reference to any general principle or substratum of an anthropological nature which, at the same time that it unified the different subject positions, would assign a character of inevitability to resistance against the diverse forms of subordination. There is therefore nothing inevitable or natural in the different struggles against power, and it is necessary to explain in each case the reasons for their emergence and the different modulations they may adopt"(152).

The fact, however, that this statement appears at the beginning of their section on 'The Democratic Revolution' serves as a reminder of the fact that it is precisely the authors themselves who have neglected to offer a historical explanation of the radical transformation of the dominant political imaginary that this revolution was the result of. Once again, therefore, Laclau and Mouffe prove more capable of identifying real weaknesses in Marxist theory than of providing a convincing critique and interpretation of these failings. The reason for this lies in the authors' failure to pay heed to Gramsci's insistence on a historicist understanding of theoretical and political discourses.

Gramsci's Historicism

We have seen that a historicist interpretation of Marxism itself allows us to formulate a more effective critique of the law of the development of the productive forces than the one provided by Laclau and Mouffe. Even though he does not challenge some of the most fundamental reifying assumptions of Marx's theory of history, Gramsci does explicitly recognize the contribution non-historicist standpoints can make to reifying phenomena. In the course of criticizing Bukharin, for example, Gramsci points out that

> "If the philosophy of praxis affirms theoretically that every 'truth' believed to be eternal and absolute has had practical origins and has represented a 'provisional'

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> value (historicity of every conception of the world and of life), it is still very difficult to make people grasp 'practically' that such an interpretation is valid also for the philosophy of praxis itself, without in so doing shaking the convictions that are necessary for action. This is, moreover, a difficulty that recurs for every historicist philosophy; it is taken advantage of by cheap polemicists... to deduce that historicism leads necessarily to moral skepticism and depravity...
> "As a result even the philosophy of praxis tends to become an ideology in the worst sense of the word, that is to say a dogmatic system of eternal and absolute truths. This is particularly true when, as happens in the 'Popular Manual', it is confused with vulgar materialism, with its metaphysics of 'matter' which is necessarily eternal and absolute" (SPN 406-7).

While this passage proclaims the necessity of a historicist understanding of Marxism itself, it also shows the limitations in Gramsci's thought that prevented him from taking the historicist understanding of Marxism to its logical conclusion. These limitations stem from the fact that, unlike Lukacs, Gramsci does not approach the non-historicist tendencies in Marxism itself in a historicist manner. The result is a topsy-turvy conception of the relationship between reification and a non-historicist approach. Thus, in the passage above, the non-historicist tendencies in Marxist thought are not seen as the product of capitalist reification but rather as the source of Marxism's degeneration into a reified body of doctrine.

The problem with Gramsci's appeal to historicism is that he is not as consistent in his application of this approach to the structural logic of political and philosophical theories as he is in his application of historicism to these theories' contents. This is shown, for example, in his interpretation of the cause underlying Marxism's degeneration into metaphysical materialism. This degeneration is attributed to a vulnerability inherent in 'every historicist philosophy'. The idea that truth should not be seen as 'eternal and absolute' but as historically situated exposes it, according to Gramsci, to the charge of relativism, "moral skepticism and depravity". Although contemporary theoretical

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debates and cultural controversies can still serve as illustrations of the tedious vulgarity with which 'cheap polemicists' trivialize historicist arguments. Gramsci's non-historicist conception of historicism prevents him from offering a convincing response to the attacks against historicism.

In the passage above, it is the undifferentiated treatment of 'every historicist philosophy' that bears witness to Gramsci's non-historicist conception of historicism. A historicist conception, by contrast, would recognize that both the form in which the most general definition of historicism is developed and the implications of this development cannot be derived logically from this definition since they are inseparable from their specific historical and social context. This being the case, a variety of types of historicism could be specified. More specifically, it is possible to distinguish between a 'relativist' historicism, a 'dogmatic' historicism and a 'historicist' historicism. The relativist historicism would be the type usually attacked in anti-historicist polemics. With obvious affinities to cultural relativism in social science, this type of historicism would interpret cultural variations in terms of the specific environmental and historical conditions confronting different human societies. Such a conception would be relativist because it would avoid privileging one culture or set of beliefs over another. The different cultures and sets of beliefs would all be seen as adequate responses to the specific conditions that gave rise to them and to the practical tasks that these conditions implied. At the same time, the attention of such an approach to the specific constellation of social and historical conditions underlying any given culture would also allow for an open-ended conception of history and social change.

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Historicism could, however, also assume a more dogmatic form if embedded in a deterministic philosophy of history, such as that of Marxism. In such a case, different social forms and cultures would not be interpreted as the products of specific constellations of social and historical conditions but rather as different stages within a unified historical process. Unlike 'relativist' historicism, this model's linear conception of history could easily lead to an equation of social change with cultural progress.

Our critical reinterpretation of Weber's analysis of rationalization creates the opening for a third approach, capable of providing an effective historicist response to the equation of historicism with relativism. In our discussion of Weber we encountered the relativistic side of his thought. This side is linked to Weber's uncritical adoption of the value-fact dichotomy. We saw, however, the reification implicit in Weber's conception of values. We also saw how Weber's own materialist interpretation of the religious impulse could be used to reinterpret the significance of the unconditional obedience that values, according to Weber, command. The pluralism of religious world-views that Weber described was then seen as the result of a rationalization process which, in the absence of the material conditions for the drastic reduction of undeserved human suffering, led to this suffering's ideal sublimation. We also pointed out, however, that the constellation of social and historical factors that allowed the emergence of capitalism also led to the radical transformation of the terrain on which the rationalization process developed. By raising the prospect of a different, more egalitarian society beyond scarcity, capitalism's unprecedented dynamism rendered obsolete all attempts to sublimate the materialist impulse underlying religion. If the ideal sublimation of this impulse could take a number of forms, which Weber described, its real satisfaction was

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only possible through the non-alienated society that had now become possible. Along with the ideal sublimation of the impulse underlying religion, this historical transformation also rendered obsolete all conceptions of moral relativism. Far from leading to moral relativism, our historicist analysis highlighted both the historical conditions providing relativism with its plausibility and the reason behind its current bankruptcy.

What we have referred to as 'historicist' historicism is not simply a more adequate alternative to the previous two types of historicism. This third type's historicist character stems from the fact that it can also account for the plausibility and existence of the two previous types. It does so by specifying the historical and social contexts in which these previous types of historicism could claim, or at least appear, to be valid. For relativist historicism it is pre-capitalist society that provides this context. In the absence of the prospect of a non-alienated society, the comparison of different types of alienated society can only lead to relativist conclusions. By contrast, dogmatic historicism as exemplified by Marxism's theory of history is patterned, after the structural logic of capitalist society. Indeed, it is hardly surprising that a society in which the economy's relentless and unsettling dynamism, which requires the continual readjustment and transformation of all other spheres of social life, would inspire an interpretation of history along the lines of Marx's base-superstructure model.

To the extent that Gramsci's historicism is accompanied by an acceptance of the Marxist theory of history, it could be seen as a version of dogmatic historicism. Although Gramsci recognizes the necessity of a historicist interpretation of historicism itself, the limitations of his efforts in this direction become evident in his interpretation of Marxism.

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The historicist character of Gramsci's interpretation is here based on the specification of the implications for Marxism that 'the passage from the reign of necessity to that of freedom' (SPN, 406) would have. Gramsci suggests that "whereas the whole system of the philosophy of praxis may fall away in a unified world, many idealist conceptions, or at least certain aspects of them which are utopian during the reign of necessity, could become 'truth' after the passage"(SPN, 407). Marxism appears here as a philosophy oriented towards the comprehension of the contradictions endemic in alienated society. The conclusion then follows that in a non-alienated society "the whole system of the philosophy of praxis may fall away." Since it would eliminate the object of Marxism's analysis and critique, such a non-alienated society would signify the completion of Marxism's practical function. In realizing itself, Marxist theory would also be bring about its self-abolition.

Such a view is historicist with respect to Marxism's contents but not with respect to the structural logic underlying these contents. Alienation itself is treated as purely a content that Marxism analyzes accurately. When alienation is removed, Marxism will no longer give expression to the logic of social life. The historicist recognition that different kinds of society call for different kinds of social theorizing is negated, however, by the failure to recognize the extent to which social reality may provide theory not only with its contents but also with its form. As a result, Gramsci fails to consider the possibility that Marxism's analysis of capitalist alienation may be contaminated by its very object. The result is an uncritical acceptance of the fundamentals of the Marxist theory of history that, as we have seen, reproduces in its reifying tendencies the structural logic of capitalist society.

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Laclau and Mouffe's Antinomies and the Historicist Alternative

In any case, this digression should be sufficient to demonstrate that Gramsci is more aware than Laclau and Mouffe of the contribution that a historicist approach can make to the critique and development of Marxist theory. Gramsci's advantage over Laclau and Mouffe in this respect is expressed in his recognition of the necessarily universalistic character of any emancipatory vision. After pointing out in the passage above that certain elements of idealism "could become 'truth'" in a non-alienated society, Gramsci explains that

> "One cannot talk of the 'spirit' when society is divided into groups without necessarily concluding that this 'spirit' is just 'esprit de corps'! (This fact is implicitly recognized when it is said... that religion is the philosophy of the multitude, whereas philosophy is the religion of the elect, that is of the great intellectuals.) But it will be possible to talk in these terms after the unification has taken place" (SPN, 407).

Gramsci is right to point out here that only an egalitarian and non-alienated society would make the conception of a universal human spirit meaningful. As we have already pointed out, the realm of freedom within such a society would make possible humanity's intellectual and artistic development in a multiplicity of directions. In this sense, human spirit would not imply a mystical opposition to nature but the result of humanity's infinite and multifarious cultivation of its collective nature.

The problem with Gramsci's conception, however, is that it relegates universalism to the future emancipated society, not seeing therefore the way in which the universalistic principle becomes operative within capitalism itself. As we have seen, the very prospect of a universalistic, non-alienated society is sufficient to create a universal human interest

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in this prospect's realization. Although this interest is to some extent obscured by capitalist reification, it is its reality that lends credibility to the universalistic ideals of bourgeois society. Once this is realized, it becomes possible to correct the weaknesses not only of Marxism but also of critiques such as that of Laclau and Mouffe. We have seen that the authors of Hegemony and Socialist Strategy reject all essentialist attempts to proclaim the inevitability of struggle against social inequality and insist that only the exploration of their social and historical context can explain why these struggles emerge. We have also seen, however, that they fail to follow their own advice and provide a historicist explanation of the radical shift in the political imaginary that they describe. Our discussion of capitalism's contradictory structural logic, by contrast, provides some of the elements for such an explanation.

First of all, our analysis accounts for the contrast between the theological and the modern democratic political imaginary that Laclau and Mouffe sketch. We have already commented on the fact that this contrast parallels that between pre-capitalist and capitalist society to the extent that the old political imaginary is associated by Laclau and Mouffe to a constant reproduction of social relations while the modern democratic imaginary is seen as inherently more expansive and dynamic. Moreover, the old political imaginary according to which "the social order had its foundation in divine will"(155) is the understandable product of a social context in which the possibility of complete human emancipation and autonomy had not arisen. The correspondence of this imaginary to the stage of the rationalization process exemplified by the world religions is clear enough. The fact that the break with the ancien regime and its corresponding political logic is, as Laclau and Mouffe point out, "symbolized by the Declaration of the Rights of Man"

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represents the political expression of a comprehensive process of social change that raised the prospect of complete human autonomy. The obsolescence of ideal sublimations of human suffering brought with it the obsolescence of cosmological conceptions assigning to human beings a subordinate position in the universe. The emerging prospect of a social order serving as a means to the satisfaction of human needs and the enrichment of human life could not but facilitate the recognition of society as a human product. Admittedly this recognition was not only obscure at first but even couched in terms that formed part of the old imaginary. One can think, for example, of the theological elements in early liberal philosophy as well as the metaphysical appeals of the French and the American Revolution to God, 'natural law', natural rights, and so on. At the same time, however, the initiation of a new political imaginary with a Declaration of the Rights of Man clearly signifies the transition to a more anthropocentric paradigm.

Moreover, unlike Laclau and Mouffe, our analysis recognizes both the centrality and the significance of universalism for both the democratic imaginary and the Declaration of Rights that stands as its symbol. As we have shown, the plausibility of such a universalistic discourse stems from the fact that the emerging capitalist society that early liberalism helped to consolidate did give rise to the prospect of universal human emancipation. This historical shift also explains the source of "the profound subversive power of the democratic discourse, which would allow the spread of equality and liberty into increasingly other domains and therefore act as a fermenting agent upon the different forms of struggle against subordination"(155). Indeed, the universalistic discourse employed by the French Revolution and the rising bourgeoisie did not simply serve as a means of legitimation for the new social order but also created room for this

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order's immanent critique. If capitalist society's appeal to universalistic discourses gains its plausibility from a dynamism that raises the prospect of universal emancipation, its inability to make good on its ideals creates the possibility of turning these ideals against it. It is not surprising, therefore, that ever since the French Revolution new emancipatory movements have often made their case by appealing to modern society's failure to fulfil its universalistic claims. One can think of the movements against gender and racial oppression in the United States as an example. There is not better illustration of the immanent critique made possible by modern society's universalistic claims than the Seneca Falls Declaration. The rhetorical device of opening a declaration demanding gender equality with a slightly modified version of the Declaration of Independence was an apt illustration of American society's violation of its self-proclaimed ideals.

We see, therefore, that the peculiar expansiveness of the democratic political imaginary can become understandable as the political manifestation of capitalism's dialectic of scarcity. The fact that modern capitalist democracies are always vulnerable to the criticism that they fail to measure up to their self-proclaimed universalism parallels the contradictory process whereby capitalism compulsively reproduces scarcity even as it creates the technological preconditions for its abolition.

Capitalism's creation of the prospect of an egalitarian society beyond scarcity also accounts for the proliferation of social struggles and political identities discussed by Laclau and Mouffe. By rendering social inequality obsolete, the prospect of a society in which "the free development of each is the condition for the free development of all" creates the potential for a denaturalization of all forms of social inequality. Thus the analysis of capitalism's contradictory logic offers us something that Laclau and Mouffe's

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analysis does not. The authors of Hegemony and Socialist Strategy felt the need for a historical explanation of each instance in which a form of social inequality gives rise to contestation and struggle. At the same time, however, an adequate historical explanation is conspicuously absent from their discussion of what they themselves identify as the turning point from a theological to a democratic political imaginary. Our analysis of capitalism's dialectic of scarcity fills this gap by providing the missing historicist explanation.

Laclau and Mouffe's failure to recognize the centrality and significance of universalism for the modern political imaginary ultimately prevents them from avoiding the reifying tendencies of Marxist thought. Their evaluation of 'the specificity of Marx's intervention' demonstrates once again how the lack of a historicist approach does not allow them to recognize the full implications of the weaknesses in Marxist thought that they are very good at identifying. Arguing against Marx's attempt to make class struggle the center of gravity of emancipatory politics, Laclau and Mouffe (1985) point out that

> "his reflection took place in a moment at which the division of the political space in terms of the dichotomy people-ancien regime seemed to have exhausted its productivity, and was in any case incapable of constructing a vision of the political which would recapture the complexity and the plurality peculiar to the social in industrial societies. Marx seeks, then, to think the primary fact of social division on the basis of a new principle: the confrontation between classes. The new principle, however, is undermined from the start by a radical insufficiency, arising from the fact that class opposition is incapable of dividing the totality of the social body into two antagonistic camps, of reproducing itself automatically as a line of demarcation in the political sphere. It is for this reason that the affirmation of the class struggle as the fundamental principle of political division always had to be accompanied by supplementary hypotheses which neglected its full applicability to the future; historical-sociological hypotheses - the simplification of the social structures, which would lead to the coincidence of real political struggles and struggles between the classes as agents constituted at the level of relations of production; hypotheses regarding the consciousness of the agents - the transition from the class in itself to the class for itself" (151-2).

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According to Laclau and Mouffe, the weakness of Marx's exclusive dependence on the principle of class struggle consists, therefore, in its attempt to capture a new situation in terms of the structural logic appropriate to the old social order. In this sense, Marx had failed to recognize the political implications of the 'radical mutation' that had, in the aftermath of the French Revolution, set in. This mutation consisted in

> "the decline of a form of politics for which the division of the social into two antagonistic camps is an original and immutable datum, prior to all hegemonic construction, and the transition towards a new situation, characterized by the essential instability of political spaces, in which the very identity of the forces in struggle is submitted to constant shifts, and calls for an incessant process of redefinition" (151).

In their failure to develop the universalistic moment in Gramsci's concept of hegemony, Laclau and Mouffe also fail to carry out the promised transformation of this concept from a symptom of Marxism's crisis to a carrier of a new political logic that could help to reconstruct the emancipatory project. The continuity between the Marxist tradition and Laclau and Mouffe's analysis consists in their shared naturalization of a conflictual mode of emancipatory politics. Laclau and Mouffe do not challenge this conception of politics that, as we have seen, is the necessary correlation of a capitalist reification that operates through the naturalization of scarcity. Because of their one-sided attention to the social construction of the collective will forged through hegemonic projects, the authors of Hegemony and Social Strategy fail to see that with the emergence of capitalist society, a radical emancipatory project presupposes not the articulation of reified social identities but rather their replacement by a universal human identity that has now become meaningful. Not recognizing the historical ground of the shift in the political imaginary that they identify, Laclau and Mouffe draw conclusions that fail not only to convince but

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also to align themselves with the imperatives implicit in the new democratic political imaginary that they identify. In this sense, Laclau and Mouffe's contribution consists in a partial rationalization of Marxist conceptions of hegemony that does not, however, challenge the reifying moment of such conceptions. Preserving the link between hegemony and a conflictual mode of emancipatory politics, the authors of Hegemony and Socialist Strategy point out that there is no priori social principle or identity around which opposed hegemonic projects can be expected to organize.

In doing so, however, Laclau and Mouffe fail to recognize that the naturalization of the conflictual mode of politics forfeits the main argument that emancipatory forces can make for themselves. This argument consists in the identification of these forces with a universal human interest in a non-alienated society. Once this argument is renounced, political discourse is restricted to a terrain that presupposes reification as its implicit framework. Laclau and Mouffe's grounding of the emancipatory project on a conception of democracy as a struggle against relations of subordination and social inequality suffers from this weakness. Privileging in this way the question of subordination and inequality tends to project an opposition of interest between those who benefit and those who suffer from the inegalitarian structure of the existing social order. The very acceptance of this dichotomy, however, ends up concealing the complete obsolescence of social inequality once a society allowing the infinite development of every individual becomes possible.

That Laclau and Mouffe fall into the trap of engaging conservative discourses on the reified terrain making such discourses possible is shown in their evaluation of the recent upsurge of neo-liberal and neo-conservative forces that have sought to challenge

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the post-war Keynesian, welfare capitalist consensus. Discussing the reinterpretation and employment of the theme of liberty by such discourses Laclau and Mouffe argue that

> "despite its articulation with the democratic imaginary, liberalism has continued to retain as a matrix of production of the individual what Macpherson called 'possessive individualism'. This latter constructs the rights of individuals as existing before society, and often in opposition to it. To the extent that more and more numerous subjects demanded these rights in the framework of the democratic revolution, it was inevitable that the matrix of possessive individualism would be broken, as the rights of some came into collision with the rights of others. It is in this context of crisis of democratic liberalism that it is necessary to locate the offensive which seeks to dissolve the subversive potential of the articulations between liberalism and democracy, reaffirming the centrality of liberalism as the defense of individual liberty against all interference from the state and in opposition to the democratic component, which is founded upon equal rights and popular sovereignty. But this effort to restrict the terrain of democratic struggle and to preserve the inequalities existing in a number of social relations, demands the defense of a hierarchical and anti-egalitarian principle that had been endangered by liberalism itself. This is why the liberals increasingly resort to a set of themes from conservative philosophy, in which they find the necessary ingredients to justify inequality. We are thus witnessing the emergence of a new hegemonic project, that of liberal-conservative discourse, which seeks to articulate the neo-liberal defense of the free market economy with the profoundly anti-egalitarian cultural and social traditionalism of conservatism" (175).

As this passage shows, Laclau and Mouffe see the rise of liberal-conservative discourse as a response to the internal contradictoriness of liberalism. More specifically, Laclau and Mouffe perceive a contradiction between the democratic imaginary and liberalism's reliance in its representation of social subjects on the model of possessive individualism. The articulation of these elements is not sustainable in the long run because of the expansive character of the democratic imaginary. As the demand for the rights implicit in possessive individualism spreads through the social body, "the rights of some come into collision with the rights of others" (175) and the framework provided by possessive individualism breaks down.

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Although Laclau and Mouffe are right to identify the contradiction between liberalism's two elements, they misspecify the dynamic that this contradiction sets off. The reason for this misspecification can be traced back to their misunderstanding of the universalistic significance of both capitalism and the modern democratic imaginary. Laclau and Mouffe's characterization of possessive individualism shows the debt of this model to the naturalization of alienation. It is this alienation that is at the origin of this model's sharp separation between individuals and society. The conception of rights as prior and potentially opposed to society implies an experience of society as an external and threatening entity from which the individual needs to be protected. The foundation of any political theory on the assumption that the individual has to assert her rights against society has clear implications. To the extent that the society confronting the isolated individual is made up of all the other individuals, possessive individualism suppresses the prospect of a society in which the development of each individual will presuppose rather than constrain the development of every other individual. Possessive individualism's naturalization of a zero-sum logic is, however, nothing but the naturalization of scarcity.

Once the connection between possessive individualism and the naturalization of alienation and scarcity is recognized, the result of liberalism's contradictory dynamic appears in a different light. More specifically, the significance of the fact the 'the rights of some come into collision with the rights of others' directly contradicts Laclau and Mouffe's interpretation. Far from signifying possessive individualism's breakdown, this collision of interests actually represents the triumph of the reifying logic that such individualism gives expression to.

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This triumph becomes possible through the domestication of the universalistic moment in the modern political imaginary that the concept of right makes possible. The meaning of this concept is fundamentally negative. What makes the appeal to one's right meaningful is the threat of this right's violation. In this respect, Laclau and Mouffe's willingness to use the concept of 'right' as the foundation for an emancipatory project is as guilty of naturalizing alienation as the model of possessive individualism. This does not mean, of course, that a non-alienated society would not recognize individual rights. It does mean however that in such a society rights would lose their foundational status and be derived from the universal interest in an egalitarian organization of the 'realm of necessity' that would allow each individual to pursue, in the realm of freedom, their self-development not at the expense of but rather through the development of every other individual.

Once the negative concept of right is elevated into a foundation for social theory, universalism becomes a false, formal universalism. This is the true meaning of the 'contradictory' dynamic described by Laclau and Mouffe. The collision of interests they refer to is not a sign of possessive individualism's non-universalizability. Rather, it is a sign of the inevitable betrayal of modern society's universalistic promise whenever this promise is articulated in terms of a reified conceptual framework that deprives it from its substance. Once this framework suppresses the possibility and universal interest in a non-alienated society, the naturalization of conflict that results can only translate universalism into a universal interest in compromise.

It is this false universalism that animates the liberal-conservative discourse Laclau and Mouffe refer to. By isolating the different movements fighting against different

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forms of inequality from each other, this discourse can reduce every single of these movements into the status of representatives of particularistic social interests. Through this operation, the neo-liberal or Social Democratic executors of this discourse's imperatives can present their defense of social inequality as a mark of their universalism. After all, they are the political forces willing to take a stand against the working people, minorities, and so on, who want to assert their partial interests at the expense of society's general interest! It is the centrality of this false universalism to the liberal-conservative discourse that Laclau and Mouffe implicitly demonstrate when they point out that

> "A series of subject positions which were accepted as legitimate differences in the hegemonic formation corresponding to the Welfare State are expelled from the field of social positivity and construed as negativity - the parasites on social security (Mrs. Thatcher's 'scroungers'), the inefficiency associated with union privileges, and state subsidies, and so on" (176).

False universalism here takes the form of a claim that the post-war consensus in rich capitalist countries creates a multitude of parasites having secured privileges at the expense of society as a whole. This accusation is, moreover, leveled against central components of this consensus. As the passage above shows the components under attack include the welfare state, the integration of labor unions into the polity as well as the State's regulation of the market and intervention in the economy.

Laclau and Mouffe, however, do not explicitly recognize the constitutive role that such 'universalistic' rhetoric plays in the construction of the liberal-conservative historic bloc. Their emphasis is rather on the instability of political identities that becomes clear once Marxism's essentialist privileging of class is abandoned. Thus for Laclau and Mouffe the emergence of a liberal-conservative bloc represents above all a 'displacement of the frontier of the social' which, as the passage above shows, leads to the redefinition

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of the subject positions accepted as legitimate differences. It is upon this instability of political identity that Laclau and Mouffe base their proposed emancipatory political strategy. Their goal is to respond to the conservative appropriation of liberalism with a radical, democratic one. In their view,

> "The task of the left therefore cannot be to renounce 'liberal-democratic ideology, but on the contrary, to deepen and expand it in the direction of a radical and plural democracy... the meaning of liberal discourse on individual rights is not definitively fixed; and just as this unfixity permits their articulation with elements of conservative discourse, it also permits different forms of articulation and redefinition which accentuate the democratic moment"(176).

Laclau and Mouffe illustrate this unfixity of the discourse of rights through a brief overview of the evolution of 'the form in which the very idea of liberty was conceived.'(171) Treating this evolution as an example of the potential for the 'democratization' of liberalism, Laclau and Mouffe point out that

> "From the traditional liberal definition of Locke -'liberty is to be free from restraint and violence from others'- we had passed with John Stuart Mill to the acceptance of 'political' liberty and democratic participation as an important component of liberty. More recently, in social-democratic discourse, liberty has come to mean the 'capacity' to make certain choices and to keep open a series of real alternatives. It is thus that poverty, lack of education, and great disparities in the conditions of life are today considered offences against liberty"(171-2).

This evolution in the meaning of liberty does imply an extension of individual rights. This extension does not, however, challenge the conception concerning the relation between individual and society that underlies the discourse of rights. The multiplication of rights does not change the fact that the individual has to claim these rights from society. These rights still act as a safeguard against abuses that the individual might otherwise suffer in the hands of society. The structural logic remains the same and what changes is only the definition of what counts as a social abuse of the individual.

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In this sense, Laclau and Mouffe's attempt to reformulate the emancipatory project on the basis of a radicalization of the discourse of rights does not abandon the reifying logic underlying this discourse. Their focus on discursive rearticulations, such as the one between the post-war welfarist consensus and the more recent neoliberal one, prevents them from also perceiving an element of continuity. Despite their differences, both the welfarist and the neo-liberal hegemonic formations had to rely on discourses that could formally lay claim to universalism. The relevant social agents recognized by the two formations differed and so did the preferred social institutions and mechanisms regulating the interaction of these agents. The welfare consensus, for example, was based on the recognition of both labor and capital as legitimate social players. Its task was accordingly defined as a mediation of their opposing interests that would produce a mutually and universally beneficial outcome. The mechanisms used to fulfil such a program included collective bargaining that allowed the sharing of productivity gains between labor and capital, a Keynesian macro-economic policy based on aggregate demand management and the pursuit of full employment, the establishment of a welfare state, the use of the state as a corrective to the excesses of the free market and, in general, a more active and interventionist role of the state in economic life through, for example, nationalization of whole sectors of the economy. Neo-liberalism's pseudo-universalism, by contrast, rests on a privatization of social agents. In the neo-liberal model, universalistic outcomes do not emerge out of a negotiation between classes and social groups that regulates the operation of the market. The universalistic outcome envisaged by neo-liberalism is produced rather by the unfettered competition of individuals in the free market.

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The pseudo-universalistic claims of both social-democratic welfarist and neo-liberal discourses were based on the naturalization of scarcity. The differences in their socio-economic assumptions notwithstanding, their prescription for the widespread persistence of human misery throughout the world is economic growth and full employment. Thus even though they disagree on the policies that would allow the achievement of these goals, both of these discourses contribute to the repression of any incipient insight into the objective obsolescence of capitalism's artificial reproduction of scarcity. Instead of recognizing the contribution of capitalism's compulsive dynamism to the perpetuation of scarcity and human misery, both of these discourses mistake the source of the problem for the cure.

This agreement is not an accident. It stems from the inherently negative meaning of the concept of rights. When this concept serves as the foundation for a political theory, the conflictual character of human relations becomes naturalized and the prospect of a society in which 'the development of each would be the condition for the development of all' is dogmatically forestalled. The recognition of rights is not seen as simply a necessary component of a non-alienated society's 'realm of necessity'. On the contrary, it implies the adoption of the very assumptions that naturalize alienation and preclude the realization of an emancipated society. In this sense, the emphasis that Laclau and Mouffe place on the reappropriation of the liberal discourse on individual rights threatens to reconstitute emancipatory politics on a reified basis.

The alternative to this reification of emancipatory politics is a genuinely universalistic strategy that exposes the pseudo-universalism of both social-democratic/welfarist and neo-liberal discourses. The plausibility of such pseudo-

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universalistic discourses stems from the reified social identities and interests that capitalism's artificial reproduction of scarcity tends to engender. Capitalism's day-to-day operation tends to reinforce particularistic identities stemming both from the class inequalities it implies and the other forms of social inequality with which it has historically been articulated. At the same time, however, it creates the possibility of transcending such identities by creating, as we have seen, a genuinely universal interest in a non-alienated society. It is only by cultivating this possibility of a universalistic identity that a radical emancipatory movement could effectively struggle for such a non-alienated society.

This requires going beyond Marxism's and conflict theory's traditional critique of bourgeois universalism's individualist character. This critique is correct to point out that in the existing society the presence of various forms of social oppression belie this society's universalistic claims. Marxism and conflict theory have traditionally responded to individualistic universalism by stressing the need for oppressed groups to develop a radical group consciousness that would allow them to fight the source of their oppression. Our analysis has shown that any attempt to found radical emancipatory politics on such a conception of a group struggle between the oppressors and the oppressed obscures the universal interest in a non-alienated society and thus bears the trace of capitalist reification. Instead of clarifying the universally beneficial character of struggles against capitalism and the various forms of social oppression, such a reified conception inevitably leads to a particularistic definition of oppressed groups' struggles. These struggles are interpreted in terms of a narrow group interest and emancipatory politics is deprived from its most convincing argument.

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As Laclau and Mouffe point out, Marx tried to address this implicit weakness in his argument through the designation of the proletariat as the 'universal' class. We have seen that this formulation is not only a contradiction in terms but can also be traced to the structural logic of capitalist society. More specifically, we have seen that there is a principle reminiscent of Hegel's 'cunning of reason' operative in Marx's theory of history. This principle, moreover, is more than a secularized version of the concept of divine providence. The material reality, whose logic this principle describes, is that of the 'invisible hand' of the market. The parallel between the ability of competition in the market to reconcile, at least to some extent, the producers' self-interested action with society's general interest in cheap and good quality products and the assignment to the self-interested action of classes of a universal historical significance has important political implications. These implications stem from the fact that under capitalism this translation of self-interested action into an outcome that serves, up to a certain point, a more general social interest has an automatic and unconscious character. This being the case, it is not surprising that the debt of the Marxist theory of history to capitalism's structural logic would predispose it favorably towards a mechanistic conception of the process through which the universalizing historical process reaches its climax. As we have seen, a number of Marxist thinkers, including Lukacs and Gramsci, tried to counter the mechanistic versions of Marxism through a renewed emphasis on class consciousness, ideology and the subjective preconditions for proletarian revolution. Such attempts were bound to founder, however, given these authors' continued allegiance to the Marxist theory of history. The hope to save the theory from its one-sided, mechanistic applications failed to recognize the fact that the reifying elements were

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deeply rooted in Marxist theory since the very structure of the theory was stamped by capitalism's reified logic.

Laclau and Mouffe allude to the connection between Marxism's conception of history as a unified process and its appeal to the 'universal' working class when they point out that the obsolete imaginary of Marxist socialism was "[p]eopled with 'universal' subjects and conceptually built around History in the singular"(2). Because of their failure to avoid, let alone criticize, capitalist reification, Laclau and Mouffe cannot see, however, that the problem with Marxism was not its appeal to 'universal' subjects but rather the form that this appeal took.

Lacking a historicist analysis of the liberal and Marxist discourses, Laclau and Mouffe do not recognize that the moment of universalism represented the radical emancipatory moment of both capitalism and the democratic imaginary. Equally, they fail to recognize that capitalist reification so obscures capitalism's universalistic significance and implications that it is capable of contaminating the vision of even as radical a critic as Marx.

As we have seen, breaking the hold of capitalist reification does require the construction of a universal subject. This subject is humanity. The emergence of humanity as a potential universal subject is historically situated. It is only capitalism's creation of a universal interest in a non-alienated society that makes such a concept meaningful. At the same time, the realization of humanity's potential to become a universal subject is hindered by capitalist reification. The pernicious impact of such reification consists precisely in its ability to shape the self-definition of struggles against the various forms of social inequality. This impasse becomes felt when the impersonal

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character that social oppression, in all its forms, assumes under capitalism is concealed by the conflictual conception of social struggles against this oppression. The conception of the struggle against oppression as one between oppressors and oppressed inevitably ends up undermining this struggle's claim to represent a universal human interest. It is clear that a struggle pitting a group that benefits from oppressive social relations against a group suffering from them is incompatible to any appeal to a universal human interest. Once the reified problematic of scarcity defines the terrain on which universalism is articulated, the latter has to turn moralistic. Universalism does not refer to a universal interest but to universal rights.

Laclau and Mouffe are right to point out that Gramsci's concept of 'hegemony' represents an advance over the traditional Marxist emphasis on proletarian class consciousness. They are also right to attribute the superiority of Gramsci's concept to its recognition that a radical collective will could not possibly be forged on the basis of pre-existing social and political identities that remain unchanged throughout the process of forming such a new collective will. However, lacking a historicist understanding of the democratic imaginary, Laclau and Mouffe are incapable of recognizing what such a new collective will would have to consist in. Laclau and Mouffe do not see, in particular, that, more than rearticulating existing social and political identities, a radical development of Gramsci's concept of hegemony can only point to a process whereby the reified identities created by the various forms of social oppression are actually challenged. In this sense, a radical emancipatory project would need to make the various struggles against particular forms of social oppression into the basis for a movement motivated by the recognition of

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both the objective obsolescence of all forms of oppression and the universal human interest in a non-alienated society.

It is only such a conception of hegemony that can lead to a strategy capable of mounting an effective resistance against the currently dominant neo-liberal discourse. The only possible response to the pseudo-universalism of both neo-liberalism and all other discourses that capitalism has depended on in the past and will depend on in the future is the recognition of the genuinely universal interest in a non-alienated society that capitalism gives rise to. The recognition of this interest is not, however, simply a matter of consciousness. More than that, it is a matter of social subjectivity and its constitution on the basis of determinate social conditions. An emancipatory hegemonic project's struggle against reification would not simply be a struggle against 'false consciousness'. More than that, it would be a struggle against capitalism's constitution of individual subjects on the basis of reified social identities. In other words, the prime target of an emancipatory hegemonic project would not be capitalist reification's distortion of truth but rather its construction of reality. The impact of capitalist reification is not simply epistemological in nature but also ontological. As we have seen, however, the identification of capitalism's reifying thrust neither projects capitalism as an inexorable and monolithic entity nor denies the contradictions that could potentially lead to its replacement by a different social order. Capitalism's dialectic of scarcity does not only reproduce the particularistic identities of groups in competition and conflict but also the prospect of a society that serves humanity as a whole.

It is this contradictory dynamic which accounts for the instability of the meaning of social struggles under capitalism. With the emergence of the prospect of a non-

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alienated society, every instance of struggle against a particular form of social oppression potentially assumes an additional and more universal dimension. Once social oppression in all its forms becomes objectively obsolete, any struggle against a particular for of oppression can potentially turn into a struggle against the obsolescence of social oppression as such. In the course of such a process, however, the identity of the agents in struggles becomes modified. A strike that starts out as a conflict between workers and capitalists turns into an opposition between human beings struggling against the absurd and artificial reproduction of social oppression and their counterparts who defend this obsolete oppression.

Reification, Class Consciousness and the Question of Intellectuals

The double significance of social struggles against particular forms of social oppression bears a clear similarity to the traditional distinction in Marxist theory between 'reformist' economic struggles trying to improve the conditions of workers within capitalism and 'revolutionary' political struggles seeking nothing less than the overthrow of capitalism and its wage-slavery. In classical Marxism this distinction did not pose a problem as a fundamental continuity was postulated between these two forms of class struggle. This is, for example, the case in Marx's Communist Manifesto. Indeed, in the course of describing the process whereby capitalism gives rise to a large, politically organized proletariat with a revolutionary consciousness, Marx argues that

> "The various interests and conditions of life within the ranks of the proletariat are more and more equalized, in proportion as machinery obliterates all distinctions of labour, and nearly everywhere reduces wages to the same low level. The growing competition among the bourgeois, and the resulting commercial crises, make the wages of the worker ever more fluctuating. The unceasing improvement of machinery, ever more rapidly developing, makes their livelihood

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> more and more precarious; the collisions between individual workmen and individual bourgeois take more and more the character of collisions between the two classes. Thereupon the workers begin to form combinations (Trades Unions) against the bourgeois; they club together in order to keep up the rate of wages; they found permanent associations in order to make provision beforehand for these occasional revolts. Here and there the contest breaks out into riots. "Now and then the workers are victorious, but only for a time. The real fruit of their battle lies, not in the immediate result, but in the ever-expanding union of the workers. This union is helped on by the improved means of communication that are created by modern industry and that place the workers of different localities in contact with one another. It was just this contact that was needed to centralize the numerous local struggles... into one national struggle" (MER, 481).

Here Marx shows how the conditions of capitalist society lead to the gradual emergence of the working class as an organized force capable of mounting resistance against the economic power of the bourgeois. This process of working-class self-organization initially unfolds on the terrain of capitalist society. As Marx recognizes the workers' "combinations (Trades Unions) against the bourgeois" are not aimed at the abolition of capitalist alienation and wage-slavery but merely seek "to keep up the rate of wages". According to Marx, however, such a reformist orientation is seen as simply a stage in the process of proletarian unification and radicalization. Marx recognizes that reformist struggles can bring about palpable gains for workers but minimizes their significance. For one thing, such gains are occasional and temporary. ("Now and then the workers are victorious, but only for a time"). On the other hand, such gains are secondary when compared to the overall dynamic of the working-class movement. ("The real fruit of their battles lies, not in the immediate result, but in the ever-expanding union of the workers.") It is through this process of political self-organization that the working-class prepares itself for the performance of its ultimate role as gravedigger of the bourgeoisie.

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It is well-known that this smooth transition from a reformist orientation towards economic gains within capitalism to a revolutionary consciousness leading to the abolition of capitalism did not materialize as Marx had expected. By the end of the 19th century the continuity between reformist struggles and a revolutionary consciousness was becoming less and less plausible. On the theoretical level, this growing tension found expression in the 'Revisionism Debates' sparked by Edward Bernstein. Functioning as a theoretical justification of reformist socialist politics devoid of any revolutionary intentions, Bernstein's views highlighted the growing estrangement between the reformist and the revolutionary wings of the socialist movement. It is not surprising then that Lenin, writing at the beginning of the 20th century, would recognize the dichotomy between a reformist and a revolutionary socialist consciousness as a real problem that could not be assumed to find an automatic solution in the course of the working-class movement's development. Advancing a much criticized thesis, Lenin argues in What Is to Be Done? that

> "there could not have been Social-Democratic consciousness among the workers. It would have to be brought to them from without. The history of all countries shows that the working class, exclusively by its own effort, is able to develop only trade union consciousness, i.e., the conviction that it is necessary to combine in unions, fight the employers, and strive to compel the government to pass necessary labour legislation, etc. The theory of socialism, however, grew out of the philosophic, historical, and economic theories elaborated by educated representatives of the propertied classes, by intellectuals. By their social status the founders of modern scientific socialism, Marx and Engels, themselves belonged to the bourgeois intelligentsia"[1].

This view can and has been criticized for being elitist and undemocratic. Instead of seeing revolutionary class struggle and the overthrow of capitalism as the process through which the working-class liberates itself, such a view seems to relegate the working-class

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into a subordinate role. The Leninist emphasis on an avant-garde party appears as the logical consequence of the inability of the working class to rise through its struggles above the level of a narrow trade-union consciousness. The identification of intellectuals and the Communist Party as the repository of authentic revolutionary consciousness seems to reduce the working class into little more than followers of the party line. Piccone (1983) lays out this line of reasoning when he polemically contrasts Gramsci's conception of the role of the Communist Party to that of Lenin:

> "Unlike in What Is to Be Done?, the party is not charged with manipulating passive proletarians but with integrating them with the intellectuals and thus remedying the shortcomings created on both sides by the division between mental and physical labour. The notion of the party as the Modern Prince- the collective will- is in no way reducible to Lenin's 'ten wise men' pulling the strings of puppet proletarians. It is, rather, the embryo of a new society constituted by people able both to think and to feel, and is based on an overcoming of social divisions"(194).

What such critiques overlook is that, despite the undemocratic implications that can be and have been drawn from Lenin's view on proletarian class consciousness, this view does contain an incipient and undeveloped insight into the nature of capitalist reification. To begin with, Lenin seems to recognize that socialism and the working-class movement are analytically distinct phenomena. At the same time, he is too orthodox a Marxist to explore the full implications of this insight. The proletariat's inability to develop a 'Social-Democratic' consciousness 'exclusively by its own effort' does not for a moment put into question for him the privileging of the working-class character of the traditional Marxist conception of socialism. Because of his allegiance to this conception, Lenin cannot appreciate the full significance of the observation that working-class struggles

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[1] See Tucker ed. (1975), 24-5.

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cannot by themselves give rise to anything more than trade-union consciousness. This fact can be explained on the basis of the argument developed in this study.

If working-class struggles tend to lead to a trade-union consciousness seeking merely an amelioration of the conditions confronting the workers in capitalist society, this is because such struggles develop on the terrain of capitalist reality. This reality is characterized, as we have seen, by a constant reproduction of scarcity and the conflictual social relations that accompany this scarcity. The division of society into owners of the means of production, on the one hand, and propertyless workers, on the other, is of course an integral aspect of this specific capitalist reality. To the extent, moreover, that such a class division would be absent from an egalitarian, non-alienated society, it also follows that the effects on both social reality and political reality produced by the existence of class divisions cannot transcend the framework of capitalist society. Capitalism's potentially self-transcending logic stems neither from the class divisions that capitalism entails nor from the opposing class interests that these class divisions, in their turn, imply. If pointing beyond itself is part of capitalism's normal, everyday operation, this is because capitalism's unprecedented dynamism renders social oppression -both in its class and its non-class forms- obsolete.

The implications of such a conclusion are much more far-reaching than Lenin had imagined. For him the inability of the working class to develop a revolutionary consciousness by its own effort simply meant that the working-class did not automatically recognize its true interest and mission. The traditional Marxist definition of this interest and mission were, however, retained. Thus the only new element introduced was the claim that to recognize this true interest and mission the working-class needed

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the help of socialist intellectuals and a vanguard party. The very fact, however, that, as Lenin points out, the revolutionary doctrine of scientific socialism originated with bourgeois intellectuals seems to contradict the conception of socialism as the logical outcome of class struggle under capitalism. This contradiction is not unique to Lenin. Marx himself had made contradictory claims concerning the relationship of bourgeois intellectuals to the revolutionary working-class movement. In The German Ideology, for example, Marx argues that

> "The division of labour... manifests itself also in the ruling class as the division of mental and material labour, so that inside this class one part appears as the thinkers of the class (its active, conceptive ideologists, who make the perfecting of the illusion of the class about itself their chief source of livelihood), while the others' attitude to these ideas and illusions is more passive and receptive, because they are in reality the active members of this class and have less time to make up illusions and ideas about themselves. Within this class this cleavage can even develop into a certain opposition and hostility between the two parts, which, however, in the case of a practical collision, in which the class itself is endangered, automatically comes to nothing, in which case there also vanishes the semblance that the ruling ideas were not the ideas of the ruling class and had a power distinct from the power of this class"(MER, 173).

In the Communist Manifesto, by contrast, Marx does entertain the possibility that bourgeois intellectuals might, at a moment of revolutionary crisis, change sides switching their allegiance to the revolutionary working-class movement. Drawing an analogy with the realignment of social forces that led to the French Revolution, Marx argues that

> "in times when the class struggle nears the decisive hour, the process of dissolution going on within the ruling class, in fact within the whole range of society, assumes such a violent, glaring character, that a small section of the ruling class cuts itself adrift, and joins the revolutionary class, the class that holds the future in its hands. Just as, therefore, at an earlier period, a section of the nobility went over to the bourgeoisie, so now a portion of the bourgeoisie goes over to the proletariat, and in particular, a portion of the bourgeois ideologists, who have raised themselves to the level of comprehending theoretically the historical movement as a whole"(MER, 481).

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It is worth pointing out that in both of his views on the attitude of ruling class intellectuals towards social revolution Marx recognizes that the relationship between these intellectuals and the class whose self-consciousness they represent need not always be smooth and devoid of conflict. At the same time, the two views are diametrically opposed with respect to the conditions under which such conflict may arise. In the Manifesto Marx suggests that a section of bourgeois intellectuals is likely to abandon its class of origin at a time of revolutionary crisis. Marx identifies the bourgeois intellectuals' recognition of the logic of the historical movement as well as of the fact that it is the working-class that 'holds the future in its hands' as the reason for these intellectuals' abandonment of their class of origin. In The German Ideology, however, Marx does not give a clear explanation for the possibility of even superficial opposition and hostility between bourgeoisie and its intellectuals. What he does do is to link the possibility of such tensions to the presence of a division between mental and material labour within the bourgeoisie itself. The identification of this link opens up the potential for an important insight into the operation of capitalist reification. Marx, however, does not explore this link, so he misses the opportunity to break with the conception that socialism is the logical consequence of class struggle.

Our analysis allows us to identify the unappreciated and unexplored significance of the link between the division of labor within the bourgeoisie and the potential for conflict between bourgeoisie and its intellectuals that Marx instinctively perceives. The two groups produced by the division between mental and material labor within the bourgeoisie are to some extent parallel to the two contradictory moments in capitalist development. To the extent that the function of bourgeois intellectuals is to provide

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legitimation for the capitalist status quo, they are more sensitive to capitalism's universalistic significance. We have seen, however, that what this universalistic significance truly consists in is the creation of the possibility of as well as of a universal interest in an egalitarian, non-alienated society. As their social function turns bourgeois intellectuals into 'universalism experts', it also makes it more likely for them to see through reified conceptions of universalism as well as reified identities such as class and class interest. Since concepts such as 'humanity' are their professional currency, such intellectuals are more likely to recognize that with capitalism all forms of inequality and oppression become obsolete and that, in this sense, the definition of any human being's, including their own, interest in terms of particularistic identities produced by corresponding forms of social oppression are equally anachronistic.

The other, and main, segment of the bourgeoisie is, as Marx points out, composed by 'the active members of this class' who, 'having less time to make up illusions and ideas about themselves', tend to adopt a 'more passive and receptive' attitude towards the refined 'ideas and illusions' produced by bourgeois intellectuals. This segment is less concerned with the 'world-historical' significance of capitalism as it has to focus all its time and energy to the pursuit of survival and success in the midst of capitalism's everyday reality. As we have seen, this everyday reality is one of perpetual reproduction of scarcity, ruthless competition and, last but not least, class conflict. These elements are of course present in the life of bourgeois intellectuals, especially when, as Marx points out, these intellectuals have to turn the production of ideas into 'their chief source of livelihood.' To the extent that these elements are, moreover, integral to intellectual production under capitalism, capitalist reification is bound to inform the intellectual's

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'universalistic' pronouncements. At the same time, however, the intellectual's activity under capitalism embodies the contradiction between use-value and exchange-value in a distinctive way. To the extent that the intellectual needs to secure a minimum exchange value for the specialized labor-power she brings into the labor market, she has to withstand her more or less fair share of the day-to-day drudgery that continues to represent capitalist society's reliable backbone. All this being the case, Marx's recognition that bourgeois intellectuals turn the production of ideas and illusions into 'their chief source of livelihood' inevitably appears as self-contradictory. If intellectuals can only survive by selling their labor-power, are they really bourgeois? On this issue Marx is, once again, inconsistent. In the Communist Manifesto Marx challenges the very conception of a bourgeois intellectual when he points out that

> "The bourgeoisie has stripped of its halo every occupation hitherto honored and looked up to with reverent awe. It has converted the physician, the lawyer, the priest, the poet, the man of science, into its paid wage-laborers" (MER 476).

Here Marx clearly recognizes the implication of his recognition that the so-called 'bourgeois' intellectuals produce ideas and cultural artifacts and provide services in order to make a living. These intellectuals are no longer seen as part of the bourgeoisie but rather as its 'wage-laborers'. Capitalism, in other words, leads to the proletarianization of intellectuals. This realization complicates matters requiring a qualification of the assertion that "[t]he ideas of the ruling class are in every epoch the ruling ideas"(MER, 172). The plausibility of this assertion stems from the real necessity of a certain, functional correspondence between a society's structure and its culture. This functional correspondence does not, however, preclude the existence of social contradictions. This

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may be especially the case in capitalist society. The specificity of capitalism in this respect lies in its unprecedented success in integrating intellectual production into its economic life. This is apparent not only in the centrality of modern science to the development of new products and productive processes or in the indispensability of scientific and technical education for the reproduction of the specialized labor power that modern capitalism requires. With capitalism the position of intellectuals becomes comparable to that of direct producers. Intellectual production is neither a leisure activity undertaken by members of the propertied classes nor directly dependent on the commissions and support of these propertied classes. Instead it becomes commodified making intellectuals as vulnerable to the fluctuations of the market as the rest of the proletarianized population. Although this commodification of culture forces intellectual and cultural producers to fashion their products with an eye to the demand of the market, the connection between the production of ideas and the ideas of the ruling class is not as immediate. Moreover, even the ideas of the ruling class do not express the real interest of its individual members but are rather the product of capitalism's reifying construction of these individuals into class subjects.

All this points to the fact that the production of ideas under capitalism cannot be explained in terms of the class position and interests of the cultural producers and her audience. Even more fundamental in this respect is the capitalist reification that constitutes these class interests. The cultural producer is certainly not immune to the capitalist reification of scarcity. To the extent that she depends on the sale of the cultural commodity or labor-power that she brings to the market, she becomes symptomatic of capitalism's subordination of use-value to exchange-value. At the same time, however,

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the universalistic ideas that, as we have seen, inform the production of cultural use-values makes this subordination less than complete. Thus, the contradictioness of capitalism's dialectic of scarcity finds its equivalent in capitalism's class structure. In the proletarianized intellectual, capitalism creates a class segment that is uniquely positioned to recognize the obsolescence of class as well as all other oppressive social divisions.

Intellectuals and cultural producers are, therefore, distinctive because of the irreducible presence of capitalism's universalistic significance in the day-to-day performance of their social function. By contrast, the day-to-day existence of the rest of the population is overwhelmingly dominated by the matrix of capitalism's perpetual reproduction of scarcity and social conflict. It is this distinctiveness of the social function of intellectuals that can remove the conceptual difficulties and paradoxes that, as Marx's and Lenin's above-mentioned statements amply demonstrate, the attitude of many intellectuals towards radical social change has posed for Marxism.

This analysis makes it possible to reinterpret Lenin's above-mentioned assertion concerning the worker's inability to rise, by their own effort, above the level of a trade-union consciousness. In our view, it is not that individual workers or members of oppressed groups are incapable of attaining a radical universalistic consciousness. It is simply that they cannot do so as workers or as members of oppressed groups. This radical universalistic consciousness cannot be the result of a recognition of a group interest that necessitates a struggle between oppressors and oppressed. Such a consciousness can only stem from a recognition of an already existing universal interest in a non-alienated society. Such a consciousness presupposes, therefore, a process whereby both reality and the existing social identities become redefined from a

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universalistic standpoint. To the extent that this process requires the forging of a new collective will that challenges dominant, reified conceptions of reality and promises the creation of a new, more autonomous and, thus, superior human culture, its continuity with Gramsci's concept of hegemony is clear. To the extent that it does not presuppose that it is class which provides this new collective will with the principle of its coherence, this conception of a radical hegemonic project avoids, however, the residual essentialism that, as Laclau and Mouffe have convincingly demonstrated, vitiated Gramsci's analysis. Finally, to the extent that this process is not seen as the rearticulation of social identities but rather as their transcendence into a universalistic human identity, our conception also avoids the reifying implications of Laclau and Mouffe's argument. As we have seen, this affirmation of universalism does not rest on a metaphysical anthropology but has a thoroughly historicist character. It is our insistence on such a thoroughly historicist approach that has allowed us to avoid the pitfalls of Laclau and Mouffe's analysis

Rationalization, Hegemony and the Rethinking of Emancipatory Politics

At this point, we are led to consider, once again, Gramsci's reflections on philosophy with which we began this chapter. The tensions in Gramsci's thought become clear here because the universalism of these reflections can be used to criticize not only the class essentialism of his thought but also the capitalist reification that Laclau and Mouffe's analysis reproduces. Our analysis to this point allows us to see in these reflections not only the imperative of intellectual rationalization but also the inseparability of such rationalization from universalism, the critique of reification and a historicist approach.

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Rationalization and the critique of reification come together when Gramsci confronts us with the rhetorical question:

> "is it better to 'think', without having a critical awareness, in a disjointed and episodic way? In other words, is it better to take part in a conception of the world mechanically imposed by the external environment, i.e. by one of the many social groups in which everyone is automatically involved from the moment of his entry into the conscious world...? Or, on the other hand, is it better to work out consciously and critically one's own conception of the world and thus, in connection with the labours of one's own brain, choose one's sphere of activity, take an active part in the creation of the history of the world, be one's own guide, refusing to accept passively and supinely from outside the molding of one's personality?"(SPN 323-4)

In this passage Gramsci recognizes that rationalization of one's thinking is inseparable from an individuation that allows one's transcendence of particularistic identities that have determined one's personality and outlook. Gramsci's affirmation of individuation does not deny, of course, that it is through society that such individuation becomes possible. The question is rather whether this socially mediated individuation leads to human autonomy or not. Gramsci's articulation of this socially mediated individuation remains ambiguous to the extent that it ends up qualifying his previous recognition of the need to transcend particularistic identities. In particular, Gramsci argues that

> "In acquiring one's conception of the world one always belongs to a particular grouping which is that of all the social elements which share the same mode of thinking and acting. We are all conformists of some conformism or other, always man-in-the-mass or collective man. The question is this: of what historical type is the conformism, the mass humanity to which one belongs? When one's conception of the world is not critical and coherent but disjointed and episodic, one belongs simultaneously to a multiplicity of mass human groups. The personality is strangely composite: it contains Stone Age elements and principles of a more advanced science, prejudices from all past phases of history at the local level and intuitions of a future philosophy which will be that of a human race united the world over"(SPN, 324).

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Ironically, the warning that Gramsci issues in this passage can be applied to his own vacillation between universalism and particularism. On the one hand, Gramsci recognizes that the most advanced and rational conception of the world will have a universalistic character. On the other hand, he fails to make a clean break with particularistic modes of thought and is content to differentiate between more and less advanced modes of particularistic thinking and conformism. Gramsci momentarily pierces through the veil of reification. It is not accidental that in describing the individual who has risen to critical, autonomous thought through the transcendence of the impact of particularistic identities on his personality Gramsci points out that such an individual can "take an active part in the creation of the history of the world." At the same time, Gramsci does not develop this momentary insight. Capitalist reification itself seems to prevent him from such a development. Faithful to the privileging of Marxism's particularistic group of choice, the working class, Gramsci falls victim to the reification that this privileging expresses. In a sense, Gramsci's failure stems from his inability to develop a fully historicist approach to Marxist theory itself. Once again, Gramsci is guilty of not heeding his own warning concerning the necessity of a critical self-consciousness. Recognizing that such a critical self-consciousness presupposes a historicist understanding of one's own consciousness, Gramsci argues that

> "To criticize one's own conception of the world... also means criticism of all previous philosophy, in so far as this has left stratified deposits in popular philosophy. The starting-point of critical elaboration is the consciousness of what one really is, and is 'knowing thyself' as a product of the historical process to date which has deposited in you an infinity of traces, without learning an inventory" (SPN 324).

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This study has attempted to submit Marxist theory itself to the requirements of such a critical process. We have found that the historical process that has left its traces on Marxist theory is none other than the contradictory capitalist reality, both in its reifying and its genuinely universalistic aspects. The contradictory moments in Marxist theory can therefore be understood in terms of the contradictoriness of the social reality informing Marxism's structural logic.

In the process of critically reexamining the structural logic of Marxist theory, we have also come to a reevaluation of the contribution to Marxism of both Lukacs and Gramsci. The work of both of these thinkers was a response to a conception of Marxism based on a mechanistic interpretation of the base-superstructure model. At the same time, however, their contribution went beyond a non-mechanistic reinterpretation of this model. As a matter of fact, some of the insights of these authors point beyond this model altogether. It is true that their allegiance to the fundamentals of the Marxist theory of history prevented Lukacs and Gramsci from fully exploring the significance and implications of their incipient insights. It is equally true, however, that the very presence of such incipient insights created an opening for the critical rethinking of both Marxism's conception of social development and its own self-understanding.

In both the strengths and the weaknesses of their work Gramsci and Lukacs demonstrate the necessity for a historicist approach to both social and cultural phenomena. It is with this insight in mind that we have reinterpreted the contribution of both of these thinkers. We have seen, for example, the usefulness of Lukacs' conception of society as a latitudinal totality, that is, as a historically specific articulation of different social spheres. At the same time, we have rejected the longitudinal/diachronic dimension

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also present in Lukacs' concept of totality. We have justified this rejection by showing that the philosophy of history implicit in Lukacs' diachronic conception of totality can be seen as a legacy of capitalist reification on the structural logic of Marxist theory. This critique of Lukacs' conception of totality is clearly indebted to Lukacs' own historicist demonstration that social reality and its logic can leave their imprint on the structure of human consciousness.

The affirmation of the synchronic as opposed to the diachronic conception of totality is in line with Gramsci's conception of politics. This conception recognizes the existence of a social totality with all the constraints and opportunities that such a totality implies. At the same time, it insists that the development of this totality is not subject to any kind of mechanical necessity but crucially depends on human intervention. This totality is not therefore conceived as an object that comprehends human subjects but rather as the raw material that human subjects have, in the pursuit of their historically conditioned goals, to appropriate.

Gramsci's insistence on the active appropriation of the social totality through human action provides the historicist theory implicit in Lukacs' concept of a synchronic totality with its practical correlate. The rejection of the diachronic dimension in Lukacs' concept of totality creates a gap since this diachronic dimension was assigned a definite function in the internal economy of Lukacs' argument. It will be remembered that in designating the proletariat as the 'subject-object of history' Lukacs in effect derived the practical political tasks confronting the working class from the philosophy of history informing his theoretical analysis. The historicist approach that has allowed to discern in this philosophy of history the reifying impact of capitalist reality does not, however, lead

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to the much dreaded meaninglessness that is often associated to the death of metaphysical guarantees. On the contrary, it contributes to the rationalization of the vision that emancipatory politics can advance.

If such a rationalization is possible, this is because our reappropriation of the work of Lukacs and Gramsci is capable of reconceptualizing emancipatory politics on the basis of what Gramsci would have called 'absolute "historicism"' or 'the absolute secularization and earthliness of thought' (SPN, 465). Lukacs' insistence on the inseparability of the dialectical method from the standpoint of totality had pointed out that it is impossible to understand the full significance of isolated facts or phenomena without exploring the complex whole of which they form a part. To the extent, however, that the complex whole is always a historically determinate society, the historicist character of Lukacs' conception of dialectics is evident.

A more adequate understanding of the social world is not, however, the only contribution that historicism can make. Equally important is the possibility of reconceptualizing emancipatory politics along historicist lines. With this, historicism becomes truly absolute since its contribution to the understanding of the world becomes complemented by its contribution to the world's change. Gramsci indicates the basis for the historicist redefinition of emancipatory politics when, in one of his comments on Marx's theory of history, he points out that

> "The scientific basis for a morality of historical materialism is to be looked for... in the affirmation that 'society does not pose for itself tasks the conditions for whose resolution do not already exist.' Where these conditions exist 'the solution of the tasks becomes "duty", "will" becomes free.'"(SPN, 409-10).

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Here Gramsci's historicist conception of politics links up with our reinterpretation of Weber's analysis of rationalization. Politics can no longer be conceived as an insoluble conflict between competing gods once the direct satisfaction of the impulse underlying the evolution of human world-views becomes possible. With the emergence of the dynamic capitalist society the questions concerning human suffering and the meaning of human life become secularized. Once the drastic reduction of human suffering and the enrichment of human life through social change become possible, the realization of this possibility emerges as the historically situated only rational goal for emancipatory politics and humanity in general. As was the case with Lukacs, it is a historicist approach that allows us both to account for the reifying moment in Weber's analysis and to develop the aspects of Weber's thought that point beyond such reification.

At this point the epigrammatic codification of the relationship between the four thinkers discussed in this study becomes possible. This relationship emerges as the relationship between Marx's concept of alienation, Weber's concept of rationalization, Lukacs' concept of reification and Gramsci's concept of hegemony. As we have seen, disentangling the intricacies of this relationship requires the use of a historicist approach. Such an approach shows that the very meaningfulness of both the concept of alienation and the demand of a non-alienated society is the historical product of capitalist society. The emergence of capitalist society appears as the result of a unique constellation of social and historical factors that, at least to some extent, owes its existence to a non-unilinear process of rationalization occurring in different spheres of social life, in accordance with a variety of temporalities and rationally comprehensible, 'ideal-typical' destinations. Once capitalism has emerged, the material terrain underlying such

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rationalization processes changes. The possibility of directly fulfilling the impulse towards a richer human life subject to less undeserved suffering renders the multifarious attempts to sublimate this impulse's frustration obsolete. The new reality created by capitalism implies that rationalization can no longer proceed in the direction of the multiple rationally coherent sublimations of human suffering. In a context where the impulse towards a rich human life with less suffering can be directly satisfied, the erstwhile rationally coherent sublimations become objectively irrational.

The direct satisfaction of the materialist impulse underlying religion coincides with the abolition of alienation since it is based on the abolition of humanity's subordination to the functional imperatives of a society it produced but never fully controlled. If social reality no longer has to be the alienated product of human beings, this is because of the increasingly efficient control of nature that capitalist society's dynamism makes possible. This technological efficiency renders scarcity obsolete creating the potential for a society in which the infinite enrichment of every human being's life could become a reality. Thus capitalism creates a genuinely universal interest in a non-alienated society. The very dependence of such a non-alienated society on technical efficiency and the universalism that this efficiency makes possible amply demonstrates the compatibility of such a society to both formal and substantive rationality.

As we have seen, Weber's refusal to acknowledge the possibility of a society that is both substantively and formally rational bears witness to the reifying impact of capitalist social relations. This reification stems from the contradictory logic of capitalist society. This logic requires that the reproduction of the prospect of a non-alienated

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society beyond scarcity can only remain a prospect since this scarcity's artificial reproduction is structurally necessary for capitalist society. Making use of Lukacs's insight into the capacity of capitalist society's structural logic to shape the capitalist subject's experience of social relations, we have shown how the naturalization of scarcity that capitalism's dialectic of scarcity makes possible can help to obscure the historically unprecedented possibility of and universal interest in a non-alienated society.

Our analysis has described the impact of capitalist reification not only on Weber's thought but also on the Marxist theory of history. We have argued that Marxism's designation of class struggle as the vehicle of radical social change is guilty of such reification to the extent that it obscures the emergence of a universal interest in the abolition of alienation. We have seen that capitalist reification's operation rests precisely on the constitution of individuals into subjects defined by particularistic identities derived from relations of oppression. The reification implicit in this construction of class subjects, gender subjects, racial subjects, and so on, has led us to conclude that the struggle for a non-alienated society cannot be pursued through the corresponding forms of group consciousness. For this reason, we have criticized not only Gramsci's failure to break with the fundamental assumptions of Marx's theory of history but also his development of the concept of 'hegemony' along the lines of the conflictual model of class struggle.

We have indicated that the turn, beginning with Lenin, towards a vanguard party functioning as either the depository of the proletariat's authentic class consciousness or as a 'collective intellectual' was a logical consequence of the fact that a radical consciousness seeking the abolition of alienation is not possible on the basis of the reified

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identities defined by social relations of oppression. We saw that in Lenin's distinction between the 'trade-union consciousness' that the working-class develops in the course of struggling on the terrain of capitalism and the 'Social-Democratic consciousness' developed by bourgeois intellectuals like Marx one can locate the beginnings of the realization that the struggle against alienation requires the replacement of particularistic identities defined by relations of oppression with a universalistic identity derived from the universal interest in the enrichment of human life that a non-alienated society would make possible.

This analysis allows us to strip Gramsci's concept of 'hegemony' from its reifying elements. Gramsci is right to point out that the radical social change from capitalism to an egalitarian, non-alienated society presupposes a process whereby a new collective will becomes forged. What he does not see is that if this collective will is to have a genuinely universalistic character, it cannot be conceived along the lines of the conflictual model of class struggle.

This does not mean that social conflicts produced by oppressive social relations cannot play part in the constitution of the new, non-reified and universalistic collective will. What it does mean, however, is that no radical hegemonic project against capitalism's obsolete reproduction of scarcity and alienation will be viable until it redefines the social struggles comprising it in universalistic terms that do not bear the trace of capitalist reification. In this sense, 'hegemony' has to be understood as a rationalization process seeking to pierce through the veil of capitalist reification and reconstitute social subjectivity in a way that the universal interest in a non-alienated society becomes recognized and transformed into a need for the rich human life that such

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a society would make possible. In other words, the hegemonic project will be viable only when the social struggles constituting it are not defined as struggles between oppressors and oppressed but rather as moments in a learning process through which humanity constitutes itself into an autonomous and universal subject that acts on its interest in and need for a non-alienated society.

This radical hegemonic project against capitalism's artificial reproduction of scarcity and alienation will never even get off the ground if social struggles against oppression are not waged with an eye to its materialization. Moreover, the recognition of the artificiality and obsolescence of capitalism's compulsive reproduction of scarcity could neutralize the divide-and-rule strategies that can and have historically functioned through concessions to selected oppressed groups or segments of oppressed groups that ensure these groups' continued complicity to the oppression of other social groups. An obvious example of such divide-and-rule mechanisms is the existence of segmented labor markets. It has often pointed out that such segmentation leads to divisions within the working class, especially as it interacts with race and gender inequalities (Gordon et al., 1982). Thus the gains of the post-war economic boom did not reach all the workers to the same extent as the stratification of labor markets paralleled stratification along the lines of race and gender. At the same time, as Mike Davis (1986) points out, the divisions within the ranks of the industrial working class were compounded by the fact that the gains for industrial workers that the social reforms exemplified by the New Deal made possible depended on the consolidation of racial oppression in the south. According to Mike Davis,

> "in 1933 there were two great oppressed social groups in North America: the first, we have observed, were the second-generation new immigrants who formed the

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> bulk of semi-skilled labor in the mass-production economy; the second were the masses of Southern rural poor, a majority of whom were Black. While the New Deal reluctantly sponsored the successful reform struggle of the first through the new industrial unions, it was the agent of the social defeat of the second. The New Deal utterly failed to bring any liberation for Southern Blacks; instead, it strengthened the power of their masters by federalizing support for Southern landowners and big planters.
> "... the failure of the postwar labor movement to form an organic bloc with Black liberation, to organize the South or to defeat the power of Southern reaction in the Democratic Party, have determined, more than any other factors, the ultimate decline of American trade unionism and the rightward reconstruction of the political economy during the 1970s"(310).

As Mike Davis points out, the failure of oppressed groups to resist such divide-and-rule strategies do not only prevent the development of a hegemonic project aimed at the attainment of a non-alienated society. More than that, this failure undermines the capacity of oppressed groups to be successful even in more modest efforts to alleviate existing social inequalities through reforms.

From the Denaturalization of Scarcity to the Creation of a Radical Alternative to Capitalism

In this sense, the critique of capitalism's artificial reproduction of scarcity can contribute in a number of ways to the development of emancipatory politics. On the one hand, it provides a response to neo-liberal attempts to justify increasing inequalities in terms of economic efficiency. The neo-liberal argument that free-market capitalism is the best response to social problems since its productive efficiency ensures that there is more to go around loses its plausibility once the scarcity that this line of reasoning uncritically affirms becomes denaturalized. By insisting that the problems that free-market capitalism is supposed to solve efficiently are capitalism's own products, the critique of

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the reifying naturalization of scarcity exposes the absurdity of neo-liberalism's claims. Once the supposedly efficient cure of the problem calling for an effective solution turns out to be this problem's cause, neo-liberalism's proposed solutions are seen to be as efficient as an attempt on the part of Sisyphus would be to bring his suffering to an end by minimizing the time it takes him to carry the rock to the top of the hill. By exposing the absurdity of neo-liberalism's appeal to efficiency, however, the denaturalization of scarcity also undermines the foundations upon which neo-liberalism's pseudo-universalistic discourse rests.

The denaturalization of scarcity can, however, do more than provide a response to neo-liberalism's attempt to dismiss struggles against social inequality in terms of a pseudo-universalistic discourse that seeks to portray the movements of oppressed groups as representative of particularistic interests incompatible to society's general interest. By identifying the contribution that the abolition of capitalism's artificial reproduction of scarcity could make to the abolition of all forms of social oppression, the denaturalization of scarcity points to an interest that all movements fighting social inequality share in common. The identification of this common interest makes it possible to transform conflictual struggles against social inequality that are carried out in the reifying terrain of capitalist society to a genuinely universalistic hegemonic project aimed at a non-alienated society. This interest provides a bridge from one kind of struggle to another because its negative moment aligns it to the character that social struggles inevitably assume in capitalism's reified terrain. We have seen that capitalism's universalistic significance lies in its creation of the possibility of a non-alienated society that would allow the infinite enrichment of the life of each individual. This is the positive moment in the new vision

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for emancipatory politics that we have been developing in this study. At the same time, the realization of this positive vision would deprive social oppression in all its forms of its raison d' etre, thus allowing social oppression's complete abolition. Indeed, in a society where every individual had an opportunity to affirm themselves directly and have a rich human life, no individual would have an interest in the preservation of oppressive social relations. The abolition of all forms of social oppression implicit in the vision of a non-alienated society can be seen as this vision's negative moment.

The hegemonic project aimed at the attainment of a non-alienated society would be, as we have seen, a learning process through which both the members of oppressed groups and humanity as a whole would transcend the reified identities defined by the different forms of oppression and recognize their universal interest in the abolition of capitalist alienation. This, however, is only the final result of the hegemonic process. At its initial stages this process would be constituted by social struggles that are based on the very reified identities that have to be transcended. The above-mentioned negative moment in the vision of a non-alienated society solves this apparent paradox by making the conflictual mode that emancipatory struggles take in capitalism's reified terrain compatible to the goal of developing a universalistic political identity.

We have seen that the critique of capitalism's artificial reproduction of scarcity implies a recognition of the obsolescence of all forms of social oppression. This recognition creates the potential for an anti-capitalist alliance of oppressed groups conscious of the link between the abolition of capitalism's artificial reproduction of scarcity and their liberation from the respective forms of social oppression confronting them. After the denaturalization of scarcity, the recognition of this link represents the

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second stage of the hegemonic project. At this point, a universalistic identity has not yet been formed but a new collective will is in the process of formation as the various movements struggling against different forms of oppression begin to realize their common interest in the abolition of capitalism's artificial reproduction of scarcity. The fact, moreover, that the oppressed groups' common anti-capitalist front is seen as a means to the abolition of the different forms of social oppression and inequality means that the social struggle in question is still understood in terms of the conflictual model pitting oppressors against the oppressed.

One advantage of such an understanding is that, beyond its contribution to the formation of humanity into an autonomous, universal subject, it is also compatible to the day-to-day struggles of the various oppressed groups for reforms that alleviate oppression and decrease social inequality. The recognition by the various oppressed groups of their common interest in the abolition of capitalism also amounts to a recognition of a common enemy. This common enemy is at this point comprised of all individuals who are not victims of any form of social oppression. This is the group of people that emerges as the main beneficiary of the persistence of social oppression. Once the various oppressed groups have identified a common interest and a common enemy, the next logical step is to join forces against this enemy in the pursuit of a decrease in the level of social inequality. What this means concretely is that the cooperation and solidarity between the movements fighting against the various forms of oppression could simultaneously take place on two different levels. More specifically, the cooperation between such emancipatory movements would not only lead to the formation of a broad anti-capitalist movement seeking radical social change. This cooperation would also be operative even

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in the day-to-day struggles of each of these movements for reforms aimed at the decrease of social inequality within the existing social order. The labor movement could, for example, give its support to the demands advanced by movements fighting racial and gender oppression and vice versa. Such mutual support of emancipatory movements could create the critical mass that each of these movements would need in order to effectively push its demands. This cooperation could, moreover, go beyond the level of mutual inter-movement support of each emancipatory movement's demands. Indeed, each of the emancipatory movements could incorporate the demands of the other movements in the formulation of its own programme. This is especially important as many members of oppressed groups are subject to more than one forms of oppression. The incorporation of the demands of other movements would, in this sense, not only facilitate cooperation between different movements but also increase the unity and solidarity within the ranks of any given movement. Thus the labor movement's incorporation in its program of the concerns of oppressed racial minorities could help counter the divisive effect of labor market segmentation.

We have therefore seen the sense in which people's overlapping membership in oppressed groups necessitates each emancipatory movement's incorporation into its programme of the other emancipatory movement's demands. At the same time, it has to be pointed out that the individuals' multiplicity of social identities does give rise to certain complications. Indeed, if an emancipatory movement's cooperation with other emancipatory movements prevents divisiveness in its ranks by embracing those of its members who are also subject to other forms of oppression, it can also work in the opposite direction by alienating those of its members who do benefit from these other

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forms of oppression. This is a real difficulty especially for conflictual conceptions of emancipatory politics. There are three main ways in which such accounts can respond to the multiplicity of forms of oppression. This multiplicity could, for all practical purposes, be repressed by presenting one particular form of oppression and the corresponding social identity as more fundamental than others. The essentialism of class that, as Laclau and Mouffe pointed out, has often characterized Marxist theory would be a good example of such a response. Here the assumption that class oppression is the most fundamental form of oppression leads to the expectation that the social-political identity of the oppressed will be class-based. By effectively dismissing other forms of oppression as secondary or derivative phenomena, such a model rests on the pious wish that pesky phenomena such as racism or sexism will somehow take care of themselves and not affect the process through which the members of the oppressed class achieve a unified consciousness and identity.

A second response to the multiplicity of forms of oppression would avoid the reductionism of the first response. The existence of a variety of forms of social conflict would be acknowledged as the logical consequence of this multiplicity. As none of these forms would be seen as more fundamental than others, the expected outcome of such conflicts would be left completely indeterminate. The multiplicity of forms of oppression as well as of individual identities would tend to lead towards a mutual neutralization of emancipatory struggles as the same individual that would have an interest in the challenge of one form of oppression might benefit from the persistence of another form. Such a model would allow for the existence of constantly fluctuating, temporary alliances between different groups pursuing their respective objectives. As such a model does not

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allow for the creation of a universalistic identity, its logical consequence would not be an abolition of all forms of social oppression but rather a series of reforms and counter-reforms pointing in different directions depending on the momentary configuration of group alliances and the relative balance of power.

A third response would, as in the case of Laclau and Mouffe, be based on a universalism of rights. We have seen, however, that such universalism is in reality a reified pseudo-universalism since it fails to recognize and draw the political implications of capitalism's artificial reproduction of scarcity. Moreover, such a universalism would not necessarily be able to resolve the issue at hand. While placing emphasis on the multiplicity of social struggles in contemporary society, Laclau and Mouffe fail to address the complications that such a multiplicity implies. More specifically, they fail to recognize that the multiplicity of each individual's social identities might prevent even members of oppressed groups to join the struggle for radicalized universal rights.

The complication implicit in the multiplicity of each individual's identities can, by contrast, be resolved by the universalism of interest advanced in this study. Capitalism's creation of a genuinely universalistic interest is what allows the transformation of an individual's interest in the particular form(s) of oppression that afflict(s) her into an interest in the abolition of all forms of social oppression. We have seen that the multiplicity of each individual's social identities can, in the absence of a universalistic identity, lead to a mutual neutralization of emancipatory struggles, thus leading to the preservation of all forms of social oppression. The denaturalization of scarcity can prevent the emergence of such a stalemate. It can do this because of the shift in the meaning of struggles against oppression that it entails. Indeed, the denaturalization

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of scarcity supplements the interest of oppressed groups in the abolition of their oppression with the demonstration that this oppression has become obsolete since a society has become possible in which the richness of an individual's life would not depend on having a privileged social position. Since this argument is, however, applicable to all forms of social oppression, the recognition by a group that the form of oppression afflicting it is obsolete brings with it the recognition of the obsolescence of all forms of social oppression. Such a recognition, however, ensures that the multiplicity of individual identities does not obstruct the alliance between different emancipatory groups. Indeed, at this point it has become clear that an individual's interest in the abolition of any particular form of oppression is fully compatible with the abolition of all of its forms.

We have, therefore identified the conditions that make possible an alliance between the various emancipatory movements fighting different forms of social oppression. We have pointed out that such an alliance could have not only long-term but also immediate results to the extent that it could facilitate the introduction of reforms alleviating the degree of inequality in the existing social order. Such results could shake the majority of the population out of its apathy by demonstrating the possibility of social change. As concrete results could help mobilize people and increase the support for individual social movements, a positive dialectic could be initiated between individual movements and the broader alliance of emancipatory movements. The greater strength of individual movements would strengthen their alliance which, in its turn, could offer a stronger support to the struggle of its constitutive movements in pursuit of their demands.

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This dialectic could therefore produce a majoritarian movement for social change. The growth of this movement would be facilitated by its capacity to achieve reforms that would decrease the extent of social inequality in the existing social order. These reforms, however, would be possible only on the basis of an alliance of emancipatory movements motivated by the radical prospect of a complete abolition of all forms of social oppression. Thus the alliance of emancipatory movements would achieve two things. On one hand, by demonstrating the inseparability of the abolition of particular forms of oppression from the abolition of social oppression in all its forms, this alliance would represent a step in the transition from the reified identities defined by social oppression to a universalistic identity. The very recognition by the allied movements that the obsolescence of the particular form of oppression confronting them is symptomatic of the obsolescence of social oppression in all its forms would entail the emergence of a new identity. Replacing the old reified, particularistic identities, a new political subject would emerge comprised of all the oppressed struggling against the obsolescence of social oppression in all its forms.

As we have seen, this would not imply the end to the struggles against particular forms of inequality. On the contrary, we have seen that such an alliance would make even the attainment of partial reforms easier than it was on the basis of struggles waged in the name of the old reified, particularistic identities. In this sense, the emergence of this new identity would not mean that the individual movements constituting the broader emancipatory movement would cease to exist. It would simply mean that they would be conscious that their ultimate goal would presuppose the triumph of the broader emancipatory alliance over capitalism's artificial reproduction of scarcity. Thus the

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individual emancipatory movements would fulfil a number of functions. First of all, they would achieve reforms decreasing the degree of inequality in the existing social order. Secondly, they would through their successes help to combat popular apathy and mobilize the members of oppressed groups. Thirdly, they would, through their recognition of the link between the abolition of particular forms of oppression and that of oppression in all its forms, function as agents of universalization, facilitating the transition of members of oppressed groups from particularistic, reified identities to a universalistic one.

All in all, the transition to a non-alienated society could take the form of a double movement. On one hand, the mutual support of emancipatory movements would, through the social reforms it would make possible, decrease the degree of inequality in the existing social order and thus undermine the privileges of the group of people not subject to any form of oppression. On the other hand, it would justify these social reforms in terms of a universalistic discourse that would not appeal as much to equality and social justice as to the complete obsolescence of all forms of social oppression. More specifically, this discourse would present this series of social reforms decreasing inequality as a stage in a process leading not simply to equal opportunity but, more than that, to a full opportunity for every human being to have a free and rich life. This double movement would lead to a gradual decrease in the resistance, on the part of the privileged groups, to the realization of the emancipatory vision. Indeed, the more the series of social reforms succeeded in decreasing the degree of social inequality, the less costly the privileged group's loss of its privileges would become. At the same time, the more the universalistic discourse of the alliance of emancipatory movements succeeded in

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becoming hegemonic, the more the recognition, even by members of the privileged group, that in the non-alienated society now possible a privileged social position is not the precondition for a rich human life would further decrease the motivation for resisting the attainment of such a non-alienated society.

It is clear that this double process presupposes the coordinated action of the different movements. The mutual support of the different emancipatory movements' demands as well as the very incorporation into these demands of other emancipatory movements' concerns clearly requires a high degree of interaction between the various emancipatory movements. It is only through such an interaction and debate that both an effective strategy for social reforms and a universalistic collective will could be forged. The forum for such a debate and interaction between different emancipatory movements could be provided in the form of a radical party. This party would perform the function of a collective intellectual. This collective intellectual would not, however, be devoted to a class-based hegemony but rather a hegemony constituted on the universalistic basis made possible by an identity having transcended the reified character of identities derived from the persisting forms of social oppression. The debate and intellectual exchange between the members of different movements would allow the transcendence of such particularistic identities through the process of mutual education that such a debate would allow. Through this process the link between the different struggles would be clarified and the recognition of a universal interest in a non-alienated society would be not only consolidated but also translated into a more concrete political strategy and programme. As the process both of social reforms and of the development of a new universalistic hegemony requires the alliance of all emancipatory social movements, this alliance would

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not come to be dominated by any one of these constitutive movements. Instead, each of the struggles of these constitutive movements would become recognized as an integral component of the general struggle against the obsolescence of all forms of social oppression. We have seen that this general struggle has to be a struggle against capitalism. The centrality of this struggle's anti-capitalist component does not, however, represent a return to the essentialist privileging of class. This centrality rather stems from a capitalism's artificial reproduction of scarcity. In this sense, historical examples of the attainment of working class gains at the expense of other oppressed groups are an argument not against but rather for the strategy here proposed. After all, it is precisely capitalist reification's naturalization of scarcity that leads to the obsolete zero-sum conception of interests.

At a time when neo-liberalism seeks to dismiss struggles for social equality in terms of a pseudo-universalistic discourse, the articulation of a truly universalistic response has become more imperative than ever. Such a response is not, however, possible on the reified terrain defined by capitalism's naturalization of scarcity. It is the failure to break with this terrain that characterizes the bankruptcy of centrist or social-democratic 'objections' to neo-liberal 'solutions'. Indeed, in identifying themselves in terms of a desire to reconcile economic efficiency and social justice the 'pragmatic' social democrats and centrists prove themselves blissfully unaware of the fundamental inefficiency implicit in their reified outlook. In a material context in which technological efficiency raises the prospect of conquering scarcity, even rhetorical appeals -and the rising inequalities around the globe prove how illusory these Social Democratic and centrist appeals really are- to the reconciliation of efficiency and social justice are

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nothing but an anachronism. After all, such appeals serve to conceal that the technological efficiency produced by capitalist dynamism has made an alternative society possible in which social justice would be transformed from an issue of morality or particular group interest to one of universal human interest. The very preservation of even rhetorical references to social justice as a moral ideal simply demonstrate the complicity of their carriers to the inefficiency of a society which has the means to enrich every human being's life but fails to do so. This inefficiency becomes possible by the reification endemic in capitalism's contradictory logic. To the extent that this reification informs some of the key assumptions of the Marxist nemesis of Social Democratic and centrist reformism, the reconceptualization of the Marxist emancipatory project becomes necessary. At the same time, this reconceptualization is also possible precisely because of the contradictory logic of capitalist society. It is an attention to this contradictory logic that has made possible the reconceptualization of the Marxist emancipatory project proposed in this study.

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CHAPTER 5

ALIENATION, ECOLOGY AND THE CHALLENGES OF EMANCIPATORY POLITICS

1. Postone's Conception of Marxism as a Theory of Capitalist Modernity

My interpretation and critique of Marx, Weber, Lukacs and Gramsci can be seen both as part of an emerging tendency in Marxist theorizing and as a conscious attempt to explore this tendency's political implications. This new tendency of Marxist theorizing has shifted emphasis from Marxism's claim to provide a comprehensive philosophy of history to the contribution that Marxist theory can make to the understanding of capitalist society in particular. In Labor, Time and Social Domination, one of the most provocative products of this new theoretical tendency, Moishe Postone (1993) argues, for example, that "the Marxian theory should be understood not as a universally applicable theory but as a critical theory specific to capitalist society."(5)

This shift of emphasis is accompanied and justified by a recognition of the distinctive social logic and form of domination that capitalist modernity introduces. According to Postone capitalism's distinctiveness compared to previous social systems lies in its dependence on abstract labor as the most fundamental form of social mediation. Criticizing what he presents as the traditional interpretation of Marx's work Postone argues that it is this distinctive feature of capitalist modernity that accounts for this society's 'historically specific, abstract, and impersonal form of social domination.' In Postone's reinterpretation of Marx

> "social domination in capitalism does not on its most fundamental level, consist in the domination of people by other people, but in the domination of people by abstract social structures that people themselves constitute ... Within the framework of Marx's analysis, the form of social domination that characterizes

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> capitalism is not ultimately a function of private property, of the ownership by the capitalists of the surplus product and the means of production; rather, it is grounded in the value form of wealth itself, a form of social wealth that confronts living labor (the workers) as a structurally alien and dominant power" (29-30).

There are advantages and disadvantages to this specification of capitalism's distinctiveness. On the positive side, this formulation leads to the recognition that the attainment of a free society requires more than the expropriation of the capitalist owners of the means of production. According to Postone (1993) the traditional Marxist conception of the dialectic between forces and relations of production did not recognize that such an expropriation did not, by itself, guarantee the abolition of capitalist alienation.

> "In the traditional interpretation, capitalist relations of production remain extrinsic to the process of production, which is constituted by 'labor'. The contradiction between the forces and relations of production is, therefore, seen as one between production and distribution, that is, between existing social 'institutions', spheres, and processes. Within the framework developed in this work, however, that contradiction is within these 'institutions', spheres, and processes. This suggests that the capitalist process of production, for example, must be understood in social as well as in technical terms." (303)

According to Postone, this traditional interpretation of Marx's thought conceives capitalism as a set of primarily distributive social relations. The degree to which the productive process itself is shaped by capitalism's alienating logic is, therefore, not recognized. Thus instead of exposing the alienating nature of capitalist production traditional Marxism unwittingly turns the alienated logic of such production into the standpoint of its anti-capitalist critique:

> "As a theory of production, traditional Marxism does not entail a critique of production. Quite the opposite: the mode of producing provides the standpoint of the critique and the criterion against which the historical adequacy of the mode of distribution is judged" (9).

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In Postone's view traditional Marxism's misspecification of capitalism's essence has serious political consequences since it inevitably shapes the way this tradition has understood socialism. Once the identification of capitalism with a set of distribution relations is accepted

> "Socialism is seen as a new mode of politically administering the same industrial mode of producing to which capitalism gave rise; it is thought to be a social form of distribution that is not only more just, but also more adequate to industrial production" (9).

In this way the alienated structure of the labor process under capitalism is naturalized and even adopted as the basis of socialist society.

One of the functions of Postone's reinterpretation of Marx's thought is to establish a sharp contrast between Marx's conception of a free, non-alienated socialist society, on the one hand, and the Soviet Union's bankrupt social model, on the other. Indeed, Postone's reconceptualization of the capitalism-socialism polarity leads him not only to deny the Soviet Union's claim to be a socialist society but also to reinterpret the Soviet experience as yet another form of capitalism. Such a reinterpretation is justified, according to Postone, because the Soviet Union never challenged the alienated structure of the capitalist productive process but contented itself with the more superficial change of distribution relations. Once again dismissing traditional Marxism's definition of socialism in terms of distribution relations, Postone insists that

> "contrary to the assumptions of Sweezy, Ernest Mandel, and others, there is no even a necessary logical opposition between value and planning. The existence of the latter need not signify the absence of the former; value can be distributed by means of planning as well" (45).

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But if the use of planning rather than the market does not preclude the socially mediating role of value as an abstract, alienated form of wealth, Postone (1993) can repeatedly (14, 391-2) claim that "'actually existing socialism' as well as the welfare systems in the West should be conceived not as fundamentally different social formations but as importantly different variations of the general state-interventionist form of 20th-century world capitalism."

The alignment of self-avowed Marxist regimes with capitalism simply bears witness, according to Postone, to the impact of capitalist reification on traditional Marxist theory. By misunderstanding Marx's distinction between concrete and abstract, alienated labor, traditional Marxism ended up naturalizing capitalist social relations. In Postone's view traditional Marxism's contamination by capitalist reification was amplified by its inability to recognize the qualitative difference between Marx's theory of value and that of classical political economy. Using Maurice Dobb as a typical representative of traditional Marxist interpretations of Marx's theory of value, Postone argues that

> "In locating the difference between Marx's analysis and classical political economy in the theory of surplus value, Dobb assumes that they share substantially identical theories of value and of the law of value. Thus, he claims that Marx 'took over' the theory of value from classical political economy and developed it further by showing profit to be a function of labor alone... According to this very common interpretation, Marx's theory of value is essentially a refined and more consistent version of Ricardo's labor theory of value" (51).

In the traditional interpretation, Postone argues, the distinction between abstract and concrete labor is understood as a distinction between productive labor in general and labor oriented towards the production of specific use values. By identifying productive labor in general as the source of value, however, the traditional Marxist interpretation naturalizes the alienation specific to capitalism. To the extent that productive labor in

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general is a trans-historical necessity of human society, the traditional Marxist link between labor as a general productive activity and value unwittingly contributes to the process whereby the historical specificity of the capitalist alienation that the mediation of social life through value exemplifies becomes obscured.

> "Because the specific social mediating role played by commodity-producing labor is veiled, and such labor appears as labor per se, these two sorts of necessity are conflated in the form of an apparently valid transhistorical necessity: one must labor to survive. Hence, a form of social necessity specific to capitalism appears as the 'natural order of things'. This apparently transhistorical necessity- that the individual's labor is the necessary means to their ... consumption- serves as the basis for a fundamental legitimating ideology of the capitalist social formation as a whole, throughout its various phases" (161).

If the efficacy of capitalism's ideology is such as to color and subvert traditional Marxism's version of the critique of political economy, this is because the misleading forms of appearance of capitalism in which traditional Marxism remained trapped were not idle illusions but rather a necessary, systematically engendered product of capitalism's structural logic. Traditional Marxism's unwitting naturalization of capitalist alienation, Postone believes, is inseparable from this tradition's inability to grasp the dialectical connection between essence and appearance that Hegel was the first to recognize. Traditional Marxism's

> "notion of 'labor' implies a conception of mystification according to which no intrinsic relationship exists between the social 'content' and its mystified form. In Marx's analysis, however, forms of mystification (of what he termed the 'fetish') most definitely <u>are</u> related intrinsically to their 'content'- they are treated as <u>necessary</u> forms of appearance <u>of</u> an 'essence' they both express and veil. (62).

By appealing to Marx's insistence on the dialectical relation between essence and appearance Postone makes clear that what he wants to provide is not only a reinterpretation of Marx's thought but also a Marxist explanation of traditional Marxism's misinterpretation of Marx's thought. The failings of traditional Marxist accounts are not

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simply dismissed as mistakes but rather as structural instances of an underlying social logic that necessarily engenders them.

> "[I]f, as a result of their manifest forms, the determinate nature of the basic social forms of capitalism is not grasped, then even if value is seen as a property of the commodity, it is not the commodity as a social mediation but as a product. Consequently, value seems to be created by labor as productive activity- labor as it produces goods and material wealth- rather than by labor as a socially mediating activity. Since labor apparently creates value regardless of its concrete specificity, it then appears to do so simply by virtue of its capacity as productive activity in general. Value, then, seems to be constituted by the expenditure of labor per se. To the extent that value is considered to be historically specific, it is as a form of distribution of that which is
> constituted by the expenditure of 'labor'.
> "The peculiar social function of labor... cannot, then, be uncovered directly" (169).

It is the exploration of this peculiar 'social function of labor' that, as we have seen is at the heart of Postone's approach. Summing up, we could say that the first strong point of such an approach is its recognition of the specificity of capitalist society as compared to previous social systems. An important corollary of the radical discontinuity between capitalism and pre-capitalist societies is that Marxism, according to Postone, can no longer claim to comprehend human history in its entirety. "In other words, by analyzing the historical dialectic in terms of the peculiarities of the fundamental social structures of capitalism, Marx removes it from the realm of the philosophy of history and places it within the framework of a historically specific social theory." (140) The third strength of Postone's approach is his willingness to apply Marxism's 'historical imagination' to the analysis of Marxist theory itself. Postone does this not only by attributing traditional Marxism's failings to its entrapment within capitalism's fetishistic forms of appearance but also through his insistence that even Marx's ability to see through these forms of appearance has to be understood in terms of its socio-historical context.

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> "By specifying the contradictory character of his own social universe, Marx is able to develop an epistemologically consistent critique and finally to move beyond the dilemma of earlier forms of materialism he outlined in the third thesis on Feuerbach: A theory that is critical of society and assumes humans and, therefore, their needs of consciousness to be socially formed must be able to account for the very possibility of its existence. The Marxian critique grounds this possibility in the contradictory character of its categories, which purport to express the essential relational structures of its social universe and, simultaneously, to grasp forms of social being and of consciousness. The critique is thus immanent in another sense: showing the nonunitary character of its own context allows the critique to account for itself as a possibility immanent to that which it analyzes" (143-4).

Finally, Postone points to the important political implications of such a 'historicist' analysis of Marxism itself. The recognition of the impact of capitalist reification also makes possible a non-reified reconceptualization of the socialist project. More specifically, the identification of the historically specific function of abstract labor in capitalist society implies for Postone that the transition to socialism requires more than a change in the property relations and the institutional mechanisms regulating economic distribution. A free, socialist society, Postone insists, requires nothing less than the abolition of the alienated structure of the production process itself.

2. Capitalism and Totality: Postone's Misguided Dismissal of Lukacs

While the insights just summarized undoubtedly point in the right direction, the coherence of the theoretical structure underlying them seems more problematic. For a testament to the truth of this assertion, we need not look further than the fact that this study has been able to derive some of the same insights on the basis of an immanent critique of authors that Postone would dismiss as representatives of 'traditional Marxism'.

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Discussing the supposedly negative impact of Lukacs and Weber's thought on Marxism, Postone argues that 'reification' as a concept

> "represents a convergence of the traditional Marxist interpretation and Weber's notion of rationalization- two strands that have one-dimensionality in common. The ambiguous legacy of Weber in strains of Western Marxism, as medicated by Lukacs, involves the 'horizontal' broadening of the scope of the Marxian categories to include dimensions of social life ignored in more narrowly orthodox interpretations and, at the same time, their 'vertical' flattening. In Capital, the categories are expressions of a contradictory social totality; they are two-dimensional. The notion of reification in Western Marxism, however, implies one-dimensionality; hence, the possible determinate negation of the existent order cannot be rooted in the categories that purportedly grasp it" (116).

With this sharp contrast between the 'two-dimensional' Marx, on the one hand, and the 'one-dimensional' Weber and Lukacs, on the other, Postone fails, in effect, to consistently follow the imperative of analyzing ideas in a historicist manner. As this study has shown, there is a utopian moment latent even in Weber, whose vision of modernity and its prospects is certainly darker and more pessimistic than that of Lukacs. More than that, it was precisely Lukacs's development of Marx's insight into the dialectical connection between social being and the forms of consciousness engendered by it that provided our starting-point for the exploration of the contradictions immanent in the work of these thinkers.

It should not come as a surprise, then, if many of the marks that Postone uses to distinguish his interpretation of Marx from traditional Marxism are already to be found in the work of Lukacs. Far from aligning himself with traditional Marxism's supposedly undialectical understanding of the relation between social being and its forms of appearance, Lukacs was always aware of the dialectical nature of this relation. Thus in 'Moses Hess and the Problem of Idealist Dialectics', an essay written in the mid-1920s,

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Lukacs (1972) clearly articulates his recognition of the objective, necessary and historically grounded character of fetishistic forms of appearance when he insists that

> "the appearance itself is a -necessary and objective- form of being, and can be correctly grasped in its dialectical interactions – when, that is, those categories of mediation have been pinpointed which have made it into the necessary appearance of essence, the necessary phenomenal form of being ... history consists precisely in the constant transformation of those forms which earlier modes of thinking, undialectical and always stuck fast in the immediacy of their present as they were, regarded as supra-historical" (215).

Similarly in a recently published response to the critics of History and Class Consciousness that Lukacs (2000) also wrote in the mid-1920s he once again endorses a historicist interpretation of ideas when he points out that

> "a correct theory is not only able to refute a false one, but is also in a position to point to those moments of existence that spawn the incorrect theory. It can point out those moments that representatives of the incorrect theory adopted with unanalyzed immediacy and then generalized in a correspondingly abstract way." (71)

In the same work Lukacs (2000) even links the dialectical relation between essence and appearance to the implications of the fact that capitalism is not merely a mode of distribution but above all a mode of production. Rather than echoing what Postone refers to as the traditional Marxist conception, Lukacs' discussion here clearly prefigures Postone's argument. As a matter of fact, if Lukacs discusses this question in this work, it is because History and Class Consciousness was criticized for not conforming to the traditional Marxist model sketched by Postone. Summarizing the argument leveled against him, Lukacs (2000) explains that

> "Rudas reproaches me... because in my polemic against Engels's passage I equate industry with capitalist. (I admit that 'capitalist industry' would have been a more accurate expression.) He maintains: in any case it is completely irrelevant whether industry is capitalist or not, saying that 'A communist industry will act

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> just as does a capitalist one of whatever type- in the sense of industry that Engels uses here... For in this sense, industry is an eternal nature-imposed necessity, without which there can be no material exchange between man and nature'" (132).

Lukacs opens his response to this criticism by quoting two passages by Marx which "show that Marx always scrupulously bore in mind the 'capitalist husk of the productive forces'." It is worth quoting at length the meaning that the phrase 'capitalist husk of the productive forces' has for Lukacs not only because Lukacs' interpretation prefigures that of Postone but also because it provides the same criticism of the political implications of 'traditional Marxist' conceptions that Postone does. As Lukacs (2000) points out

> "The materialist dialectician knows that the capitalist husk is just as much a part of objective reality (just as with Hegel the appearance is a moment of the essence)... Through such correct dialectical knowledge of the capitalist husk it is recognized in its actuality as husk. That is to say, it becomes clear that knowledge of its social determinedness does not turn it into a mere illusion (something subjective), that knowledge of its transitoriness does not change the fact that it is a concrete form of industry for our epoch, and that actual industry can only be separated from this husk conceptually. For the existence of this husk is inseparably tied up with the most essential forms of existence of our present social being. (Machines with division of labour in factories, division of labour in factories with social division of labour, etc.). With historical materialism we can reach an outlook on to those times where these real forms of being are really abolished (higher phase of communist society in the Critique of the Gotha Programme), but we cannot pre-empt this development concretely in thought. The actual disappearance of the capitalist husk happens in the real process of history: that is to say, in order to allow the capitalist husk to disappear concretely and actually those real categories of social being (capitalist division of labour, separation of town and country, of physical and mental labour) must be revolutionised. This revolutionising must, of course, also revolutionise to a large extent (technically as well) the concrete form of industry (relationship of technology to capitalist division of labour" (134).

In other words, Lukacs' dialectical conception of the 'capitalist husk' makes clear that it is not simply capitalism's use of an otherwise neutral productive apparatus that leads to the oppressive conditions that the mass of the population has to endure. On the contrary, the oppressive character of capitalist social relations is already embodied in the very structure

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of the productive and technological apparatus. Thus the capitalist husk of the present productive and technological apparatus does not disappear once a socialist society inherits this apparatus from its capitalist predecessor. Rather, the revolutionization of the productive process is both a necessary precondition and an integral moment in the process of building a socialist society. Seventy years before Postone Lukacs (2000) is clearly aware that a failure to take the truth of this statement seriously can only lead to a failure to transcend the alienation endemic in capitalist society:

> "In treating the capitalist husk as a mere appearance, which one simply needs to strip away like a veil, in order to perceive concretely 'industry' as an 'objective process of production', 'eternal nature-imposed exchanges between man and nature', Comrade Rudas's efforts lead to spelling out the essential identity of capitalist society and communist society. He reveals that its concrete shape is the same in capitalism and socialism" (135).

The parallels between Lukacs and Postone are such that even the most fundamental premise of the latter's interpretation of Marx bears an obvious resemblance to the opening of 'Reification and the Consciousness of the Proletariat'. 'According to Marx,' Postone argues, "the dual function of labor in capitalism as abstract labor and as concrete labor, as an activity that mediates people's relations with one another and with nature, constitutes the fundamental structuring form of social life in capitalism- the commodity" (385). Postone's identification of the commodity- with the dual form of labor that it embodies- as 'the fundamental structuring form of social life in capitalism' is also based on Lukacs' emphasis on the qualitative distinction between the role of the commodity form in the capitalist society "where this form is dominant, permeating every expression of life, and a society where it only makes an episodic appearance" (HCC 84). Indeed, according to Postone "the mere existence of exchange... does not signify that the commodity exists as a structuring social category and that social labor has a double character. Only in

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capitalism does social labor have a twofold character and value exist as a specific social form of human activity." (128) Finally, Postone follows Lukacs in attributing to capitalism's structuring form a pervasive, even total, influence on all spheres of social life:

> "social totality, in Marx's analysis, is an essential feature of the capitalist formation and an expression of alienation. The capitalist social formation, according to Marx is unique inasmuch as it is constituted by a qualitatively homogeneous social 'substance'; hence, it exists as a social totality. Other social formations are not so totalized: their fundamental social relations are not qualitatively homogeneous. They cannot be grasped by the concept of 'substance', cannot be unfolded from a single structuring principle, and do not display an immanent, necessary historical logic." (79)

We have already discussed the contradicting ways in which Lukacs employs the concept of 'totality' to theorize capitalist society and its tendencies. We have seen, on the one hand, that the conception of capitalism as an expressive totality, which ironically Postone seems to adopt, lends the latter's dismissal of Lukacs' approach as one-dimensional a certain plausibility. On the other hand, however, we located in 'Reification and the Consciousness of the Proletariat' a theory of crisis based on the opposite premise, namely the impossibility of establishing a functional coherence between the various spheres of social life operating according to their respective logics.

The problem with Postone's conception of capitalism as an expressive totality, by contrast, is that is is incapable of delivering everything that Postone requires of it. Postone's expressive totality is anything but a totality since it is founded upon the arbitrary separation of the constituent elements of capitalism as an articulated totality. Indeed, by reducing capitalism's essence to the socially mediating function of abstract labor, Postone in effect denies the irreducible contribution of class division and market relations to the structural logic and dynamic tendencies of capitalist society. Thus, for

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example, Postone (1993) insists that "[i]n Marx's analysis, then, the twofold character of labor rather than the market and private ownership of the means of production, constitutes the essential core of capitalism" (387). We have already seen that this claim has an important political function for Postone insofar as it allows him to present the Soviet experience as a special state-interventionist form of capitalism. As the plausibility of this claim depends, however, on a broadening of the meaning of capitalism, the result is a specification of the essential structural principles of capitalist societies that is not fully compatible with capitalism's dynamic tendencies that Postone himself identifies. The way Postone elaborates on his identification of labor's twofold character as the essential core of capitalism illustrates this difficulty. According to Postone,

> "Labor is distributed by manifest social relations in noncapitalist societies. In a society characterized by the universality of the commodity form, however, an individual does not acquire goods produced by others through the medium of over social relations. Instead, labor itself... replaces these relations by serving as an 'objective' means by which the products of others are acquired. Labor itself constitutes a social mediation in lieu of overt social relations. That is, a new form of interdependence comes into being: No one consumes what one produces, but one's own labor or labor-products, nevertheless, function as the necessary means of obtaining the products of others... Hence, rather than being mediated by overtly or 'recognizably' social relations, commodity-determined labor is mediated by a set of structures that... it itself constitutes. Labor and its products mediate themselves in capitalism: they are self-mediating socially. This form of self-mediation is unique: within the framework of Marx's approach, it sufficiently differentiates capitalist society from all other existent forms of social life" (144).

Even though this formulation is meant to provide an expanded definition of capitalism, it seems especially suited for capitalist societies in the narrow, traditional sense. After all, Postone's formulation is nothing but a variation of Marx's recognition of the social mediating role of the market in capitalist society. Postone could justifiably argue here that his formulation is a more general since it identifies not the market but abstract alienated labor as capitalism's fundamental form of social mediation. In this respect, this

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formulation could be perceived as sufficiently broad to encompass the 'actually existing socialism' of the Soviet Union. This would, however, simply displace the difficulty since the dynamic tendencies that Postone rightly attributes to capitalist society could not plausibly be attributed to all the 'forms of capitalism' that Postone's broader definition encompasses. According to Postone (1993),

> "The movement of capital is without limit, without end. As self-valorizing value, it appears as pure process. In dealing with the category of capital, then, one is dealing with a central category of a society that becomes characterized by a constant directional movement with no determinate external telos... Marx's concept of self-valorizing value attempts to grasp an alienated form of social relations that possesses an intrinsic temporal dynamic; this alienated form constitutes an immanent logic of history, gives rise to a particular structure of labor, and continually transforms social life while reconstituting its underlying capitalist character. His critical investigation of production in capitalism analyzes how individual labors increasingly become cellular components of a large, complex, and dynamic alienated system that encompasses people and machines and is directed by the goal of production for the sake of production" (269).

This interpretation of Marx's conception of the dynamic tendencies of capitalist society is undoubtedly correct. What is lacking, however, is a plausible account of the sense in which these dynamic tendencies could also be attributed to the form of capitalism specific to the Soviet Union. At this point the cost of Postone's description as an expressive totality of abstract labor rather than as an articulated totality recognizing capitalism's class divisions and dependence on market relations as central constituent elements becomes felt. Touching on the connection between capitalism's dynamic tendencies and its class character Postone (1993) argues that

> "Because... the intrinsically dynamic relations that mark capitalism are mediated by labor, humanity's interaction with nature does indeed acquire a directional dynamic in capitalism. What ultimately gives rise to this historical dynamic, however, is the twofold character of labor in capitalism, not 'labor'. This directionally dynamic structure also totalizes and renders dynamic the antagonism between producing and expropriating social groupings; in other words, it constitutes such antagonism as class conflict" (305).

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By conceptualizing class division as a division between 'producing and expropriating social groupings' rather than in terms of property relations, one could plausibly compare social inequality in the Soviet Union with class inequality under capitalism. This parallel becomes problematic, however, when we take into account the differential effects of class conflict in Soviet-style societies as opposed to capitalist societies in the traditional, narrow sense of the term. We have seen that, according to Marx, even class conflict can be a source of economic and technological dynamism to the extent that capitalists have an incentive to introduce labor-saving technologies whenever labor becomes scarce, more expensive or more militant. In Soviet-style societies, by contrast, class conflict and alienated labor tend to eventually lead to stagnation. The mere fact that Soviet-style systems cannot be assumed to have economic dynamism built into their structure puts into question Postone's treatment of such systems as special forms of capitalism.

The fact that the presence of abstract, alienated labor as a social mediation tends to lead in the case of Soviet-style systems to dynamic tendencies that are diametrically opposed to those of capitalism in the traditional sense of the term does not only render problematic Postone's broader definition of capitalism. It also demonstrates that abstract, alienated labor cannot by itself explain the peculiar dynamism of capitalist society. To account for this dynamism, one need merely elaborate on Postone's recognition that "capitalism, in Marx's analysis, is a social formation in which social production is for the sake of production, whereas the individual labors in order to consume" (33). The question of how a social system oriented to production for production's sake can reproduce itself as the aggregate result of the actions of individuals oriented to consumption cannot be answered simply by reference to abstract, alienated labor. This

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question can be answered only if capitalism's class and property relations as well as its dependence on the market as a mediating mechanism are taken into account. As we have pointed out before, the solution to the paradox in question lies in the fact that in capitalist society the reproduction by the members of the dominant economic groups of their privileged position requires more than a constant reproduction of their relation to the direct producers. More specifically, the reproduction of social position under capitalism is mediated by competition in the market. Far from being automatic and predictable, the capitalists' reproduction of their privileged position presupposes constant innovation, revolutionization of the productive process, and economic and technological development. In other words, the peculiar dynamism of capitalist society stems from the fact that the mediating institutional mechanisms through which capitalist social relations become reproduced guarantee that one has to run even to stay where one presently is.

3. Alienation and the Distinctiveness of Capitalist Domination

This specification of the difference between capitalist and pre-capitalist societies has important implications for Postone's analysis of the distinctive form of social domination introduced by capitalism. We already saw that in Postone's interpretation of Marx "social domination in capitalism does not... consist in the domination of people by other people, but in the domination of people by abstract social structures that people themselves constitute." (29-30). Once again Postone attributes the novelty of capitalism's domination to abstract labor:

> "The system constituted by abstract labor embodies a new form of social compulsion whose impersonal, abstract, and objective character is historically new. The initial determination of such abstract social compulsion is that individuals are compelled to produce and exchange commodities in order to

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> survive. The compulsion exerted is not a function of direct social domination, as is the case, for example, with slave or serf labor; it is, rather, a function of 'abstract' and 'objective' social structures, and represents a form of abstract, impersonal domination ... Society as the quasi-independent, abstract, universal other that stands opposed to the individuals and exerts an impersonal compulsion on them, is constituted as an alienated structure by the double character of labor in capitalism." (158)

The way that Postone formulates the contrast between capitalist and pre-capitalist societies is misleading. The rise of capitalism does not signify a transition from personal or group domination to abstract domination but rather a change in the way these two forms of domination are articulated. Both forms of social domination are present in both capitalist and pre-capitalist society. At the same time, it is true that the structural peculiarity of capitalist society endows abstract domination with a new prominence. As we have seen for Postone abstract social domination does not pit an oppressed social group against a privileged one but rather expresses the subordination of people in general to the imperatives of the social structures that they themselves have produced. In this sense abstract domination can be said to exemplify people's alienation from the product of their activity. The way that Postone sets up the contrast between capitalist and pre-capitalist societies therefore ends up obscuring the interrelation between group domination and alienation. Thus instead of exploring how these two aspects of all the hitherto unfree societies mediate each other, Postone's analysis ends up presenting group domination as a feature of pre-capitalist society that has come to be eclipsed by alienation, the defining characteristic of capitalist society.

Here it has to be noted that in the Grundrisse Marx sets up a contrast between ancient and modern capitalist societies that seems to render Postone's interpretation more plausible. According to Marx (1973),

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> "the old view, in which the human being appears as the aim of production, regardless of his limited national, religious, political character, seems to be very lofty when contrasted to the modern world, where production appears as the aim of mankind and wealth as the aim of production... In bourgeois economics- and in the epoch of production to which it corresponds- this complete working-out of the human content appears as a complete emptying-out, this universal objectification as total alienation, and the tearing-down of all limited, one-sided aims as sacrifice of the human end-in-itself to an entirety external end. This is why the childish world of antiquity appears on one side as loftier. On the other side, it really is loftier in all matters where closed shapes, forms and given limits are sought for. It is satisfaction from a limited standpoint; while the modern gives no satisfaction; or, where it appears satisfied with itself, it is vulgar" (487-8).

It is true that Marx here contrasts a pre-capitalist societies that treat human beings as their ostensible end to a capitalist society characterized by a 'total alienation' that subordinates 'the human end-in-itself to an entirely external end.' At the same time, Marx's repeated characterization of pre-capitalist society as 'limited' is meant as a challenge to this society's claim to treat human beings as ends-in-themselves. The fact that Marx attributes to the human 'end-in-itself' of pre-capitalist society a 'limited national, religious, political character' illustrates the social character of such limitations and, thus, the degree to which human beings in pre-capitalist society are constituted in accordance with this society's imperatives. In this sense, it is not alienation that distinguishes capitalism from pre-capitalist society but the form that alienation takes within it. As we saw in our earlier comments on this passage the appearance that pre-capitalist society treats human beings as ends-in-themselves is simply the corollary of the form that alienation takes in societies characterized by a logic of constant reproduction and a subordination of production to consumption. To the extent that human beings themselves are the embodiment of such abstract social imperatives, alienation does not necessarily take the form of an objective institutional order experienced by the individual as an external and hostile reality. While this latter form of alienation is present in capitalist

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society, this does not mean that the former 'embodied' form of alienation is absent from it. As Marx points out in The Poverty of Philosophy,

> "The consumer is no freer than the producer. His judgment depends on his means and needs. Both of these are determined by his social position, which itself depends on the whole social organization. True, the worker who buys potatoes and the kept woman who buys lace both follow their respective judgements. But the difference in their judgements is explained by the difference in the positions which they occupy in the world, and which themselves are the product of social organization" (41-2).

The fact that the example of the kept woman especially cannot be fully explained by a reference to capitalist social relations bears witness to the more general significance of the form of alienation illustrated by this passage. Far from separating alienation from group domination along the lines of Postone's argument this example also illustrates how alienation can help mediate the reproduction of group domination. To the extent that group domination has a social structural basis, the reproduction of group domination emerges as the result of the individual's adjustment to the requirements of her social position.

In this sense, the instrumentalization of human beings by society and alienation are not unique to capitalist society. If this appears to be so, this is because the abstract form of domination is more palpable in capitalist society. This is so because of the social mediating role of the market that provides a concrete institutional embodiment of this abstract domination. Thus what appears to Postone as a transition from personal/group domination to impersonal/abstract domination stems from capitalism's reversal of the way in which these two forms of domination mediate each other. Thus while in pre-capitalist society the reproduction of 'overt' personal/group domination was inseparable from the alienating -if less visible- hold of society's functional imperatives over the

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constitution of human beings, the reproduction of the overt hold of the impersonal market mechanism over the individual subjects of capitalist society helps mediate and obscure the reproduction of class domination. To the extent that he chooses to foreground capitalism's more palpable, impersonal form of domination at the expense of the class domination that this impersonal form of domination helps reproduce, Postone falls victim to the reifying appearances of capitalist society that Marx's analysis of 'commodity fetishism' sought to expose.

We have shown that Marx's contrast - in the Grundrisse- between capitalist and pre-capitalist society does not confirm Postone's claim that capitalism gives rise to a new, unprecedented form of social domination. Having argued that the passage from the Grundrisse simply points to capitalism's change in the form of appearance of society's alienating hold over human beings, I should also add that according to Marx capitalism also creates the preconditions for a society that abolishes human alienation from society in both its capitalist and its pre-capitalist forms. Transcending the false dilemma between limitless development through the degradation of human beings into means rather than ends (i.e., the reality of capitalist society) and a society that lacks dynamism and development but ostensibly treats human beings as ends-in-themselves (i.e., the reality of pre-capitalist society), Marx insists that capitalist dynamism has made possible a radically different society that would reconcile the treatment of human beings as ends-in-themselves with the prospect of limitless development. Indeed, after his reference to the subordination of human beings in capitalist society to the imperatives of the production of wealth, Marx continues with a series of rhetorical questions:

> "In fact, however, when the limited bourgeois form is stripped away, what is wealth other than the universality of individual needs, capacities, pleasures,

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> productive forces etc., created through universal exchange? The full development of human mastery over the forces of nature, those of so-called nature as well as of humanity's own nature? The absolute working-out of his creative potentialities, with no presupposition other than the previous historic development, which makes this totality of development, i.e. the development of all human powers as such the end in itself, not as measured on a predetermined yardstick? Where he does not produce himself in one specificity, but produces his totality? Strives not to remain something he has become, but is in the absolute movement of becoming?" (Grundrisse, 488)

This passage clearly raises the specter of a radically different society that would use capitalism's technological achievements to promote the infinite development of human beings. By turning itself into simply a means to the enrichment of human life, such a free society would reverse the alienating subordination of human beings to the functional imperatives of their society. Thus we have reached a point where, following Lukacs' above-mentioned maxim, we are able not only to object to the limitations of Postone's theory but also 'to point to those moments of existence that spawn' these limitations. Postone's temptation to treat human alienation from society as a new, unprecedented form of abstract domination emerging with capitalism stems from a peculiarity of capitalist society itself. Indeed by giving rise to the unprecedented possibility of a radically different society that would function as only a means to human development and the enrichment of all people's lives, capitalist dynamism turns the subordination of human beings to their society's functional imperatives from a seemingly inevitable and taken for granted fact of social life to a deplorable and obsolete social phenomenon. Thus although the subordination of human beings to social imperatives was present in pre-capitalist societies, it is only in capitalist societies that this subordination can become de-naturalized and normatively reinterpreted as a symptom of alienation and abstract domination. In other words, it is only from our standpoint, the standpoint of capitalist

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society, that is becomes possible to retrospectively redefine the perennial subordination of human beings to social imperatives as an alienating and thus reversible phenomenon. In this sense, Postone's recognition of abstract domination in the case of capitalism but not in the case of pre-capitalist society manages to give simultaneous expression to both the partial de-reification of human alienation from society under capitalism and its reification in pre-capitalist societies.

We see therefore that the critical evaluation and further development of a theoretical tradition that Postone dismisses as 'one-dimensional' is very much compatible to his requirement that critical theory account for the conditions of its possibility. We have established the link between these conditions and the contradictory logic of capitalist development in our discussion of abstract domination. With respect to the latter question, in particular, we have shown that the dependence of capitalism on the market as a social mediating mechanism gives the even previously existing human alienation from society a palpable institutional embodiment that turns this alienation into a subjectively experienced reification. At the same time, the unprecedented dynamism that the market's mediating role builds into the capitalist system renders human alienation from society obsolete thus pointing to the possibility of abolishing it.

4. The Contradictory Significance of Capitalism's Technological Dynamism

Not the least of the advantages of such an account is that it avoids the weaknesses of the way Postone conceptualizes the contradiction underlying capitalist development. In one of his formulations of this question Postone argues that

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> "with the development of scientific and technologically advanced production, increases in productivity also express the accumulation of socially general past experience and labor, as well as the frequently discontinuous increases in general knowledge that occur on the basis of this preserved past. The dynamic of capitalism, as grasped by Marx's categories, is such that with this accumulation of historical time, a growing disparity separates the conditions for the production of material wealth from those for the generation of value. Considered in terms of the use value dimension of labor (that is, in terms of the creation of material wealth), production becomes ever less a process of materially objectifying the skills and knowledge of the individual producers or even the class immediately involved; instead, it becomes ever more an objectification of the accumulated collective knowledge of the species, of humanity- which, as a general category, is itself constituted with the accumulation of historical time. In terms of the use value dimension, then, as capitalism develops fully, production increasingly becomes a process of the objectification of historical time than of immediate labor time. According to Marx, though, value necessarily means an expression of the latter objectification" (297-8).

Here the reduction of capitalism's essence to the twofold character of labor undermines Postone's ability to conceptualize the contradiction at the basis of capitalism and even leads him to the reification he is accusing traditional Marxism for. Using concrete and abstract labor as the only conceptual blocks at the basis of his analysis, Postone analyzes capitalism's contradictory logic in terms of a simplified opposition between value and use value. The irreducible orientation of production to the creation of use values is presented as increasingly incompatible to capitalism's dependence on the production of value. The assumption underlying this claim is that the logic underlying the development of the capitalist production process is that of use-value. Thus Postone implicitly renounces what he had claimed to be the fundamental advantage of his approach vis-a-vis traditional Marxism. Instead of recognizing the inherently political structure of the capitalist production process, Postone regresses to a more innocuous conception of this process that is strongly reminiscent of traditional Marxism's undialectical celebration of capitalism's development of the productive process. Capitalist production, Postone now assures us,

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'becomes ever more an objectification of the accumulated collective knowledge of the species, of humanity'. The contention, however, that the logic underlying capitalist production of use-values diverges from the logic of value obscures the degree to which capitalism's productive development is fueled by the alienating imperatives specific to this system. In this sense Postone's refusal to recognize class and property relations as a fundamental constituent element of the capitalist totality backfires and has an effect opposite to the one intended.

We see, therefore, that the recognition of class and property relations, on the one hand, and the social mediating role of the market as fundamental constituent elements of the capitalist totality does not only allow us to account for the peculiar dynamism of capitalist society but to do so in a way that does not reproduce traditional Marxism's and Postone's reification of production. The ambiguity of productive development under capitalism is illustrated, for example, in Marx's already discussed recognition concerning the incentives for the revolutionization of the productive process that class conflict provides. This ambiguity has often given rise to often sterile debates concerning the status of science and technology in modern society. These debates are usually based on an arbitrary sundering of the interconnection between the opposing moments of productive and technological development under capitalism and an undialectical elaboration of the implications of whichever of the two poles one happens to favor. Thus it is that every few years one can count on the reemergence of the standard debate between the 'positivists' seeing science and technology as a value-neutral tool and the followers of a certain strand of critical theory who undialectically equate science and technology with social domination. That this question is important for Marxist theory

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should be obvious. After all, the political implications of undialectically adopting either polar alternative are equally debilitating and pernicious. We have already seen that, as both Postone and Lukacs recognize, the 'positivist' view of science and technology naturalizes alienation by failing to adequately differentiate between capitalism and its free, non-alienated alternative. The anti-positivist polar alternative is equally incompatible to an adequate reconceptualization of the vision and strategy of emancipatory politics because its undialectical equation of science and technology to social domination inevitably leads it to interpret capitalism's unceasing productive development as an inexorable advance of an 'one-dimensional' society. To the extent that it tends to lead to an underestimation of the challenge that the transition from capitalism to a free, non-alienated society implies, the positivist polar alternative in Marxist theory can be accused of voluntarism. Conversely, the tendency of the anti-positivist alternative to gloss over the contradictions implicit in capitalist productive development makes it more vulnerable to the symmetrically opposite 'sin' of disenchanted fatalism.

The dialectical alternative to these two polar opposites would still conceptualize capitalism's dynamic tendencies in terms of the contradiction between value and use value. Unlike Postone, however, it would resist the temptation of regressing to a model where capitalism's productive process is associated to use value thus linking by default value to the relations of distribution. This de facto reversal of Postone's position amply illustrates the incoherence of his fundamental assumptions. If, however, the underestimation of the constitutive role of capitalism's class character for this society leads to the old conception of contradiction as one between production and distribution, the restoration of class to its rightful position in the capitalist totality allows the

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recognition of the operation of the value-use value opposition within the capitalist productive process. More specifically, capitalist dynamism and the constant revolutionization of the productive process it involves unfold according to a contradictory logic displaying a simultaneous orientation to value and use-value. In this sense Postone is right to point out that "[t]he historical dynamic characteristic of capitalist society, as analyzed by Marx, is not linear but contradictory. It points beyond itself but is not self-overcoming." (298) We have seen that Postone does not manage to translate this programmatic assumption into a position capable of transcending the undialectical dichotomy structuring the traditional debate on the status of science and technology in modern society. Such a translation becomes possible, however, when we disentangle the components that drive capitalist productive development. Given the fact that the underlying motive of capitalist production is profit, we have to recognize that such profit is pursued in two analytically separable ways. On the one hand, the pursuit of profit leads to the search for technically more efficient ways of producing use-values. On the other hand, the pursuit of profit cannot be equated with technical efficiency and may at times even be incompatible to it. In this respect it is important to remember Weber's warning that one of the elementary truths of rationalization is that since nothing is rational or efficient in general any pronouncement of rationality or efficiency is always with respect to a certain criterion. Thus whether something is rational or efficient depends on the criterion by which it is evaluated. What capitalist enterprises seek to pursue in as efficient a manner as possible is the pursuit of profit. This is an important point because the generic way in which terms such as efficiency or rationality are used often leads to a conflation of capitalist efficiency and the more general conception of

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technical efficiency defined as the optimum employment of productive resources. That this conflation is not to be found only among uncritical supporters of capitalism is demonstrated by Andre Gorz's claim that

> "An action is termed economically rational in so far as it tends to maximize the efficiency with which the factors of production are employed. Efficiency in the economic sense is measured by the profit realized per quantum of living or dead labor (circulating or fixed capital) employed. Whatever the property relations, there is no other economically rational way of managing an enterprise than the capitalist way" (Gorz 1994, 30).

Here again the failure to recognize the dialectical logic underlying capitalist productive development leads to a theoretical confusion with serious political implications. Gorz mistakes, for example, a potential created by capitalism but requiring the transcendence of capitalism for a development operating within capitalism itself. Thus Gorz (1994) informs us that

> "We are leaving the work-based society behind, but we are exiting backwards from it and walking backwards into a civilization of free time, incapable of visualizing and desiring that civilization, and thus incapable of civilizing the free time which is coming our way; incapable of creating a culture of free time and a culture of chosen activities to take over from and complement the technicist and professional cultures which currently hold center age... we seem intent upon ignoring the fact that the chief consequence of our drive towards efficiency and economic rationalization is that it frees us from work, frees up our time, releases us from the rule of economic rationality itself" (45).

Here, once again, the reference to efficiency and economic rationalization in general obscures the specific form that these processes take in capitalist society. Gorz's abstraction from the contradictory logic of capitalist productive development leads him to a position that can best be described as the mirror image of the traditional Marxist position criticized by Lukacs and Postone. More specifically, the fact that Gorz uses his confused formulations to rethink the vision and strategy of the Left today leads him to obscure the qualitative difference between capitalism and socialism. This it will be

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remembered, was one of the weaknesses of traditional Marxist conceptions. These conceptions patterned socialism after the alienating logic of capitalism and could, for that reason, be easily instrumentalized by the apologists for the Soviet Union's actually existing non-socialist nightmare. Gorz conflates capitalism and socialism not by patterning the latter after the former but by attributing to capitalism characteristics that would only become possible with the realization of its socialist alternative. The result of Gorz's analysis is therefore not a monstrous non-socialism but an idealized and utopian capitalism. Given the symmetry between Gorz's and traditional Marxism's view, it is not surprising that the quotation by Marx that Lukacs used in his response to his traditional Marxist critics could also be employed against Gorz. Marx's dialectical conception includes among "[t]he contradictions and antagonisms inseparable from the capitalist employment of machinery" the fact that "machinery, considered alone, shortens the hours of labour, but, when in the service of capital, lengthens them"[3]. In another context Marx makes clear that this contradiction is between the utopian potential created by capitalism and the necessary frustration of this potential by the alienating logic underlying capitalism's actuality. In a 'Speech at the Anniversary of the People's Paper' 150 years ago Marx made a point that still remains relevant today:

> "There is one great fact, characteristic of this our nineteenth century, a fact which no party dares deny. On the one hand, there have started into life industrial and scientific forces, which no epoch of the former human history had ever suspected. On the other hand, there exist symptoms of decay, far surpassing the horrors recorded of the latter times of the Roman empire. In our days everything seems pregnant with its contrary. Machinery, gifted with the wonderful power of shortening and fructifying human labour, we behold starving and overworking it..." (MER 77-8).

Instead of building on Marx's dialectical analysis of the inextricable connection between capitalist development and capitalist alienation, Gorz attempts to reconceptualize

[3] See Lukacs (2000), 133.

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socialism on the basis of the Habermasian thesis concerning the colonization of the lifeworld. In Habermas's Theory of Communicative Action this conception leads to an impasse since it attempts to fulfil the function that the theory of capitalist crises played in Marx but does so in a dualistic, utopian rather than immanent, dialectical form. Seeing this colonization of the lifeworld as a symptom not of capitalism but as the only device to address the crisis tendencies of an economic system concerned as generically as is the case with Gorz, Habermas ends up with an analysis that conceives human emancipation not as a possibility grounded in the immanent dynamic of capitalist society but as an abstract 'Ought'. As Postone (1993) rightly points out

> "Habermas claims that instrumentality has extended beyond its 'proper' realm (for example, the sphere of production) and is invading other spheres of social life; yet it remains unclear why the extension of instrumentality into the sphere of interaction, which presumably results from the growing importance and complexity of production in the medium world, is not inexorable and irreversible" (241).

To Habermas's credit, his failure to provide a convincing explanation of how the expansionism of the system's imperatives could be contained within its proper domain amounts to an implicit admission that it is part of capitalism's irreducible essence to be an expansive and totalizing force. Gorz (1994), by contrast, seems blissfully oblivious of the compulsive expansionism inherent in capital when he assures us that

> "the response which will henceforth define the left... consists in viewing the saving of working time as a liberation of time, by virtue of which social individuals should be able to emancipate themselves from the constraints of economic rationality embodied in capital (i.e. in the domination of dead over living labour). To emancipate themselves not by abolishing capital and the sphere of economically rational commodity activities (as the communist or fundamentalist anti-moderns or pre-moderns imagine) but by assigning them a limited and subaltern function in the development of society. In other words, the societal objective of productivity gains must be to bring about a contraction of the

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> sphere governed by economic calculation and an expansion of the self-determined, self-organized spheres of activity in which human faculties can develop freely.
> "To use the potentialities of technology not to reinforce the domination of the apparatuses over people's lives, consumer choices and time, but to free social individuals from the constraints of the social megamachine and increase their power over their own lives and the development of society- this is the alternative which today defines the Left-Right divide or, as Alain Touraine puts it, the 'central conflict'" (20).

Gorz's formulation recognizes the centrality of the question of alienation for socialism and even conceives socialism in terms of a reduction of the 'realm of necessity' into a means to the enrichment of human life in the 'realm of freedom.' How these worthy goals could, however, be achieved without the abolition of capital only Gorz and the thriving New Age sector of the 'culture and lifestyle industry' know.

Having established that the failure to recognize the contradictory logic driving capitalist productive development has led not only to the legitimation of Soviet-style regimes but also to the idealization of contemporary capitalism, we should discuss a little further the implications of this contradictory logic. More specifically, it is capitalism's orientation to a constant increase in the technical efficiency of producing use-values that constitutes capitalism's utopian moment. The contribution of inter-capitalist competition in the market to this orientation is obvious and renders problematic Postone's underestimation of the centrality of market relations to capitalist development. It is ultimately capitalism's compulsive development of science and technology that first raises the specter of a society beyond scarcity. Moreover, as capitalism develops its compulsive growth of scientific and technological knowledge it is further supported through the creation of elaborate institutional links between the private sector, the state, and academic and research institutions.

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At the same time, the utopian moment of capitalism's development of science and technology has its darker side. It is only the recognition of both of these sides that can protect us from the temptation to understand the growth of the forces of production as a purely quantitative process. We have already identified the tendency in traditional Marxism's theory of history to understand the dialectic between forces and relations of production as one between quantity and quality. To the extent that the growth of productive forces is seen as an ongoing process within the framework of a given society production forces, in this conception, represent the moment of quantity. At some point quantity turns into quality as the forces of production come into conflict with the existing relations of production as the latter can no longer support the further growth of the former. A moment of discontinuity, namely revolution, ensues as qualitative change- represented by a change in the relations of production- restores the conditions for further quantitative growth of the forces of production. It is clear that such a quantitative conception of the production forces is closely linked to the productivist streak in Marxist theory that, as Postone points out, has often celebrated capitalism's productive development in too uncritical a manner. The implication of such an assumption is that capitalism's productive apparatus could be made to serve the imperatives of a free, non-alienated society.

To recognize the 'dark' side of capitalist development is to recognize the inseparability of capitalism's productive and technological development from class conflict over the structure and change of the labor process. As Laclau and Mouffe point out, neo-Marxist political economists have explored the political nature of the capitalist productive process. The capitalist pursuit of ever-growing efficiency leads, in the case of

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labor, to resistance on the part of workers. The desire of capitalists to extract from the labor-power they hire as much labor as possible ensures that the orientation of the capitalist productive process towards discipline and increased control over the activity of the worker. Incidentally, this subordination of technical efficiency to the imperatives of social domination restructures all spheres of social life under capitalism. The uncontrollable expansionism and totalizing thrust of capitalist society requires the unprecedented refinement of the techniques of administering and manipulating mass populations that the Frankfurt School and Foucault have explored.

It becomes clear, then, that, despite Postone's assertions, it is impossible to understand the alienating nature of production and social life under capitalism on the basis of a model that relegates class and group domination to the background. By identifying the fundamental mediating roles that class divisions and market relations have in capitalist society our interpretation is capable of reconciling the critique of traditional Marxism that Postone attempts with an adequate account of capitalism's dynamic tendencies and contradictions. As a result of this analysis the contradictory significance of productive and technological development under capitalism emerges as a moment of capitalism's dialectic of scarcity. If capitalism's drive towards an ever more efficient production of use-values raises the specter of an alternative 'post-scarcity' social order, its subordination of efficiency to the imperatives of capitalist profit is central to the artificial reproduction of scarcity on which the reproduction of social domination depends.

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5. From Marxism as a Theory of Capitalism to Marxism as a Theory of Synchronic Totalities

The elucidation of the structural characteristics that lend capitalism its peculiar dynamism also allows us to settle the question concerning Postone's broader definition of capitalism. We have shown how in the case of capitalism in the traditional sense of the term the reproduction of class inequality through competition in the market can account for the paradoxical emergence of production for production's sake as the result of the interaction of individuals who, as Postone points out, are oriented towards consumption. In the case of the Soviet system, by contrast, the derivation of production for production's sake from the interaction of individuals oriented towards consumption is not possible. To the extent that the reproduction of social inequalities in the system depends on political conditions rather than on market competition, the Soviet system is- as far as its dynamic tendencies are concerned- more akin to pre-capitalist than to capitalist society. The fact that the Soviet system emerged in the context of an inherently dynamic and antagonistic to it world made a comparable economic and technological dynamism a matter of life or death for it. It is clear, however, that an external impulse to dynamic economic development is no match to the compulsive dynamism built into the very structure of the capitalist economy. In this sense, the failure of the Soviet system did not simply consist in its repressive, undemocratic and alienating character. This character was both a symptom and a cause of the Soviet system's failure. On the one hand, a constellation of very adverse historical, economic and political factors can help explain the degeneration of the Russian Revolution into Stalinism. These factors include Russia's lack of economic development at the beginning of the century, the failure of the European proletarian

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revolution that the Bolsheviks were counting on to materialize, the fact that the Soviet Union had to survive in a hostile capitalist environment that forced it to defend itself against foreign invasion twice in the first twenty-five years of its existence, and, last but no least, Russia's lack of a strong democratic tradition and culture. Given these factors, the degeneration of the Russian Revolution into a repressive regime is not surprising. Once this repressive regime became consolidated, however, its lack of the structurally induced dynamism characteristic of capitalism made it as vulnerable in the long run to the compulsive expansionism of the capitalist juggernaut as all those pre-capitalist systems around the world that this juggernaut also liquidated.

What this sketch is merely intended to illustrate is that it is possible to develop a critical, Marxist interpretation of the Soviet experience and hold on to Marx's anti-capitalist emancipatory project without resorting to a reinterpretation of the Soviet regime as a form of capitalism. As the weaknesses of Postone's analysis illustrate, however, this is not possible on the basis of a conception of capitalism as an expressive totality that can be derived from labor's dual function. We have argued that to account for the dynamic tendencies of capitalism that Postone himself identifies we have to see capitalism as an articulated totality with a logic that crucially depends on the interaction between capitalism's class character and its dependence on market relations.

We have also seen that Postone's specification of capitalism's distinctiveness leads him to a misleading contrast between pre-capitalist society's exclusive dependence on personal or group domination and capitalism's unprecedented abstract form of social domination. It is this abstract form of social domination stemming from the dual function of labor in capitalist society, according to Postone, that turns this society into a totality. Apart from

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the fact that Postone cannot plausibly derive the totality of capitalism's tendencies from the dual function of labor under capitalism, the greater 'visibility' of personal or group domination in pre-capitalist society should not blind us to the fact that in their more direct and personal interactions the oppressors and the oppressed of pre-capitalist societies did not only reproduce personal forms of servitude but also an underlying, less visible and more abstract social structure. From the more fundamental standpoint of this social structure the personal or group relations of domination visible to the naked eye were, at the same time, the mediations through which the impersonal, functional imperatives of these pre-capitalist societies asserted themselves.

These comments suggest a qualification of Postone's claim that "the Marxian theory should be understood not as a universally applicable theory but as a critical theory specific to capitalist society" (5). More specifically, the methodological corollary of our argument that an articulation of personal/group domination, on the one hand, and impersonal/abstract domination, on the other, is present in both capitalist and pre-capitalist societies is that both of these forms of society have to be analyzed as totalities articulating the social relations that have structured collective human life within their boundaries. We have discussed the ambiguity of Lukacs' conception of totality and have argued that only its synchronic-structural dimension should be retained. The standpoint of synchronic totality is only a development of Marx's claim that "[i]n the social production, men enter into definite relations that are... independent of their will." This selective quotation of Marx's famous 'Preface' to A Contribution to the Critique of Political Economy stems from the fact that the summary of historical materialism offered in it presents us with the articulation of the 'synchronic' and 'diachronic' conceptions of

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totality that we criticized in the case of Lukacs. The standpoint of synchronic totality advanced in this essay allows us to avoid Postone's restriction of Marxism's applicability to capitalist society as well as the traditional tendency to turn Marxism into a philosophy of history. By requiring that in all societies social phenomena have to be understood in their relation to a context constituted by the specific articulation of fundamental social relations and spheres of social life characteristic of the society in question, the standpoint of synchronic totality recognizes not only the contribution that Marxism can make to the understanding of pre-capitalist societies but also the possibility of delivering the Marxist theory of history from its traditional metaphysical baggage.

Our critique of Postone has shown, moreover, that it is only from this broader standpoint of synchronic totality that the distinctiveness of capitalist society can be adequately understood. Thus by restricting the applicability of Marxism to capitalism Postone in effect forfeited the only standpoint that can account for capitalism's peculiar dynamism and contradictoriness. To the extent that this standpoint can be developed through a critical confrontation of the theoretical tradition discussed in this study, it is clear that Postone's hasty dismissal of Lukacs' concept of reification and the Weberian influence on Marxist theory that this represents proves costly indeed.

By accounting for the distinctiveness of capitalist society, the standpoint of synchronic totality also accounts for the thorough-going political implications of this distinctiveness. We have seen, for example, that capitalism's unprecedented dynamism has raised the specter of a society beyond scarcity and, in so doing, has created not only the possibility of a non-alienated society but also a genuinely universal human interest in such a society's realization. We have also shown how the conception of capitalism's

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dialectic of scarcity allows an updating of Lukacs' concept of reification that is compatible to an analysis of capitalist society that, far from being one-dimensional- is keenly aware of this society's contradictions.

6. The Ecological Limits of the Capitalist Totality: O'Connor's 'Second Contradiction' Thesis

Capitalism's contradictions become even more apparent once we incorporate in our analysis the implications of the ecological question for capitalism's dialectic of scarcity. Given the specter of an ever-deepening crisis for capitalist society that this question raises, it is not surprising that Marxist theorists have in recent years become increasingly interested in this question's theoretical and political ramifications. Not surprisingly the incorporation of the ecological question into Marxist thinking has taken a variety of forms. James O'Connor (1996), for example, has discovered in our sorry ecological predicament a 'second contradiction of capitalism' and used this contradiction to complement more traditional Marxist theories of economic crisis. According to O'Connor the traditional contradiction between the forces and relations of production that leads to overproduction of capital is not the only source of capitalist economic crises. This first contradiction that leads to demand-side economic crises has its supply side, that between forces and relations of production, on the one hand, and what O'Connor calls the 'conditions of production' on the other. In his identification of what these 'conditions of production' consist in O'Connor claims to follow Marx's lead:

> "Marx defined three kinds of production conditions. The first is 'external physical conditions,' or the natural elements entering into constant and variable capital. Second, the 'labor power' of workers was defined as the 'personal conditions of

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> production.' Third, Marx referred to 'the communal general conditions of social production, for example, 'means of communication'" (200).

In O'Connor's view the 'second contradiction' leads to economic crises by leading to the depletion and destruction of the conditions of production. This contradiction operates on the supply side of the capitalist economy because the crises it gives rise to do not stem from the failure of demand to keep up with production but from the increase in the cost of production that the destruction of the conditions of production implies.

O'Connor also draws the political implications of this analysis by interpreting the rise of 'new social movements' as a response to capitalism's destruction of the conditions of production:

"The specific form of the contradiction between production relations (and forces) and production conditions is also between the production and realization of value and surplus value. The agency of social transformation is 'new social movements,' social struggles including struggles within production over workplace health and safety, toxic waste production and disposal, the use of urban space, and the like. The social relationships of reproduction of the conditions of production (e.g., state and family as structures of social relations and also the relations of production themselves insofar as 'new struggles' occur within capitalist production) constitute the immediate object of social transformation. The immediate site of transformation is the material process of reproduction of production conditions (e.g., division of labor within the family, land use patterns, education, etc.) and the production process itself, again insofar as new struggles occur within the capitalist workplace" (200-1).

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According to O'Connor (1996) the 'second contradiction' of capitalism along with the new social movements responding to it may also have engendered a second path to socialism, parallel to the original path based on the working-class movement:

> "it is conceivable that we are engaging in a long process in which there occur different yet parallel paths to socialism, hence that Marx was not so much wrong as he was half-right. It may be that the traditional process of 'socialist construction' is giving way to a new process of 'socialist reconstruction', the reconstruction of the relationship between human beings and production conditions, including the social environment- a kind of Preservation First! politics" (211).

It should be mentioned here that O'Connor's reference to the two paths to socialism is not predicated on the assumption that socialism will emerge as the inevitable resolution of capitalist crisis. O'Connor does point out that capitalism has in the past attempted to resolve its crises through the introduction of more social forms of production and coordination in the economy and suggests that the response of the new social movements to the second contradiction of capitalism may have a similar effect on the reproduction of the conditions of production. Elaborating on his hypothesis concerning the existence of two parallel paths to socialism, O'Connor continues:

> "we know that the labor movement 'pushed' capitalism into more social forms of productive forces and relations, for example, collective bargaining. Perhaps we can sense that feminism, environmental movements, and other new social movements are 'pushing' capital and state into more social forms of the reproduction of production conditions" (211).

Although these more social forms may have socialist potential the realization of such potential is not inevitable but depends on a number of conditions. These conditions include, according to O'Connor, "the ideological and political terrain, degree of popular mobilization and organization, national traditions, and the like, including and especially the particular world economic and political conjuncture" (205).

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Even if the socialist potential of more social forms of productive forces and relations, on the one hand, and the reproduction of production conditions, on the other, is not immediately realized the effect of these more social forms, according to O'Connor, is to undermine the fetishistic character of capitalist social relations. Following the traditional Marxist association of fetishism to capitalism's mediation of social relations through the automatic and seemingly objective market mechanism, O'Connor argues that

> "crisis-induced changes in production conditions necessarily lead to more state controls, more planning within the bloc of large-scale capital, a more socially and politically administered or regulated capitalism, and hence a less naturelike capitalism, one in which changes in production conditions would need to be legitimated because they would be more politicized- and one in which capitalist reification would be less opaque." (212)

The de-reifying impact of response to crises in the reproduction of production conditions through the use of more social forms of organizing capitalism's economic mechanisms is of course present in the use of equivalent social forms to respond to capitalism's first contradiction. In general, O'Connor concludes, "[t]he telos of crisis is thus to create the possibility of imagining a transition to socialism" (203).

7. The Ecological Crisis as a Threat to the Emancipatory Project

As we pointed out in our discussion of Lukacs, the traditional Marxist conception of reification and fetishism adopted by O'Connor was developed in the context of 19th century liberal capitalism and is best suited to understand this particular system's realities. The obvious implication of this traditional conception is that with the transition to more 'organized', interventionist forms of capitalism the hold of capitalist reification is bound to weaken. Our discussion of capitalism's 'dialectic of scarcity' has demonstrated, however, that this need not be the case. Capitalism's compulsive and artificial

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reproduction of scarcity can naturalize scarcity obscuring both the growing obsolescence of capitalism and the emergence of a universal interest in the non-alienated society that has now become possible. The irreducible presence of market relations in capitalist society implies that the original Marxist conception of reification and fetishism neither has become completely irrelevant nor is likely to become so as long as capitalism survives. Nonetheless this conception's projection of capitalism as a free market economic order circumscribes its validity. By avoiding a narrow definition of capitalism, by contrast, the form of reification associated to capitalism's dialectic of scarcity is more generally applicable than the original conception of fetishism and reification. Indeed, the naturalization of scarcity that, as we saw, is at the basis of the neoclassical economics emerging during the transition from liberal to organized capitalism does not mean that such naturalization was not operative during capitalism's earliest stages. As a matter of fact, the naturalizer of scarcity par excellence, Malthus, was one of the main representatives of classical political economy.

It still remains the case, however, that during capitalism's earliest stages the dialectic of scarcity could not have been as pronounced. On the one hand, the more capitalism revolutionized the production process and accelerated the growth of scientific and technological knowledge the more the utopian specter of an alternative non-alienated, post-scarcity society could become visible. On the other hand, the transition to 'organized' capitalism diversified the channels through which scarcity is naturalized. To the 'naturalization of scarcity through the market's reproduction of economic inequality and poverty organized capitalism has added a naturalization of scarcity through consumerism's colonization of human needs. While, however, it allowed the

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development of the contradictory tendencies within the dialectic of scarcity, organized capitalism encouraged at the same time the consolidation of a reformist ideology that neutralized the utopian, transcending moment of this dialectic by subordinating it to its reifying counterpart. Such a subordination both allowed the recognition of the utopian possibilities implicit in capitalism's ever more efficient production of use-values and the transformation of this recognition into a means of legitimating the frustration ad infinitum of the utopian possibilities in question.

This transformation is exemplified by the socialist movement's shift from a radical, anti-capitalist position aimed at qualitative social change to a more quantitative orientation towards an alleviation of the plight of the working classes through capitalist growth. In his comprehensive history of European social democracy Donald Sassoon (1996) describes how capitalist growth ended up replacing radical social change as the socialist movement's overarching priority:

> "High growth, by enabling an increase in the prosperity of the majority, dominished the demand for the redistribution of wealth and power. As Charles Maier noted: 'The concept of growth as a surrogate for redistribution is the great conservative idea of the last generation.'
> "Socialist parties were thus in an impasse. They aspired to redistribute power away from the impersonal forces of the market towards ordinary people. They sought to help the poor, establish economic and social justice, expand opportunities for those who could not obtain them through the market. Little of this could be done without accepting economic growth- in other words, capitalist growth- as the orcerarching priority." (280)

The relevance of capitalism's compulsive pursuit of economic growth to the ecological question is clear enough. Indeed, what this question demonstrates is that capitalist growth does not resolve the contradictions encapsulated in capitalism's dialectic of scarcity but simply displaces them. As both Elmar Altvater (1994) and Jean-Paul Deleage (1994) point out, the ecological destruction wrought by capitalism is inseparable

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from the economic dynamism and expansionism of an economic system oriented not to consumption and use value but rather to production for production's sake and exchange value. Capitalist growth's displacement of the system's underlying contradictions does not only consist in the threat to the survival of the human species that it comes to represent. Apart from raising the specter of a future of accelerating ecological catastrophes, capitalism's destruction of nature also complicates the operation of the capitalist dialectic of scarcity.

On the one hand, the ecological devastation engendered by capitalism's compulsive dynamism has an effect opposite to the naturalization of both society and scarcity. When global capitalism has managed in a mere hundred years to bring about greater climatic changes than had occurred in the course of thousands of years, the experience of society as a 'second nature' increasingly has to contend with the recognition of the degree to which nature is increasingly transformed into a (violated and deformed) social product. Similarly, the fact that the climatic changes associated to global warming will increasingly lead to droughts around the world will make the link between capitalist productivism and the increasing scarcity of as fundamental a natural element as water ever more palpable. The fact that the depletion of natural resources, in general, is increasingly recognized to be inherent in the operation of capitalist growth does not, however, signify a definitive de-naturalization of scarcity. On the contrary, if it is left unchecked this de-naturalization of scarcity raises the specter of a re-naturalization of scarcity that is not simply apparent but actually real. As O'Connor implicitly recognizes capitalism's ecological contradictions give rise to a scarcity that has lost its purely social character:

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> "We can therefore distinguish two kinds of scarcity: first, scarcity arising from economic crisis based on traditional capital overproduction, that is, a purely social scarcity; and second, scarcity arising from economic crisis based on capitalistically produced scarcity of nature or production conditions generally. Both types of scarcity are ultimately attributable to capitalist production relations. The second type, however, is not due to 'bad harvests', for example, but to capitalistically produced 'bad harvests' as a result of mining, not farming, land; polluting water tables; and so on." (217)

This distinction between a social and a socially produced natural form of scarcity has, however, more thoroughgoing implications than O'Connor acknowledges. The special significance of the new and paradoxical socially produced natural scarcity stems from the fact that it does not obey social scarcity's cyclical logic but a more linear one. In this respect, socially produced natural scarcity is diametrically opposed to social scarcity. As we saw the latter form of scarcity is reproduced along with its opposite, namely the specter of a radically different, non-alienated 'post-scarcity' society. As long as capitalism successfully reproduces itself, the reproduction of the two poles of its dialectic of scarcity leaves the relationship of these tow poles unaltered.

The linear logic of capitalism's socially produced natural scarcity, by contrast, stems from the implications that what John Bellamy Foster refers to as "irrevocable change (the arrow of time)" (17) has in the case of capitalism's ecological destruction. Indeed capitalism's increasing depletion and destruction of natural and energy resources threatens to reverse capitalism's 'socialization' of scarcity. If capitalist dynamism de-naturalized scarcity by raising the specter of a radically different, non-alienated post-scarcity society, the failure to turn the possibility of such a society into a reality threatens, as time passes, the continued existence of this society even as a possibility. The transition from a social scarcity to a socially produced natural one represents the point of no return at which capitalism's cyclical reproduction of the dialectic of scarcity and the

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contradiction associated to it gives its place to this dialectic's liquidation. Were such a development to materialize the universal human interest in a free society would become a thing of the past and humanity would regress to a stage where the attainment of welfare for the few on the basis of the misery of the many would once again become inevitable. The realization of such a scenario points to a situation where, to paraphrase Adorno, alienation, which once seemed obsolete, would live on because the moment to realize it was missed. It may be Hans Magnus Enzensberger (1996) who has most clearly seen the political implications of an irreversible ecological crisis:

> "If ecology's hypotheses are valid, then capitalist societies have probably thrown away the chance of realizing Marx's project for the reconciliation of man and nature. The productive forces that bourgeois society has unleashed have been caught up with and overtaken by the destructive powers released at the same time. The highly industrialized countries of the West will not be alone in paying the price for the revolution that never happened. The fight against want is an inheritance they leave to all mankind, even in those areas where mankind survives the catastrophe. Socialism, which was once a promise of liberation, has become a question of survival. If the ecological equilibrium is broken, then the rule of freedom will be further off than ever" (48).

The darkness of this statement indicates that Enzensberger is more keenly aware than either O'Connor or Foster of the complications to the socialist project that capitalism's ecological devastation introduces. As noted above, O'Connor does not see capitalism's ecological devastation as a threat to the continued viability of the socialist alternative but rather as a contradiction that opens the road to a second path to socialism. While O'Connor's analysis is based on the assumption that "Marx was not so much wrong as he was half-right" (211), Foster is adamant that Marx was totally right. Thus, although the links between historical materialism and Darwin's theory of evolution that Foster seeks to establish are based on a rejection of teleological modes of reasoning, Foster uncritically accepts formulations that carry within them the teleological assumptions of the Marxist

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philosophy of history. Thus in the course of arguing that Marx did not believe that "a sustainable relation to the earth would come about automatically with the transition to socialism", Foster cites approvingly Marx's observation that capitalism "creates the material conditions for a new and higher synthesis, a union of agriculture and industry on the basis of the forms that have developed during the period of their antagonistic isolation" (170). Socialism's higher synthesis is presented, in other words, as immanent in capitalist development. In endorsing such a view Foster in effect freezes the dialectic and fails to pay heed to his own warning against any ecological thinking that is not sufficiently sensitive to irrevocable change and the arrow of time. To the extent that capitalist dynamism leads to great ecological devastation it is clear that the result of this dynamism may turn out to be the liquidation rather than the realization of this dynamism's liberating potential. If capitalism's ecological devastation has made teleological conceptions less plausible this is partly because such teleological conceptions, especially in the case of Marxism, were inspired by a faith in time. The only way to preserve this faith in time in view of capitalism's ecological devastation is by implicitly hypostatizing capitalism's 'dialectic of scarcity' into a cycle capable of constant self-reproduction ad infinitum. The fact, however, that the faith in time, which has long been one of the defining characteristics of the dialectic, can only be achieved through the violation of another defining characteristic, the dialectic's association to dynamism and constant change, simply illustrates the threat to the dialectic that capitalism's ecological devastation represents. The specter that this devastation raises is not necessarily the higher synthesis that Foster and Marx have in mind but a situation where capitalism's

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'dialectic of scarcity' dialectically turns into its opposite, the irrevocable regression to the undialectical state of a socially renaturalized scarcity.

Having identified the advantage of Enzensberger's perspective on the ecological question over the assumptions underlying Foster's and O'Connor's analysis, we also have to point out that Enzensberger does not clearly recognize the full implications of his insight. Thus he ends up vacillating between the claim that capitalism's ecological devastation invalidates utopian visions of alternatives to capitalism and the belief that socialism will emerge as the only alternative to the looming ecological catastrophe. The implication of his argument seems to be that capitalism's ecological destruction requires a new, more 'realistic' concept of socialism that is adequate to the quest of survival in a world that is once again under the hold of scarcity. Enzensberger, however, does nothing to spell out this new conception of socialism. This is surprising since the inseparability of a free socialist society from the conquest of scarcity that has characterized the dominant, Marxist conception of socialism makes one wonder whether the pursuit of 'socialism under scarcity' may not be as oxymoronic and futile as the disastrous attempt to construct 'socialism in one country'. Instead of developing the full implications of his aphoristically asserted insight, Enzensberger is content, however, to simply criticize the inadequacy of theoretical approaches, like that of Marcuse, that predicate the socialist alternative on the specter of a post-scarcity society raised by capitalist dynamism. According to Enzensberger (1996),

> "If nature has been damaged to a certain, admittedly not easily determinable, degree and if the damage is irreversible, then the idea of a free society begins to lose its meaning. It seems completely absurd to speak in a short-term perspective, as Marcuse has done, of a 'society of superabundance' or the abolition of want. The 'wealth' of the overdeveloped consumer societies of the West, insofar as it is not a mere mirage for the bulk of the population, is the result of a wave of plunder

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> and pillage unparalleled in history; its victims are, on the one hand, the peoples of the Third World and, on the other, the men and women of the future. It is therefore a kind of wealth that produces unimaginable want.
> "The social and political thinking of the ecologists is marred by blindness and naivete... Yet they have one advantage over the utopian thinking of the left in the West, namely the realization that any possible freedom and that every political theory and practice-including that of socialists- is confronted not with the problem of abundance, but into that of survival" (30).

The passage just quoted follows a peculiar logic. It starts out with a conditional statement and ends with an unconditional conclusion. As the conditional statement itself makes clear, however, the claim that socialism has to be redefined is based on the existence of ecological damage the degree of which, as Enzensberger himself admits, it not easily determinable. The political implications of such a position are obvious. Instead of pointing to the resistance against capitalism's ecological destruction as a means to the preservation of the possibility of a non-alienated post-scarcity society, Enzensberger's rush to naturalize scarcity in theory before capitalism does so in reality leads to the renunciation of 'the ideal of a free society'.

Moreover, as we have already argued, the naturalization of scarcity also implies a naturalization of a society in which the welfare of the few depends on the misery of the many. In this sense, Enzensberger's position helps to legitimize the very exploitation of the Third World that he claims to oppose. Indeed, one of the main effects of the re-naturalization of scarcity that Enzensberger's position facilitates rather than resists would be the multiplication of the difficulties confronting any movement fighting against any form of social inequality.

This becomes clear if we combine the insights of Enzensberger and O'Connor's analysis into a synthesis that avoids the pitfalls of each of these two positions. We have already seen that O'Connor links the new social movements to the ecological question by

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interpreting these movements as a reaction to capitalism's destruction of the conditions of production. As our critique of Laclau and Mouffe has shown, however, this is not the only dimension of the question. As we saw in this critique the proliferation of struggles against social inequality is inseparable from the fact that the utopian possibilities created by capitalist dynamism render all forms of social oppression objectively obsolete. O'Connor ignores this side of the question because he seeks to conceptualize the transition to socialism in terms of a generalization of the Marxist theory of economic crisis. His argument concerning the adverse economic impact of capitalism's destruction of the conditions of production is convincing. However, the neglect of the other dimension of new social movements leaves O'Connor's analysis incomplete and distorts its conclusions. This is the case despite (or, even, precisely because of) the fact the O'Connor's conception of the second contradiction of capitalism' along the lines of Marxist crisis theory does not constitute a return to economic determinism. According to O'Connor (1996),

> "whether of not capital faces 'external barriers' to accumulation, including external barriers in the form of new social struggles over the definition and use of production conditions...; whether or not these 'external barriers' take the form of economic crisis; and whether or not economic crisis is resolved in favor of or against capital are political and ideological questions first and foremost, and economic questions only secondarily" (206).

O'Connor is right to emphasize that the emergence and resolution of a capitalist crisis is not a purely economic matter but crucially depends on political and ideological factors. What O'Connor does not recognize, however, is the obstacles that the re-naturalization of scarcity that capitalism's destruction of the conditions of production may lead to would pose for any attempt to build a majoritarian movement against capitalism. O'Connor (1994) is right to insist that

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> "sooner or later labor, feminist, urban, environmental and other social movements need to combine into a single powerful, democratic force- one that is both politically viable and also capable of radically reforming the economy, polity, and society. Individually, social movements are relatively powerless in the face of the totalizing force of global capital" (172).

However, the basis for such a majoritarian movement would disappear if capitalism's ecological destruction achieved a re-naturalization of scarcity. Such a re-naturalization would mean the end of the universal human interest that capitalist dynamism had originally given rise to. If a non-alienated, post-scarcity society were to become impossible, the diversity of forms of social oppression would no longer be compatible to a united front between the oppressed. Instead, the location of most individuals in the contradictory social position of belonging to the oppressors in one respect and the oppressors in another would at most lead to temporary and shifting alliances between different groups motivated by the need to compete for the scarce resources of an inevitably alienated society. To the extent that a united front of oppressed groups represents the best strategy not only for abolishing in the long term but even for alleviating in the shorter term of all the different forms of social inequality, it becomes clear that the struggle against capitalism's destruction of nature becomes an important nodal point allowing the convergence of movements fighting any form of social inequality including class, gender, racial and global inequality.

The fact that capitalism's re-naturalization of scarcity could prove fatal to the pursuit of gender equality around the world, for example, is borne by the fact that the achievement of such equality is easier in wealthy countries. In a comparison of the achievements of Northern European countries in the area of gender equality to Southern Europe's failure to go beyond the recognition of equal civil rights for women Donald Sassoon tells us that

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> "As Gisela Kaplan has observed, the relative wealth of countries is a not insignificant factor in the progress of women: 'Social engineering takes money.' Northern Europe is richer than Southern Europe. Civil rights may be cheap, but domestic appliances, health care and child-care, good schools and universities are not. Wealth may not necessarily be the decisive element in the progress of women, but it does create the conditions for further emancipation and equality. Once again socialist determination without a solid economy cannot deliver the goods" (684-5).

It has to be pointed out here, of course, that Sassoon's emphasis on the dependence of reforms on a 'solid economy' are meant to justify the European Social Democracy's reconciliation with the imperatives of the capitalist economy. What our analysis shows, however, is that by being ecologically unsustainable capitalism's 'solid economy' undermines its ability to fulfil its promise of ever greater wealth. It is not surprising then that capitalism's ecological destruction would lead even the Social Democrats to renounce the principle that, according to Sassoon, constitutes the fundamental precondition for egalitarian reformist projects, in general, and greater gender equality, in particular. Indeed, Sassoon informs us,

> "The [German] SPD turned its back on the idea of unlimited growth in favor of 'qualitative' and ecologically aware growth. This was a genuine political shift. In the post-war period the SPD had acquired legitimacy by accepting fundamental assumptions of liberal capitalism - namely, that the gradual development of technical progress would bring about a continuous increase in the welfare of society- that modern societies faced an infinite trend towards growth and technical progress. It further assumed that this would go hand in hand with the gradual development of socialism" (722).

Apart from contradicting Sassoon's claim that egalitarian reformist projects presuppose wealth, this 'genuine political shift' has important implications. On the one hand, this shift seems to be derived from the differentia specifica of Social Democracy, namely the incorrigibly voluntaristic belief in its ability to control capitalism. The appeal to a so-

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called 'qualitative' growth ignores, for example, the fact that the very capitalist wealth that as Sassoon points out, made the achievements of Social Democracy possible was precisely the result of capitalism's unprecedented, compulsive and quantitative dynamism. By contrast, the political shift in question comes at a time when these achievements and principles underlying them are, as Sassoon himself recognizes, increasingly abandoned even by Social Democrats themselves. In this sense, the break with the traditional faith in 'a continuous increase in the welfare of society' inevitably sounds as a euphemistic reference to contemporary Social Democracy's complicity to the dissolution of the welfare state. The insane proportions that Social Democratic voluntarism can assume are illustrated by the adoption by the Berlin Programme, in which the above-mentioned political shift found expression, of the principle that 'capital must serve humanity, not humanity capital' (cf. Sassoon 1996, 722). Here the utopianism of Social Democratic 'pragmatism' reaches unprecedented heights as the abolition of alienation is not located in the resolution of capitalism's immanent contradictions through radical social change but is simply transformed to an abstract 'Ought' that is dogmatically asserted to be realizable within the framework of capitalist society. Sassoon's sympathy for the spectacle that European Social Democracy's vicissitudes has offered us for the last hundred years or so also finds expression in a voluntaristic conception of capitalist development. Indeed, in his attempt to justify the reduction of socialism into the defense of the European model of capitalism, Sassoon informs us that

> "Capitalism is like a powerful river which must flow somewhere. Nature, luck and the conscious activities of human beings may force it hither and thither. The river may run dry and leave the soil parched. Or, if untamed, it may run wild and destroy all before it. But it has no inner logic, no preordained progression" (760).

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To begin with, one is tempted to point out here that if they could talk the many rivers that have been transformed into polluted bodies of water devoid of any life thanks to what Meszaros (1995) has aptly called capitalism's destructive production would undoubtedly object to Sassoon's analogy. More seriously, however, the connection between Sassoon's 'non-essentialist' conception of capitalism and Social Democracy's absurd ambition to abolish capitalist alienation through a new, 'qualitative' form of administering capitalism is clear enough. Indeed, once the alienation exemplified in the subordination of human beings and their needs to the imperatives of production for production's sake is not seen as an irreducible aspect of capitalist reproduction, the logic that drives capitalism's compulsive expansionism also falls out of view.

8. New Social Movements, the Second Dialectic of Scarcity and Marxism's Contribution to Democratic Theory

So far we have seen that the specter of capitalism's renaturalization of scarcity introduces a number of complications to the emancipatory project and renders problematic O'Connor's conception of the link between 'the second contradiction of capitalism' and the new social movement as a second path to socialism. Conversely, we should point out here, O'Connor's identification of the 'second contradiction of capitalism' also renders problematic Enzensberger's premature renaturalization of scarcity. By exposing the adverse effect that capitalism's destruction of the conditions of production may have on capital accumulation, O'Connor's conception of a 'second contradiction of capitalism' implicitly points to the existence of a second dialectic of scarcity arising from this contradiction in the same way that the original 'dialectic of scarcity' stemmed from what

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O'Connor describes as capitalism's first contradiction. More specifically, if capitalism's compulsive dynamism raises the specter of a renaturalization of scarcity, the break to this dynamism that capitalism's destruction of its conditions of production applies slows down the process that could eventually lead to the realization of this specter. In this sense, the new social movements that by reacting to capitalism's destruction of the conditions of production further limit capitalist growth should not be seen as a second, parallel path to socialism. The function of these movements consists rather to slow down the process of capitalism's renaturalization of scarcity so as to keep open the original path to socialism with its dependence on the original dialectic of scarcity.

O'Connor himself implicitly recognizes the implausibility of a one-to-one correspondence between the first contradiction of capitalism and the labor movement, on the one hand, and the second contradiction and the new social movements, on the other. This implausibility becomes clear when O'Connor points out that the struggle over the reproduction of the conditions of production may also unfold within the capitalist workplace' (201) and thus involve the labor rather than new social movements. Similarly, we have shown that new social movements have a stake in the resolution of the first contradiction with its artificial reproduction of scarcity because if capitalism were to be allowed to renaturalize scarcity the struggles of new social movements against non-class forms of oppression would become that much more intractable. Indeed in the same way that the struggle against gender inequality may depend, as both Sassoon and Kaplan point out, on the wealth of a society, capitalism's renaturalization of scarcity would probably also imply the freezing of global social, economic and ecological inequality along racial lines. As Gunnar Skirbekk points out,

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> "If by 'capitalism' we mean an economic system that seeks to increase profit in an open market, this system will become impossible as soon as, for ecological reasons, a future society demands political control of the economy. In the long-term perspective, the problem is therefore not 'capitalism or socialism', but 'socialism or fascism', that is, global democratic and egalitarian control, or global totalitarian, authoritarian, and probably racist control" (125-30).

Skirbekk's claim that the dilemma of the future may be not 'socialism or capitalism' but 'socialism or fascism' provides a corrective to Enzensberger's demand for a new concept of socialism that would take into account the specter of a renaturalized scarcity. We saw that Enzensberger vacillated between the hypothesis that capitalism's ecological destruction had made a free society impossible and the claim that socialism was the only option if humanity was to survive. Skirbekk's argument suggests a way to resolve this contradiction. If capitalism's ecological destruction were to reach a point where scarcity became renaturalized, not only socialism but even capitalism itself might no longer be viable options for humanity. We have seen that capitalism is an inherently expansive system and that as time passes this expansiveness transforms itself from a promise of human liberation to a threat to human survival. This transformation may eventually force upon humanity a choice between an egalitarian, democratic and non-alienated society that reverses capitalist productivism through the subordination of production to human need and a society that puts an end to capitalism's ecologically destructive expansionism through a freezing of the relations of social domination. As has already been pointed out, however, the first alternative will not remain an option indefinitely but only as long as capitalism has not brought about the renaturalization of scarcity. If this point of no return is reached, however, and authoritarian non-capitalist social system may very well turn out to be the most likely scenario for the future.

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It is therefore clear that Marxist theory has an important contribution to make to the debates concerning the future of democracy. Marxism's advantage over more mainstream approaches to the question consists in its recognition and critical analysis of the dynamic tendencies and contradictions of capitalist society. Once these contradictions are explored, the conventional wisdom of liberal capitalist democracy as the 'end of history' appears as the product of an impoverished, static and, thus, hopelessly utopian understanding of contemporary capitalist society.

Marxism, for its part, has always been aware of the ways the structural inequalities of capitalist society undermine this society's democratic pretenses. If democracy can be defined as 'power of the people' Marxists can legitimately claim that a society in which the means of production and thus of the general population's livelihood are controlled by a small group of people will give this group a degree of power disproportional to its size. Democracy in this conception depends, in other words, on the even distribution of power among different individuals and social groups. This conception is clearly associated to Weber's 'negative' conception of power as "the probability that one actor within a social relationship will be in a position to carry out his own will despite resistance" (ES, 53). It is clear that once power is understood in such conflictual terms, democracy becomes understandably defined as a political system in which there is no disproportional concentration of power in the hands of individuals or small groups of people.

Our discussion of capitalism's dialectic of scarcity suggests, however, an expanded conception of democracy. We have seen that, by raising the specter of a radically different non-alienated post-scarcity society, capitalism's dynamism gives rise,

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for the first time in history, to a genuinely universal human interest. We have also discussed the reifying tendencies of capitalist development that obstruct the recognition of this universal interest. This highlights the importance of alienation as an even more fundamental obstacle to democracy than the obstacles implicit in the various forms of social inequality in contemporary capitalist society. As we saw in our discussion of Lukacs the problem may not be so much that different social groups have opposed interests and unequal means to pursue these interests but rather that capitalist reification constitutes individuals into class, gendered, racialized subjects incapable of recognizing their interest in a free, non-alienated society. In the case of capitalism, therefore, the undemocratic implications of social inequalities appear as a derivative phenomenon. Going beyond the derivative aspects of capitalism's undemocratic character also implies a conception of power broader than that of Weber. More specifically the recognition of capitalism's creation of a genuinely universal human interest implies that the most fundamental power people are deprived of in capitalist society is the power to recognize their interest in a free society and their capacity to subordinate society to their need for self-development and a richer life. The usurpation of power from the people does not necessarily entail a redistribution of power from one social group to another. Most fundamentally, capitalism is undemocratic because people do not have power over an alienated society that seems to unfold according to its own inexorable logic. Lukacs captures this human powerlessness under capitalism through his analysis of the 'contemplative attitude' engendered by capitalism. As Lukacs points out the only option that capitalism seems to leave for its individual subjects is that of adjusting to rather than changing a society that confronts them as a 'second nature'.

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This reconceptualization of democracy as abolition of people's alienation from the society they have produced is especially apt today that 'economic globalization' is used as the cover for economic and social policies that exacerbate social inequality on all fronts. Sassoon (1996) provides us with a representative version of the argument that conventional wisdom used to praise and justify Social Democracy's ever more perfect alignment with the imperatives of global capital:

> "interdependence has reached such an intensity that it has thrown into crisis traditional concepts of national politics and all political parties and ideologies. Socialists have been more affected than conservatives, because of their essential conviction that politics can govern the economy. In a global economy, national politics can survive only at a less ambitious level, although this will not necessarily lead to the end of major differences in economic policy between Left and Right" (773).

The political function of such a view is clear. The tempering of traditional Social Democratic ambitions euphemistically refers to the attack on such Social Democratic achievements as the welfare state, the regulation of labor relations and full employment. The social regression that such developments represent are justified though a reference to the pressure of global competition, the mobility of capital, and so on. In a textbook example of what Lukacs calls 'the contemplative attitude' the mainstream liberal/left political forces are not concerned with how collective action can resist the alienating pressure of the global capitalist economy on people's life but seem content to debate concerning the best way to adjust to the global capitalist system's imperatives. Thus instead of organizing all progressive forces into an international front capable of resisting the blackmail of capitalist globalization, conventional left/liberal political forces confront capitalist globalization with appeals to a national interest that supposedly rests on international competitiveness and economic and social policies that aggravate inequalities. Thus Sassoon assures us that

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> "[i]nternal politics will increasingly become a contest between parties over who can best defend the 'national' interest. The new global stage of capitalism will constrain socialists far more than conservatives" (775).

It is clear that the acceptance of the global capitalist system as a given fact to which a given nation has to adjust as best as possible if it is to successfully pursue its national interest is analogous to the individual's pursuit of her self-interest through an adjustment to the imperatives of the capitalist market. The labor movement in the 19th century recognized that since the capitalist market led to competition between workers resistance to capital presupposed the organization of workers into unions and the pursuit of collective action as a means to the satisfaction of workers' demands. Since the challenge of nation-states to resist capital's ability to play one against the other is analogous to the challenge facing individual workers in the 19th century, so has to be the response of nation-states to this challenge.

This challenge could be met through a coordination of social and economic standards that would take into account the needs of both rich and poor nations. The fact that globalization is used to reduce wages and undermine job security, the welfare state and environmental regulations in rich countries could be addressed by the introduction of minimum standards that would, at a first stage, set a limit to capital's exploitation of workers and nature around the world. At the same time, the control of global capital over the economic and social policies of poor countries could be weakened through a cancellation of the debt and an increase in development aid.

Such a global anti-capitalist front would be the international counterpart of the alliance between movements against class, gender, racial and other forms of oppression in the domestic front. As we have seen, however, an alliance between movements

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struggling against different forms of oppression is only possible through a recognition of a universal human interest in a free, non-alienated society. Such a recognition already points, however, beyond particularistic class, gender and racial identities. In this respect, it also offers the only possible resistance to the 'creative' form of power that capitalist reification engenders. This power consists not in the ability to coerce others into behavior that favors one's interests but rather in the ability of capitalist reification to constitute individuals into class, gendered, racial and national subjects. It is through this constitution of individuals according to its own imperatives that capitalism ensures the obsolete and ecologically dangerous reproduction of scarcity.

The conception, therefore, of democracy exclusively in terms of the uneven distribution of 'negative' power unwittingly perpetuates the hold of capitalist reification. The struggle against capitalist reification presupposes the realization that capitalism's totalizing thrust creates a new form of power that is indivisible and can, therefore, not be distributed among individuals or social groups but can only be exercised through the collective self-organization of humanity into a non-alienated society. Such a society would be genuinely democratic not only because every citizen would have an equal say over the decisions that affected her life but also because humanity as a whole would, for the first time in history, achieve power over a no longer alienating and uncontrollable social reality.

9. Conclusion

The critical reinterpretation of Marx, Weber, Lukacs and Gramsci advanced in this study has sought to demonstrate how the insights of these thinkers could make a contribution to

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the reformulation of the vision and strategy of the emancipatory project. To the extent that these figures can be seen as either the founding fathers or influential precursors of the tradition that has come to be known as 'Critical theory' or 'Western Marxism', this study has taken up Slavoj Zizek's (2000) challenge to resist the de-politicization that has often characterized this intellectual tradition's more recent members. I have tried to show that a reformulation of the emancipatory project is possible on the basis of an immanent critique of Marx, Weber, Lukacs and Gramsci's theoretical analysis. As I have already pointed out (cf. 'Introduction'), such a reformulation gives rise to an extensive research programme that this study can initiate but not exhaust. The immanent critique of Marxist theory that this study undertakes has made an argument for the continuing validity of the Marxist emancipatory project in the hope that the further research that a full reconceptualization of this project requires will be forthcoming.

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