

INFORMATION TO USERS

The most advanced technology has been used to photograph and reproduce this manuscript from the microfilm master. UMI films the text directly from the original or copy submitted. Thus, some thesis and dissertation copies are in typewriter face, while others may be from any type of computer printer.

The quality of this reproduction is dependent upon the quality of the copy submitted. Broken or indistinct print, colored or poor quality illustrations and photographs, print bleedthrough, substandard margins, and improper alignment can adversely affect reproduction.

In the unlikely event that the author did not send UMI a complete manuscript and there are missing pages, these will be noted. Also, if unauthorized copyright material had to be removed, a note will indicate the deletion.

Oversize materials (e.g., maps, drawings, charts) are reproduced by sectioning the original, beginning at the upper left-hand corner and continuing from left to right in equal sections with small overlaps. Each original is also photographed in one exposure and is included in reduced form at the back of the book. These are also available as one exposure on a standard 35mm slide or as a 17" x 23" black and white photographic print for an additional charge.

Photographs included in the original manuscript have been reproduced xerographically in this copy. Higher quality 6" x 9" black and white photographic prints are available for any photographs or illustrations appearing in this copy for an additional charge. Contact UMI directly to order.

U·M·I

University Microfilms International
A Bell & Howell Information Company
300 North Zeeb Road, Ann Arbor, MI 48106-1346 USA
313/761-4700 800/521-0600

Order Number 9000729

**Marxist dialectics in its application to literary theory and
criticism**

Renzullo, Achille, Ph.D.

City University of New York, 1989

Copyright ©1989 by Renzullo, Achille. All rights reserved.

U·M·I
300 N. Zeeb Rd.
Ann Arbor, MI 48106

A

MARXIST DIALECTICS IN ITS APPLICATION TO LITERARY THEORY AND CRITICISM

by

ACHILLE RENZULLO

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

1989

Copyright 1989
ACHILLE RENZULLO
All Rights Reserved

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

May 1, 1989
Date

Frank Rosengarten
Chair of Examining Committee

April 28, 1989
Date

Ummat Paganzani
Executive Officer

Frank Rosengarten

Fred Nichols

Luigi Ballerini
Supervisory Committee

The City University of New York

As the thought of the world, it [philosophy] appears only when actuality is already there cut and dried after its process of formation has been completed. The teaching of the concept, which is also history's inescapable lesson, is that it is only when actuality is mature that the ideal first appears over against the real and that the ideal apprehends this same real world in its substance and builds it up for itself into the shape of an intellectual realm. When philosophy paints its grey in grey it cannot be rejuvenated but only understood. The owl of Minerva spreads its wings only with the falling of the dusk.

Hegel

The dialectics is a scandal and abomination to bourgeoisdom and its doctrinaire professors ... because ... it lets nothing impose upon it and is in its essence critical and revolutionary.

Marx

Contents

Introduction	1
Part One: Hegelian Marxists: Georg Lukács, Lucien Goldmann, Theodor W. Adorno	
A. G.Lukács	
1. Dialectics	24
2. Literary Theory and Criticism	34
B. L.Goldmann's <u>Hidden God</u>	45
C. T.W.Adorno	
1. Dialectics	54
2. Literary Theory and Criticism	68
Part Two: Non-Hegelian Marxists: Galvano Della Volpe, Lucio Colletti, Louis Althusser, Pierre Macherey, Terry Eagleton	
A. G. Della Volpe	
1. G.Della Volpe's and L.Colletti's Dialectics	75
2. G.Della Volpe's <u>Critique of Taste</u>	82
B. L.Althusser	
1. Dialectics	94
2. Remarks on Literary Theory and Criticism	106
C. The Althusserians	
1. T.Macherey's <u>Theory of Literary Production</u>	113
2. T.Eagleton's <u>Criticism and Ideology</u>	121
Part Three: Summary Evaluation	
1. Dialectics	127

2. Literary Theory and Criticism	149
Appendix	174
Bibliography	178

INTRODUCTION

This essay has three specific aims. The first two intermingle and can only be separated theoretically.

First, then, this essay will illustrate the logical and consequential link between Marxist dialectics, literary theories and literary criticism. It will point out how the concepts of literature and literary criticism stem from and are strictly dependent for their meaning and their claims upon the concept of the dialectics of historical materialism. All of the authors analyzed, Georg Lukács, Theodor Adorno, Galvano Della Volpe, Lucio Colletti and Louis Althusser, reject the theory of economic determinism and try to clarify, to develop or work out in a different manner, giving more emphasis to the whole or to the interrelationship between the parts, Engels' brief explanation of the dialectics of historical materialism in a letter to Joseph Block (September 21, 1890) since Marx and Engels never elaborated and articulated a theory of the superstructure. Engels states,

According to the materialist conception of history, the determining element in history is ultimately the production and reproduction in real life. More than this neither Marx nor I have ever asserted. But now if someone twists that around to mean that the economic element is the only determining one, then he transforms that proposition into a meaningless, abstract, absurd phrase. The economic situation is the basis, but the various elements of the superstructure - political forms of the class struggle and its results, constitutions established by the victorious class after the battle has been won, and so on - legal forms - and even the reflexes of all these real struggles in the minds of those taking part in them, political, legal, philosophical theories, religious ideas and their further development into systems of dogma - also have their effect upon the course of the historical struggles and in many cases predominantly determine their form. It is a mutual interaction of all these elements, in which, finally, through all the infinite number of accidents (that is, of things and events whose inner connection to

each other is so distant or so indemonstrable that we can disregard it as not present) the economic movement wins through by necessity.

One can fully capture then the full hermeneutic import of Della Volpe's concept of literary abstraction as a polysemic, typical, determinate abstraction or Althusser and the Althusserian's concept of the overdetermination and heterogeneity of the literary text, in which the absence of a relationship among the levels of discourse is the true relationship, or Lukacs' concept of realism as a mode of apperception of the social totality only if he understands Della Volpe's conception of the dialectics of determinate abstraction, Althusser's conception of the dialectics of overdetermination and structural causality and Lukacs' conception of the dialectics of concrete totality.

For instance, if the negative knowledge that a literary work yields is, according to Adorno, the non identity between ideology and its pretension to correspond to reality, then only negative dialectics can clarify this by showing what is the epistemological relationship between identity and non identity and why what is revealed in the non identity between concepts and reality turns out to be negative knowledge. Identity thinking's claim that objects are what they are empirically and that concepts are adequate in subsuming the objects to which they apply is seen as the structural principle of the reified and unjust socio-economic reality. It is the dialectics then that ultimately explicates and warrants any claim made by Marxist literary theories and literary criticism.

Secondly, since one of the reasons for the extraordinary ideological vitality of Marxist literary theories and literary criticism is their claim to yield a scientific knowledge of society, we will analyze the dialectics' claim to scientificity and the epistemological foundation of this claim. Is Marxist dialectical contradiction a logical or a real contradiction? Is the dialectics, that

is, of Marx or of the mature Marx, affected by the Hegelian themes of contradiction, alienation, objectification and reification? Is it possible to produce a knowledge of reality by discarding the logical principle of non-contradiction?

Della Volpe and Althusser maintain that Marx's inversion of Hegel's dialectics, his turning it "right side up again," meant the recovery of the logical principle of non-contradiction, upon which all science is based, the abolition of the a priori scheme of the alienation, objectification and self-awareness of the idea, and the establishing therefore of the positivity of matter. It is a dialectics which operates upon real contradictions. Della Volpe and the early Colletti ¹ argue that the Marxist dialectics is the dialectics of determinate abstraction which proceeds according to the hypothetico-deductive method of science. The dialectics utilizes concepts or hypotheses that are socio-historical (empirically) determinate. In the case of economics, for example, it utilizes concepts that are not only economic but also socio-historical. All economic abstractions, that is, - even the most abstract - though applicable (in the sense that they are logical universals) to all forms of society, are determinate: they are historical categories which express specific social relationships. In this manner the dialectics expresses the unity of relations of production and social relations.

Althusser asserts that the Marxist dialectics deals with contradictions that are distinct, complex and overdetermined - determined not just by one but by many conflicts. The contradiction at the economic level, for instance,

¹ The Colletti of Marxism and Hegel and From Rousseau to Lenin. Part of Colletti's work can be considered as an original amplification of Della Volpe's theories. Colletti worked with Della Volpe as a colleague at the University of Messina (Italy) from 1960 to 1964.

In his recent articles on the New Left Review, Colletti, however has rejected some of the basic tenets of his previous understanding of the Marxist dialectics. We will discuss this later.

is compounded by the different contradictions of all the other levels in their relation of articulation upon each other. Each level expresses itself in a determinate structural configuration. The dialectics of historical materialism then, according to Althusser, analyzes a structured complex whole made of distinct, interrelated levels of practice with their irreducible contradictions in which the economic level is determined in the last instance in structuring it in a relation of domination-subordination among the levels.

On the other hand, the Hegelian Marxists, Lukács and Adorno among them, consider the Marxist dialectics to be Hegelian through and through. According to them, Marx rejected Hegel's idealistic system but adopted his dialectics.

For Lukács the Marxist dialectics is scientific and revolutionary at the same time. It is based upon the category of concrete totality and the unity of subject and object. The concrete totality not only preserves the individuality and historicity of phenomena in relating them; it also represents the identity of subject and object. What we know is what we have made. This coincidence of subject and object in the knowledge of the historical process turns out to be the revolutionary class consciousness of the proletariat.

For Adorno, however, the truth value of the Marxist dialectic resides only in the capacity to negate. In this manner, it penetrates the veil of reification, the transformation of the world of human relationships into a set of relationships between discrete things, and unmasks the structures of dominance and oppression. Only negative dialectics can give us a glimpse of the non-reified world. Adorno attacks any form of identity thinking which posits, according to him, metaphysical or epistemological absolutes.

Thirdly, an evaluation of the dialectics and the literary theories will follow. First we establish the validity of the different interpretations of the

dialectics: we will point out, that is, their merits and their flaws. At the same time, we will indicate tentatively our interpretation and establish the validity of Marx's claim to scientificity. Two views will be presented: one that maintains that Marx's dialectics is scientific by pointing out that it operates with real, ontological categories such as real essence, natural necessity, form, tendency, and development; the other which considers the dialectics faulted by a strong unscientific Hegelian framework: the theory of alienation embodied in the logical contradictions of the capitalistic system guarantees a priori its autodestruction.

The literary theories will then be assessed. Notwithstanding their merits, it will be shown that their epistemological import is undermined by a strong foundational idealistic presupposition. All the authors analyzed aim at writing a theory of literature valid for all forms of literary works. They believe that literary writings share some formal properties or essence. Then the question is: if literary works are characterized by unchanging formal properties, what weight does the statement and the alleged evidence that they are molded by the conditions of their production have? The absurdity of constructing a materialistic approach to literary writings within the constraints of an a priori and unchanging epistemological and aesthetic categories is the more evident in Althusser and the Althusserians since their concept of the literary practice is construed as a real, materialistic process of transformation. The first step then for a materialistic understanding of literary writings is to free the concept of practice from eternal, unchanging epistemological and aesthetic forms of cognition. At the end, however, such an understanding will show the politics of literary criticism including its own. Two questions then follow: Can the Marxist-political analysis still

claim cognitive supremacy over other literary interpretations, and if it cannot, is it true or better by virtue of its politics?

At the end, this essay will turn out to be mainly a brief description and evaluation of the philosophical and literary writings of the above mentioned philosophers, who were chosen for their originality, their radically different understanding of the dialectic, and mostly, their attempt, rare among Marxist philosophers, at a coherent and systematic exposition of the dialectic. This is the theme that unifies the essay: what is the dialectic, what makes it scientific or capable of knowledge. Another reason for choosing the above authors is that through them we will get a glimpse of the complex Hegelian and non-Hegelian Marxist European panorama from the 1920s to the late 1960s. Della Volpe and especially Althusser's ideas have been the source of much inspiration and debate also in the 1970s.

Lukacs' History and Class Consciousness (1923) represents a reaction against Engels' dialectical materialism and the positivistic and deterministic interpretations of "orthodox" Marxism of the theoreticians of the Second International.

In Antiduhring (1878) backing his conclusions with a cursory analysis of the natural sciences, Engels states that the Hegelian dialectics' basic structures such as the transformation of quantity into quality, the interpenetration of opposites and the negation of the negation represent the laws immanent in society as well as in nature. Thought, history and nature, all share the same dialectical structure. Marx's theoretical innovation, according to Engels, has been the successful application of these laws to the analysis of society in emphasizing the primacy of being over thought. The dialectics of the mind is simply a reflection of the dialectics of the world.

Affected by the implicit deterministic trend of Engels' philosophy, the next generation of Marxists, the theoreticians of the Second International -- the most significant representatives being Plekhanov, Kautsky and Hilferding -- held that Marx had displayed in Capital (First volume, 1867) the laws of development of the capitalistic mode of production by analyzing the reality of facts and the direct causal link between the economy and the superstructure. Marx's laws were natural laws which would inevitably bring about the overthrow of capitalism and the advent of a socialistic society. These writers were convinced that economic determinism was the right orthodox interpretation of Marxism.

For Lukács it is erroneous to apply the dialectics to nature. He maintains that the essential "determinations" of nature are undialectical. Besides, Engels' conception of the dialectics, according to him, presents serious flaws. He overlooks the crucial category of the dialectics, the historical interaction of subject and object, the unity of theory and practice. Lukács says:

Engels does not even mention the most vital interaction, namely the dialectical relation between subject and object in the historical process, let alone give it the prominence it deserves. Yet without this factor dialectics ceases to be revolutionary, despite attempts (illusory in the last analysis) to retain 'fluid' concepts. For it implies a failure to recognise that in all metaphysics the object remains untouched and unaltered so that thought remains contemplative and fails to become practical; while for the dialectical method the central problem is to change reality.²

For Marx, according to Lukács, the scientificity of dialectics, of theory, coincides with the way it relates to practice: the proletariat understands reality in the very act of changing it. The cognitive validity of the dialectics

² G. Lukacs, History and Class Consciousness, MIT Press edition, Cambridge Mass., 1971, pp.20.

depends on its capacity to understand, to criticize, and change reality. Cognitive acts always proceed in accordance with evaluative and practical attitudes.

Orthodox Marxism, according to Lukács, does not imply the acceptance of any tenets or laws; it refers exclusively to the dialectical method. Dialectics, however, does not proceed from the analysis of facts but from the understanding of the social-economic whole or totality. Reality can only be "understood and penetrated" as a totality. Facts are not significant in themselves; they can only be conceived within the framework of a theory. Only within the Marxist whole, however, they acquire their true significance. For Lukács, the concept of the whole represents what is fundamental in Marxism. He says, "It is not the primacy of economic motives in historical explanation that constitutes the decisive difference between Marxism and bourgeois thought but the point of view of totality." The whole is prior to its parts.

This understanding of Marxism as a totality, as a whole, will become an important Lukacsian legacy. Even though worked out in ways completely different from Lukács, it will be accepted by most Marxist philosophers.

Adorno, as well as some prominent members of the Frankfurt school which originated in Germany in the early 1920s and spanned two intellectual generations, was deeply influenced by Lukács concept of reification, his analysis of the antinomies of bourgeois philosophy as reflections not of the inadequacy of reason but of the contradictions of reality, and, most of all, his understanding of the dialectics as a critical tool which could harmonize description of reality and value judgements.

On the other hand, Adorno differs fundamentally from Lukács. He emphasizes the independence and autonomy of theory and rejects any

political, philosophical or epistemological claim that theory makes. According to Adorno, when subordinated to political or revolutionary ends, theory manipulates truth according to the needs of party strategy; when adhering to first philosophical or epistemological principles, it reifies its concepts and falls into antinomies. First philosophical and epistemological principles wrongly emphasize an ontological or epistemological absolute, being the subject or the object, or within the subject or the object, under which all reality is subsumed.

In reality, everything is interdependent with its opposite but irreducible to it and in motion. There is no primacy of subject or object. Each is mediated by the other. Therefore, he rejects the basic tenet of historical materialism that states the primacy of the base over the superstructure, or the primacy of the whole over its parts.

Adorno then is a paraMarxist. He takes the critical Marxist framework and integrates it with Freudian categories in order to analyze and criticize society.

Theory, then, being unable to subscribe to any philosophical or epistemological principles, in order to avoid misrepresentation and reification cannot be anything but negation.

In Negative Dialectics (1956), the systematic presentation of 30 years of theoretical practice, Adorno states that dialectics, theory, in order to abide in its autonomy has to relentlessly negate the claims made by identity thinking and be aware of slipping into the identity trap of the negation of the negation which brings about the positive resolution of contradiction and of absolutizing contradiction. Therefore negative dialectics can only claim negative knowledge.

As we have pointed out, Della Volpe and Althusser disagree profoundly with Lukács and Adorno. For them any trace of Hegelianism or historicism undermines the scientific claims of the dialectics. Besides, they maintain that Adorno has emptied the Marxist dialectics of the cognitive capacity to provide a positive knowledge of reality, and that Lukács has conflated the strictly epistemological problem of establishing the criteria that guarantee the scientific claims made by theory with the practical problem of how a theory can relate to practice. According to them, in Marx's scientific dialectics they are separated and distinct.

Della Volpe's Logica come scienza positiva (1950) gave a new direction to Marxist thought, especially in Italy, where Gramsci's historicistic conception of Marxism was consolidating itself in becoming the center of debate and a research program. Some of Gramsci's writings had been published already in the late 1940s. Attacking like Lukács the scientific and positivist interpretation of Marxism, Gramsci claims that the truth of philosophy or science does not consist in their capacity to describe reality objectively, that is, independent of man. The notion of an independent and objective world is unscientific. It fails to consider the omnipresent dialectical nature of the subject-object, praxis and reality, relationship in an everchanging historical process.

It is supposed that there can be an objectivity outside history and outside humanity? But who is to judge of such objectivity? Who can adopt the viewpoint of the 'universe in itself', and what would such a viewpoint mean? It may very well be held that we have to do here with a residue of the idea of God, particularly the mystical notion of an unknown God ... 'Objective' always means 'humanly objective' which may correspond exactly to 'historically subjective', i.e. 'objective' would mean 'universal subjective'. Man possesses objective knowledge in so far as knowledge is real for the whole human race historically unified in a unitary cultural system...The idea of "objective" in metaphysical materialism would appear to mean an

objectivity which exists even apart from man; but when one affirms that a reality would exist even if man did not, one is either speaking metaphorically or one is falling into a form of mysticism. We know reality only in relation to man, and since man is historical becoming, knowledge and reality are also a becoming and so is objectivity.³

The truth of philosophy and science then is always historical, related to the whole historical processes of which they partake. They are true only when they express the historical "truth" of their times, the real historical developmental trends, that is, of the society of which they are manifestations. Marxism is true because it expresses the needs and aspirations of a particular class' practical struggle, the proletariat, which represents historically the new direction toward which society tends. Marxism is also, however, a component of that struggle. It articulates it in the best possible way. In his exact analysis of reality, Marx has done

nothing other than systematise rationally and coherently what the historical agents of this reality felt and feel still in a confused and instinctive way, and of which they have a clearer consciousness as a result of the hostile critique.⁴

But how do we know that a theory, in this case Marxism, expresses the real objective movement of history? Marxism is scientific because it is winning its support from the "bulk of mankind". For Gramsci then the unanimity of consent establishes the rationality and objectivity of theory.

La Logica represents a rigorous effort at reconciling the Marxist dialectics with the experimental method of science: at showing how the logical structure of the dialectics in its tautoheterogeneity, in the separation

³ A.Gramsci, Selections from the Prison Notebooks of Antonio Gramsci, ed. and trans. Hoare and Nowell Smith, Lawrence and Wishart, London, 1971 p.187.

⁴ Ibid p.341.

of matter and thought, of concreteness and abstraction, coincides with the hypothetico-deductive method. Referring to Marx's critique of Hegel's Philosophy of Right (1843) and Introduction to the Grundrisse, (1857) Della Volpe states that, whereas the Hegelian dialectics proceeds from the abstract to the concrete and then again to the abstract in a vicious process of hypostasis, of identifying structures of thought with those of reality, the Marxist dialectics goes from the concrete to the abstract and to the concrete again in a hypothesis-verification process.

Basing the crux of his demonstration also on the Introduction to the Grundrisse, Althusser brings forth an understanding of Marx's epistemology completely different from Della Volpe. He says, in Pour Marx, (1965) that Marx rejected the empirical methodology of science and established the scientificity of the dialectic strictly on the theoretical level, distinguishing between the object of reality and the object of thought. He maintains that an epistemological break has occurred between Marx's early and late writings. Whereas the early writings, focusing on man as the subject of history and on the concept of alienation, contained an ideological problematic of man, the later writings dealing with the constellation of "social relations", above all those relations and forces of production, presented a problematic capable of producing a new scientific understanding of the world and at the same time the actual production of such an understanding - the dialectics of historical materialism - by the theoretical work of the concepts of the problematic on the preexisting theories, partly ideological, partly scientific, of the field in consideration. Marx, however, did not conceptualize this epistemological breakthrough. This absence is uncovered by Althusser's symptomatic reading.

The epistemological break, a concept Althusser derived from Bachelard, which points to the noncumulative development of science and

the establishing of a new type of rationality that each succeeding scientific theory brings, is similar to Kuhn's basic concept of paradigm. A scientific theory proposes and at the same time stems from a world view: a paradigmatic set of ideas, criteria and values to understand and explain the world. A new paradigm prevails, according to Kuhn, not because it is better corroborated by experience but because it offers a better theoretical explanation of the pressing anomalies that the old paradigm is unable to solve. It presents better theories, not better proofs. The betterness of a scientific theory then is established mostly on a theoretical level.

In France, Althusser's Marxism with its emphasis on invariant structures as underlying and self-regulating systems represents a polemic especially against the historicism of Sartre's Critique de la Raison Dialectique (1960) in which it is stated that history is made by the action of totalizing individuals under predetermined conditions. The concept of totalization is different from that of a totality or finished entity. Totalization implies a living process which unifies past and present and points to a future which goes beyond the present's determinations.

Sartre infuses into Marxism the existentialist concept of man as defined by "his project", by his capacity to transcend through his free actions the limiting economic-social conditions of the present. In order to justify this epistemologically, Sartre claims that, although situated in history, the dialectics starts from individuals in the process of totalizing their experience. As in Gramsci and Lukács, the dialectics, as a method and as the structure of reality, finds its ontological foundation in human praxis.

If we do not wish to become a divine law again, a metaphysical fate, it must proceed from individuals and not from some kind of supra-individual ensemble. Thus we encounter a new contradiction: the dialectic is the law of totalization which creates several collectivities,

several societies, and one history - realities, that is, which impose themselves on individuals; but at the same time it must be woven out of millions of individual actions. We must show how it is possible for it to be both a resultant, though not a passive average, and a totalizing force, though not a transcendent fate, and how it can continually bring about the unity of dispersive profusion and integration.⁵

At the end, human freedom to act, to establish ends within the limiting sedimentation of history and the obstacles of nature, guarantees the irrepressible motion of the dialectics towards the emergency of novelty.

The dialectical movement, which proceeds from the objective conditioning to objectification, enables us to understand that the ends of human activity are not mysterious entities added on to the act itself; they represent simply the surpassing and the maintaining of the given in an act which goes from the present toward the future. The end is the objectification itself inasmuch as it constitutes the dialectical law of a human conduct and the unity of its internal contradictions.⁶

On the literary level, we analyze also I. Goldman's Le Dieu caché (1955) T. Macherey's Pour une Theorie de la Production Litteraire (1966) and T. Eagleton's Criticism and Ideology (1976) so that a more comprehensive and adequate presentation of the Marxist literary scene we are concerned with is given. Goldman's work brings to its extreme logical conclusions some of Lukacs' concepts within Lukacs' general theoretical framework. Macherey's and Eagleton's works develop systematically, in different ways, Althusser's few remarks about literature within Althusser's general theoretical framework. Eagleton's work, however, also resents of the influence of Macherey.

In their unsystematic writings about art, Marx and Engels endow literature with the capacity to transcend ideology, the false, mystifying

⁵ J.P. Sartre, Critique of Dialectical Reason, NLB, London, 1976 p.36.

⁶ .P. Sartre, Search for Method, Vintage Books, New York, 1963, p.158

representation of man and his world which legitimates the dominant class economic and social relations, and give us a true representation of reality. There is a famous passage in Marx's Grundrisse which gives us an idea of the special role assigned to literature within the mechanics of historical materialism. In pointing out that great artistic achievements, as in the case of Greek art, do not depend upon a developed social economic formation, but sometimes are only "possible" in an underdeveloped one - the relationship of the development of material production, that is, is unequal -, Marx presents the difficulty of explaining in strictly socio-historical terms the "unattainable" artistic value of Greek art and the pleasure that still excites in us.

In the case of art it is well known that certain flourishing periods by no means stand in a direct relationship to the general development of society, that is, to the material foundation, as it were, of the organizational skeleton. For example, the Greeks compared with the moderns or even with Shakespeare. With respect to certain art forms - for example, the epic - it is even recognized that they can never be produced in their epoch-making classical form as soon as artistic production as such appears; that is, within the area of art itself, certain significant formations are only possible at an undeveloped stage of the development of art. If this is the case in the relationships between the various genres of art within the field of art itself, it is less noticeable that it is also the case in the relationship of the whole field of art to the general development of society. The difficulty lies only in the general statement of these contradictions. No sooner are they specified than they are already explained.

...Is the view of nature and of social relations on which the Greek imagination and hence Greek [mythology] is based possible with self-acting mule spindles and railways and locomotives and electrical telegraphs? ... Greek art presupposes Greek mythology, i.e. nature and the social forms already reworked in an unconsciously artistic way by the popular imagination. This is its material.

...From another side: is Achilles possible with powder and lead? Or the Illiad with the printing press, not to mention the printing machine? Do not the song and the saga and the muse necessarily come to an end with the printer's bar, hence do not the necessary condition of epic poetry vanish?

But the difficulty lies not in understanding that the Greek arts and epic are bound up with certain forms of social development. The

difficulty is that they still afford us artistic pleasure and that in a certain respect they count as a norm and as an unattainable model.⁷

Marx's answer is that Greek art reminds us of the childhood of mankind. What is more pleasurable for man than to relapse into the magic and charm of childhood? The charm of Greek art then is strictly dependent upon a determinant and irrepeatable historical time.

A man cannot become a child again, or he becomes childish. But does he not find joy in the child's naivete, and must he himself not strive to reproduce its truth at a higher stage? Does not the true character of each epoch come alive in the nature of its children? Why should not the historic childhood of humanity, its most beautiful unfolding, as a stage never to return, exercise an eternal charm? There are unruly children and precious children. Many of the old peoples belong in this category. The Greeks were normal children. The charm of their art for us is not in contradiction to the undeveloped stage of society on which it grew. (It) is its result, rather, and is inextricably bound up, rather, with the fact that the unripe social conditions under which it arose, and could alone rise, can never return.⁸

To some critics, this does not appear to be a satisfying answer and it has been criticized as inappropriate to the socio-genetic argument that Marx is bringing forward. For them, it smacks of an unwarranted sentimentalism. To others, Marx is reluctantly conceding a certain degree of "timelessness" and "universality" to artistic expressions. Marx, in other words, is disproving his own materialistic conception of history. P. Demetz says,

This interpretation tries in vain to unite two different trains of thought; Marx, the friend of literature, finds himself here in open revolt against Marx, the theoretician. He insists upon his theory of economic causality and declares Greek art to be a necessary and inimitable product of early Greek productive relationships. At the same time, however, in order to justify the value judgements of his

⁷ Karl Marx, Introduction to the *Grundrisse*, in his *Grundrisse*, Vintage Books, New York, 1973, p.110.

⁸ Ibid. p.111.

taste and German tradition, he combines the economic theory with the traditional metaphor of the cyclical growth of arts and cultures that arise, flourish, and mature in the same way as seeds, blossoms and fruit. Economic thinking is here bound up with ideas that recall Vico's preindustrial theory of history, Herder's poetic visions of the development of art, and Hegel's systematic aesthetics. But the attempt at compounding and uniting such disparate elements cannot succeed: theory continues to clash with traditional value judgements. It is perhaps not without deeper significance that Marx's incomplete manuscript breaks off abruptly at this place; just at the point where Marx himself was willing for the first and last time to apply his theory to a concrete phenomenon of art, the theory proves to be completely incapable of encompassing the reality, and Marx's personal value judgement, his traditional admiration of the Greeks, wins the victory over the unsatisfying theory of economic determinism.⁹

A careful analysis, however, of the whole quotation would dispel such absurdities. Marx's answer is not inept and he is not stating a theory of economic determinism. He is rejecting it along with the traditional artistic value judgements. Marx is presenting the complexity of a dialectical interpretation of art. Della Volpe explains,

The essential issue was brought to the surface by no less than Goethe on the one hand and Marx on the other. For it was Goethe who declared that 'the highest lyric is decidedly historical', and that if for instance you tried 'to separate the mythological and historical elements from Pindar's Odes' you would find that 'you had cut away their inner life altogether'; and it was Marx who argued that 'Greek art pre-supposes Greek mythology', that is 'nature and the social forms already elaborated ... by the popular imagination', and conclude that 'the difficult [for the materialist] lie not in understanding that the Greek [figurative] arts and epic are bound up with certain forms of social development' but rather in the fact that 'they still afford us artistic pleasure and that in a certain respect they count as a norm and as an unattainable model'. Marx's observations show his intuition of the great complexity of the aesthetic problem once the inadequacies of any romantic or idealist approach have been critically ascertained, and it is posed in strictly materialist rather than positivist terms. What this formation indicates is that the historical and social bonds of a work of

⁹ Peter Demetz, Marx, Engels and the Poets, the University of Chicago Press, Chicago and London, 1959, pp.71-72.

art do not condition it mechanically and externally, but must in some way be part of the particular kind of pleasure which the work - and not some other object - affords us. They must therefore partake of the very stuff of the work of art as such: in other words of its intellectual and structural substance.¹⁰

Marx and Engels consider realism with its insistence upon the typical as the more adequate artistic tendency to represent the contradictions of capitalism. Realism induces the writer, as in the case of Balzac, "to go against" his own ideology. For Marx and Engels the literary work presents a contradiction between the author's intention, the author's explicit social content, and the objective, actual meaning of the text.

Well, Balzac was politically a legitimist; his great work is a constant elegy on the irretrievable decay of good society; his sympathies are all with the class doomed to extinction. But for all that, his satire [sic] is never keener, his irony never bitterer, than when he sets in motion the very men and women with whom he sympathizes most deeply - the nobles. And the only men of whom he always speaks with undisguised admiration, are his bitterest political antagonists, the republican heroes of the Cloitre Saint Mery, the men who at this time (1830-1836) were indeed the representatives of the popular masses. That Balzac was compelled to go against his own class sympathies and political prejudices, that he saw the necessity of the downfall of his favorite nobles, and described them as people deserving no better fate; and that he saw the real men of the future where, for the time being, they alone were to be found - that I consider ... one of the grandest features of old Balzac.¹¹

But how is reality reflected in the literary work? What does it mean to say the literary work mirrors reality? Engels and Marx never elaborate on this. Does the mirror metaphor imply a mimetic representation, a crude one to one correspondence between the reality that exists independently of our consciousness and its depiction in the literary work?

¹⁰ G.Della Volpe, *Critique of Taste*, NLB London, WI, 1978, p.7.

¹¹ Quotation taken from P. Demetz, *Marx, Engels, and the Poets*, The University of Chicago Press, Chicago and London, 1963, p.174.

Lukacs' reflection model which follows from his concepts of historical materialism and mediation represent a subtle understanding of realism. Literature is an active and autonomous form of consciousness with its own laws and practices. It reflects in a mediated manner the form of reality. To reflect is to frame a mental structure, which abstracts from the surface of the world of phenomena to express the historical totality, the essential link, that is, between the economic and social relationships. Lukacs' artistic totality represents a harmonious whole: the working out of the capitalistic contradictions between essence and appearance, concrete and abstract, individual and society.

It is in its form, understood as the structuration given to the content, that a literary work reflects the form of reality. The literary type and narration with its dynamics of storytelling and dramization, for instance, portray the predominant dialectical forces of changing society.

Literary criticism then has to ascertain if the literary work reflects in a mediated way or distorts in an unmediated way the form of reality through the analysis of form, typicality and narration.

Goldman's genetic-structuralistic or homology model is based upon Lukacs' concepts of totality and of a social class potential consciousness. Literary or philosophical works' significant structures can be uncovered only if placed and explained within socio-historical global wholes or structures, embodying world-views, which ultimately relate to the interests and aspirations of social classes. Literary works, that is, present a structure homologous to the structure of a class world vision. They are seen as generating from the social-economic situation of the class whose consciousness they embody. They embody, however, the potential not the actual consciousness of a class, the consciousness, that is, of what a class

would think, feel and aspire to if it had a lucid understanding of its status and interests. In the Hidden God, Racine plays reflect the tragic Jansenist world view of the "nobless de la robe", a displaced social group who was divided between its economic dependence on the absolutist monarchy and the pull of bourgeois rationalistic individualism.

Adorno attacks the realist view of literature contending that literature does not have a direct contact with the world in the same way as human consciousness does. Realism commits the blunder of transferring "to the realm of art categories which refer to the relationship of consciousness to the actual world, as if there were no difference between them." Realism neglects the importance of illusion in the depiction of reality. Lukács fails to understand the subjective nature of his "idolized" realism.

According to Adorno, Brecht's didacticism with its insisting that literature should expose the contradictions of capitalistic society by subverting the basic conventional naturalistic forms upon which bourgeois art is based in order to "alienate" the reader from identifying with bourgeois ideology, and Sartre's "engagement" claiming that literature should be politically involved falls into the same error. A fictional text changes the literal meaning of words. It creates an autonomous, illusory reality.

For Adorno, literature, especially modernist writings, keeps at a distance from the reality to which it refers. This distance gives the literary work the power to criticize and negate reality. The negation, however, is effectuated not by the content but by the form of the literary work, by the procedures and techniques, that is, which structure its meaning. In his literary practice, Adorno shows how Kafka's use of the interior monologue or disruptions of conventional narrative time negate the reified reality they portray.

In Critical Del Gusto(1960) Della Volpe presents a realist-materialist conception of literature in a more scientific, systematic way. His intent is to trace out the formal-epistemological aspect of literature by analyzing its semantic or linguistic side. He wants to establish linguistically, that is, how literature generates from the socio-economic reality and provides a knowledge of it. In this manner, he would remedy a key neglect in Marxist literary writings, which start from an examination of society and history and then proceed to the analysis of the literary work to see if it reflects or distorts them without verifying such judgement within the linguistic structure of the literary work.

... I have tried for my part to help make good that 'neglect' to which Engels confessed in his own name and that of Marx ('wir alle ...') in the self-criticism he addresses to Mehring in July 1893. He was referring - the passage is quoted in the frontispiece to his volume - to the neglect of the 'formal aspect', or as we would say the logical and epistemological aspect, of 'ideological representations' (in our case, works of art), for a concern with their origin in 'fundamental economic facts' or solid structures - in other words their 'substantive' aspect. The attempt to redress the balance has of course been made before, by such writers as Plekhanov, Gramsci and Lukács - yet nearly always with uneven results. Thus, for example, an examination of the semantic or linguistic side of poetry and of art is one of the main themes of the present inquiry, precisely because it has been lacking hitherto in any materialist aesthetic.¹²

Through the analysis of language, Della Volpe brings forth an intrinsic relation between society and literature. Accepting with the structural linguistics of the Copenhagen school the identity between language and thought, and thought being historical thought, the expression of a socio-historical reality, Della Volpe shows how the literary symbol generates from

¹² G.Della Volpe, Critique of Taste, p.1.

and transcends the everyday historical literal discourse. The literary symbol is a historically determinate, polysemic abstraction.

Literary criticism therefore should consist of a critical paraphrase which will point out the "scarto dialettico", the semantic difference, that is, between the poetical-polysemic and the literal-univocal discourses on the basis of a historical and functional philology. Only in this manner, according to Della Volpe, it is possible to capture the poetical values of the literary work in their specificity.

Della Volpe brings to its extreme logical consequence Gramsci's criticism of Croce's conception of literature which individuates the artistic value and truth of a literary work in the poetic image or imagination at the expense of the structural or conceptual element. In Cavalcante's canto in the Divine Comedy, Gramsci points out that the structural element - Cavalcante's absolute ignorance of present events -, that Croce had considered extraneous to the poetic-dramatic effect, is, on the contrary, indispensable to the concretization of such an effect. Cavalcante sees Dante, and, disappointed that his son Guido is not with him, asks Dante of his son's whereabouts. Dante's answer that his trip in the world of the dead has been decided by God, "whom perhaps" Guido "had in disdain", and Dante's subsequent hesitation to answer a second similar question are for Cavalcante the verification of his fear that his son has been placed among the damned. Dante's hesitation springs from the fact that he does not know how to explain Cavalcante's ignorance of his son's destiny. Cavalcante's blindness about the present historical state of affairs induces him to equivocate about Dante's answer. Cavalcante takes the word "had been" to mean that his son is dead. Later we find out that Guido has presently reacquired his faith.

Glossing over their differences, basically Althusser, Macherey and Eagleton reject the theory of realism and maintain that literary texts work upon the ideology to produce "an effect of the real". Criticising the concept of unity or formal unification of the text as an ideological myth, they state that the literary text is incomplete and contradictory. It presents discontinuities, gaps and silences. By reading them symptomatically one can detect how the literary practice puts ideology into contradiction and in this manner reveals the reality, the dialectics of history, that ideology necessarily represses in order to maintain itself.

What the text does not say is precisely what makes it as a literary object. It is complete in its incompleteness. The incompleteness of the text, its decenteredness, is a necessary consequence of the conflict within the text between its literary form and its ideological content.

It follows that the function of literary criticism is to place itself in the very decenteredness of the text in order to explain the ideological necessity of that which it is not said, of "the eloquent silence".

When we explain the work, instead of ascending to a hidden centre which is the source of life (the interpretive fallacy is organicist and vitalist), we perceive its actual decenteredness. We refuse the principle of an intrinsic analysis (or an immanent criticism) which would artificially circumscribe the work, and deduce the image of a 'totality' (for images too can be deduced) from the fact that it is entire. The structure of the work, which makes it available to knowledge, is this internal displacement, this caesura, by which it corresponds to a reality that is also incomplete, which it shows without reflecting. The literary work gives the meaning of a difference, reveals a determinate absence, resorts to an eloquent silence.¹³

¹³ P.Macherey, A Theory of Literary production, Routledge and Kegan Paul, London, 1978, p.79.

*Part One: Hegelian Marxists: Georg Lukács, Lucien Goldmann,
Theodor W. Adorno.*

A. G. Lukács

*1. Dialectics*¹

For Lukács the Marxist dialectics is scientific and revolutionary at the same time. It represents the unity of theory and practice. It seeks the truth of reality in order to transform it. The essential nature of the Marxist dialectics is Hegelian. It is based upon the principle of contradiction, the category of concrete totality and the unity of subject and object.

In the preface to *History and Class Consciousness*, Lukács implicitly states the principle of contradiction upon which the Marxist dialectical method is based when he warns the reader unacquainted with dialectics that in the dialectical analysis of reality it is difficult to establish fixed meanings for concepts. Dialectics operates the unity of different concepts and in such unity it transcends and falsify their onesided and fixed meaning. For instance, what is false, taken by itself, abstracted, that is, from the historical context, is, qua false, untrue. If what is false is considered, however, in its historical context, in conjunction with what is true, it becomes an aspect of truth and it is, therefore, both false and not false.² Thus one should not define concepts in an a priori fashion but understand their meaning through the dialectical function they perform. In this manner, he would not cut a figure as sorry as

¹ See Appendix :A note on the Hegelian dialectics

² Ibid. Basically, if we view things and concepts that represent them not in isolation but in their interconnection, and in motion and development, then something is itself and other than itself at the same time.

Schopenhauer' who criticized the Hegelian dialectics without understanding this basic mechanism.

...Moreover, it is even more difficult to establish fixed meanings for concepts in Marx's improved version of the dialectic than in the Hegelian original. For if concepts are only the intellectual forms of historical realities then these forms, one-sided, abstract and false as they are, belong to the true unity as genuine aspects of it. Hegel's statements about this problem of terminology in the preface to the *Phenomenology* are thus even more true than Hegel himself realised when he said: "Just as the expressions 'unity of subject and object', of 'finite and infinite', of 'being and thought', etc., have the drawback that 'object' and 'subject' bear the same meaning as when they exist outside that unity, so that within the unity they mean something other than is implied by their expression: so, too, falsehood is not, qua false, any longer a moment of truth." In the pure historicisation of the dialectic this statement receives yet another twist: in so far as the 'false' is an aspect of the 'true' it is both 'false' and 'non-false'. When the professional demolishers of Marx criticise his 'lack of conceptual rigour' and his use of 'image' rather than 'definitions', etc., they cut as sorry a figure as did Schopenhauer when he tried to expose Hegel's 'logical howlers' in his Hegel critique. All that is proved is their total inability to grasp even the ABC of the dialectical method.³

That the contradictions of reality are logical is also explicitly manifest throughout Lukács' work because their solution within the identity of opposites will bring to the negation of the existing state of affairs - the overthrow of the capitalist system. In criticizing a line of thought by Rosa Luxemburg in which she separates the negative, violent aspect of the proletarian revolution from the post-revolutionary, positive one of social reconstruction, Lukács says,

I shall not pause to dwell on the singularly undialectical nature of this line of thought on the part of an otherwise great dialectician. It is enough to note in passing that the rigid contrast, the mechanical separation of the 'positive' and the 'negative', of 'tearing down' and 'building up' directly contradicts the actuality of the Revolution. For

³ Georg Lukacs, History and Class Consciousness, MIT Press edition, 1971, pp. xlvi-xlvii.

in the revolutionary measures taken by the proletarian state, especially those taken directly after the seizing of power, the `positive' cannot be separated from the `negative', even conceptually, let alone in practice. The process of struggling against the bourgeoisie, of seizing from its hands the instruments of power in economic conflict coincides - especially at the beginning of the revolution - with the first steps towards organising the economy.⁴

The claim to scientific superiority of the Marxist dialectics is warranted by its understanding of social reality through the category of concrete totality which is a historical process. The totality is concrete because it preserves the individuality and historicity of phenomena. This comes forcefully to the fore in Lukács' attack on the methodology of bourgeois positivism which presumes to infer the laws of society by an objective study of isolated, reified empirical facts. Anticipating convictions of contemporary epistemology, Lukács argues that facts are not autonomous, pure data within a determinate context: they already imply an interpretative theory and are dialectically related to the whole concrete context of society in which and from which they acquire significance. A spinning-jenny, for instance, taken in itself, is only a spinning-jenny, that is, a machine; it becomes a form of capital only if we take into consideration the whole social context of which it forms a part. Cut off from the whole, facts are artificially isolated aspects of it. Therefore, the separate, specialist disciplines - such as economics, sociology, law, etc., are utterly unscientific. The true science is the one which embraces the social totality. The whole then is logically prior to its parts, to the facts, and is reflected in them. The whole, however, is not directly given because, as Marx says, the concrete is "a synthesis of many particular determinants, i.e. a unity of diverse element", but it is mediated. An unmediated whole disregards the specificity and the dialectical interrelationship of the various elements of

⁴ Idem., p. 278.

society and culture. It is an undifferentiated aggregate of all phenomena. Consequently, the true meaning of facts is also mediated. By mediation is understood any kind of subordinate whole into which facts must be placed before they are integrated into the general whole. The blunder of bourgeois social sciences, based upon a naive and uncritical empiricism, of neglecting the historical and mediated dimension of facts and of isolating and reifying them is a consequence of the capitalist society which is convinced that social reality naturally has, and will always have, a capitalist structure.

The blinkered empiricist will of course deny that facts can only become facts within the framework of a system - which will vary with the knowledge desired. He believes that every piece of data from economic life, every statistic, every raw event already constitutes an important fact. In so doing he forgets that however simple an enumeration of 'facts' may be, however lacking in commentary, it already implies an 'interpretation'. Already at this stage the facts have been comprehended by a theory, a method; they have been wrenched from their living context and fitted into a theory.

...The 'pure' facts of the natural sciences arise when a phenomenon of the real world is placed (in thought or in reality) into an environment where its laws can be inspected without outside interference...

In this way arise the 'isolated' facts, 'isolated' complexes of facts, separate, specialist disciplines (economics, law, etc.) whose very appearance seems to have done much to pave the way for such scientific methods.

By contrast, in the teeth of all these isolated and isolating facts and partial systems, dialectics insists on the concrete unity of the whole.

...In order to progress from these 'facts' to facts in the true meaning of the word it is necessary to perceive their historical conditioning as such and to abandon the point of view that would see them as immediately given: they must themselves be subjected to a historical and dialectical examination.⁵

...But in fact, to leave empirical reality behind can only mean that the objects of the empirical world are to be understood as aspects of a totality, i.e. as the aspects of a total social situation caught up in the process of historical change. Thus the category of mediation is a lever with which to overcome the mere immediacy of the empirical world

⁵ Idem., pp. 5-7.

and as such it is not something (subjective) foisted on to the objects from outside, it is no value-judgement or 'ought' opposed to their 'is'. It is rather the manifestation of their authentic objective structure.⁶

The totality, Lukács points out, is a historical process which is evolving toward some end. Its contradictions, stemming from the basic contradiction between classes, show "an immanent meaning" - a trend, that is, a future direction where past and present point. A dialectical analysis based on the principle of historical materialism will show that such a trend is revolutionary and the end is the overthrow of the capitalist system.

The concrete totality, however, is not only an object of knowledge, it is also the subject. It represents the identity of subject and object. What we know is what we have made. Lukács quotes Hegel's epistemological and ontological principle: "Truth must be understood and expressed not merely as substance, but also as subject." In considering history as the identity of subject-object - mankind is a producer and a product of historical process - Hegel, according to Lukács, was able to overcome the Kantian epistemological impotence of the thing in itself stemming from the sharp antithesis between object and subject. Knowledge is possible only when knower and known are one. He made the blunder, however, of locating the identical subject-object outside history in the Absolute Mind. For Lukács the identical subject-object is the proletariat. The proletariat, however, comprehends the totality in so far as becomes self-aware, class-conscious - that is in so far as it understand its economic and social position in society and the revolutionary nature of such a position.⁷

⁶ Idem., p. 162.

⁷ "Why must the action be that of the proletariat? Because, in contemporary society, the proletariat is the only revolutionary class."

This is what Lukács calls potential consciousness of the proletariat as oppose to what the proletariat actually thinks, feels and desires. Its very existential situation then allows the proletariat to overcome the reification of consciousness to which the bourgeois consciousness ineluctably aims, conditioned as it is by its own class interests. A reified consciousness considers reality uncritically, as we saw in the case of bourgeois science, as a conglomeration of discrete facts and things. The basic phenomenon of reification is represented by the fetishism of commodities,⁸ the transformation of human relations into a collection of commodities, of discrete things, which is inevitable in a society that subjects production solely to the increase of exchange-value and the exploitation of man. Man is only seen as part of an enormous system of production and exchange and as such he is a commodity, a mere unit of labour power to be purchased and sold according to the laws of the market. His specific individuality is an impediment to the uniformity and rationalization of the system which involve the specialization and the particularization of productive activity. As a result, man is spiritually crippled, confined to the knowledge and practice of a narrow range of skills, and alienated from labour itself as an act of production. Stemming from the economic sector, rationalization structures all the other aspects of society. When the proletariat becomes self-aware, aware of its own position as a commodity in society, it will understand the

⁸ "Marx describes the basic phenomenon of reification as follows: "A commodity is therefore a mysterious thing, simply because in it the social character of men's labour appears to them as an objective character stamped upon the product of that labour; because the relation of the producers to the sum total of their own labour is presented to them as a social relation, existing not between themselves, but between the products of their labour. This is the reason why the products of labour become commodities, social things whose qualities are at the same time perceptible and imperceptible by the senses....It is only a definite social relation between men that assumes, in their eyes, the fantastic form of a relation between things." (Idem., p. 86.)

nature of reification and the social mechanism as a whole, and at the same time it will rebel against it and change it. It can bring to consciousness and transform into practice the immanent trend, the "concrete possibilities" of history's contradictions. The concept of truth as the correspondences of judgement with reality still holds, but it is a reality to be attained in the future. Truth, however, here departs from the traditional understanding of it. It is relative to a social class.

Above all the worker can only become conscious of his existence in society when he becomes aware of himself as a commodity. As we have seen, his immediate existence integrates him as a pure, naked object into the production process. Once this immediacy turns out to be the consequence of a multiplicity of mediations, once it becomes evident how much it presupposes, then the fetishistic forms of the commodity system begin to dissolve: in the commodity the worker recognises himself and his own relations with capital.

...when the worker knows himself as a commodity his knowledge is practical. That is to say, this knowledge brings about an objective structural change in the object of knowledge.⁹

...But it must be emphasized that (1) the structure can be disrupted only if the immanent contradictions of the process are made conscious. Only when the consciousness of the proletariat is able to point out the road along which the dialectics of history is objectively impelled, but which it cannot travel unaided, will the consciousness of the proletariat awaken to a consciousness of the process, and only then will the proletariat become the identical subject-object of history whose praxis will change reality.¹⁰

Understanding the totality, then, is not an act of mere contemplation. The theory of reflection implies a reified world view and a sharp antithesis between subject and object.

Proletarian thought is practical thought and as such is strongly pragmatic. "The proof of the pudding is in the eating," Engels says, providing an idiomatic gloss on Marx's second Thesis on Feuerbach:

⁹ Idem., pp.168-9.

¹⁰ Idem., p. 197.

"The question whether human thinking can pretend to objective truth is not a theoretical but a practical question. Man must prove the truth, i.e. the reality and power, the 'this-sidedness' of his thinking in practice. The dispute over the reality or non-reality of thinking that is isolated from practice is a purely scholastic question. This pudding, however, is the making of the proletariat into a class: the process by which its class consciousness becomes real in practice.¹¹

Since subject and object coincide in the knowledge of the historical process, the class consciousness of the proletariat is the essential driving force of that process. The proletariat understands reality in the very act of transforming it. It is in its practice that the totality actualize itself as a revolutionary process. Theory and practice coincide.¹² The cognitive and normative dimensions of consciousness complement each other and only from a logical standpoint can they be split.

Against the charge of historical determinism, Lukács replies that the potentiality of the self-awareness of the proletariat in the historical process is

¹¹ *Idem.*, p. 198-199.

¹² "In the same essay Marx clearly defined the conditions in which a relation between theory and practice becomes possible. 'It is not enough that thought should seek to realise itself; reality must also strive towards thought.' Or, as he expresses it in an earlier work: 'It will then be realised that the world has long since possessed something in the form of a dream which it need only take possession of consciously, in order to possess it in reality.' Only when consciousness stands in such a relation to reality can theory and practice be united. But for this to happen the emergence of consciousness must become the decisive step which the historical process must take towards its proper end (an end constituted by the wills of men, but neither dependent on human whim, nor the product of human invention). The historical function of theory is to make this step a practical possibility. Only when a historical situation has arisen in which a class must understand society if it is to assert itself; only when the fact that a class understands itself means that it understands society as a whole and when, in consequence, the class becomes both the subject and the object of knowledge; in short, only when these conditions are all satisfied will the unity of theory and practice, the precondition of the revolutionary function of the theory, become possible.

Such a situation has in fact arisen with the entry of the proletariat into history. 'When the proletariat proclaims the dissolution of the existing social order,' Marx declares, 'it does no more than disclose the secret of its own existence, for it is the effective dissolution of that order.'" (*Idem.*, pp.2-3.)

an indication of its free activity. Instead of revolutionizing society, the proletariat may also adapt to the forms of bourgeois society.

Realizing the identity of thought and reality is the central methodological concept of objective idealism, against which Marx's materialism had asserted the primacy of being over thought and their separation, Lukács, however, later makes the category of reflection the focal point of his theory of knowledge. Even so, Lukács still retains the concept of totality as a concrete unity of thought and history, of facts and values.

In its struggle to achieve self-consciousness, to understand the totality, the proletariat has to make use of the tenets of historical materialism. "It is one of the most important of its weapons." It is inseparable from its practical and critical activity. From the nature of totality and mediation, it follows that historical materialism, even emphasizing the economic factor above all, "does not link the world of forms and the content of consciousness with the economic structure in a directly productive relation," but it links it in a mediated relationship to the whole social being.

To the argument that historical materialism is self-refuting if reapplied to itself - that is, that it is itself an ideology, a "function of the economic reality of the capitalist society" - Lukács answers that not all ideologies are representations of false consciousness. Historical materialism is the correct historical method and the true ideology of the proletariat.

I believe that this objection can be upheld in part, but to concede it is not to the detriment of the scientific status of historical materialism. Historical materialism both can and must be applied to itself. But this must not be allowed to lead to total relativism, let alone to the conclusion that historical materialism is not the correct historical method. The substantive truths of historical materialism are of the same type as were the truths of classical economics in Marx's view: they are truths within a particular social order and system of production. As such, but only as such, their claim to validity is

absolute. But this does not preclude the emergence of societies in which by virtue of their different social structures other categories and other systems of truth prevail.¹³

¹³ Idem., p. 226.

2. *Literary Theory and Criticism*

Inserting himself in the traditional Marxist conception of art, Lukács maintains that realism is the essential characteristic of works of art. His theory is descriptive and evaluative at the same time. The Marxist critic in establishing which works satisfy the criteria of realism is also making a value judgement. He is excluding everything else from the realm of art. Lukács stresses that evaluation and explanation are necessarily intertwined. In pointing out Flaubert's and C. F. Meyer's impoverished and inadequate picture of reality, he says, "...it is the duty of Marxist aesthetics not only to explain this impoverishment and inadequacy in a social-genetic way, but also to measure them aesthetically against the highest demands of the artistic reflection of historical reality and to find them lacking. Criticism must be allowed the right to judge and condemn the artistic products of entire periods, while acknowledging their social-historical necessity - indeed, the whole aesthetic judgment rests upon this acknowledgment."¹

Art is a reflection of reality. Reality, as we know it, is the concrete dialectical totality. Lukács artistic totality represents a harmonious whole: the working out of the capitalistic contradictions between essence and appearance, concrete and abstract, individual and society. From Lukács, concepts of historical materialism and mediation it follows that the reflection does not mean photographic or mimetic representation - a one-to-one correspondence between the objects and the events of the world and the ideas and images of a work of art. Art is an active and autonomous form of consciousness with its

¹ Georg Lukacs, The Historical Novel, Beacon Press, Boston, 1963, p.333-4.

own laws and practices. To reflect is to frame a mental structure of reality. It is the form of the work of art which reflects in a mediated manner the form of reality.

...artistic form is just as much a mode of reflecting reality as the terminology of logic (as Lenin demonstrated so convincingly). Just as in the process of the reflection of reality through thought, the categories that are most general, the most abstracted from the surface of the world of phenomena, from sense data, therefore, express the most abstract laws governing nature and men; so is it with the forms of art.²

But, different from logic, that is, science, it is a form which expresses the concreteness, that is, the content of life. It is concrete knowledge in which form and content are dialectically related.

That the artistic forms carry out the process of abstraction, the process of generalization, is a fact long recognized. Aristotle contrasted poetry and history from this point of view (it should be noted by the contemporary reader that Aristotle understood by history a narrative chronicle of loosely related events in the manner of Herodotus). Aristotle says: "Historians and poets do not differ in the fact that the latter write in verse, the former in prose.... The difference lies rather in the fact that the one reports what actually happened, the other what could happen. Thus poetry is more philosophical than history, for poetry tends to express the universal, history the particular." Aristotle obviously meant that because poetry expresses the universal it is more philosophical than history. He meant that poetry (fiction) in its characters, situations and plot not merely imitates individual characters, situations and actions but expresses simultaneously the regular, the universal and the typical.³

A meaningful form then has to be understood in the Hegelian sense as the aesthetic shape or structuration or configuration given to a content. A configuration which is rendered through linguistic or technical devices but is

² Georg Lukacs, *Writer and Critic, and Other Essays*, The Merlin Press Ltd., London, 1970, p. 45.

³ *Idem.*, pp. 45-6.

not itself something linguistic or technical. The dialectics of form and content, the conversion of one into the other and vice versa, is, according to Lukács, the characteristic of a work of art. When this conversion is "well developed", the work of art gives the impression of being "natural", "artless", completely objective. It reflects reality in the most clear and unequivocal manner.⁴

Consequently, realism is not a style restricted to what historically has been called realism. It comprehends a variety of styles. Lukács, for instance, calls Shakespeare, Goethe and Dante "realists". He defends the fantastic and hyperbolic elements in Balzac's literary practice as indispensable in rendering the dialectics of reality against Zola's or Flaubert's sterile, strictly naturalistic practice.

Realism, as the apperception of the dialectics of the concrete totality, is strictly dependent upon the categories of typicality and narration. Typicality and narration mediate such an apperception.

The typical, for Lukács, is not a pure statistical mean. It is the individual, concrete character or situation which manifests the universal determinants of reality.

⁴ "The dialectic of content and form, the transformation from the one into the other, can naturally be studied in all the stages of origin, development and effect of a work of art. We will merely allude to a few important aspects here. When we take the problem of subject matter, we seem at first glance to be dealing again with a problem of content. If we investigate more closely, however, we see that breadth and depth of subject matter convert into decisive problems of form. In the course of investigating the history of individual forms, one can see clearly how the introduction and mastery of new thematic material calls forth a new form with significantly new principles within the form, governing everything from composition to diction. (Consider the struggle for bourgeois drama in the eighteenth century and the birth of an entirely new type of drama with Diderot, Lessing and the young Schiller.)

When we follow this process over a long period of history, the conversion of content into form and vice versa in the effect of works of art is even more impressive. Precisely in those works in which this conversion of one into the other is most developed, does the resultant new form attain the fullest consummation and seem entirely 'natural' (one thinks of Homer, Cervantes, Shakespeare, etc.). (Idem., p. 52.)

The central category and criterion of realist literature is the type, a peculiar synthesis which organically binds together the general and the particular both in characters and situations. What makes a type a type is not its average quality, not its mere individual being, however profoundly conceived; what makes it a type is that in it all the humanly and socially essential determinants are present on their highest level of development, in the ultimate unfolding of the possibilities latent in them, in extreme presentation of their extremes, rendering concrete the peaks and limits of men and epochs.⁵

The type subsumes dialectically the individual and the universal. That the typical, the universal is a component of reality and not a product of a merely subjective intellectual operation is well argued by Marx, according to Lukács, when he says, "The concrete is concrete because it is the synthesis of many determinants, the unity within diversity. In our thinking the concrete thus appears as the process of synthesis, as the result, not as the point of departure, although it is really the point of departure and hence also the point of departure for perception and conception."⁶

Narration with its dynamics of storytelling and dramatization portrays the rhythm of the contradictions of reality. It penetrates into the inner dialectical interrelationship of human passions and events where "chance" is a pretext for the inevitable. It shows, therefore, how the characters are directly involved in the events, how they experience them. This stems from the fact that the writer himself is a participant in public life. Description, on the other hand, portrays a reified, static reality: a world of things where events are cut off from the fates of the characters and observed or contemplated from outside. The writer is a mere observer. Description, in addition, minimizes

⁵ Georg Lukacs, Studies In European Realism, The Merlin Press, London, 1972, p. 6.

⁶ Georg Lukacs, Writer and Critic, and Other Essays, The Merlin Press Ltd., London, 1970, pp. 46-7.

plot. Plot contrasts the ideological understanding of themselves and reality that the characters have, and reality as it is. From the definition of form it follows that plot is an epistemological and ontological criterion at the same time.⁷ Lukács comparison between the depiction of the horse race in Zola's *Nana* and Tolstoy's *Anna Karenina* illustrates this distinction.

The description of the race is a brilliant example of Zola's virtuosity. Every possible detail at a race is described precisely, colourfully and with sensuous vitality:.... However, for all its virtuosity the description is mere filler in the novel. The events are loosely related to the plot and could easily be eliminated; the sole connection arises from the fact that one of *Nana's* many fleeting lovers is ruined in the swindle.

In *Anna Karenina* the race represents the crisis in a great drama. *Vronsky's* fall means an overturning in *Anna's* life. Just before the race she had realized that she was pregnant and, after painful hesitation, had informed *Vronsky* of her condition. Her shock at *Vronsky's* fall impels the decisive conversation with her husband. The relationships of the protagonists enter a new critical phase because of the race. The race is thus no mere tableau but rather a series of intensely dramatic scenes which provide a turning point in the plot.

The absolute divergence of intentions in the scenes in the two novels is further reflected in the creative approaches. In Zola the race is described from the standpoint of an observer; in Tolstoy it is narrated from the standpoint of a participant.

The key question is: what is meant by "chance" in fiction? Without chance all narration is dead and abstract. No writer can portray life if he eliminates the fortuitous. On the other hand, in his representation of life he must go beyond crass accident and elevate chance to the inevitable... The race is, on the one hand, merely an occasion for the

⁷ "When we analyse this formal requirement precisely in its formal abstractness, we come to the conclusion that only through plot can the dialectic of human existence and consciousness be expressed, that only through a character's action can the contrast between what he is objectively and what he imagines himself to be, be expressed in a process that the reader can experience. Otherwise the writer would either be forced to take his characters as they take themselves to be and to present them then from their own limited subjective perspective, or he would have to merely assert the contrast between their view of themselves and the reality and would not be able to make his readers perceive and experience the contrast. The requirement for representing the artistic reflection of social reality through plot is therefore no mere invention of aestheticians; it derives from the basic materialist dialectical practice of the great poets (regardless of their frequent idealist ideologies) formulated by aesthetics and established as a formal postulate - without being recognized as the most general, abstract reflection of a fundamental fact of objective reality." (Idem., p.51.)

of life he must go beyond crass accident and elevate chance to the inevitable... The race is, on the one hand, merely an occasion for the explosion of a conflict, but, on the other hand, through its relationship to Vronsky's social ambitions - an important factor in the subsequent tragedy - it is far more than a mere incident.⁸

One of the requirements for the creation of realistic works then is the author's participation in the life of his time. Only his engagement enables him to comprehend the nature of reality. Knowledge is practical. To comprehend is to act. The other requirement is that reality itself presents "concrete possibilities" for the author to comprehend it. It is usually a reality which depicts a society in the process of consolidation after severe crises.

Balzac, Stendhal, Dickens and Tolstoy depict a bourgeois society consolidating itself after severe crises, the complicated laws of development operating in its formation, and the tortuous transitions from the old society in decay to the new society in birth. They themselves actively experienced the crises in this development, though in different ways. Goethe, Stendhal and Tolstoy took part in the wars which were the midwives of the revolutions; Balzac was a participant in and victim of the feverish speculations of emerging French capitalism; Goethe and Stendhal served as government officials; and Tolstoy, as landowner and as participant in various social organizations (the census and famine commissions, for example) directly experienced important events of the transitional upheaval.⁹

The above requirements explain the contradiction in the great bourgeois writers between their political-ideological credos and their literary performance - the ability to grasp reality. F. Jameson says:

Yet in his examples of such engagement, Lukács follows his materialism through to a further and even paradoxical conclusion: if it is the material substructure, the social situation that takes precedence over mere opinion, ideology, the subjective picture someone has of himself, then we may logically be forced to conclude that under certain

⁸ *Idem.*, pp. 110-112.

⁹ *Idem.*, p. 118.

circumstances a conservative, a royalist, a believing Catholic can better seize the genuine forces at work in society than a writer whose sympathies are relatively socialistic. This is the ultimate force of Lukács comparison between Balzac and Zola.¹⁰

The great bourgeois writers are called by Lukács critical realists in spite of their ideology, whereas the great Marxist writers are called socialist realists. Obviously, socialist realism represents the highest literary achievement. "The perspective of socialist realism is, of course, the struggle for socialism...Socialist realism differs from critical realism, not only in being based on a concrete socialist perspective, but also in using this perspective to describe the forces working towards socialism from the inside."¹¹

For further illustration and clarification of the interrelationship of form, typicality, narration and the writer's ideology, we will quote two passages from Lukács literary practice. The first concerns W. Scott's *Waverley*. The form of the novel is the "composition", that is, the configuration that the conflictual social and political forces of the time - the Tories, the Whigs, and the Jacobites - assume through typicality and narration. *Waverley*, the mediocre hero with a "middle way" viewpoint, standing between the "extreme" conflicting social groups, draws them together and manifests through his adventures their dialectics. *Waverley* then is not, like Achilles, a historical significant type, "the sun round which the planets revolve". He is a vehicle for portraying the typical - the universal determinants - of his time in concrete lived situations. This manner of artistic composition is characteristic of all Scott's works and stems from his own

¹⁰ F. Jameson, Marxism and Form, Princeton University Press, New Jersey, 1971, pp. 202-3.

¹¹ G. Lukacs, The Meaning of Contemporary Realism, London, 1963, p. 93.

political views, his conception of English history as the assertion of a middle course through the struggle of extremes.

Scott presents great crises of historical life in his novels. Accordingly, hostile social forces, bent on one another's destruction, are everywhere colliding. Since those who lead these warring forces are always passionate partisans of their respective sides, there is the danger that their struggle will become a merely external picture of mutual destruction incapable of arousing the human sympathies and enthusiasms of the reader. It is here that the compositional importance of the mediocre hero comes in... The appropriate fortunes of such a mediocre hero, who sides passionately with neither of the warring camps in the great crisis of his time can provide a link of this kind without forcing the composition. Let us take the best known example. Waverley is an English country squire from a family which is pro-Stuart, but which does no more than quietly sympathize in a politically ineffective fashion. During his stay in Scotland as an English officer, Waverley, as a result of personal friendships and love entanglements, enters the camp of the rebellious Stuart supporters. As a result of his old family connections and the uncertain nature of his participation in the uprising, which allows him to fight bravely, but never to become fanatically partisan, his relations with the Hanoverian side are sustained. In this way Waverley's fortunes create a plot which only gives us a pragmatic picture of the struggle on both sides, but brings us humanly close to the important representatives of either side.¹²

The second passage is about Balzac's *Pere Goriot*. Balzac's legitimist royalism induces him to employ his literary energies in exposing the contradictions and the ugliness of bourgeois society. This is achieved by intensifying the manifestations of these contradictions to an extreme degree in an individual or situation through an "avalanche" of events. The exaggeration of types and the improbability of events, taken by themselves, are just as such, but in the social fabric depicted by Balzac are necessary elements in reflecting the form of the social reality of capitalist society.

¹² G. Lukacs, *The Historical Novel*, Beacon Press, Boston, 1963, pp. 36-7.

society, the inevitable inner contradictions appearing in every institution in bourgeois society, the varied forms of conscious and unconscious rebellion against the enslavement and crippling of the institutions in which men are imprisoned. Every manifestation of these contradictions in an individual or a situation is intensified to an extreme by Balzac and with merciless consequences. Among his characters he depicts men representing ultimate extremes: being lost or in revolt, thirsting for power or degenerate: Goriot and his daughters, Rastignac, Vautrin, the Viscountess de Beauseant, Maxime de Trailles. The events through which these characters expose themselves follow upon each other in an avalanche that appears incredible if the content is considered in isolation - an avalanche impelled by scarcely credible explosions.¹³

Lukács makes nineteenth-century realism the standard of literature. Almost all literature after this period - naturalism, symbolism, expressionism, surrealism, etc. - is judged by Lukács as non-realist, and therefore as decadent and mystifying. Writers such as Zola, Proust, Joyce, Kafka, etc., because of their epistemological stance as mere observers, are unable to comprehend the totality and to perform the act of mediation.

Lukács' criticism of Zola can be taken as an illustrative example. As a matter of fact, he calls all the non-realist writers substantially naturalist. He says that Zola portrays in a photographic way an unconnected and unmediated world of particular events to the laws that he believes govern reality. Particular events and laws remain abstractly separated from each other creating a totality of reifications. Zola's scientific method is utterly unscientific.

Despite all Zola's ideological concessions to the fashionable dogma of agnosticism, for example, he is nevertheless profoundly sure of having found the most important and decisive laws of existence as a whole in the immediately verifiable influence of the milieu and heredity upon human destinies. Which is why he considers naturalism to be the

¹³ G. Lukacs, Writer and Critic, and Other Essays, The Merlin Press Ltd., London, 1970, pp. 49-50.

found the most important and decisive laws of existence as a whole in the immediately verifiable influence of the milieu and heredity upon human destinies. Which is why he considers naturalism to be the modern and "scientifically" correct method of writing,... This occurs as a general trend only at a much more advanced stage of literary decadence, very often in opposition to naturalism.

What is decisive, rather, is the naturalistic, that is, immediate and therefore abstract attitude to these general laws. Thus, what Hegel laid down generally in his criticism of all immediate knowledge, applies *mutatis mutandis* to artistic truth as conceived by naturalism: "Its peculiarity [i.e. of immediate knowledge, G.L.] is this: the content of immediate knowledge is only truth when taken in isolation, when mediation is excluded." This exclusion of mediations may be easily studied in literature by comparing the relationship between man and society in Balzac and Zola.

Universality without mediation is necessarily abstract.¹⁴

Zola then fails to create types. What he creates instead is the merely average or the pathological character.¹⁵

Besides, Zola's laws can never reflect reality. They are not based upon the principle of contradiction. They consider society as a harmonious organism whose social evils are only attacking diseases. According to the Marxist dialectics, instead, social evils are symptoms of the contradictory nature of capitalism. Zola is imprisoned within the bourgeois progressive myth of science.

Zola says: "The social cycle is identical with the life-cycle: in society as in the human body, there is a solidarity linking the various organs with each other in such a way that if one organ putrefies, the rot spreads to the organs and results in a very complicated disease...What he then puts in the place of Balzac's ideas, as a 'scientific' result, is the undialectic conception of the organic unity of nature and society; the elimination of antagonisms is regarded as the motive power of social movement and the principle of 'harmony' as the essence of social being. Thus Zola's subjectively most sincere and courageous criticism

¹⁴ G. Lukacs, The Historical Novel, Beacon Press, Boston, 1963, p. 215.

¹⁵ G. Lukacs, Studies in European Realism, The Merlin Press, London, 1972, p. 176.

of society is locked into the magic circle of progressive bourgeois narrow-mindedness.¹⁶

¹⁶ *Idem.*, pp. 86-7.

B. L. Goldmann's Hidden God

Goldmann maintains that Lukács dialectical standpoint, which denies the possibility of any separate history of economics, politics, religion, philosophy and literature and states therefore that facts are significant only when placed within concrete-historical wholes which reveal the necessary interdependence of all forms of human behavior, is the most reliable scientific methodology in humanistic science. It provides a more "objective, explicative and comprehensive" analysis of reality. It resolves the dichotomy of facts and value and brings to the fore the understanding - experimentally demonstrated by Piaget - that cognitive norms are not based upon transcendental criteria of rationality but upon evaluative and practical factors without which they cannot be conceived.

Facts concerning man always form themselves into significant global structures, which are at once and the same time practical, theoretical and emotive, and these structures can be studied in a scientific manner, that is to say they can be both explained and understood, only within a practical perspective based upon the acceptance of a certain set of values.¹

For Goldman, wholes are characterized by significant structural patterns of ideas, emotions and practical norms of behavior of large social groups. These significant structures, Goldman states, offer a theoretically objective, clear cut field of investigation, the "understanding" of which does not involve, as Dilthey would have, the subjective act of imitative experience or empathy. Understanding entails a description "as exact as possible" of the significant structures. Explanation, on the other hand, is the

¹ L. Goldmann, The Hidden God, Routledge & Kegan Paul, London, 1964, pp. ix.

integration of those structures, as "constitutive and functional" elements in structures which "directly" contain them. In the act of explaining the lesser structure by the greater, we also understand the greater. In this dialectical cognitive play of lesser structures within greater structures, the traditional neo-Kantian dichotomy between "explanation and understanding", as two different mental operations, is resolved.

In his studies, Goldman seeks to establish the precise, genetic links between literary and philosophical works and the social group whose consciousness they express. In order to do so, the first step is "to understand and to explain" literary and philosophical works by placing them within the world vision, a "trans-individual mental structure", of the social class to which the author belongs. The world vision is "a whole complex of ideas, aspirations, and feelings which links together the members of a social group (a group which, in most cases, assumes the existence of a social class) and which opposes them to members of other social groups."² Explanation of the literary and philosophical works in the light of a logic supposedly immanent in the structures of individual psychology is irrelevant because the objective meaning of the text is not always clear to the author himself.

"What he [the author] intended to say, and the subjective meaning which his books had for himself, do not always coincide with their objective meaning, and it is this which is the first concern of the philosophically-minded historian. For example, Hume was not himself a thorough-going sceptic, but the empiricism to which his work gave rise does lead to an attitude of complete scepticism. Descartes believed in God, but Cartesian rationalism is atheistic. It is when he replaces the work in a historical evolution which he studies as a whole, and when he relates it to the social life of the time at which it was written - which he also looks upon as a whole - that the enquirer

² Ibid., p.17.

can bring out the work's objective meaning, which was often not completely clear for the author himself."³

The world vision is not an immediate, empirical fact but a conceptual working hypothesis which is able to show how works "apparently dissimilar" as Kant's, Pascal's and Racine's, for instance, display a similar structure essential to their formation and understanding. They exhibit a structure homologous to the structure of the world-view.

Even on an empirical plane, its importance and reality can be seen as soon as we go beyond the ideas of work of a single writer, and begin to study them as part of a whole. For example, scholars have long since noted the similarities which exist between certain philosophical systems and certain literary works: Descartes and Corneille, Pascal and Racine, Schelling and the German romantics, Hegel and Goethe. What I shall try to show...is that similarities can be found not only in the details of the particular arguments put forward but also in the general structure of texts as apparently dissimilar as the critical writings of Kant and the Pensées of Pascal.

On the plane of personal psychology, there are no people more different than the poet, who creates particular beings and things, and the philosopher, who thinks and expresses himself by means of general concepts. Similarly, it is difficult to imagine two beings more dissimilar in every aspects of their lives than Kant and Pascal. Thus, if most of the essential elements which make up the schematic structure of the writings of Kant, Pascal and Racine are similar in spite of the differences which separate these authors as individuals, we must accept the existence of a reality which goes beyond them as individuals and finds its expression in their work. It is this which I intend to call the world vision...⁴

The world vision, however, is an intellectual construction which "is not dialectical in origin, and has been widely used by Dilthey and his school" in a vague and idealistic way, producing no scientific results. It was related to

³ Ibid., p.7-8.

⁴ Ibid., p. 15.

a universal, classless history of ideas or culture, of which it was considered the outcome. It is only by means of the dialectics that it acquires a scientific status.

This brings us to Goldman's second step of his intellectual endeavor: the integration of the world view within a larger structure, a determinate socio-economic whole, amenable to scientific analysis. The dialectics analyzes the world vision in its genesis from the social economic structure of the class whose consciousness it embodies.

Thus, the method which consists of going from the actual text to the conceptual vision, and then returning from this vision to the text again, is not an innovation of dialectical materialism. The improvement which dialectical materialism makes upon this method lies in the fact that by integrating the ideas of a particular individual into those of a social group, and especially by analysing the historical function played in the genesis of ideas by social classes, it provides a scientific basis for the concept of world vision, and frees it from any criticism that it might be purely arbitrary, speculative and metaphysical.⁵

Literary or philosophical works, then, are expressions of collective consciousness. They present a structure homologous to the structure of the world vision. As in Lukács, in a literary work characters embody primarily abstract concepts. The structure of a literary or philosophical work, however, shows a high degree of elaboration and coherence. It converts the potential consciousness of a class into actuality, and, therefore, it sharpens the class' awareness of its full consciousness. This is the function of the author and also what gives the literary and philosophical text its value. The author

advances very considerably the degree of structural coherence which the collective consciousness itself so far attained only in a rough and

⁵ Ibid., p. 20.

ready fashion. Thus the work constitutes a collective achievement through the individual consciousness of its creator, an achievement which will afterwards reveal to the group what it was moving towards without knowing it.⁶

In the Hidden God, a study of Pascal's Pensées and Racine's tragedies, Goldmann believes to have shown how the dialectical explanation of the texts, world vision and social class has to be conducted. He says that

any valid and scientific study of Pascal's Pensées or Racine's tragedies will be based not only upon a careful analysis of their structure but also upon an attempt to fit them into the intellectual and emotional climate which is closest to them. That is to say, they should first of all be studied as part of the whole movement of Jansenism, seen both as a spiritual and as an intellectual phenomenon, and then in relation to the economic and social life of the group or class which found its expression in the Jansenist movement. This book is thus a study of Racine and Pascal with special respect to the expression which Jansenism gave to the social, economic and political situation of the noblesse de robe in seventeenth-century France.⁷

The world-vision expressed by Jansenism is a "tragic world vision". Its structural categories are God, World and Man: man is tragically torn between the rationalism of a valueless human world deserted by Providence and deprived of clear moral laws and the absolute authority of a hidden God, of a God, that is, who is not directly present in nature. Reason, embodied in mechanistic physics, has denied the presence of God in nature. His only doubtful function "is to `give a little tap to start the world off' after which he has nothing else to do."⁸

⁶ L. Goldmann, Genetic Structuralism in the Sociology of literature, in Sociology of Literature and Drama, eds. Elizabeth and Tom Burns, Harmondsworth, Middx, 1973, p. 153.

⁷ L. Goldmann, The Hidden God, p. 99.

⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 29.

The essential conflict of the Jansenistic tragic mind is represented by the lucid understanding of the new world created by rationalistic individualism, together with all the invaluable and scientifically valid acquisitions, and, at the same time, the impossibility to accept it as it is without God's presence as the guarantor of human rationality and effort to pursue a life of relative justice and truth amidst an amoral socio-economic setting, in the belief of a God who, even though always absent as man's helper, is always present as a spectator and an uncompassionate and uncompromising judge. He demands complete dedication to a life of absolute justice and absolute truth.

The God of tragedy, the God of Racine, Pascal and Kant, is a wholly different being. Like the rationalists' God, he does indeed bring man no help from outside; but, unlike the rationalists' God, he offers man no guarantee of the validity of his own strength and powers of reasoning. Far from offering man anything, the God of tragedy judges man and makes demands on him; he forbids the slightest degree of compromise, and constantly reminds man - who lives in a universe where life is made possible only by approximation - that a true calling is one devoted to the quest for wholeness and authenticity. He is a God, in Lukács words,

whose cruel and harsh tribunal knows neither pardon nor prescription, who mercilessly punishes the slightest hint of infidelity towards the quest for Essence; a God who, with blind rigidity, sweeps from the ranks of men all those who have, by the slightest gesture, made in the most fleeting and forgotten moment of time, shown that they are strangers to the world of Essences; a God whose merciless judgment can be softened by no riches and no splendid gifts offered by the soul, and in whose sight along life, filled with most glorious actions, is as nothing.⁹

Jansenism represents the social consciousness of a displaced social group, the noblesse de robe, recruited from the bourgeois class, who was

⁹ Ibid., p. 38.

divided between its economic dependence on the absolutist authority of the king and the influence and attraction of bourgeois rationalistic individualism. It represents, that is, the impossibility of a class to resolve its tragic state of confusion and uncertainty by overthrowing the absolute monarchy and creating the conditions for a rationalistic bourgeois society. Paradoxically, for its existence, the noblesse de robe needs the very monarchy that is displacing it in favor of a new royal bureaucracy.

Beside the court nobility the profile of another class appears: the gens de robe, the majority of whom were ennobled. We will call them the noblesse de robe. Commoners by origin, fulfilling effective social functions as against the nobles de cour, they regarded the latter with a disdain mixed with envy on account of its pomp and privileged social situation. The noblesse de robe, living not only in Paris, but chiefly in the provinces, involved with commoners by virtue of their daily lives and affairs, and often related to them, were indisputably enticed by the rationalistic individualism of the bourgeoisie. (Some of them became renowned mathematicians.) But, on the other hand, since their function was the most considerable component of their success, they were too bound to the monarchy to be able to accept rationalism in all its consequences. Hence, it is this class in France in which developed the tragic vision wherein man appears torn between two contradictory claims that the world prevents him from reconciling.¹⁰

Pascal's Pensées and Racine's tragedies exemplify the maximum "potential consciousness" of the noblesse de robe to which they belong. They express Jansenism in a coherent and consummate form.

In his Main Currents of Marxism, L. Kolakowski synthesizes very clearly Goldmann's interpretation of Pascal's static tragic-dialectical consciousness, incapable to transcend the conflict of opposite views. He says:

Pascal reached the zenith of tragic consciousness in 1657, immediately after the date of the Provincial Letters. He denied the value of all

¹⁰ L. Goldmann, The Human Sciences and Philosophy, Jonathan Cape Ltd, London, 1969, p. 109.

worldly knowledge, yet went on with scientific research; he refused to compromise with authority, yet declared his obedience to the Church. He did not believe that truth and righteousness could triumph in this world, but he proclaimed that the whole of life should be devoted to fighting for them. This attitude also conditioned his literary style: in the world of tragedy no statement is true and no action is right unless accompanied by another which contradicts it. To this extent Pascal is also an exponent of dialectical thought, although his dialectic is static and tragic: there is no synthesis, no escape from the clash of opposites....In the last resort Pascal cannot recognize any basic principles of cognition, either the cogito or the rules of empiricism, but falls back on the *raisons du coeur*, on a practical faculty as the only trustworthy guide. In this respect too he anticipates dialectical thought; his dialectic reaches its acme in the *pari*, where a question fundamental to human destiny, the existence of God, is decided not by theoretical reasoning but by a gambler's throw.¹¹

The *pari* is an act of hope dictated by reasons of the heart: by weighing the gain and the loss against or in favor of God's existence in terms of man's happiness. Reason is impotent to decide because God's will and existence is hidden from the world. Descartes' epistemological stratagem to guarantee the truth of his cogito upon the proclaimed certitude of God's existence is seen as a 'deus ex machina', desperate attempt to rescue what is absolutely uncertain. With Descartes' rationalism the gulf between creature and creator has become infinite.¹²

¹¹ L. Kolakowski, *Main Currents of Marxism*, Oxford University Press, Oxford, 1978, pp. 332-3.

¹² Pascal says, "Let us examine this point: 'Either God is, or is not,' we can say. But to which side shall we incline? Reason cannot help us. There is an infinite gulf fixed between creature and creator. What will you wager? It is like a game in which heads or tails may turn up. There is no reason for backing either the one possibility or the other. You cannot reasonably argue in favor of either.

If you know nothing either way, it might be urged, the true course is not to wager at all. But you must wager; that does not depend on your will. You are embarked in this business. Which will you choose?

Let us see. Since you must choose, your reason is no more affronted in choosing one way than the other. That point is clear. But what of your happiness? Let us weigh the gain and the loss in wagering that God does exist. If you wager that He does, and He does, you gain all; if you wager that He does, and He does not, you lose nothing. If you win, you take all; if you lose, you lose nothing. Wager then, unhesitatingly, that He does exist. This is demonstrable, and if men are capable of any truths, this is one.

About Racine's plays, Goldmann points out that they are profoundly Jansenistic in spite of the fact that Racine argues vehemently with Port-Royal whose members disapproved of Racine's pagan subject-matter and theatrical conventions. Racine's plays present a severe and uncompromising hidden God, a meaningless world of beings lacking authenticity, awareness and human value and a tragic character whose greatness consists in the fact that he rejects this world. Goldmann writes:

The constituent elements of Racine's plays never vary, at least in the three genuine tragedies that he wrote: they are always God, the World and Man. .

...Setting out from the central theme of the tragic vision, the radical opposition between, on the one hand, a world of beings lacking in authentic awareness and human greatness and, on the other, the tragic characters whose greatness lies precisely in the fact that they refuse this world and this life, two types of tragedy become possible: those with and those without peripeteia and recognition. The second type is again divided into two sections, that in which the world and that in which the hero is at the centre of the action.

The tragedy 'in which there is neither peripeteia nor recognition' is the one where the hero knows from the very beginning that there is no possible way in which he can fit in with a world that is empty of awareness, and against which he sets up, without the slightest hesitation of illusion, the greatness of his own refusal.

The other type of tragedy is the one where the hero's recognition of his fate is preceded by a fall because the tragic character still thinks, at the beginning of the play, that he can live without compromise and impose his own desires on the world. The play ends inevitably with his recognition that this was an illusion.¹³

If we ought to do nothing except on a certainty, we ought to do nothing for religion, because it is not a matter of certainty. But it is false to say, "We ought to do nothing except on a certainty." In a voyage at sea, in a battle, we act on uncertainties. If it be the case that we ought to do nothing except on a certainty, then we ought to do nothing at all, for nothing is certain. (Alburey Castell, An Introduction To Modern Philosophy, The Macmillan Company, New York, 1963, pp. 31-2.)

¹³ L. Goldmann, The Hidden God, pp. 317-8.

C. T. W. Adorno

1. Dialectics

Lukács' analysis of the antinomies of bourgeois thought as reflections not of the inadequacy of reason but of a reality essentially contradictory provides Adorno with an intellectual tool which is not only able to show the historical relativity of any philosophy but also to invalidate by immanent criticism any philosophical claim which could be shown to present the reified relationships of society. Reification is a fact of consciousness as much as a social process. The Kantian problem of the thing in itself and the antinomies that follow, based upon the assumption of the duality of thought and reality, for instance, are solved as soon as that duality is shown to be the ideological result of the reified relationship between worker and commodities. Commodities appear as given, immutable objects because they are cut off from the social process of their production, that is, from the workers who have produced them. The social-historical genesis of subject and object and their interdependence reveals that the abstractness of Kant's formulation is the abstractness of exchange value and that the irrationality of the thing in itself is the resulting opacity of commodities.

To the structure of reification Adorno adds the structure of domination that he found also very pervasive, and upon them and the contradictoriness and interdependence of the real he grounds his attack on philosophy especially through the analyses of Kant, Hegel, Kierkegaard and Heidegger. The dynamics of philosophy, he contends, has wrongly been to individuate an identity principle - an ontological or epistemological absolute, being the subject or the object, or within the subject or the object, to which everything

subject or the object, or within the subject or the object, to which everything else could be reduced. In this manner, Philosophy reifies its concepts and falls into antinomies. It fails to give an adequate account of reality where everything is interdependent with its opposite but irreducible to it and in motion. The relation between subject and object is

neither an ultimate duality nor a screen hiding ultimate unity. They constitute one another as much as - by virtue of such constitution - they depart from each other...In truth, the subject is never quite the subject, and the object never quite the object; and yet the two are not pieced out of any third that transcends them. The third would be no less deceptive. The Kantian answer - withdrawing the third, as infinite, from positive, finite cognition and using its unattainability to spur cognition to untiring effort - falls short. The duality of subject and object must be critically maintained against the thought's inherent claim to be total. The division, which makes the object the alien thing to be mastered and appropriates it, is indeed subjective, the result of orderly preparation; but no critique of its subjective origin will reunify the parts, once they have split in reality.¹

Each, that is, is mediated by the other. Subject and object, however, are social processes and not the presuppositions of pure ontology or epistemology.

Adorno therefore rejects dialectical or historical materialism to which everything could be reduced: there is no dialectical law of history which operates independently of men's projects and action and there is no primacy of the base over the superstructure. He says: "History is in the truth; the truth is not in history." Although truth is historical, there are no laws of history, or processes of history which are identical with truth. History is no guarantee for any theory of knowledge. What is true about history is its continuous, patternless change. He also rejects the conviction that theory has to be subordinated to praxis in order to be cognitively valid. The criterion of truth

¹ Adorno, Theodor W., Negative Dialectics, The Seabury Press, New York, 1973, p. 174.

for Adorno is rational rather than pragmatic. Theory when subordinated to political or revolutionary goals manipulates truth according to the needs of Party strategy.

The subject-object relationship is, for Adorno, a social historical and psychological process. Therefore, in his dialectical analyses, he integrates Freudian categories such as ego weakness, anxiety, Oedipal complex, anal character, sadomasochism, within the Marxist critical framework in order to uncover the psychological traits of a society founded on class and commodity structure. Psychoanalytic theory provides Adorno with the tool to analyze in depth the mediation between the individual and society.

In the mediation of subject and object, however, the object has priority over the subject. In this manner, he gives his dialectical approach a materialistic foundation. The precedence of the object over the subject does not mean, however, Adorno emphasizes, an affirmation of naive realism but only a moment articulated within the operational field of dialectics. He says,

Due to the inequality inherent in the concept of mediation, the subject enters into the object altogether differently from the way the object enters into the subject. An object can be conceived only by a subject but always remains something other than the subject, whereas a subject by its very nature is from the outset an object as well. Not even as an idea can we conceive a subject that is not an object; but we can conceive an object that is not a subject. To be an object also is part of the meaning of subjectivity; but it is not equally part of the meaning of objectivity to be a subject.

That the I is an entity is implicit even in the sense of the logical "I think, which should be able to accompany all my conceptions," because the sequence of time is a condition of its possibility and there is no sequence of time save in temporality. The pronoun "my" points to a subject as an object among objects, and again, without this "my" there would be no "I think." The being of a subject is taken from objectivity - a fact that lends a touch of objectivity to the subject itself; it is not by chance that the Latin word *subiectum*, the underlying, reminds us of the very thing which the technical language of philosophy has come to

call "objective." The word "object," on the other hand, is not related to subjectivity until we reflect upon the possibility of its definition.

This does not mean that objectivity is something immediate, that we might forget our critique of naive realism. To grant precedence to the object means to make progressive qualitative distinctions between things which in themselves are indirect; it means a moment in dialectics - not beyond dialectics, but articulated in dialectics.²

The absolute primacy of the subject or the object or anything reproduces in thought the structures of reification and domination that exist in reality.³ It strengthens totalitarian and conformist tendencies. This is inherent in the prevalent mode of thinking - identity thinking - which structures a search for identity principles. Identity thinking claims that objects are what they are empirically and that concepts are adequate to their objects: they fully subsume the objects, that is, to which they apply as if the objects have the properties to which the concepts refer. Concepts are therefore reified.

No concepts can express the whole content of the object, of experience. Identity thinking makes unlike things alike. To claim that the political concept of emancipation, for instance, accurately covers a real socio-economic situation is to make unlike things alike. Political emancipation is not real human emancipation. But identity thinking can best be seen as the structural principle of the reified and unjust socio-economic reality. It is embodied in the process of commodity exchange. But thought is not a reflection of reality: commodity exchange and thought are real. They are two processes that have

² Ibid., P. 183-4.

³ Existential philosophy, for instance, reifies the human subject by neglecting its complexity and uniqueness in the concept of the absolute individual subject as the irreducible reality, and by proclaiming the absolute individual subject's indifference to the unjust and exploitative social reality justifies it.

the same internal structure. Through the exchange process unlike phenomena are made equal: individual qualities of labour are reduced to "homogeneous human labour...labour power expended without regard to its mode of expenditure"⁴ and commodities are equalized under a monetary value or price. Adorno says,

the exchange principle, the reduction of human labour to its abstract universal concept of average labour-time, is fundamentally related to the principle of identification. Identification has its social model in exchange and exchange would be nothing without it.⁵

Because of reification then relations between human beings appear in the form of relations between properties of things, and concepts of things subsume human relation. Exchange value seems to be a natural property of the commodity. In this manner a deceptive equation of concept and object occurs. Following Marx, Adorno maintains that for a concept to be non reified it has to express the real properties of a thing, its use value.

It is through its own properties, its own qualities that a thing is use-value...as values, commodities are social magnitudes, that is to say something absolutely different from their properties as things. Where labour is communal, the relations of men do not manifest themselves as 'values' of things.⁶

Reified concepts, the concepts that the objects have of themselves, however, one must understand, are not completely deceptive. They contain truth and error. Truth in so far as they express a reified reality and error in so far as they consider it essential. It is through the reified concepts that negative

⁴ Marx, Karl, Capital, Penguin, Harmondsworth, 1976, p. 128.

⁵ Ibid., P. 146.

⁶ Marx, Karl, Theories of Surplus Values, Part 3, Lawrence and Wishart, London, 1970, p. 129.

dialectics penetrates the veil of reification and reaches the non-reified, that is the non conceptual reality.

The process of exchange which claims to be exchange of equivalent entities therefore is unequal and unjust. It hides the domination of man by man.

The assertion of the equivalence of what is exchanged, the basis of all exchange, is repudiated by its consequences. As the principle of exchange, by virtue of its immanent dynamics, extends to the living labours of human beings it changes compulsively into objective inequality, namely that of social classes.⁷

Philosophy, theory, therefore has failed, but the positivistic solution to resolve theory into particular sciences is also mistaken. Adorno's attack on the social sciences is based upon the same principles of criticism. Science is identity thinking. Identity thinking is not only the paradigmatic mode of thinking of philosophy, but also of science. Science neglects the social genesis and function of its knowledge. The world of ready made facts upon which the positivist fixes his gaze in order to establish the laws of its uniformity is a deceptive creation. It is a reified world. Perception is never independent of the social paradigm within which it operates. Facts mediate and are mediated by the social totality. "Totality", obviously, for Adorno, is neither "a comprehensive principle of explanation" nor is it "ontologized". For totality he intends the socio economic psychological reality. Moreover, science, just because it is not critical of its methods, its epistemological foundation and its history, just because, that is, it does not seek an understanding of itself by any methods other than its own, becomes an ideological justification of the status quo.

⁷ Adorno, T., The Positivist Dispute in German Sociology, Heinemann, London, 1969, p. 25.

Since the sciences' irrevocable farewell to idealistic philosophy, the successful sciences are no longer seeking to legitimize themselves otherwise than by a statement of their method. Their self-exegesis makes a *causa sui* of science. It accepts itself as given and thereby sanctions also its currently existing form, its division of labor, although in the long run the insufficiency of that form cannot be concealed.⁸

Adorno's view of social reality and consciousness or theory of it is very gloomy. Social reality and consciousness of it are almost completely reified and justify the enslavement of man by man.⁹

It seems natural for reason to start from first principles and therefore fall into reification. The only hope, the only way out of this impasse is for theory, dialectics, to abide in its autonomy, to be critical and self-critical: to relentlessly negate from within, to negate the claims made by identity thinking - claims of absolutizing the universal or the particular - and go no farther than those claims. Negative dialectics can only claim negative knowledge. It is the self-reflection of thinking.

Dialectics, the epitome of negative knowledge, will have nothing beside it;...To this end, dialectics is obliged to make a final move: being at once the impression and the critique of the universal delusive context, it must now turn even against itself. The critique of every self-absolutizing particular is a critique of the shadow which absoluteness casts upon the critique; it is a critique of the fact that critique itself, contrary to its own tendency, must remain within the medium of the concept. It destroys the claim of identity by testing and honoring it; therefore, it can reach no farther than that claim. The claim is a magic circle that stamps critique with the appearance of absolute knowledge. It is up to the self-reflection of critique to extinguish that claim, to extinguish it in the very negation of negation that will not become a

⁸ Adorno, T., Negative Dialectics The Seabury Press, New York, 1973, p. 73.

⁹ "No recollection of transcendence is possible any more, save by way of perdition; eternity appears, not as such, but diffracted through the most perishable." *Ibid.*, p. 360.

positing...It lies in the definition of negative dialectics that it will not come to rest in itself, as if it were total. This is its form of hope.¹⁰

Negative dialectics then seeks out negation without falling into the identity trap of the negation of the negation which implies the positive resolution of contradictions and without absolutizing contradiction.

To equate the negation of negation with positivity is the quintessence of identification; it is the formal principle in its purest form. What thus wins out in the inmost core of dialectics is the anti-dialectical principle: that traditional logic which, more arithmetico, takes minus times minus for a plus. It was borrowed from that very mathematics to which Hegel reacts so idiosyncratically elsewhere.¹¹

Identity and contradiction of thought are welded together. Total contradiction is nothing but the manifested untruth of total identification.¹²

In this act of repeated opposition against absolute descriptive schemata or methods and against any concept with a claim to comprehensiveness, negative dialectics reveals the non identity of reason with reality and reality with itself. Of the object under investigation, it shows the object's non-identity with its concept, that is, with the standards and criteria that the object has of itself in its concept, and the object's non identity with itself. Non identity unveils the concrete particularity of the object, the non conceptual, which shows that the object is not what it appears to be, reified and identical with itself. The concrete particular is unique and at the same time contains a picture of the whole. It is mediated by the social economic psychological structure.

¹⁰ Ibid., p. 406.

¹¹ Ibid., p. 158.

¹² Ibid., p. 6.

Adorno says,

The matters of true philosophical interest at this point in history are those in which Hegel, agreeing with tradition, expressed his disinterest. They are nonconceptuality, individuality, and particularity - things which ever since Plato used to be dismissed as transitory and insignificant, and which Hegel labeled 'lazy Existenz.' Philosophy's theme would consist of the qualities it downgrades as contingent, as a 'quantity' negligible. A matter of urgency to the concept would be what it fails to cover, what its abstractionist mechanism eliminates, what is not already a case of the concept.¹³

The non-conceptual historical particulars - the non-identity - usually appear unintentionally, often in contradiction with the author's intention, within the fractures, the contradiction of the philosophical system in order to undermine it. Truth reveals itself unintentionally. Because of his ideological assumption, the bourgeois thinker could not realize that reality constitutes an harmonious and unified whole, that his failure to resolve the contradictions within the system pointed not to the inadequacy of reason but to a reality essentially contradictory which eluded his conceptual network: to a reality whose real contradictions could not be solved on the speculative level alone in the name of an identity principle. The concrete particular not only undermines any systematic attempt at describing reality; it makes it look ludicrous.

Negative dialectics then is non identity thinking. It is an immanent approach or criticism because it operates within the "force-field" between reason and reality, concept and object.¹⁴ It determines what the relation is

¹³ Ibid., p. 8.

¹⁴ Negative dialectics is neither a method nor reality. To be one or the other is to fall into identity thinking. Moreover, it is not a method because the object is contradictory: it has no definite starting and ending points, resists any attempt at complete interpretation, and induces thought to dialectics. It is not reality because the real is recast through the process of reflection. .

between the set of properties or categories implied by the concept and the object's actuality. It is through the concept that the object has of itself that negative dialectic reaches the non-conceptual, the social, historical and psychological reality which constitutes its truth. In addition, negative dialectic can show in special cases the difference between the potentiality and actuality of the object. And it is in this that the possibility of utopia resides. A certain class of concepts, freedom, justice, equality, beauty, for instance, expresses less than the actuality of the object, missing its specific concreteness, but at the same time expresses more. It refers to a set of ideal properties that the object fails to but it could fulfill under special relations and conditions.

The nonidentical element in an identifying judgment is clearly intelligible insofar as every single object subsumed under a class has definitions not contained in the definition of the class. But to a more emphatic concept, to one that is not simply the characteristic unit of the individual objects from which it was abstracted, the opposite applies as well. Emphatically conceived, the judgment that a man is free refers to the concept of freedom; but this concept in turn is more than is predicated of the man, and by other definitions the man is more than the concept of his freedom. The concept says not only that it is applicable to all individuals defined as free; it feeds on the idea of a

In fact, dialectics is neither a pure method nor a reality in the naive sense of the word. It is not a method, for the unreconciled matter - lacking precisely the identity surrogated by the thought - is contradictory and resists any attempt at unanimous interpretation. It is the matter, not the organizing drive of thought, that brings us to dialectics. Nor is dialectics a simple reality, for contradictoriness is a category of reflection, the cognitive confrontation of concept and thing. To proceed dialectically means to think in contradictions, for the sake of the contradiction once experienced in the thing, and against that contradiction. (Negative Dialectics, pp. 144-5.).

To the charge of sterility of negative dialectics, Adorno says, "A contradiction in reality, it is a contradiction against reality." Negative dialectics is a "practical challenge." (Negative Dialectics, p. 145). This challenge, as we will see, is embodied mostly in the concept of the potentiality of the object.

condition in which individuals would have qualities not to be ascribed to anyone here and now.¹⁵

In the "here and now" social situation, the inequality of social power points to the gulf between the theoretical domain of freedom and its real actualization. It points to "the possibility of which the reality has cheated"¹⁶ the object.

Negative dialectics then gives critical thought its transcending power in the mutual interaction of the inadequacies of the concept towards reality and reality towards the concept.

Negative dialectics, Adorno claims, is nothing new: it has been used constantly by Marx in his critique of political economy. Adorno often in his writings uses Marx's analysis of exchange value as an example of non-identity thinking. Exchange value as he points out above is an instance of identity thinking.

In practice Adorno's dialectics aims at constructing a constellation, - a structural configuration, that is - out of the specific, concrete elements of the phenomenon under investigation which would illuminate its socio-historical psychological reality. Specifically it first breaks up the phenomenon, its apparently identical pattern, into its contradictory or extremely unrelated, unidentical conceptual elements and then it unifies them - it finds their similarities and connecting link without subsuming their contradictory aspect and differences - through the mediation of critical Freudian and Marxist categories so that the social and psychological specificity of the mutual constitution of the phenomenon and the totality - the non identical, the non conceptual, the non visible - becomes visible. The

¹⁵ Ibid., p. 150.

¹⁶ Ibid., p. 52.

phenomenal elements are seen as a code language, ciphers of the concrete particularity of the phenomenon: their constellation, their conceptual composition, through the mediation of critical concepts shows it without the intervention of a positive unifying abstractive principle, without, that is, falling into identity thinking. In this manner thinking penetrates the 'interior' of the object.

The unifying moment survives without a negation of negation, but also without delivering itself to abstraction as a supreme principle. It survives because there is no step-by-step progression from the concepts to a more general cover concept. Instead, the concepts enter into a constellation. The constellation illuminates the specific side of the object, the side which to a classifying procedure is either a matter of indifference or a burden.

The model for this is the conduct of language. Language offers no mere system of signs for cognitive functions. Where it appears essentially as a language, where it becomes a form of representation, it will not define its concepts. It lends objectivity to them by the relation into which it puts the concepts, centered about a thing. Language thus serves the intention of the concept to express completely what it means. By themselves, constellations represent from without what the concept has cut away within: the 'more' which the concept is equally desirous and incapable of being. By gathering around the object of cognition, the concepts potentially determine the object's interior. They attain, in thinking, what was necessarily excised from thinking.¹⁷

It seems that "in bringing" Marxist and Freudian concepts "from outside" in the analysis of the phenomenon, dialectics is betraying its objective: to avoid any form of external theory which would reify the phenomenon by attributing to it qualities it does not have. The truth of the phenomenon can only be discovered by immanent criticism. Adorno explains how dialectics makes these concepts fluid and adaptive to the phenomenon.

¹⁷ Ibid., p. 162.

into a field of tension of the possible and the real: each one, in order to exist, is dependent upon the other....[In sense] theory is indisputably critical.¹⁸

In The Origin of Negative Dialectics, Susan Buck-Morss illustrates admirably Adorno's procedure in penetrating the veil of reification and establishing the socio-economic psychological reality of the object.

In decoding a musical phenomenon, the familiar C sharp minor Prelude by Rachmaninoff, Adorno focused on two elements: it sounded grandiose, yet it was childishly easy to play. With the aid of Freud, he interpreted the great appeal of this 'constellation of heavy bombardment [schweres Geschütz] and easy performability':¹³

Psychoanalysis have discovered the Nero complex. The Prelude has anticipated its gratification. It allows delusions of grandeur to have their fling, without being caught....Daring and security are mixed together in this, one of the most glaring cases of daydreams in music.¹⁴

At the same time, Adorno made the piece's social function perceptible within the musical material itself. The entire prelude was 'one single closing cadence.'¹⁵ The closing cadence, a romantic gesture, functioned in music to affirm what came before it. Here, where it was the whole of the compositional material, the affirmation was 'fully emancipated from all musical content and thrown onto the market as a commodity.'¹⁶ Thus fetishized, the cadence repeated itself like a 'relentless commercial.'¹⁷¹⁹

In 'Especially for You,'⁴¹ a short article Adorno wrote in the thirties, the 'phenomenon' was an American hit song. Adorno noted two contradictory elements: its existence as a commodity of mass culture and the personalized message of its title. The paradox could be seen within the words of the song themselves:

Especially for you that's what a moon's for.

¹⁸ Adorno, T., The Positivist Dispute in German Sociology, Heinemann, London, 1969, p. 69.

¹⁹ Buck-Morss, Susan, The Origin of Negative Dialectics, The Free Press, New York, 1977, p. 97-8.

message of its title. The paradox could be seen within the words of the song themselves:

Especially for you that's what a moon's for.
Especially for you that's what a June's for 42

More than mere ideology, the lie of the lyrics unintentionally spoke a social truth: of course neither moon nor June was there especially for the individual, and the same was true of the relation between a popular song and its audience. The song producers had no more concern for the customer's real interests than 'that moon interests the dog that howls at it...'43 (while the consumer had no real choice but to howl along in unison). In the apparently unrelated juxtaposition of elements on the sheet music itself, Adorno again read social content: the song title was followed by the U.S. copyright law warning of criminal prosecution for the violation of private property:

The man who might get it into his head that something is there especially for him and therefore bought the song in the first place will thereafter no longer fall into the mistake of thinking it belongs to him.44

Now Adorno reversed the words, echoing Marx's analysis of commodities 'He belongs to the product, not vice versa,' and concluded with another reversal, showing the law-abiding individual as himself imprisoned: 'If he wanted to change something he would be locked up, that is, if he were not locked up already.45²⁰

The first passage shows Adorno's dialectical skill in relating Freudian categories to Marxian categories: the Prelude allows the composer to express inadvertently his delusions of grandeur, and at the same time presents itself as a commodity; the second passage in extracting from the interior of a seemingly insignificant phenomenon, a hit song, its socio-economic structure.

²⁰ Ibid., pp. 101.

2. *Literary Theory and Criticism*

Negative dialectics is the essential trait of a work of art and the measure of its value.

On the one hand, all art is the expression of ideology. Therefore, the task of criticism

must be...to decipher the general social tendencies which are expressed in these (cultural and therefore artistic) phenomena and through which the most powerful interests realize themselves. Cultural criticisms must become social physiognomy.¹

On the other hand, art is essentially, often against the author's intention, the negation of ideology: the non-identity between ideology and its pretension to correspond to reality. Ideology in itself is not false; it is the expression of a reified reality. "Art then is the negative knowledge of the actual world."²

It follows that

Immanent criticism of intellectual and artistic phenomena seeks to grasp, through the analysis of their form and meaning, the contradiction between their objective idea and that pretension...Where it finds inadequacies it does not ascribe them hastily to the individual and his psychology, which are merely the facade of the failure, but instead seeks to derive them from the irreconcilability of the object's moments. It pursues the logic of its aporias, the insolubility of the task itself. In such antinomies criticism perceives those of society.³

¹ Adorno, Theodor W., *Prisms*, MIT Press, Cambridge Massachusetts, 1981, p. 30.

² New Left Review, eds. *Aesthetics and Politics: Debates between Bloch, Lukacs, Brecht, Benjamin, Adorno*, NLB, London, 1977, p. 160.

³ Adorno, Theodor W., *Prisms*, MIT Press, Cambridge Massachusetts, 1981, p. 32.

It is the form of the work of art, the procedures and techniques which structure its meaning, and not its content which effectuates the moment of negation.

The unsolved antagonisms of reality reoccur in the work of art as the immanent problem of its form. This, not the entry of objective moments, defines the relation of art to society.⁴

Art has its own formal laws which set it at a distance from the form of reality. Lukács contention that in great works of art the form of art is a unified and compressed reflection of the form of reality is based upon the fallacy of considering such a reflection as being similar to the way reality is reflected in human consciousness. He transfers "to the realm of art categories which refer to the relationship of consciousness to the actual world, as if there were no difference between them."⁵ He ignores the importance of illusion in the portrayal of reality. By focusing on narration and not on techniques he fails to see the subjective nature of his "idolized" realism. The basic mistake of Brecht's didacticism and Sartre's engagement is also the failure to concede the necessity of illusion in the work of art. They don't realize that a fictional text alters the literal meaning of words and that therefore creates an autonomous semantic space.

He [Sartre] restricts his notion of commitment to literature because of its conceptual character: 'The writer deals with meanings'. Of course, but not only with them. If no word which enters a literary work ever wholly frees itself from its meanings in ordinary speech, so no literary work, not even the traditional novel, leaves these meanings unaltered, as they were outside it. Even an ordinary 'was', in a report of something that was not, acquires a new formal quality from the fact

⁴ Adorno, Theodor W., Aesthetic Theory, B. Blackwell, Oxford, England, 1982, p. 16.

⁵ New Left Review, eds. Aesthetics and Politics, p. 159.

that it was not so. The same process occurs in the higher levels of meaning of a work, all the way up to what once used to be called its 'Idea'.⁶

Besides, any work of art which tries to express an antagonistic political message as clearly as possible is negated by the culture industry, whose function is to neutralize criticism against the status quo. Therefore, Adorno praises formally difficult tests.

Art's formal laws give art "a vantage-point from which it can criticize actuality".⁷ In this manner, art keeps its promise of utopia: it gives, as Stendhal put it, "une promesse de bonheur."

A successful work of art then is one which presents not a positive reconciliation of contradictions, as Lukács prescribes, but "the idea of harmony negatively by embodying the contradictions, pure and uncompromised, in its innermost structure."⁸ A positive reconciliation of an essentially contradictory reality is a spurious harmony. It posits an identity between subject and object. A successful work of art provides a structural model for dialectical cognition; it presents the interrelationship of subject and object without either side prevailing over the other.

It is the internal development of artistic techniques within works of art, Adorno stresses, which enhances art's emancipatory potential; a development which is effectuated by the dialectical intervention of the artist over the historically developed techniques of his trade. New techniques

⁶ Adorno on Sartre and Brecht, New Left Review, London, 1975, p. 76.

⁷ New Left Review, eds. Aesthetics and Politics, p. 160.

⁸ Adorno, Theodor W., Prisms, MIT Press, Cambridge Massachusetts, 1981, p. 32.

minimize the aura of false authenticity and uniqueness of a work of art. This is how art negates its commodity character within the culture industry.

Precisely the uttermost consistency in the pursuit of the technical laws of autonomous art changes this art and instead of rendering it into a taboo or fetish, brings it close to the state of freedom, of something that can be consciously produced and made. I know of no better materialistic programme than that statement by Mallarmé in which he defined works of literature as something not inspired but made out of words.⁹

Adorno then strongly disagrees with Benjamin who maintains that the revolutionary potential of art does not reside within art itself but within the new mechanical technologies of art production. Mechanical production, the possibility of art works unlimited duplication, destroys, according to Benjamin, its aura and frees it from the authority of the illusory perception of its uniqueness and autonomy. Mechanical reproduction reveals "the universal equality of things". This new way of perceiving art changes the entire function of art.

Unmistakably, reproduction as offered by picture magazines and newsreels differs from the image seen by the unarmed eye. Uniqueness and permanence are closely linked in the latter as are transitoriness and reproducibility in the former. To pry an object from its shell, to destroy its aura, is the mark of a perception whose 'sense of the universal equality of things' has increased to such a degree that it extracts it even from a unique object by means of reproduction. Thus is manifested in the field of perception what in the theoretical sphere is noticeable in the increasing importance of statistics....for the first time in world history, mechanical reproduction emancipates the work of art from its parasitical dependence on ritual. To an ever greater degree the work of art reproduced becomes the work of art designed for reproducibility. From a photographic negative, for example, one can make any number of prints; to ask for the 'authentic' print makes no sense. But the instant the criterion of authenticity ceases to be applicable to artistic production, the total function of art is reversed.

⁹ New Left Review, eds. Aesthetics and Politics, p. 122.

Instead of being based on ritual, it begins to be based on another practice-politics.¹⁰

Art can be turned into the service of the interests of the masses. It can free them from tradition and authority and make them aware of their social status.

Against this argument Adorno first objects:

The concept of technique in the culture industry is only in name identical with technique in works of art. In the latter, technique is concerned with the internal organization of the object itself, with its inner logic. In contrast, the technique of the culture industry is, from the beginning, one of distribution and mechanical reproduction, and therefore always remains external to its object.¹¹

Then he points out that mechanical reproduction is at the same time a new force of production and a new mode of distribution which is regulated by the dominant mode of production and exchange in society. It is then a new form of social and political control.¹² Therefore, in allowing the reproduction and larger distribution of formerly irreproducible works of art, mechanical reproduction strengthens their commodity character.

An illustration of Adorno's critical analysis can be seen in his polemic with Lukács. Against Lukács negative criticism of the modern novel as subjectivistic and decadent, unable to break through the crust of reified appearances to reflect the correct form of the totality, Adorno argues that Lukács fails to understand the function of the stylistic and technical devices of the novel. They are not subordinated to the content, the subjectivity they

¹⁰ Benjamin, Walter, Illuminations, Schocken Books, New York, 1969, pp. 223-4.

¹¹ Adorno, Theodor W., "Culture Industry Reconsidered", New German Critique, London, 1975, p. 14.

¹² Adorno's letter to Benjamin, 18 March 1936, New Left Review, London, 1973, p. 63-8.

express; in every case, they form a different mode of subjectivity which takes a critical stand against such a subjectivity and negates its false ontology. The alienated and reified condition of the subject is shown to be part of an objective social reality. The structures of society generate forms of individual isolation. In this manner, the correct perspective of the precedence of the social totality over the individual subject is reestablished.

Kafka's textual devices, for instance, such as the pitting of gestures against dialogues and disruptions of conventional narrative time with various forms of repetition of events, places and so on, undermine and contradict the meaning of the text and therefore negate the world of absolute subjectivity, "objectless inwardness," they are trying to portray. This world is shown to have "blind spots" and cracks within it. The subject's withdrawal into absolute subjectivity succumbs to the very estrangement it is attempting to avoid. By trying to shatter the spell of reification the subject reifies itself. The result is a "tortuous epic" in which the "boundary between what is human and the world of things becomes blurred." The reality of ambiguity and the obscurity of the existent, of the "permanent *deja vu*", - Kafka's other themes - are also upset. The subject's terror and isolation then lose the immediacy of ultimate reality and appear as effects of a hostile social reality.

The attitude that Kafka assumes towards dreams should be the reader's towards Kafka. He should dwell on the incommensurable, opaque details, the blind spots. [where absolute subjectivity is negated, where what is enclosed in the estranged world of Kafka's "glass ball" is shattered] The fact that Leni's fingers are connected by a web, or that the executioners resemble tenors, is more important than the Excursus on the law. It is true both of the mode of representation and of the language. Gestures often serve as counterpoints to words: the pre-linguistic that eludes all intention upsets the ambiguity, which, like a disease, has eaten into all signification in Kafka. "The letter," began K., "I have read it. Do you know the contents?" "No," said Barnabas, whose look seemed to imply more than his words. Perhaps K. was as

mistaken in Barnabas' goodness as in the malice of the peasants, but his presence remained a comfort.' Or: "Well," she said extenuatingly, "there was a reason for laughing. You asked if I knew Klamm, and you see I" - here she involuntarily straightened up a little, and her triumphant glance, which had no connection whatever with what she was saying, swept over K. - "I am his mistress."... Such gestures are the traces of experiences covered over by signification.... The gesture is the 'that's the way it is'; language, the configuration of which should be truth, is, as a broken one, untruth.... Eternalized gestures in Kafka are the momentaneous brought to a standstill. The shock is like a surrealist arrangement of that which old photographs convey to the viewer. Such a snapshot, unclear, almost entirely faded, plays its role in *The Castle*.... The most gruesome example of this is probably to be found in *The Trial*: Josef K. opens the lumber-room, in which his warders had been beaten a day earlier, to find the scene faithfully repeated, including the appeal to himself. 'At once K. slammed the door shut and then beat on it with his fists, as if that would shut it still more securely.' This is the gesture of Kafka's own work, which - as Poe had already begun to do - turns away from the most extreme scenes as though no eye could survive the sight. In it what is perpetually the same and what is ephemeral merge. Over and over again, Titorelli paints that monotonous genre picture, the heath.... Proust was familiar with the shiver of discomfort that comes over someone who has been made aware of his resemblance to an unknown relative. In Kafka, this becomes panic. The realm of the *deja vu* is populated by doubles, revenants, buffoons, Hasidic dancers, boys who ape their teachers and then suddenly appear ancient, archaic; at one point, the surveyor wonders whether his assistants are fully alive. Yet there are also images of what is coming, men manufactured on the assembly-line, mechanically reproduced copies, Huxleyian Epsilons. The social origin of the individual ultimately reveals itself as the power to annihilate him.¹⁵

¹⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 252-3.

Part Two

Non Hegelian Marxists: Galvano Della Volpe, Lucio Colletti, Louis Althusser, Pierre Macherey, Terry Eagleton

A. G. Della Volpe

1. G. Della Volpe and L. Colletti's Dialectic

Della Volpe and Colletti argue that from the Kritik¹ of 1843 to the Introduction to the Grundrisse of 1857 Marx's effort has been to elaborate a scientific dialectic of determinate abstraction, of reason and the contradictory multiplicity of the real, based upon the principle of non-contradiction. Specifically, it means that in investigating society the determinate dialectic utilizes concepts or hypotheses that are socio-historically (empirically) determined: in the case of economics, it utilizes concepts that are not only economic but also socio-historical. Such a dialectic presents the same logical structure of the hypothetic -deductive method of science.

Colletti states:

The dialectic in Hegel, Marx says, stands, on its head, auf dem Kopf. It must be turned right side up again, if you would discover the rational kernel (den rationellen Kern) within the mystical shell (der mystischen Hulle). The interpretation of this text is essential for us. 'The rational Kernel' is precisely the Hegelian theory of reason itself; i.e. the discovery, arrived at by passing through the broadening of Eleaticism, etc., that reason is 'being' and 'non being' together, finite and infinite within the infinite, a tautoheterology and dialectic. The

¹ In The Kritik, Della Volpe points out, Marx sharply criticizes the Hegelian dialectic for transcending the material specificity or determinateness of the empirical reality, and for interpolating in it surreptitiously the abstractness of the Idea or Logos. Marx distinguishes between a ratio essendi and a ratio ecgnoscendi.

'mystical' shell, on the other hand, is the immediate translation of reason into a positive moment, its substantification; a substantification that follows from the proposition that reason must be, at one and the same time and without making any distinction reason and reality, i.e. Christian Logos. If this interpretation of ours is correct, the breaking of the 'mystical shell' and thus the 'overturning' of the dialectics (to make use once again of these abused metaphors) can only consist in the recovery of the principle of identity and non contradiction or what is the same thing, the recovery of the materialist point of view. Reason is a totality; this is what Hegel saw clearly. But since this totality is only reason, i.e. thought, it must also be only 'one of the two', i.e. a totality and, at the same time, a function or predicate of an individual object external to it.²

The establishing of the positivity, discretion, and the tautoheterogeneity of matter, of the concrete datum, entails that the contradictions or oppositions are real, permanent and historically determinate since they constitute the object itself. They are contradictions which, precisely in so far as they establish the specificity of the capitalist mode of production in relation to all other socio-economic formations, "contribute to defining its (capitalism's) identity, and thus turn out to be irreducible to the terms of a simple rational contradiction." Precisely because of their historical determinateness and permanency, then, they can be reproduced in thought only by the dialectic of determinate abstraction, or empirical concept.³

² Lucio Colletti, Marxism and Hegel, NLB, London, 1973, p.48

³ Della Volpe states: ... Il problema della contraddizione oggettiva e della dialettica che la padroneggia - può essere affrontato in questi termini: 1: richiamando il concetto che il concreto (storico), ad esempio una determinata società, è stato definito - in quanto luogo di oggettive contraddizioni - non già unita di opposti, ossia di una generica diversità momentanea, com'è l'idea hegeliana, che da sé, unità originaria indifferenziata muove, come natura, per tornare a se stessa come spirito bensì (poiché il concreto storico o reale non è <<razionale>> a quel modo <<immaginario>>) come la unità di un molteplice o diverso effettivo (il discreto che è la materia); 2) precisando che - se dunque le contraddizioni oggettive sono contraddizioni diverse materiali determinate, storiche, e quindi la contraddizione oggettiva è permanente e non transeunte e apparente come quella hegeliana che non è, ripetiamolo, se non <<momento>> di una unità (l'idea) misticamente precostituita che come la genera così la riassume - allora la sola dialettica capace di riprodurre nel pensiero la contraddizione oggettiva non può essere che una dialettica di astrazioni determinate o scientifica (dell'esigenza di una dialettica

In the process of comprehending the contradictions, the determinate dialectics relates the opposites and, therefore, effects their unity, but keeps them separate and distinct in reality since they are real contradictions. It produces a tautoheterological identity. To make this clearer Colletti quotes Marx's most significant attacks on political economy when it denies crises.

"Where the economic relation - and therefore also the categories expressing it - includes contradictions, opposites, he [James Mill] emphasizes the aspect of the unity of the contradictions and denies the contradictions. He transforms the unity of opposites into the direct identity of opposites. For example, a commodity conceals the contradiction of use-value and exchange-value. This contradiction develops further, presents itself and manifests itself in the duplication of the commodity into commodity and money. This duplication appears as a process in the metamorphosis of commodities in which selling and buying are different aspects of a single process and each act of this process simultaneously includes its opposite. In the first part of this work, I mentioned that Mill disposes of the contradiction by concentrating only on the unity of buying and selling; consequently he transforms circulation into his description of barter "(Theories of Surplus Value, Part III, London, 1972, p.88)... And in Part II of Theories of Surplus Value, there is this rather significant passage: "Thus the apologetics consists in the falsification of the simplest economic relations, and particularly in clinging to the concept of unity in the face of contradiction. If , for example purchase and sale - or the metamorphosis of commodities - represent the unity of two processes or rather the movement of one process through two opposite phases, and thus essentially the unity of two phases, the movement is essential. Just as much the separation of these two phases and their becoming independent of each other. Since, however, they belong together, the independence of the two correlated aspects can only show itself forcibly, as a destructive process. It is just the crisis in which they assert their unity, the unity of the different aspects. The independence which these two linked and complementary phases assume in relation to each-other is forcibly destroyed. Thus the crisis manifests the unity

sola dialectica capace di riprodurre nel pensiero la contraddizione oggettiva non può essere che una dialettica di astrazioni determinate o scientifica (dell'esigenza di una dialettica scientifica già parla Marx nella Miseria della filosofia), in quanto solo questo tipo di astrazione è idoneo a scoprire e padroneggiare le contraddizioni determinate materiali e permanenti del concreto o reale..." Logica, Editori Riuniti, Roma, 1969, p.282-283.

apparently indifferent to each other. But no, says the apologetic economist. Because there is this unity, there can be no crises."⁴

The dialectics of determinate abstraction is, according to Della Volpe, fully elucidated by Marx in the third section of the Introduction of 1857 in contrast with the last paragraphs of the first section in which the "generic or indeterminate abstraction" used by bourgeois political economy is criticized. Marx attacks the political economists because they take the categories of their science uncritically, as fixed and unalterable. They are not critical of their own ideological preconceptions.

The generic abstraction neglects the "essential" or "specific" difference of its socio-historical determinations and consequently produces hypostases and tautologies as in the case of the economic category of production which subsumes what is common to all epochs but does not consider what makes the production of each epoch unique and, therefore, different from the others: what makes, for instance, capitalistic production capitalistic is what differentiates it from what it is common to all epochs. In a priori fashion, the generic abstraction of production as appropriation of nature and the relations (or categories) in which it can unfold are given an eternal immutable reality; and then, in a deceitful manner - by transcending bourgeois production specific characteristics - such a reality is made to coincide with bourgeois production and its relations. "Rather production is supposedly represented - see, for example, J. S. Mill - in distinction to distribution etc., as framed in eternal laws independent of history; this is the occasion for passing of, in an underhand way, bourgeois relations as irrevocable natural laws of society in the abstract."⁵ Hence it is easy to fall into ludicrous tautologies, "All

⁴ L. Colletti, Marxism and Hegel, pp. 137-138.

⁵ T. Carver, Karl Marx Texts on Method, Basil Blackwell, London, 1975, p.54-55.

production is the appropriation of nature on the part of the individual within and by means of a determinate form of society. In that sense it is a tautology to say that property (appropriation) is a condition of production. However, it is ludicrous to leap from that (tautology) to a determinate form of property, e.g. private property. (What is more, [private property] is an antithetical form, which implies as a condition non-property as well as [property]). Rather history shows that common property is the original form [of property] (e.g. in India among the Slavs and ancient Cheks etc.), a form which still plays a significant role under the shape of communal property. We have not yet come to the question whether wealth develops better under this or that form of property. However, that there can be no talk of production hence no talk of society, where no form of property exists, is a tautology. An appropriation which does not appropriate anything is a contradiction in the thing spoken of."⁶

This is so, Della Volpe continues, because in explaining production the generic abstraction of production and of its simple categories such as division of labour, money, value, etc. analyzes an "imaginary" and chaotic concrete devoid of its real, historical and sociological, determinations. It starts, that is, with population, but it leaves out the classes of which it consists, and the elements on which they are based such as wage-labor, capital, etc. which imply in their turn exchange, division of labour, prices, etc. In analysing economics, then, the generic abstraction neglects sociology and history (which are irreducible to economics): that is historical-social relations. Production cannot be represented "in distinction from distribution". All economic abstractions - even the most abstract - though applicable (in the sense that

⁶ Ibid., p.54-55.

they are logical universals) for all forms of society, are determinate: they are historical categories which express specific social relations. According to Marx, for instance, the category of labour in its most simple and abstract form can only materialize in a society where the differentiation of labor is highly developed and where one particular form of labour does not prevail over the other.⁷

The dialectic of determinate abstraction penetrates, as in the case of the theory of fetishism, beneath the appearances that the uncritical categories of bourgeois political economy show as market relations to uncover the true relations of society.

In operating, then, from the outset, with categories that are economic and socio-historical at the same time in their most intimate structure - reflecting, that is, the heterogeneous and organic unity of relations of production and social relations; economic structure and the ideological political superstructure - the dialectic expresses the dynamic totality of historical materialism of the capitalist society. This organic unity of economics and sociology has to be understood as an "objective, object-subject process", in which the economic factor has the primary role. Colletti says:

On the other hand, the relationship money-commodity (m-c) or capital-labour power, expresses the relation between constant and

⁷ "The indifference towards a determinate form of labour presupposes a very developed totality of actual types of labor, of which one is no longer dominating (over) the others. Thus the most general abstractions generally develop only with the richest concrete development, where one [moment] appears common to many, common to all. Then one ceases to be able to think only [in terms] of a particular form. On the other hand, this abstraction of labor generally is not merely the mental result of [abstracting from] a concrete totality of labors. The indifference towards the determinate type of labor corresponds to a form of society in which individuals transfer with ease from one type of labor into another and the determinate type of labor is contingent to their, hence indifferent. Here labor has become not only in the category but in actuality a means to the creation of wealth generally and has ceased being attached to individuals as a determination in a particular situation. Such a condition is at its highest development in the most modern form of existence of bourgeois society - the United States." (Ibid., p.144-145).

variable capital, i.e. a relation between simple objects, raw materials and machinery on the one hand and the rest of the means of production on the other, under capitalism. Yet on the other hand, this relation between the mere objective conditions of production, between the mere means or instruments by which the objective materials process of production proceeds, is indeed a relationship between objects, but one between active objects, i.e. between capital and labour-power, between the employer and the wage worker; in short, a relationship between socio-historical agents.⁸

Specifically, the superstructure is itself a socio-economic reality, being part of the structure; but, being consciousness, it distinguishes itself from the structure by reflecting upon it and embracing it mentally within itself. It follows that the Marxian law is both a social relation or reality and a form of reflection upon this social relation which means that value judgements, critique of social reality, are inevitably present in scientific research "but as judgements whose ultimate significance depends on the degree to which they stand up to historical - practical verification or experiment, and hence on their capacity to be converted ultimately into factual judgements. This is precisely the link between science and politics, between knowledge and transformation of the world that Marx accomplished in the historical moral field."⁹

⁸ L. Colletti, From Rousseau to Lenin, Monthly Review Press, New York, London, 1972, P.13.

⁹ Ibid., p.76.

2. *Literary Theory and Criticism*

For G. Della Volpe the dialectic of determinate abstraction or the experimental method of hypothesis deduction is the only warranted method to obtain knowledge. Art, then, which has a cognitive and universal function as symbol of truth is, like science and history, its product. It is a socio-historically determined abstraction; there is nothing metaphysical or extrahistorical about artistic values. It is a contradiction in terms, an impasse, Della Volpe maintains, to speak of the epistemological and universal value of art, and to affirm the non-intellectual (non discursive and non conceptual) nature of art as Croce and romantic-idealistic aesthetic and literary criticism do. Artistic knowledge is dialectically obtained through images or intuitions-
imagination-organically linked to concepts-reason. Reason unifies the contradictory multiplicity of the real by giving images meaning, that is, form. The conviction of an epistemology based upon the imagination, of images as vehicles of truth, is nonsensical and mystical. From a general epistemological point of view, therefore, the literary abstraction does not differ from the scientific or historical. It, differs, however from a technical semantic point of view. But all this has to be proven empirically.

On a strictly technical-epistemological level, an analysis of the metaphor reveals the intellectual character of poetry. It shows the abstractive power of reason to conceptualize by comparison: in establishing similarities among dissimilar images.¹ Metaphors are rational empirical syntheses,

¹ Della Volpe bases his argument upon Aristotle's interpretation of the metaphor in The Topica, I, 108b 1-25, and 40 to 10, where Aristotle compares the metaphor to the inductive and deductive methods.

determinate abstractions, by genus or type.¹ Della Volpe reconsiders Aristotle's analysis of some famous metaphors. Here is an example:

Un esempio di traslato del genere alla specie - é detto - é questo: "Qui ristá la mia nave" (*Odyss.* I, 185; XXIV, 308) perche l'"esser ancorato," ormein, e un modo specifico del generico "ristare," o "esser fermo," estanai, che qui é usato in vece sua. Di specie a specie, questo: "poiché con l'arma di bronzo gli attinse la vita" (Empedocle, *Katharmoi*) e anche: "poiché con la coppa di duro bronzo ebbe recisa l'acqua" (ibid.): dove il poeta disse arusai, "attingere," invece di tamein, "recidere," e recidere invece di attingere, e tutt'e due sono specie del generico aphelein, o "toglier via." Al qual proposito é da considerare, in primo luogo, che la metafora del "ristare" della nave é veramente tale e non una insipida astrazione a patto che quella sorta di definizione che essa é (come dice il Castelvetro), e cioé riportamento della specie dell'ormein al suo genere estanai, consista non in un puro nesso formale di astratte ragioni ma in un nesso logico-intuitivo delle diverse specie (non solo lo ormein) col loro genere; a patto insomma di essere non astratta pura somiglianza o sintesi senza analisi, ma sintesi-analisi: che altrimenti si misconoscerebbe quel tanto di intuitivo o immaginoso o icastico che contribuisce a render espressivo quel traslato omerico appunto perché la sua positività di icastico o intuitivo o molteplice risulta non già abolita ma esplicita e intensificata (per il principio dell'implicazione reciproca degli eterogenei) dalla stessa potenza relazionale di quei suoi nessi specifici, che costituiscono in concreto il concetto-genere del "ristare"; risulta, infine, per chi sappia percepire che la nave ristá all'ancora come il carro ristá sulle ruote e l'uomo sulle gambe etc.²

On a semantic level, a rapid approach to the poetical text shows not only that images and concepts are inseparable, but that it is the intellectual meaning which gives the image its aesthetic impact, its "icasticita". Without thought i.e., in their abstractness, images are "out of focus", amorphous: they belong to the precognitive stage. Besides, the words themselves, according to modern linguistics, are vehicles of concepts.

Dunque, quando Dante ci dice nella grande canzone dell'esilio che "di fonte nasce il Nilo picciol fiume / quivi dove 'l gran lume / toglie a la

² G. Della Volpe, *Critica Del Gusto*, Feltrinelli, Milano, 1960, p.50-51.

terra del vinco la fronda," c'è da chiedersi come possiamo percepire e valutare la bellezza dell'ultima immagine (in cui culminano le precedenti) se dobbiamo assumerla solo come "immagine" e cioè senza anche (a tacer d'altro) il contemporaneo concetto esplicativo dell'ombra quasi annullata dalla perpendicolarità dei raggi solari? Appena ci abbandoni questa povera nozione empirica (la "più probabile" ci dice la critica) non ci resta che un gratuito nonsenso che è ad un tempo un'immagine sfocata: e cioè da un rigoroso punto di vista tanto gnoseologico che estetico: un niente: non immagine-concetto e dunque nemmeno immagine o intuizione che si dica...Così, se voi trascurate il significato ateo di quello "apparir del vero" etcetera in A Silvia, per cui "Silvia si mostra pura di ogni elemento soprannaturale o spirituale" e "non ci è più cielo, non ci è più redenzione," non avendo "Silvio... niente di comune...con Beatrice e Margherita" (De Sanctis), voi perderete ad un tempo la patetica conclusione del sublime idillio leopardiano.³

The intellectual or structural element of any poetical text points to the historical reality with its problematic and its aspirations in which the author is immersed. It brings to the fore the dialectical link between art and reality. Are there any concepts - Della Volpe asks rhetorically - which cannot be related directly or indirectly to the real? "Dunque, il poeta per esser poeta, e cioè per dar forma alle sue immagini (sia pure in quel certo suo modo, che vedremo poi), deve pensare e ragionare, nel senso letterale dei termini, e quindi fare i conti con la verità e la realtà delle cose (il "verosimile" come elemento artistico essenziale scoperto da Aristotele) non meno, certo, dello storico e della scienziato in genere. E fare i conti - come poeta - con le ideologie e gli avvenimenti e l'esperienza insomma (anche "storica") pur quando, nell'intenzione sua, astragga da - o rifiuti - le prime e i secondi, alla maniera di un Ariosto o di un Cervantes."⁴

³ Ibid., p.2-3.

⁴ Ibid., p.6-7.

The cognitive criterion of verisimilitude, it must be emphasized - "i.e. poeta deve fare i conti con la verita, e la realta' della cose" - sanctions the indissoluble link between poetry and history: the poetical truth is always a sociological truth; but it establishes also their heterogeneous character. Therefore, every work of art is realistic in this sense: it expresses historical truths.

With the recognition that art and society are connected through the conceptual element the sociological materialistic interpretation of the work of art is scientifically grounded. Modern linguistics, Della Volpe will emphasize later on, will strengthen this basis. According to him, it postulates the identity of thought and language. In showing, then, that the structural (ideological or cultural) values of a work of art determine its poetical effect, the dialectic of determinate abstraction will proceed according to a semantic philology totally functional with respect to the poetic text as a historical product. It will articulate itself within superstructures historically defined. In this manner, it will establish "gli antecedenti reali storico - cultural o ideologici (nella fattispecie), del conseguente che'e' l'oggetto o fenomeno problematico studiato: e diciamo appunto antecedenti ideologici reali, temporali, storici e non antecedenti puramente ideali, astratti, a priori." Therefore, it will avoid the serious flaw of previous sociological interpretations: a mechanic and generic relation between society and the work of art. It will instead manifest how the superstructure to which art belongs is dialectically related to the social-economic structure.

Onde si salda veramente, non meccanicamente ma dialetticamente, la sovrastruttura culturale (cui appartiene la poesia e l'arte in genere) alla base economico sociale e si dimostra - attraverso l'enucleazione di complessi poetico - strutturali - che né Antigene "né Achille né Vulcano etc." sarebbero stati "possibili" con "Roberts and Co." o "il

Credit Immobilier" o "la polvere da sparo e il piombo" (Marx, cit.), proprio perché ognuno di essi presuppone e contiene nella sua struttura di organismo poeticamente significativo tutt'altre, condizioni ideologiche o cultural (moralì, religiose, scientifiche, etc.) e implicitamente economiche o materiali.⁵

Art, then, is a socially determined abstraction being at once a part of the structure and a form of consciousness or reflection upon it. This form of reflection is what is generally called artistic symbolism.

Della Volpe's demonstration is very exhaustive and convincing; it encompasses a wide spectrum of literary production from the Greeks to Brecht. We will refer only to a few examples. In the case of Sophocle's Antigones Della Volpe points out how the peculiar Greek ethical - religious concepts of Hybris, human arrogance, Sophrosyne, wisdom in the sense of moderation, Nemesis, divine punishment, Ananke, fate and the problematic that they engender generate the lyrical symbolism of the tragedy. Within the ethical-religious problematic, in fact, created by Antigone's hybris, Oedipus' daughter, who has defied Creon's, edict by performing funeral rites for her brother, Polynices, and by Creon's hybris who has sentenced Antigone to death, thus committing thus an injustice which calls for a divine nemesis, these ethical-lyrical passages acquire their significance:

la "saggezza" comprensiva della sorella Ismene: "Per me, dunque, pregando i nostri morti sottoterra di perdonarmi, poiché vi sono costretta, obbediró a coloro che hanno il potere. Voler fare cio ch'è al di sopra delle nostre forze [perissá] é un atto irragionevole... Poiché lo vuoi, va: e sappi una cosa: tu parti per un atto folle, ma tu sei veramente amica di quelli che ami" (vv. 65 sgg., 98-9); la logica dello strumento divino Creonte: "É impossibile conoscere l'anima, i sentimenti e il pensiero di alcun uomo, se non lo si é mai visto all'opera al potere e nell'applicazione delle leggi... No, io non sono un uomo, e essa [Antigone] che prende il mio posto, se questa superiorità

⁵ Ibid., p.11.

che ha assunto deve restare impunita" (vv. 175 sgg., 484 sgg.); le ragioni di Antigone di fronte a Creonte: "A.: ...Né io credevo che il tuo editto avesse forza bastante da dare a un mortale il potere di violare le leggi non scritte e immutabili degli dei... Chi sa se queste [tue] regole sono sacre laggiú? C.: Certo un nemico non mi sará mai caro, neppure quando sia morto. A.: Certo, io non nacqui per condividere l'odio, ma l'amore" (vv. 453 sgg., 519 sgg.); il secondo stasimo o delle speranze umane: "...La varia speranza a molti uomini giova, per molti, invece, é un inganno dei loro vani desideri: ed essa si attacca a chi nulla comprende prima di bruciarsi il piede all'ardente brace. Con saggezza é stato pronunciato il detto famoso: il male sembra essere un bene a colui a cui la divinitá spinge l'intelletto alla rovina: ed egli passa brevissimo tempo al riparo della sventura" (vv. 615 sgg.); la logica di Creonte confutata dal figlio Emone: "C.: La citta non é forse ritenuta esser di chi la governa?...⁶

In the case of Pindar, known for his irrational flights of the imagination, unchained to a determined historical reality, he emphasizes the extreme rationality of his metaphors and again the organic bond between the Greek ethical Weltanschauung and his lyrical poetry.

... Così, dissociate, ad esempio, le immagini dai concetti etico-religiosi e da quelli più comuni in questa veduta conclusiva della vita umana dell'ottava pitica, senza perderne la poesia, se vi riesce: "... La gioia dei mortali in breve ora cresce e così si abbatte, sovvertita da un giudizio ch'è fuori del nostro controllo. Creature d'un giorno! Che mai é ognuno di noi? che mai non é? Sogno di un'ombra é l'uomo. Ma quando ci investa un raggio di Zeus, la luce per gli uomini é fulgida e la vita soave" (e cfr. la seconda olimpica: "Nessuna delle nostre azioni, e giuste e ingiuste, e senza conseguenza, nemmeno se Cronos padre di tutte le cose potesse segnare un termine alle opere; ma con una felice sorte potrebbe nascere l'oblio. Muore, infatti, il tenace male domato dalle nobili gioie, quando la Moira celeste ci sollevi a una felicità somma")...o nell'undicesima pitica per la sentenza sull'Hybris: "Le sventure invidiose [concentrata formula metaforica limiti ai desideri] sono stornate da chi, toccato il vertice e vivendo tranquillo, sia sfuggito all'insolenza fatale" etc.⁷

⁶ Ibid., p.9.

⁷ Ibid., p.16-17.

In Dante, Della Volpe stresses, it is the fusion of the literal-moral language, "che é tanto storicamente quintessenziato e tecnico quanto personale", with the symbolic or allegoric apparatus which generates artistic excellence. The moral-religious symbolism, in fact, structures and unifies the poem.

Analyzing contemporary poetry, Della Volpe shows that in T. S. Eliot it is his Christian spirituality which acts as a poetical catalyst in the crisis of the traditional bourgeois moral values; in Montale, on the other hand, it is his moral atheism which acts as a poetical catalyst in the crisis of contemporary society; in Mayakosky, the poet of the socialist revolution, it is a positive and optimistic atheism, rooted in Marxism, which confers on his poetry the enthusiasm and exultation of a society on the road to reconstruction and progress.

The poetical strength of all the above authors, Della Volpe concludes, consists in their ingenious use of metaphors and other technical devices to typify the cultural values of the societies they describe. The typicality (and hence tendentiousness) of poetical values, he says, has nothing to do with the statistical typicality of science. The artistic typicality, as has been shown, is historically determined: it consists of an ensemble of common and specific characteristics of historico-social essentiality. It follows, then, that the poetical abstraction is a symbolic typicality which typifies the multiplicity of the real.

What has been said above entails a complete subversion of the traditional aesthetic criterion of form and content and the identification of form with thought and content with the multiplicity of the images. Artistic unity or coherence, an essential requirement for the greatness of a work of art, means logical coherence (to talk of artistic unity produced by fancy, and logical unity in a work of art as two separate components is to misunderstand

it) and the unpoetical is caused not by the poverty of imagination or images, but by imagination or images not supported by a strong, concrete thought.

If from a general epistemological point of view poetry does not differ from history or science what, then, is their specific epistemological difference, besides their different ways of typifying the real? The answer has to be sought, Della Volpe points out in an examination of the technical-semantic operations that regulate the poetical and scientific discourse.

It follows that the poetical text is semantically autonomous and self-verifying: it does not need any other text but itself in the expression of its semantic values so that what it expresses is inseparable from its text (organic unitextuality).

Infatti, se leggiamo, ad esempio, le correzioni d'autore di Rime, CCCXXIII, 25-28, per cui da "In un boschetto, / E fra i bei rami udiasi dolci canti" si passa, infine, a "In un boschetto novo i rami santi / Fiorian d'un lauro giovenetto e schietto, / Ch'un delli arbor pareo di paradiso; / E di sua ombra uscian si dolci canti" etc., oppure leggiamo alcune delle correzioni de L'Infinito (al v.3 "celesti confine" corretto in "ultimo orizzonte," al v. 14 "Infinitá" corr. in "Immensita") e di A Silvia (al v. 5 "lieta e pudica" corr. in "lieta e pensosa," al v. 12 "dolce avvenir" corr. in "vago avvenir," al v. 62 "Un sepolcro deserto e l'Ombre ignude," e "A me la tomba inonorata e nuda" etc. corr. in "La fredda morte ed una tomba ignuda"), e se teniamo presenti le considerazioni in proposito suggerite e suggeribili da una critica sensibile ... dovremo concludere dal punto di vista filosofico o gnoseologico-estetico: 1) che il progresso della rappresentazione in obiettività e verità, e quindi di poeticità, si risolve o coincide con un progresso di modulazione linguistica di sentimenti-pensieri, ossia di comunicazione (nell'accezione corrente, di cui sopra, di questo termine);... 2) che, d'altra parte, il progresso nella modulazione linguistica di sentimenti-pensieri, come progresso stesso della verità poetica, é tale in quanto processo interno ai testi in questione e cioè concernente e dipendente dalla loro crescita (storia) e individuazione come organismi semantici ossia contesti determinati.⁸

⁸ Ibid., p.70-71.

The semantic organicity of poetical discourse means, then, that its words are from a relative point of view irreplaceable. They cannot be replaced by other words drawn abstractly from experience. They are embedded in the context in a relation of necessary interdependence. The leopardian line, "Dolce e chiara é la notte e senza vento," for example, cannot be paraphrased, that is, translated into a common meteorological observation without losing "quel di piú", that something more, which makes it poetical.

The scientific text, instead, is semantically heterotonomous: it ideally refers to other similar texts; that is, it presupposes them in order to convey the full impact of its semantic value. The scientific text implies a semantic chain of which it partakes (disorganic omnitextuality). For Della Volpe a scientific text includes not only those of the natural and social sciences but also those of philosophy and history because in them, broadly speaking, the intellectual procedure and the use of language are scientific.

Esaminiamo allora un testo filosofico, il seguente passo della poetica bruniana degli "eroici furori" e dell'anti-petrarchismo: "Conchiudi bene, che la poesia non nasce da le regole, se non per leggerissimo accidente; ma le regole derivano da le poesie: e però tanti son geni e specie de vere regole, quanti son geni e specie de veri poeti" etc.: e chiediamoci il che e il come del processo verso la verità che costituisce, a sua volta, questa modulazione linguistica di sentimenti-pensieri. Consteremo così che, affinché questo determinato testo-elemento-di-un-contesto acquisti non un senso generico e vago o sfocato, quale può derivargli dalla decifrazione immediata dei termini lessicali che lo compongono etc., ma un significato preciso e articolato che enuclei quel tanto di verità - circa la realtà della poesia e del suo rapporto con le regole - che può sostenere l'argomentazione o "tesi" filosofica ch'esso ci comunica o esprime, questo testo-contesto dev'essere assunto in relazione di inter-dipendenza perlomeno con molti altri testi-contesti - e non semplicemente "pensieri" - precedenti e relative esperienze storiche espresse in essi, s'intende, da quelli platonici, sulla natura irrazionale della poesia, in quanto manía, invasamento o "furore" divino, e relativo deprezzamento del "sapere" o tecnica (regole) in essa poesia, circa le "regole" della sua Poetica e anche a quelli aristotelici italiani, contemporanei del Bruno, e delle relative polemiche; a

prescindere poi (per comodo) da tutti i testi susseguenti, che vanno fino a quelli dei romantici tedeschi e degli idealisti italiani etcetera.⁹

What is more important, the poetical text is an organic text of connotative or polysemic (more terms for the same genus or concept) semantic values, whereas the scientific text is a disorganic text of denotative or univocal (the same term for the same concept) semantic values. The poetical symbolic abstraction is then a characteristic polysemic typicality; the scientific abstraction, instead, is a characteristic univocal typicality. Both abstractions, transcend dialectically - in a conservation-transformation process - the equivocal (same term for different concepts) values of the "letterale-materiale", that is, of the common everyday discourse. In many cases, they also transcend each other. The "letterale materiale" has to be understood according to the linguistic-structuralistic criteria as a historical - social institution without which neither words nor communication would be possible. Language, that is, is not to be dissociated from thought ("pensiero storico, in senso lato, inclusavi dunque l'esperienza in genere") and each word from its concept it expresses. Language itself therefore insures the presence of history in poetry. The autonomy of poetry is not from history, as the idealists maintain, but in history.

On a semiological level, the aesthetic symbol represents a message which always refers to the social code. Because of its polyvalence of signification such a message is highly informative. Specifically, then, the semantic organicity of the poetical discourse is obtained by the unification of verbal symbols which assume new and different meanings in addition to the one they already have. A verbal sign, that is, becomes in relation to the

⁹ Ibid., p.70-71.

context - to the other signs to which it is interwoven - a term of manifold signification. It assumes a syntactical freedom. Therefore:

la "rosa rossa rossa" di Burns é e non é "la rosa" del trattato di botanica, lo é per il suo valore letterale-materiale, da cui procede nel dipartirsene il trattato, e non lo é per la mancanza di sviluppo tecnico delle sue caratteristiche di organo riproduttore della pianta etc., interessando al poeta nella "rosa" la sua desiderabilitá, ch'egli trasporta alla persona dell'amata, cosi la "hybris" di Pindaro e "Mylae" di Eliot sono e non sono quelle delle storie dello ethos greco o delle guerre puniche: lo sono per il loro letterale-materiale comune, per i loro nomi-concetti nei lessici greci e latini, non lo sono per la mancanza della loro particolarizzazione tecnica, sostituita da Pindaro con le "sventure invidiose" e la "insolenza fatale" etc., e da Eliot con lo "Stetson! tu che eri!" etc., cioè con significati che non sono piú soltanto dell'ordine onnitestuale di quelli dei lessici greco-latini, elementi-base comuni del linguaggio dei poeti come degli storici, e che non possono essere (se non a costo di confondere e annullare la rispettiva sintesi poetica) dell'ordine onnicontestuale di quelli delle storie dell'ethos greco o delle guerre puniche, che non conoscono né "sventure invidiose" etc. (perché anche adducendole come fonti ne colgono solo gli elementi ordinabili nella gerarchia unívoca dei concetti etici greci) né alcuno Stetson alla battaglia di Mylae.¹⁰

Della Volpe analyzes more poetical texts to show their polysemic rationality. Here is an example of his critical intelligence.

Ancora Burns: "The wan moon is setting ayont the white wave, / and time is setting with me, oh!" (la pallida luna sta tramontando dietro la bianca onda, / e il tempo sta tramontando per me, oh): qui l'effetto di poetica malinconia nasce dalla connessione connotativa, polisensa, del tramonto della luna col passare del tempo per me, per noi, tramite la attribuzione - per traslato - dell'idea di "tramonto" al "tempo," il che comporta la estensione-traslazione della letterale denotativa pallidezza e bianchezza della luna (tramontante) e dell'onda (al tramonto) alle cose umane, che cosi impallidiscono e svaniscono anch'esse. Si noti la presenza intellettuale richiesta pur in quest'ordine di associazioni di tanto vaghe impressioni esterne e interne (ci si perdoni un confronto con la riflessione oraziana ben piú profonda, nella sua semplicitá, e d'effetto ben piu commovente in "Tuttavia le rapide lune riparano i

¹⁰ Ibid., p.84.

danni del cielo: / ma noi quando cadremo / dove il padre Enea, dove i ricchi Tullo e Anco sono caduti, / polvere ed ombra saremo"):11

It follows that in literary criticism the sociological interpretation of poetry should be integrated with a critical paraphrase in order to capture the poetical values in their specificity. The critical paraphrase will point out the "scarto dialettico" (dialectical difference) between the poetical, the literal-material and the omnitextual discourses in univocal scientific terms according to the dialectic of determinate abstraction. It will show the uniqueness and dependence of poetical style. The semantic organicity of ideas will represent the degree of artistic excellence. At the same time the critical paraphrase will also reveal the reciprocal epistemological import or interaction between the literal-material, the omnitextual and the unitextual.

...onde, ad esempio, il pindarico stilema "le sventure invidiose" etcetera é reale, come fatto espressivo, e perché, transcendendo in significato la sua parafrasi "hybris" etcetera, si costituisce come senso peculiarmente espressivo (polisenso) e perché, essendo dialettico questo suo transcendimento della lettera "hybris" richiamata dalla parafrasi, esso si mantiene, pur in questo suo transcendere, nello universo della comunicazione (la lingua), che conferisce effettiva validità o universalità al senso espressivo peculiare ch'esso é: ed esso si rapporta infine - nella comune base (dialettica) della lettera "hybris" - a qualsiasi altro possibile senso peculiare espressivo della stessa lettera, quale ad esempio, il senso storiografico scientifico, o unívoco, di "hybris," nel mentre che se ne differenzia e cioè lo delimita e ne é delimitato per peculiarità rispettive dei modi di transcendimento (dialettico) della lettera in questione.¹²

¹¹ Ibid., p.86.

¹² Ibid., p.131.

B. Louis Althusser

1. Dialectics

Althusser claims that between the Manuscripts and Marx's later works an epistemological break has occurred. Marx rejected the anthropological problematic and fixed his attention upon a new problematic which he brought to light by transforming the problematic of classical political economy. The new problematic dealt with the constellation of "social relations", above all those relations and forces of production. By working within this problematic, Marx produced the scientific dialectic of historical materialism. The anthropological problematic had confined him to metaphysical reflection, and therefore to ideology, rather than to scientific analysis.¹

¹ The notion of the problematics and the theory of "symptomatic reading" are Althusser's basic epistemological tools in interpreting Marx's works. Althusser states that many Marxist concepts are latent in Marx's texts and they can be extracted only by a symptomatic reading of the texts. The theory at work in a text lies not in the author's intentions or beliefs, or in the "visible" and specific statements implied by the theory but in an underlying structure where the problematic that the theory has to deal with is presented. This structure manifests itself through dislocations or contradictions of levels of discourse because the problematic is usually complex and contradictory. It can be identified by a symptomatic reading of the gaps, lapses, silences, absences, transpositions, and absurdities resulting from the dislocations. In this manner, the objective text will be decoded: it will unveil the invisible text. A symptomatic reading "divulges the undivulged event in the text it reads, and in the same movement relates it to a different text, present as a necessary absence of the first." (L. Althusser and E. Balibar, Reading Capital, NLB London 1970, p. 52.). It follows, in fact, from the nature of problematic - a definite logical space that allows only the posing of certain questions - that the "invisible", the excluded problems, is a necessary concomitant of the problems defined by the problematic. "The same connexion that defines the visible also defines the invisible as its shadowy obverse. It is the field of the problematic that defines and structures the invisible as the definite excluded, excluded from the field of visibility and defined as excluded by the existence and peculiar structure of the field of the problematic." (Ibid., p. 25-26) "A minimum of provisional Marxist theoretical concepts bearing on the nature of theoretical formations and their history", that is, a Marxist problematic, has to guide the reading.

Like Della Volpe, Althusser maintains that the Marxist dialectic is based upon the principles of non-contradiction and the specificity and irreducibility of the real. The famous metaphor, the "inversion" of Hegel's dialectic, meant not only changing the object of the dialectic but also altering its structures,² since Hegel emphatically asserts the unity of the method of the dialectic and its object.³ Had Marx simply inverted the Hegelian dialectic, he would have been bound to the ideological problematic of Hegelian philosophy. Therefore he repudiated the Hegelian logical and simple contradiction by means of the teleology of the negation of the negation which finds its chief expression in the category of alienation, the concept of the social totality in which such a contradiction operates, and the idealistic category of the subject, being God or Man or the Idea, as maker of history.

The Hegelian contradiction is simple because it is determined by one essential, simple dialectical conflict of ideas which activates all the instances of the social totality. That is, all the other apparently diverse contradictions of the social totality, that is, are manifestatious of this essential, simple contradiction. The Hegelian totality is thus an expressive totality, "all of whose parts are so many 'total parts', each expressing the others and each expressing the social totality that contains them, because each in itself contains in the immediate form of its expression the essence of the social

² "To criticise the Hegelian philosophy of history because it is teleological, because from its origin it is in pursuit of a goal (the realisation of Absolute Knowledge), hence to reject the teleology in the philosophy of History, but to return to the Hegelian dialectic as such at the same time, is to fall into a strange contradiction. For the Hegelian dialectic too is teleological in its structures, since the key structures of the Hegelian dialectic is the negation of the negation, which is the teleology itself, within the dialectic." (L. Althusser, Politics and History, NLB, London 1972, p. 181.).

³ Hegel, G.W.F., The Science of Logic, Volume 1, Penguin Harmondsworth, p. 53.

totality itself."⁴ The complexity of any historical period is reduced then to a simple explanatory principle.

Thus Rome: its mighty history, its institutions, its crises and ventures, are nothing but the temporal manifestatious of the internal principle of the abstract legal personality, and then its destruction. Of course this internal principle contains as echoes the principle of each of the historical formations it has superseded, but as echoes of itself-that is why, too, it only has one center, the center of all the past worlds conserved in its memory; that is why it is simple. And its own contradiction appears in this very simplicity: in Rome, the Stoic consciousness, as consciousness of the contradiction inherent in the concept of the abstract legal personality, which aims for the concrete world of subjectivity, but misses it. This is the contradiction which will bring down Rome and produce its future: the image of subjectivity in medieval Christianity.⁵

Therefore, the versions of Marxism which have emphasized that the essence of the social totality is represented by the basic and simple contradiction between forces and relations of production distort Marx's thought.

The Marxist contradiction, instead, is complex and overdetermined-determined, that is, not just by one but by many conflicts. All the contradictions of the different instances or levels of practice - not only the economical, but also the political, ideological and theoretical - of the social totality are distinct and therefore irreducible to a basic, essential contradiction. They coexist overdetermining one another. Simplicity is merely the product of a complex and structured process.

The Introduction is no more than a long demonstration of the following thesis: the simple only ever exists within a complex structure; the universal existence of a simple category is never original,

⁴ L. Althusser and E. Balibar, Reading Capital, NLB, London 1970, p. 94.

⁵ L. Althusser, For Marx, Verso, London 1969, p. 102.

it only appears as the end-result of a long historical process, as the product of a highly differentiated social structure; so, where reality is concerned, we are never dealing with the pure existence of simplicity, be it essence or category, but with the existence of 'concretes' of complex and structured beings and processes.⁶

The dialectic of history, Althusser stresses, is that of a process powered by a structured complex and unified whole made of necessarily related but relatively autonomous levels of practices in which, however, the economic level is determinant in the last instance in structuring. The superstructure is subordinated to the economy, but at the same time represents its condition of existence.

The economic dialectic is never active in the pure state; in History, these instances, the superstructures, etc., are never seen to step respectfully aside when their work is done, or when the time comes, as his pure phenomena, to scatter before His majesty the Economy as he strides along the royal road to Dialectic. From the first moment to the last, the lonely hour of the "last instance" never comes.⁷

The contradiction at the economic level is compounded by the different contradictions of all the other levels in their relation of articulation upon each other and therefore overdetermined by them.⁸ Unlike a living organism

⁶ Ibid., p. 196-197.

⁷ Ibid., p. 201.

⁸ "They [Marx and Engels] draw from them the basic notion that the Capital-Labour contradiction is never simple, but always specified by the historically concrete forms and circumstances in which it is exercised. It is specified by the forms of the superstructure (the State, the dominant ideology, religion, politically organized movements, and so on); specified by the internal and external historical situation which determines it on the one hand as a function of the national past (completed or 'relapsed' bourgeois revolution, feudal exploitation eliminated wholly, partially or not at all, local 'customs' specific national traditions, even the 'etiquette' of political struggles and behavior, etc.), and on the other as functions of the existing world context (what dominates it - competition of capitalist nations, or 'imperialist internationalism', or competition within imperialism, etc.), many of these phenomena deriving from the 'law of uneven development' in the Leninist sense.

What can this mean but that the apparently simple contradiction is always overdetermined?" (Ibid., p. 106).

this highly structured whole is then "decentered": that is, it has no center, no simple, governing contradiction which determines the form of all the other manifestations of the social system.

Althusser emphasizes that even though the dialectic yields a different structure for each historical period, the levels of practice, however, on which it acts are structural invariants of all societies. There is, in other words, in each particular historically determined level an unchanging structure which typifies that level as such.

For Althusser, practice is an activity which has the structure of production. It is defined as "any process of transformation of a determinate given raw material into a determinate product, a transformation effected by a determinate human labour, using determinate means (of 'production'). In any practice thus conceived, the determinant moment (or element) is neither the raw material nor the product, but the practice in the narrow sense: the moment of the labour of transformation itself, which sets to work, in a specific structure."⁹ This conception of practice brings to the fore the distinctness of all the practices since each of them has its own specific raw materials, means of production, product, and form of human labour. The distinctness of the levels of practice, however, is especially shown by their uneven development. They do not develop in the same historical time. "Each of these different 'levels' does not have the same type of historical existence. On the contrary, we have to assign to each level a particular time, relatively autonomous and hence relatively independent, even in its dependence, of the 'times' of the other levels. Each of these peculiar levels is

⁹ Ibid., p. 166-167.

punctuated with peculiar rhythms and can only be known on condition that we have defined the concept of the specificity of its historical temporality and its punctuations¹⁰

Althusser explains the nature of the uneven, overdetermined but unified whole as that of a hierarchy of levels linked by the economy in a relation of domination - subordination. The complex whole possesses the unity of a structure in dominance. The contradiction within the economy displays the role of dominant instance onto a particular instance or to itself and assigns to the other instances their specific roles.¹¹ Under feudalism, for instance, the political was the dominant instance, whereas under capitalism the social is the dominant one. The structure in dominance permeates the reality of the conditions of existence of each contradiction.

The concept of overdetermination can then be understood as the effectivity of all the other contradictions through the presence of the structure in dominance on the reality of the conditions of existence of each contradiction. Althusser uses the notion of conjuncture to indicate this unity of necessarily related, necessarily uneven levels.

¹⁰ L. Althusser and E. Balibar, Reading Capital, NLB London 1970, p. 99-100. Althusser often mentions the unevenness of development of the social formation in Russia in 1917 - for instance a highly advanced heavy industry with a semifeudal monarchy and a backward agrarian system - which led to the revolution.

¹¹ "In the Introduction Marx gives us the best possible proof of the invariance of the structure in dominance within the apparent circularity of conditioning, when he analyses the identity of production, consumption and distribution through exchange. This might give the reader Hegelian vertigo - 'nothing simpler, then, for a Hegelian than to pose production and consumption as identical' (op. cit., p. 625) - but this would be a complete misunderstanding. 'The result we have obtained is not that production, distribution, exchange and consumption are identical, but that they are all elements of one totality, differentiations within one unity' in which it is production in its specific difference that is determinant." Determinant here stands also for dominant. "So a determinate production determines a determinate consumption, distribution and exchange, and the determinate mutual relations of these different moments. For its part, production in its unilateral form is really determined by the other moments' (pp. 630-31)." (L. Althusser, For Marx, London 1969, footnote 45, p. 206)

A new concept of causality as structural causality follows from the notion of overdetermination. The causality of the structure of the whole as determined by the economy in the last instance on the contradictions is nothing beyond the interrelation of those contradictions. Cause and effect, that is to say, are not clearly marked off and inseparable. The causality of the whole is given by the relations existing among its effects. When Althusser then speaks of the "absence of the cause" he simply means that the structure of the whole is immanent in its effects since cause and effect are inseparable. But it is a structure which dissimulates itself as "a hidden mystery", "an absent cause", in presenting itself.

The structure is not an essence outside the economic phenomena which comes and alters their aspect, forms and relations which is effective upon them as an absent cause, absent because it is outside them. The absence of the cause in the structure's 'metonymic causality' on its effects is not the fault of the exteriority of the structure with respect to the economic phenomena; on the contrary, it is the very form of the interiority of the structure, in its effects. This implies therefore that the effects are not outside the structure, are not a pre-existing object, element or space in which the structure arrives to imprint its mark: on the contrary, it implies that the structure is immanent in its effects, a cause immanent in its effects in the Spinozist sense of the term, that the whole existence of the structure consists of its effects, in short that the structure, which is merely a specific combination of its peculiar elements, is nothing outside its effects.¹²

Althusser is here also arguing against the classical conception of reality as an essence underlying the phenomena which are pure illusions-well exemplified in the prevailing understanding of the theory of fetishism-and, consequently against an understanding of it according to the epistemology of linear causality.

¹² Ibid., p. 188-189.

It follows then that the fetishism of commodities is not an illusory phenomenon. Through its concealments the capitalist mode of production presents itself. The fetishism of commodities is a necessary form of existence of the capitalist mode of production. This is the form that the products of social labor must take for consumption since the capitalist mode of production is also regulated by the mechanism of the market. The real cause - the law of value - of the existence of the commodity on the market is present through its absence.¹³ Marx says: "value does not carry what is written on its forehead." For Althusser, then, what Marx means when he says that if the phenomenon and the essence were to coincide then science would be a trivial pursuit, is that the essential structures of reality are always hidden and they require a great deal of analysis to be uncovered.

According to Althusser, the epistemology that guarantees the validity of the dialectic's claim to provide objective knowledge of the real world is not, however, an empiricist one. He denies the homology between thought and real, and therefore denies scientific validity to the techniques of verification, induction or falsification. The process of knowledge, according to him, takes place entirely in thought. He espouses the conventionalist theory of science of his teacher, Gaston Bachelard, according to which facts are

¹³ "In this entirely specific form of value [that of exchange value], labour prevails on the one hand as social labour; on the other hand, the distribution of this social labour and the mutual supplementing and interchanging of its products, the subordination under, and introduction into, the social mechanism, are left to the accidental and mutually nullifying motives of individual capitalists. Since these latter confront one another only as commodity-owners and everyone seeks to sell his commodity as dearly as possible (apparently even guided in the regulation of production itself solely by his free wil), the inner law enforces itself only through their competition, their mutual pressure upon each other, whereby the deviations are mutually cancelled. Only as an inner law, vis-a-vis the individual agents, as a blind law of Nature, does the law of value exert its influence here and maintain the social equilibrium of production amidst its accidental fluctuations." (K. Marx, Capital Volume 3, Progress Publishers, Moscow 1971, p. 880.)

theory-laden and theories are overthrown not by experiments and observations but mainly by better alternative theories: less irrational and less subjective (ideological, for Althusser). For Althusser, science is based upon the transformation and development of problematics.

"By what mechanism does the process of knowledge, which takes place entirely in thought, produce the cognitive appropriation of its real object, which exists outside thought in the real world? or again, by what mechanism does the production of the object of knowledge produce the cognitive appropriation of the real object, which exists outside thought in the real world?"¹⁴

The theoretical structures of the theoretical practice guarantee the scientificity of the knowledges produced. The scientificity of a theory, be it Newton's theory of gravitation or Marx's dialectic of historical materialism, lies more in itself, in "its radical inwardness" than in the particular results it arrives at.

Theoretical practice is...its own criterion and contains in itself definite protocols with which to validate the quality of its product, i.e. the criteria of the scientificity of the products of theoretical practice. This is exactly what happens in the real practice of the sciences: once they are truly constituted and developed they have no need for verification from external practices to declare the knowledges they produce to be 'true', i.e. to be knowledges. At least for the most developed of them and in the areas of knowledges they have sufficiently mastered, they themselves provide the criterion of validity of the knowledges - this criterion coinciding perfectly with the strict forms of the exercise of the scientific practices considered.¹⁵

¹⁴ L. Althusser and E. Balibar, *Reading Capital*, London 1970, p. 186.

¹⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 59.

Theoretical practice, which is a dialectical process, is best explained by Marx's, according to Althusser, when he describes in the *Grundrisse* the "scientifically correct method" of political economy as proceeding from the "abstract to the concrete."

To understand the process of theoretical practice involves distinguishing between three bodies of concepts at work in the process, called Generalities I, II and III. Generality I forms the starting point, the raw material of theoretical practice, that is to say, the body of concepts (not, to repeat, things in the world), either scientific or ideological, upon which the process will set to work in order to transform them. Generality II is the corpus of concepts whose more or less contradictory unity constitutes the 'theory' of the science in question by defining the field in which the problems of the science must necessarily be posed - in other words, the science's problematic. Generality III is the 'concrete-in-thought', the knowledge that is produced by the work of Generality II on Generality I, of the concepts defined by the science's problematic on the pre-existing theories that constitute the pre-history of this stage in the science's development.

A correct understanding of theoretical practice can only be reached, Althusser argues, if two theses are accepted. Firstly, there is never any identity of essence between Generality I and II, the process's raw material and end product respectively, but always real transformation.¹⁶

But then what is the difference between science and ideology since ideology is also a theoretical practice? If ideology is a mystified interpretation of reality, what makes it so?

"Ideology, as a system of representations, is distinguished from science in that in it the practico-social function is more important than the theoretical function". It contaminates the theoretical function with religious, ethical, political or strictly emotional interests by endowing men or women with the knowledge to respond to the demands of their conditions of

¹⁶ A. Callinicos, *Althusser's Marxism*, Pluto Press, London 1976, p. 56-57.

existence so that they can perform the roles demanded of them by society. It follows that at the level of problematic ideology confirms its own presuppositions by extra theoretical criteria without any cognitive development.

In the theoretical mode of production of ideology (which is utterly different from the theoretical mode of production of science in this respect), the formulation of a problem is merely the theoretical expression of the conditions which allow a solution already produced outside the process of knowledge because imposed by certain extra-theoretical instances and exigencies (by religious, ethical, political or other 'interests') to recognise itself in an artificial problem manufactured to serve it both as a theoretical mirror and a practical justification.¹⁷

Therefore, ideology is a complete misrecognition of reality. It represents an imaginary and, consequently, false account of men and women's relationship to their conditions of existence.

In ideology men do indeed express, not the relation between them and their conditions of existence, but the way they live the relation between them and their real conditions of existence. In ideology the real relation is inevitably invested in the imaginary relation, a relation that expresses a will (conservative, conformist or revolutionary), a hope or a nostalgia, rather than describing a reality.¹⁸

Ideology has a material existence and functions so as to secure the reproduction of the existing relations of production. All state apparatuses or institutions, Althusser stresses, such as the army, the police, the courts, etc., operate both by repression and by ideology, "with the difference that the (repressive) state apparatus functions incisively and predominantly by

¹⁷ L. Althusser and E. Balibar, Reading Capital, London 1970, p. 52.

¹⁸ L. Althusser, For Marx, p. 233-234.

repression, whereas the Ideological State Apparatuses" such as the churches, the trade unions, the school, the political parties "function massively and predominantly by ideology."¹⁹

But what really makes ideology succeed in adapting and equipping individuals to the needs of society and at the same time in deceiving them about the nature of the social structure and the repressive and exploitative institutions of the state?

It succeeds by means of the functioning of the category of the subject. "All ideology hails or interpellates concrete individuals as concrete subjects, by the functioning of the category of the subject."²⁰ The category of the subject acquires its significance only in reference and in relation to the object. It establishes therefore an ideal relationship between subject and object: the individual has a unique value in a world made for him in which he has to play a role in conformity to what society prescribes. And the guarantor of the meaningfulness of this structure is the concept of a Unique or Absolute Subject - God in Christian theology, for example, or of Man in bourgeois philosophical humanism - who "recruits" concrete individuals into concrete subjects according to a teleological plan.

¹⁹ L. Althusser, Lenin and Philosophy and Other Essays, NLB, London 1971, p. 141.

²⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 162.

2. Remarks on Literary Theory and Criticism

Art is a specific, autonomous level of practice which "hovers" between science and ideology. "The real difference between art and science lies in the specific form in which they give us the same object in quite different ways: art in the form of "seeing" and "perceiving" or "feeling", science in the form of knowledge (in the strict sense, by concepts).¹ What art makes us see, perceive or feel is the ideology "in which it bathes, from which it detaches itself as art and to which it alludes"² as a lived experience of human existence itself. Art ruptures from within on a perceptual basis the cognitive categories of the dominant ideologies. It does this by a process of internal dissociation of levels of discourse partly through the criticism and transformation of a habituated ideological forms, including prior literary or dramatic devices, but mainly and specifically through the decentering of the concept of the Absolute Subject which is the center of identification of the individual within any ideology. According to Althusser, the dissociation of, or the absence of relations among the levels of discourse inscribed within the structure of the work of art is paradoxically the true relationship. It suggests through a silent discourse a latent theoretical structure - the structure of reality.

Whether this latent structure is, however, consciously or unconsciously produced is irrelevant: it constitutes the essence of any work of

¹ L. Althusser, Lenin and Philosophy and other Essays, 1971, p. 223.

² *Ibid.*, p. 222.

art.³ It can only be detected by a "symptomatic" reading within the framework of the Marxist theory.

This follows from Althusser's dialectic. It is implicit in the concepts of overdetermination or structural causality and of the structural invariant of each level of practice that the artistic practice manifests itself in an unchanging structure whose conditions of existence bear the marks of the structure of the whole and, therefore, of the reality that ideology mystifies. These marks are indicative of a silent discourse. They present themselves within the dislocations of the levels of discourse of the work of art as gaps, lapses, silences, etc. Specifically, the artist, for example, a writer working within an ideology as a producer of literary products⁴ writes about what the ideology makes him "see" but also records - most of the time unwillingly - the reality that ideology mystifies, what lies, that is, outside his field of vision, as a "hidden" structure within the dislocation of the levels of discourse. What lies outside the author's field of vision, according to Althusser is a necessary concomitant of what he sees. Therefore it is always present in the text.

³ "At this point someone will want to stop me, arguing that what I am drawing from the play goes beyond the intentions of the author - and that I am, in fact, attributing to Bertolazzi what really belongs to Strehler. But I regard this statement as meaningless, for at issue here is the play's latent structure and nothing else. Bertolazzi's explicit intentions are unimportant: what counts, beyond the words, the characters and the action of the play, is the internal relation of the basic elements of its structure. I would go further. It does not matter whether Bertolazzi consciously wished for this structure, or unconsciously produced it: it constitutes the essence of his work; it alone makes both Strehler's interpretation and the audience's reaction comprehensible." (L. Althusser, For Marx, 1969, p.141.)

⁴ According to the concept of practice, in fact, art is productive labour. It works upon raw materials - previous literary and dramatic devices, conventions, language, world - views (ideologies) - and transforms them into end products - artistic products. Therefore the artist is not a creator but a producer in the same sense in which the Formalists considered the writer as a technical craftsman.

The task of Marxist criticism, then is to produce an "adequate (scientific) knowledge"⁵ of the mechanism of the above process.

Althusser's literary analysis of Strehler's interpretation of Bertolazzi's El Nost Milan and of Brecht's Mother Courage illustrates his ideas. In El Nost Milan⁶, the play's internal dissociation is represented by the unevenness and opposition of its temporal and spatial structures.

⁵ Like all knowledges, the knowledge of art would be produced by the dialectic of Generality I, II and III (see above). Roughly speaking, Generality I is the body of literary and aesthetic concepts that must be transformed or abandoned. The concepts, for instance, of art as a direct perceptual knowledge of reality in the form of mirroring it or copying it or intuiting it has to be transformed whereas the concept of the unity of the text and the basic ideological categories on which the aesthetics of consumption and the aesthetics of creation which are "merely one and the same" depend must be abandoned. These categories are: "(1) the category of the subject, whether creator or consumer (producer of a 'work', producer of an aesthetic judgement), endowed with the attributes of subjectivity (freedom, project, act of creation and judgement; aesthetic need, etc.); (2) the category of the object (the 'objects' represented, depicted in the work, the work as a produced or consumed object). Thus the subjectivity of creation is no more than the mirror reflection (and this reflection is aesthetic ideology itself) of the subjectivity of consumption: the 'work' is no more than the phenomenon of the artist's subjectivity, whether this subjectivity is psychological or transcendental-aesthetic." (L. Althusser, Lenin and Philosophy and Other Essays, p. 230-31). Generality II is the body of concepts defined by the Marxist literary criticism problematic - in this case a problematic which stems from and at the same time determines Althusser's Marxist theory. Generality III, the concrete in thought, will be the knowledge produced by the work of Generality II on Generality I.

⁶ Since this play is not well known, a summary of the plot seems necessary. We will quote Althusser's summary because his is already an interpretation of the play and will throw light on his subsequent critical remarks. "The first of its three acts is set in the Milan Tivoli in the 1890's: a cheap, poverty-stricken fun-fair in the thick fog of an autumn evening. With this fog we already find ourselves in an Italy unlike the Italy of our myths. And the people strolling at day's end from booth to booth, between the fortune-tellers, the circus and beggars, girls on the look-out, old men and women on the watch for the odd halfpenny, soldiers on a spree, pickpockets chased by the cops... neither are these people the people of our myths, they are a sub-proletariat passing the time as best they can before supper (not for all of them) and rest. A good thirty characters...waiting for something of some sort to happen in their lives, in which nothing happens. They wait. however, at the end of the act, in a flash a 'story' is sketched out, the image of a destiny. A girl, Nina, stands transfixed by the lights of the circus, staring with all her heart through a rent in the canvas at the clown performing his perilous act. Night has fallen. For one moment, time is in suspense. But she is already being watched by the Togasso, the good-for-nothing who hopes to seduce her. A quick defiance, retreat, departure. Now an old man appears, the 'fire-eater', her father, and he has seen everything. Something has taken shape, which might turn into a tragedy.

A tragedy? It is completely forgotten in the second act. It is broad day in the spacious premises of a cheap eating-house. Here again we find a whole crowd of poor people, the same people but different characters: the same poverty and unemployment, the flotsam of the past, the tragedies and comedies of the present... Yes, the day of the second act is indeed the truth of

...the coexistence of a long, slowly-passing, empty time and a lightning-short, full time; the coexistence of a space populated by a crowd of characters whose mutual relations are accidental or episodic - and a short space, gripped in mortal combat, inhabited by three characters: the father, the daughter and the Togasso. In other words, this is a play in which about forty characters appear, but the tragedy concerns only three of them. Moreover, there is no explicit relationship between these two times or between these two spaces.⁷

The implicit relationship is the absence of relations which brings to the fore the invisible structure of the dialectic of the melodramatic consciousness (ideology), that is, the conflicting moral and religious myths of Nina's father completely foreign - not contradictory - to the conditions of existence of Nina's father, and the other characters of the melodrama and especially to the subhuman reality of the Milanese subproletariat. The dialectic of consciousness cannot escape from its confining and blinding ideological presuppositions in order to reach reality.

...Strictly speaking, there is no dialectic of consciousness: no dialectic of consciousness which could reach reality itself by virtue of its own

the night of the first: these people have no more history in their lives than they had in their dreams...A life in which nothing happens. Then, just at the end of the act, Nina reappears on the stage, for no apparent reason, and with her the tragedy. We learn that the clown is dead. The men and women leave the stage little by little. The Togasso appears, he forces the girl to kiss him and give him what little money she has. Hardly more than a few gestures. Her father arrives. (Nina is weeping at the end of the long table.) He does not eat: he drinks. After a terrible struggle he succeeds in killing the Togasso with a knife and then flees, haggard, overwhelmed by what he has done. Once again a lightning flash after a long grind.

In the third act it is dawn in the women's night shelter. Old women, blending into the walls, sitting down, talk or stay silent...When the stage is emptied, the tragedy begins again. Nina was sleeping in the shelter. Her father comes to see her for the last time before prison: she must realize at least that he killed for her sake, for her honour...but suddenly everything is reversed: Nina turns on her father, on the illusions and lies he has fed her, on the myths which will kill him. But not her; for she is going to rescue herself, all alone, for that is the only way. She will leave this world of night and poverty and enter the other one, where pleasure and money reign. The Togasso was right. She will pay the price, she will sell herself, but she will be on the other side, on the side of freedom and truth..." (L. Althusser, *For Marx*, 1969, p. 131-133.)

⁷ Ibid., p. 134.

contradictions; in short, there can be no 'phenomenology' in the Hegelian sense: for consciousness does not accede to the real through its own internal development, but by the radical discovery of what is other than itself.⁸

It is, then, through the criticism of the non-dialecticity of this dialectic by means of the chronicle of "anonymous and interchangeable beings' wretched existence" that a rupture is made and the spectator's field of vision is decentered in order to perceive the real dialectic of the world of Capital and "the tragedy latent in the existence of the Milanese subproletariat: its powerlessness". Actually, the play's inner dialectic of centering on the category of the subject, the structure of the melodrama, and of decentering from it and focusing on the naked reality of the poor, the structure of the chronicle, is latently operative throughout the entire play until it consummates itself at the point of the rupture. The rupture happens when Nina turns on her father.

When Nina turns on her father, when she sends him back into the night with his dreams, she is breaking both with her father's melodramatic consciousness and with his 'dialectic'. She has finished with these myths and the conflicts they unleash. Father, consciousness, dialectic, she throws them all overboard and crosses the threshold of the other world, as if to show that it is in this poor world that things are happening, that everything has already begun, not only its poverty, but also the derisory illusions of its consciousness. This dialectic which only comes into its own at the extremities of the stage, in the aisles of a story it never succeeds in invading or dominating, is a very exact image for the quasi-null relation of a false consciousness to a real situation.⁹

In Mother Courage, the dissociation of opposing forms of temporality, the false dialectical temporality of Mother Courage's personal tragedies and

⁸ Ibid., p. 143.

⁹ Ibid., p. 140.

the apparently undialectical temporality of society and war, reveals the silent structure "of confrontation of a consciousness (living its own situation in the dialectical-tragic mode, and believing the whole world to be moved by its impulse) with a reality which is indifferent and strange to this so-called dialectic-an apparently undialectical reality, makes possible an immanent critique of the illusions of consciousness."¹⁰ It is this structure, Althusser emphasizes, - not so much the technical device of alienation, which prevents the audience from empathizing with Mother Courage's predicament - which distances the spectator from Mother Courage's ethical stoicism and makes him perceive the ideological forms of bourgeois humanism which nurture that stoicism.

This - that the dynamic of the latent structure produces this distance within the play itself - must be the starting-point from which to pose the problem of the relation between the spectator and the performance. Here again Brecht reverse the established order. In the classical theatre it was apparently quite simple: the hero's temporality was the sole temporality, all the rest was subordinate to it, even his opponents were made to his measure, they had to be if they were to be his opponents; they lived his time, his rhythm, they were dependent on him, they were merely his dependants. Thereby the content of the [heros'] struggle [against his opponent] was identified with the hero's consciousness of himself. And quite naturally, the spectator seemed to 'live' the play by 'identifying' himself with the hero, that is, with his time, with his consciousness, the only time and the only consciousness offered him. In Bertolazzi's play and in Brecht's great plays this confusion becomes impossible, precisely because of their dissociated structure. I should say, not that the heroes have disappeared because Brecht has banished them from his plays, but that even as the heroes they are, and in the play itself, the play makes them impossible, abolishes them, their consciousness and its false dialectic, This reduction is not the effect of the action alone, nor of the demonstration which certain popular figures are fated to make of it (on the theme: neither God nor Caesar); it is not even merely the result of the play appreciated as an unresolved story; it is not produced at the level of

¹⁰ Ibid., p. 143.

detail or of continuity, but at the deeper level of the play's structural dynamic.¹¹

¹¹ Ibid., p. 147.

C. The Althusserians

1. T. Macherey's Theory of Literary Production

Althusser's ideas have been very influential in structuralist and post-structuralist criticism. Even a critic of a different Marxist formation as F. Jameson has incorporated in his methodology the concepts of structural causality and of the heterogeneity of the text. In The Political Unconscious, he states:

It follows, then, that the interpretive mission of a properly structural causality will on the contrary find its privileged content in rifts and discontinuities within the work, and ultimately in a conception of the former "work of art" as a heterogeneous and (to use the most dramatic recent slogan) a schizophrenic text... In the interpretive chapters of the following work, I have found it possible without any great inconsistency to respect both the methodological imperative implicit in the concept of totality or totalization, and the quite different attention of a "symptomal" analysis to discontinuities, rifts, actions at distance, within a merely apparently unified cultural text.¹

We will analyze briefly P. Macherey's Theory of Literary Production and T. Eagleton's Criticism and Ideology which can be placed within Althusser's general theoretical framework.

For P. Macherey the literary text is incomplete and contradictory. The concept of unity or formal unification of the text is an ideological myth. Against the traditional literary Marxist theory of realism, Macherey stresses that textual, that is, formal contradictions do not reflect real historical contradictions. As Eagleton points out, they result precisely "from the absence of such a reflection - from the contortive effect on the work of the

¹ F. Jameson, The Political Unconscious, Cornell U. Press, Ithaca, 1981, P. 56-57.

ideology which interposes itself between the work and history."² They manifest, that is, a conflict between the text and its ideological content.

The text, however, puts ideology into contradiction not from within ideology, but from its limits, that is, from what is not said. "What is important in the work is what it does not say." Seen from within, ideology is a coherently compact and closed system which gives the illusion of a complete and unified text. Eagleton says,

Ideology, seen from within, has no outside; in this sense one does not transgress its outer limits as one crosses a geographical boundary. The threshold of ideology is also an internal limit: ideological space is curved like space itself, and history lies beyond it as only God could lie beyond the universe. It is not possible to effect a 'passage' from the heart of ideology beyond the boundaries, for from that vantage-point there are no boundaries to be transgressed; ideology curves back upon itself, creating outside of itself a void which cannot be explored because it is precisely, nothing. If it is impossible to cross its frontiers from within, it is because those frontiers - since nothing lies beyond them - have no existence. To travel indefinitely along any one track of ideological meaning is not to encounter an ultimate threshold of articulation but to describe an arc which returns one inexorably to one's starting-point.³

Therefore, only by reading symptomatically the discontinuities and silences of the text through the theoretical Marxist model can one detect how the literary practice in transforming ideology into fiction puts it into contradiction. The gaps, the silences, disclose the repressions of the dialectics of history to which ideology must necessarily be related but cannot permit to be thought or revealed in order to maintain itself.

The function of scientific criticism then is to place itself in the very incompleteness of the text in order to explain the ideological necessity of that

² T. Eagleton, *Criticism and Ideology*, The Thetford Press Ltd., London 1978, p. 95.

³ *Idem.*, pp. 95-96.

which is not said. This explanation can be effected only by reconstructing the text within the complex of historical determinations of which it is an overdetermined product. It is a reconstruction of the process of its production.

The incompleteness of the text and the concept of writing as production obviously rule out the traditional concept of criticism as interpretation. There is no deep meaning to be unveiled in the visible text. Since the true meaning of the text is in that which it does not say, which can be explained only in the light of a theoretical, that is Marxist, understanding of writing as production - the explanation involves writer, text, reader and theorist - one can see that the Marxist semantic potentiality is a structural invariant of the literary practice and it is its real significance. Depth readings, besides, especially of the structuralist vogue, fall into the normative idealist fallacy of reducing the work to a standard model, a "fixed and independent entity which exists alongside the work, guaranteeing both its consistency and its readability and making it accessible as an object of judgment."⁴

The incompleteness of the text and the concept of literary production also rule out "empirical" approaches in criticism. Macherey says,

The preceding pages have identified a fundamental problem in the method of traditional criticism: its tendency to slide into the natural fallacy of empiricism, to treat the work (the object of the enterprise of criticism) as factually given, spontaneously isolated for inspection. The work thus exists only to be received, described, and assimilated through the procedures of criticism. Dependent entirely upon its object, the critical judgment is required only to reproduce and imitate it by tracing its obvious outline. This is the only possible displacement that the work can accomplish: to be consumed, to move out from the

⁴ P.Macherey, A Theory of Literary Production, Routledge and Kegan Paul Ltd., London, 1978, p.19.

provisional container of the book into the minds of possible readers, minds in diverse states of clarity and readiness. The critical gaze is the model of such a communication.⁵

In analyzing the conjuncture of the various determinations of Verne's novels, Macherey exemplifies his interpretive model. He points out that Verne's novels are distinguished by a contradiction between the level of figuration and that of representation. The level of representation is the storyline which embodies Verne's project to show how science and industry conquer nature and transform it in presocial conditions. The domination and transformation of Nature by Man is, according to bourgeois ideology, a teleological progressive process in harmony with the workings of Nature itself and History - a process in which the end, a happy and affluent society, is already visible in the present.

Firstly, then, a general and explicit theme against which the work is continuously defined: the internal transformation of the social order by a process which is history itself, but which has now (and here arises the theme of modernity) come to predominate: the conquest of nature by industry. This is an easily identifiable ideological theme:

Verne belongs to the progressive line of the bourgeoisie: his work proclaims that man is capable of everything, that even the most distant world is an object within his reach, and that property is only after all a dialectical moment in the general subjection of nature. (Barthes, *Mythologies*, trans. Annette Lavers, London, Cape, 1972)

...Man's domination of nature, the subject of all Verne's work, though sometimes in a disguised form, is presented as a conquest, as a movement - the propagation of the presence of man in the whole of nature, which is also a transformation of nature itself. Nature is invested by man: this is Verne's elementary obsession (elementary because it is conscious and deliberate). A total conquest is possible; man penetrates nature only because he is in total harmony with it. The great novelty is that this movement, like a voyage, has an ending

⁵ Idem, p.13-14.

and that this ending can be seen and described: the future bathes in the present, the future is completely contained in the present.⁶

The level of figuration is the way the story is fictionally represented: the way in which it is formally handled by the workings of the text. Fiction limits and undermines Verne's project in the manner described above, that is, from its limits where history is occulted. It decenters, therefore, the attention from it and unmasks it as the ideological theme of a colonizing bourgeoisie which has obliterated the objective economic and political reasons for its enterprise.

Verne begins with an ideology of science which he makes into a mythology of science: both the ideology and the mythology are irreproachable in their authority. It is the path which leads from the one to the other which must be questioned: it is in this in between, which, as we shall see, has its marked place in the work, that a decisive encounter occurs. In the passage from the level of representation to that of figuration, ideology undergoes a complete modification - as though, in a critical reversal of the gaze, it were no longer seen from within but from the outside: not from its illusory and absent centre (an ideology is centred at all its points, that is to say, perfectly credible because its centre is excluded), not from its centre then, but from the limits which hold it in check and impose upon it a certain shape by preventing it from being a different ideology or something other than ideology.⁷

Eagleton says,

In discovering its demarcations, ideology discovers its self-dissolution; it cannot survive the 'culture shock' consequent on its stumbling into alien territory adjacent to itself. In discovering such territory, ideology finds its homeland, and can return to it only to die. It cannot survive the traumatic recognition of its own repressed parentage - the truth that it is not after all self-reproductive but was historically brought to birth, the scandal that, before it ever was, history existed.⁸

⁶ Ibid., pp. 165-6.

⁷ Idem., p.194.

⁸ T. Eagleton, Criticism and Ideology, p. 96.

In The Mysterious Island, for example, Verne would like to represent his project through the deeds and efforts of some pioneering castaways on a mysterious island. They are "going to retrace - and this is what their future best illustrates - the whole process of the conquest of nature, which has actually been achieved". Theirs is going to be a total reconstruction of society from "true beginnings". Unlike Robinson Crusoe, therefore, they are absolutely destitute of anything but the natural wealth of the island.

From the first, Verne's island must signify an absolute destitution, whereas for Defoe the island is already a kind of plenitude, since it expresses the methodical circularity of origins:

The imaginary heroes of Daniel Defoe were never in such absolute destitution. Either they had abundant resources from their stranded vessels...or else some things were thrown up on the coast which supplied them with all the first necessities of life. But here not a single tool, not a utensil. From nothing, they must supply themselves with everything. (The Mysterious Island).⁹

Besides, they represent a real society reduced to its most simple expression.

In The Mysterious Island the initial group, a distinct elite in relation to the other inhabitants of the island, comprises an adopted father who is also an engineer (the one who makes things); the reporter, the one who observes, who remembers and also cares; and the young man, who possesses a knowledge in the form of recognition (which is properly miraculous) of virgin nature (plants and animals). This is not a gathering of separate individuals but a true collectivity, organized according to the distribution of important functions.

By the side of this initial group, and clearly distinct, there are the performers and the entertainers, inferior beings, (This separation between the two sub-groups clearly shows that if the group, the social element, is symbolic, it does not relate to the abstract idea of society (a collection of individuals), but to a precise form of society, to a state of

⁹ P.Macherey, A Theory of Literary Production, p.207.

society, society at the moment when Verne was writing. This division shows that the distribution of individuals within this 'basic element' is not only arranged in a functionalist perspective. The place devolved upon function must be previously determinable from a more fundamental division. This is Comte's distinction between 'entrepreneurs' and 'operators', which he elaborated in 1844 in his *Discours sur l'esprit positif*, (*Discourse on the Positive Mind*), thirty years before Verne had begun to write, and just contemporary with the Communist Party Manifesto. In Verne's conception, society even in its minimum state retains a proletariat.)¹⁰

As the story unfolds, however, the castaways are provided by captain Nemo who has arrived on the island with his men before them and hides from them as a mysterious and supernatural force with a chest full of socially produced goods. This bringing back what Verne had first started to leave out ruptures the text between the modernized Robinson Crusoe theme and the old Robinson Crusoe theme, which contradicts and undermines his project. One here has to keep in mind that this is Macherey's subtle analysis of Verne's work. Verne does not so blatantly contradict himself. The Mysterious Islands' plot, climaxing at the appearance of the chest full of socially produced goods, must show that Verne's project can be realized in the kind of presocial conditions presented in the Crusoe story.

The mysterious 'force' pushes them back to the condition of Robinson Crusoe, from which we thought they had been finally delivered; and at a crucial moment this force puts in their hands the shipwrecked chest which contains, in miniature, all the panoply of the perfect Robinson Crusoe: 'nothing was missing'. Their adventure now becomes identical with the motif which, by contrast, had served to differentiate it.

Thus it not by chance that the wreck, this time, was not given from the start: it is precisely this delay which underlines the facticity of the ideological beginning.¹¹

¹⁰ Idem., p. 212-3.

¹¹ Idem., p. 219.

This completely obliterates the idea of a conquest revealing it as the ideological theme of colonial imperialism.¹² It shows the impossibility of the conquest of nature by science and industry in the kind of pre-social conditions describe above. It reveals the artificiality of such conditions. Science and industry can exist only with the socially developed goods - only, that is, when society is well developed. Macherey's argument is implicitly based on Marx's criticism of the Robinsonians, of bourgeois economist, that is, who consider Crusoe the example of primitive economic man without realizing that he is really bourgeois man. Consequently, Macherey points out, bourgeois ideology even as ideology "has become incapable of thinking and representing the future".

In unmasking, however, the falseness of the myth of genesis, of true beginnings, Verne's work draws attention to the real nature of the history of colonialism, a history made of oppression and exploitation of colonial people.

Thus, far from being the condition and the precocious image of the human future, Nemo remains tied to the form of the past. He is the very image of yesterday, instead of that of tomorrow. Indeed, Cyrus Smith judges him thus: 'Captain, your mistake is to have believed that one could resurrect the past, and you have fought necessary progress.'

These words would have a particular meaning, since they directly evoke Nemo's incessant struggle against the English policy of oppressing colonial peoples; it is interesting to note how unrevolutionary such a struggle could appear to the avantgarde bourgeois that Verne nevertheless was.¹³

¹² Nemo himself, the mysterious force, obviously "is no more of a conqueror than are the colonists: he is in exactly the same situation as the men he wanted to deceive...Nemo has simply transferred his appointed ordeal on to others. He is Crusoe as much as they, and may even be the most Crusoe-like of them all. He is the true Crusoe which the others merely imitate." (Idem., p. 226)

¹³ Idem., p. 226.

2. T. Eagleton's Criticism and Ideology

Agreeing with Macherey that the text is incomplete and contradictory, Eagleton defines it as "the product of a specific overdetermined conjuncture": of society's general mode of production; its literary mode of production, the way, that is, in which the production, exchange and reading of literature has been organized; its general ideology which does not denote any ideology in general, "but that particular dominated ensemble of ideologies to be found in any social formation;"¹ its aesthetic ideology which is a "region" of the general ideology, "an internally complex formation including a number of subsectors of which the literary is one";² and the authorial ideology, "the effect", that is, "of the author's specific mode of biographical insertion" into the general ideology, "a mode of insertion overdetermined by a series of distinct factors: social class, sex, nationality, religion, geographical region and so on."³ It is an insertion, therefore, which can establish a relationship of homology with the general ideology similar to that of a subset and a set, or can contradict it: in this case, the subset contains strong features which do not partake of the set and at the same time vehemently opposes it.

From the concept of overdetermination we know that the text is not a merely passive product. "The text is constituted by this conjuncture as to actively determine its own determinants - an activity which is most apparent

¹ T. Eagleton, Criticism and Ideology, p. 54.

² Idem., p. 60.

³ Idem., p. 59.

in its relations to ideology"⁴ by 'hollowing' it. But the form which the text bestows on ideology in working on it is not to be interpreted as a technical or transcendent faculty whose productive power comes from a source extrinsic to ideology, but as a capacity inherent in ideology itself. Eagleton wants to avoid the idealistic snares of formalism, into which Althusser and Macherey partially fall because of their concept of literature as hovering between science and ideology, and to stress the relation of production between text and ideology as an internal, dialectical one.

For if it is true that the text's relation to ideology is crucially effected by its forms, it is not the whole truth.... The text establishes a relationship with ideology by means of its forms, but does so on the basis of the character of the ideology it works. It is the character of that ideology, in conjunction with the transmutative operations of the literary forms it produces or enables, which determines the degree to which the text achieves significant or nugatory perceptions.⁵

The "ceaseless reciprocal operation of the text on ideology and ideology on the text, a mutual structuring and destructuring in which the text constantly overdetermines its own determinations" transforms the "signifier" of ideology and the "signified" of history, that is, the meaning placed on history by ideology. It unveils their arbitrary and mystifying bond. Of this operation, however, the text is "necessarily silent". Like any product it hides in its form and materials the fashion and conditions of its making. But they manifest themselves "without being said" in ruptures and absences within the text's discourse. The real is present in its absence. Ideology, we know, being a coherently closed system, can never be transcended from

⁴ Idem., p. 63.

⁵ Idem., p. 83-4.

within. The mode and conditions of the text's making will show how the real is reached.

The real is by necessity empirically imperceptible, concealing itself in the phenomenal categories (commodity, wage-relation, exchange-value and so on) it offers spontaneously for inspection. Ideology, rather, so produces and constructs the real as to cast the shadow of its absence over the perception of its presence. It is not merely that certain aspects of the real are illuminated and others obscured; it is rather that the presence of the real is a presence constituted by its absences, and vice versa. Balzac was indeed able to achieve partial insight into the movement of real history, but it is mistaken to image such insight as a transcendence of ideology into history. No such displacement of realms occurs: it is rather that Balzac's insights are the effect of a specific conjuncture of his mode of authorial insertion into ideology, the relations of the ideological region he inhabited to real history, the character of that stage of capitalist development, and the 'truth-effect' of the particular aesthetic form (realism) he worked. It is by force of this conjuncture that he was able to be at once exceedingly deluded and extraordinarily percipient.⁶

The task of criticism then, Eagleton stresses, is similar to psychoanalytic dream analysis. Both have to expose the meaning of the text distortion mechanism.

The task of both criticism and dream-analysis, then, is to articulate that of which the discourse speaks-without-saying-it - or, more precisely, to examine the distortion-mechanism which produce that ruptured discourse, to reconstruct the work-process whereby the text suffers an internal displacement by virtue of its relations to its conditions of possibility.⁷

Eagleton differentiates himself from Althusser and Macherey by pointing out that within the workings of the text on ideology and of ideology on the text, ideology can be demarcated and brought into contradiction by another ideology or by an ideological sub-ensemble with conflictual relations

⁶ Idem., p. 69-70.

⁷ Idem., p. 91.

to it (usually, the author's ideology). This, he claims, is the basic characteristic of major literature.

In discovering its demarcations, ideology discovers its self-dissolution; it cannot survive the 'culture shock' consequent on its stumbling into alien territory adjacent to itself. In discovering such territory, ideology finds its homeland, and can return to it only to die. It cannot survive the traumatic recognition of its own repressed parentage - the truth that it is not after all self-reproductive but was historically brought to birth, the scandal that, before it ever was, history existed. Such a recognition may be forced upon ideology by the unwelcome discovery of a rival sibling - an antagonistic ideology which reveals to it the secret of its own birth. That secret may be spoken directly; but it may also be that ideology, in discerning the moment when its rival emerged from the womb of history, is thereby constrained to acknowledge itself as an offspring of the same parent. It is not, in other words, simply by virtue of text that it is terrorised into handing over its secrets. Its contradictions may be forced from it by its historically determined encounter with another ideology, or ideological sub-ensemble; indeed it is possible to claim that it is in such historical conjunctures that the moment of genesis of much major literature is to be found.⁸

This new concept of literature as a form of signifying practice that functions at the points of contradictions between competing ideologies comes especially to the fore when Eagleton tackles the problem of literary value, which is the mark of the relative autonomy of the aesthetic, that is, of its "irreducibility to the historico-ideological of which it is the product." At first he argues that literary value is not a quality intrinsic or immanent in the literary work. It is relational.

Moreover, in opposition to certain trends within bourgeois and even materialist criticism, such a method must re-enact the founding gesture of Marxist political economy and re-consider the question of value on the site of literary production. This is not, need one say, to ignore the spheres of textual circulation and consumption - to fetishise value as an immanent quality of the product, sublimely untainted by the ideological practices of literary reception. For there is no

⁸ *Idem.*, p. 96.

'immanent' value - no value which is not transitive. Literary value is a phenomenon which is produced in that ideological appropriation of the text, that 'consumptional production' of the work which is the act of reading. It is always relational value: 'exchange-value'.⁹

Then he states that the works of the great traditions have aesthetic value. This might seem contradictory. Eagleton, however, takes pains to argue that it is not an immanent value but the effect of the works' origins.

Examining closely the conditions of productions of the works of some representatives of the great tradition - George Eliot, Dickens, Conrad, James, Joyce, T. S. Eliot and others - Eagleton concludes that it is the author's standpoint "contradictorily inserted into an hegemonic bourgeois ideology which had passed its progressive prime" to throw into relief the "fault lines" of that ideology and therefore to lay the basis for literary value. It determines "a certain curvature in the ideological space in which the texts play - a curvature produced by the impaction of value upon value, signification upon signification, form upon form."¹⁰ The author's viewpoint, however, needs not be progressive. On the contrary, it is regressive in all the authors analyzed.

It is not that a 'progressive' ideology thrusts through the constrictions of the hegemonic formation; there is little historically progressive about the ideological worlds of those major authors. It is rather that the hegemonic formation is produced from a particular dissentient conflictual position within it, and that the resulting problematic throws the 'fault-lines' of that formation into partial relief. One must examine this process simultaneously from the standpoint of textual production. In producing its meanings, such a text produces the ideological curvature of which I have spoken, inscribes it in its very substance....In much of Trollope's fiction, 'ideology' produces 'sign' and 'sign' produces 'ideology' in simple, mutually reductive exchange; and this, indeed, could not be different. For the ideological matrix of

⁹ Idem., p. 166-7.

¹⁰ Idem., p. 180.

Trollope's fiction (as with all writing) includes an ideology of the aesthetic - in Trollope's case, an anaemic, naively representational 'realism' which is merely a reflex of commonplace bourgeois empiricism. For Eliot, Hardy, Joyce and Lawrence, by contrast, the ideological question is implicit in the aesthetic problem of how to write; the 'aesthetic' - textual production - becomes a crucial, overdetermined instance of the question of those real and imaginary relations of men to their social conditions which we name ideology.

In most of the texts I have examined, then, it is a production of the hegemonic ideological formation from a particular regressive standpoint within it which lays the basis for literary value.¹¹

¹¹ Idem., p. 180-1.

Part Three: Summary Evaluation

1. Dialectics

With the exception of Adorno's system¹ which has singled out as significant and reliable only the negative or critical characteristic of the Marxist dialectic rejecting its scientific claim and, therefore, the theory of historical materialism, all the others claim to express the essence of Marx's thought.

Before assessing the validity of this claim we would like to point out that by insisting only on the negative import of the dialectic Adorno alters the true nature of the Marxist dialectic which ends in a positivity. A negative dialectic seems to betray the true spirit of Marxism, the spirit of positive knowledge and transformation of reality. Besides, some critics feel that Adorno is unable to overcome the charge of sterility and show that negative dialectics gives critical thought the transcending and constructive power of presenting the vision of a future reality. For them, Adorno's pessimism brings critical theory to a dead end and becomes an expression of helplessness and despair. M. Solomon remarks,

As Fredric Jameson has pointed out, Adorno's work resolves itself into "various fragments" which are "organized around a center which has been left out." Put another way, Adorno's life has been devoted to critical analysis and opposition, but not to construction or synthesis. He knows what he opposes—the diminution of the individual and of the mind in an increasingly totalitarian industrial world—but he does not accept any theory or politics by which that totalitarian grip might be

¹ Adorno abhorred the word 'system' as indicative of identity thinking, but at the end his unsystematic thinking is also an unsystematic, system, sceptical and relativistic as it might be.

broken, and (decisively) he has no vision of a workable future or memory of a viable past... his [Adorno's] brilliant insights tend to frustrate rather than inspire; his dialectics, cut off from the living branch of history, spins toward the void. The Utopian dimension, the vision of the future, is a closed book to Adorno, caught in a perpetual tension between a capitalism which his mind has rejected and a communism which he does not wish to accept. Where he glimpses the Utopian dimension in his musical researches he does so only in order to condemn it as illusory.²

In defense of Adorno, Martin Jay writes:

"Whether or not Adorno was blind to the genuinely dynamic impulses in our society, as his activist critics always maintain, is still uncertain. But in a century when every revolution has in some sense been betrayed, when virtually all attempts at cultural subversion have been neutralized, and when the threat of a nuclear Aufhebung of the dialectic of enlightenment continues unchecked, it is difficult to summon the self-confidence to call his melancholy unwarranted. ...But I think it is only fair to extend to Adorno the same exculpation that he offered to Schoenberg: "It is not the composer who fails in the work; history, rather, denies the work in itself." It was impossible, given that history, for Adorno to find a way out; whether or not those of us who retrieve his bottles tossed into the sea will have better luck remains very much to be seen."³

Given Adorno's premises that there is no certain basis for human reasoning or knowledge and that thinking and reality are totally reified, negative dialectics, however, seems to us the only possible form of praxis to construct a new world. He writes

The uncompromisingly critical thinker, who neither subordinates his conscience nor permits himself to be terrorized into action, is in truth the one who does not give up...Open thinking points beyond itself. For its part, such thinking takes a position as a figuration of praxis which is

² Maynard Solomon, *Marxism and Art*, Vintage Books, New York, 1974, p. 373.

³ Martin Jay, *Adorno*, Harvard U. Press, Cambridge, Mass., 1984, pp.162-3.

more closely related to a praxis truly involved in change than is a position of mere obedience for the sake of praxis.⁴

For Adorno, a contradiction in reality is a contradiction against reality.

Of great value and profoundly enlightening are Adorno's analyses, however, of the dialectical interplay between culture and society. He is probably the most interesting dialectician of our time. Of Adorno's analyses, F. Jameson writes:

What happens is rather that for a fleeting instant we catch a glimpse of a unified world, of a universe in which discontinuous realities are nonetheless somehow implicated with each other and intertwined, no matter how remote they may at first have seemed; in which the reign of chance briefly refocuses into a network of cross-relationships wherever the eye can reach, contingency temporarily transmuted into necessity.⁵

Althusser's analysis of how Marxism fought its battle to establish its scientificity against classical political economy is of extreme interest. It shows, in a Kuhnian sense, how one paradigm critically replaces another by establishing a new conceptual grid of categories such as "A mode of production", "forces of production", "relation of production", "surplus value", etc., and how the new paradigm requires a gestalt switch. The static world of discrete things of classical political economy is replaced by an interconnected, contradictory reality. It is, however, Althusser's subtle interpretation of contradiction and dialectics, vague as it may be (one can never get a clear explanation from Engels down to our own day of how the economic factor affects the other factors), which is of great significance to Marxist theory. The concept of structural causality with each level of the

⁴ Quotation taken from Martin Jay, *Adorno*, p. 54

⁵ F. Jameson, *Marxism and Form*, Princeton U. Press, Princeton, N.J. 1971,

structure having its own history and its own temporality has replaced the traditional, inadequate concept of history as a homogeneous, continuous succession, and it has become a valuable tool in historiography.

Althusser's interpretation, however, presents some serious shortcomings. His epistemology and his reification of the concept of structure with its invariant determinants are idealistic conclusions which represent a distortion of Marx's texts. In the General Introduction, a work that he considers of the break, Althusser focuses his attention on the concrete in thought, neglecting that for Marx the concrete in thought presupposes the concrete in reality. It is not only a product of the concept. Marx writes:

The concrete is concrete because it is the concentration of many determinations, hence unity in the diverse. It appears in the process of thinking, therefore, as a process of concentration, as a result, not as a point of departure, even though it is the point of departure in reality and hence also the point of departure for observation and conception...the concrete in thought...[is] a product of the working up of observation and conception into concepts.⁶

It appears inconceivable that, in forcing Marx's texts to fit into his formula, Althusser, for all his subtlety, blindly commits the error of attributing to Marx what Marx criticizes as Hegel's main error: The construction of the forms of the dialectic in theory. Marx is extremely clear about the empirical and historical approach of his method. He often warns us not to confuse his method of presentation with his method of analysis.

Of course the method of presentation must differ from that of inquiry. The latter has to appropriate the material in detail, to analyze its different forms of development, to trace out their connection. Only after this work is done, can the actual movements be adequately

⁶ Karl Marx, General Introduction to the Grundrisse, in Grundrisse, Penguin, Harmondsworth, 1973, pp. 101-102.

described. If this is done successfully, if the life of the subject-matter is ideally reflected as in a mirror, then it may appear as if we had before us a mere apriori construction.⁷

In censuring Lassalle's Hegelianism, Marx says:

He will learn to his cost, that it is one thing to develop a science to the point where one can present it dialectically, and something else altogether to apply an abstract and read-made system of logic.

General definitions have, for Marx, little explanatory power. Each mode of production with its economic categories and relationships is specific and unique to that particular society in which it occurs and cannot be inferred from some combinatory arrangement of the structural invariants of a recurrent structure. There is no simplistic account of historical materialism; no general law which explains the formation of modes of production. In a 1877 letter to Mikhailovsky, Marx says:

Now what application to Russia could my critic make of this historical sketch? Only this: if Russia is tending to become a capitalist nation after the example of West European countries...she will not succeed without having first transformed a good part of her peasants into proletarians; and after that, once taken to the bosom of the capitalist regime, she will experience its pitiless laws like other profane peoples. That is all. But that is too little for my critic. He feels he must metamorphosize my historical sketch of the genesis of capitalism in Western Europe into a historico-philosophic theory of the general path every people is fated to tread, whatever the historical circumstances in which it finds itself..

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 supra-historical.

⁷ Afterword to the Second German edition of Capital I, p. 28, in K.Marx Capital vol.1, ed. by F.Engels, International Publishers, NY 1975.

Marx's analysis of capitalism emphasizes the historical and socially conditioned character of the economic categories and laws of the dialectic.

This is well expressed by Della Volpe and the early Colletti's dialectic of determinate abstraction. But the dialectic of determinate abstractions cannot be identified with the hypothetico-deductive method of science. Such an identification minimizes the value of the dialectic and misinterprets Marx's true method of analysis.

Marx continuously criticizes the undialectical and formalistic aspects of the hypothetico-deductive method of classical political economy: its inability to overcome critically and dialectically the "hic" and "nunc" of the phenomenal reality in order to unearth its essential relationships, and its assumption that it should start from "concepts" and to try from them to explain the production and exchange of commodities. Concept formation is an a posteriori activity. In his Notes on Adolf Wagner (1879-80), Marx says:

De prime abord I do not start from 'concepts' and thus not form the "value-concept"...What I start from is the simplest social form in which the labour product is represented in contemporary society, and this is the 'commodity'. I analyze this, and, indeed, first in the form in which it appears [...] Thus it is not I who divide 'value' into use-value and exchange-value as oppositions into which the abstraction 'value' divides itself, but the concrete social form of the labour product.

In the passage below, Marx criticizes Ricardo for trying to define abstractly the concept of an invariable measure of value, instead of understanding that value is an expression of social relations of commodity production and cannot be measured by formal standards.

Ricardo often gives the impression, and sometimes indeed writes, as if the quantity of labour is the solution to the false, or falsely conceived problem of an 'invariable measure of value' in the same way as corn, money, wages, etc. were previously considered as panaceas of this kind. In Ricardo's work this false impression arises because for him the

decisive task is the definition of the magnitude of value. Because of this he does not understand the specific form in which labour is an element of value, and fails in particular to grasp that the labour of the individual must present itself as abstract general labour and in this form, as social labour. Therefore he has not understood that the development of money is connected with the nature of value and with the determination of this value by labour-time.⁸

Derek Sayer aptly compares Marx's methodology to what Hanson, in Patterns of Discovery, considers the true logic of scientific discovery, a reasoning from data to hypotheses in which the data control the hypotheses and not viceversa. He adds, however, that the passage from concrete to abstract, from data to hypotheses is not inductive because it involves, as we pointed out, a dialectical and critical operation of unearthing the essential relations under the phenomenal forms.

The next step in Marx's critique is to explain why the phenomena he has thus identified should take such forms. Since the latter are defined precisely by attributes not common to production in general, they are not explicable by its exigencies. They are on the contrary 'phenomenal forms of essential relations' specific to the modes of production in which they occur, or in other words suppose a 'material groundwork or set of conditions of existence' (Capital, I, pp. 537, 80) which is historical. It is this Marx now sets out to unearth, and 'unearthing' is the appropriate metaphor. For, as already observed, in Marx's view phenomenal forms are apt to mislead. Forms and relations need no visible connection while manifest correlations may be spurious. Thus, for instance, the exploitation which links profit to the separation of labour from the means of production which is its sine qua non is not a manifest feature of capitalist production; the correlation of wages to work done, on the other hand, is massively apparent (in all senses). Marx cannot therefore proceed by induction.⁹

The main flaw of Della Volpe and Althusser's reading of Marx, however, is their denial of any relationship between Marx and the Hegelian

⁸ K. Marx, Theories of Surplus Value, Part III, London, Lawrence and Wishart, 1972, p. 137

⁹ Issues in Marxist Philosophy, Volume III, Edited by John Mapham and David-Hillel Ruben, Humanities Press, Atlantic Highlands, N.J., 1979, pp.39-40

dialectic and their arbitrary elimination, consequently, of the theory of alienation from Marx's later works. In adhering to the positivistic canons of science, they overlook the evaluative and critical aspect of the Marxian dialectic, and therefore sever Marx's vital link between theory and practice. As Lukács has correctly pointed out, we believe, fact and value, description of the mechanisms of society and their implicit teleology, are indissolubly linked within the totality that dialectics unveils. The dialectics is critical not only of classical political economy but of society itself, and requires from its own epistemological standpoint the overthrow of both. In a well known paragraph in a preface to capital, Marx states that his dialectic is "a scandal and abomination to bourgeoisdom and its doctrinaire professors...because it lets nothing impose upon it and is in its essence critical and revolutionary." Lukács understanding of Marx's epistemological standpoint, however, as he himself later recognizes, is completely erroneous. The identification of subject and object, of theory and practice, the simultaneous unfolding, that is, of society's dialectical objective process and the working class development of awareness of that process, is an idealist conclusion, the negation of which constitutes, as we have seen, the foundation of Marxist thought.

Marx's epistemological standpoint is the Hegelian dialectical view of matter applied to society divested, however, of its mystifying and idealistic aspects. The rational core of the dialectics is represented by the notions of the necessary connections, development contradiction and change in phenomena. It is, however, the category of contradiction, the contradictions inherent in the movement of capitalist society, which justify, according to Marx, his analysis as explanatory, critical and revolutionary. Contradiction is not only an ontological principle; It is at the same time a critical tool.

It unearths the 'fetishistic' or 'alienated' nature of the quantitative variables related by the law of value and its class character. It reveals capital as a relation of exploitation via the wage contract. In this manner Marx's analysis becomes the analysis of reality from the viewpoint of the working class. It points to the class character, therefore, of the capitalistic mode of production. Consequently the unity of theory and practice is sealed: the understanding and overthrowing of the capitalistic mode of production by the proletariat follow consequentially.

A few crucial questions follow. Does the application of the Hegelian conception of dialectics, even though purged of its idealistic impurities, to reality entail, as in Hegel, Marx's rejection of formal logic which is linked, according to Hegel, to an ontology of contingency, stasis and atomic individuals and his use of dialectical contradiction as logical contradiction subverting thus the basic principle of science? It doesn't seem illogical to think with the Hegelian Marxists that if reality did contain logical contradictions, that is, the existence of both sides of a logical contradiction, then a correct description of reality would have to contain logical contradictions and viceversa. But, in truth, this thought is untenable because to assume that one logical contradiction but not another exists is a highly doubtful standpoint since theoretically from any logical contradiction any other logical contradiction can be derived. Applying the rules of formal logic, from any contradiction, in fact, we can derive any conclusion we like. Any theory therefore which states contradictory propositions, the affirmation and negation of some kind of information at the same time, is useless: it gives us no information. In the following quotation, where p and q stand for any proposition and the symbol \vee stands for 'and/or', by using two basic rules of inference K. Popper explains,

We can also state our first rule in this way

$$\frac{p}{p \vee q}$$

which may be read: 'from the premise p we obtain the conclusion $p \vee q$ ' [in other words, from a premise p any conclusion of the form ' $p \vee q$ ' can be validly inferred, and ' $p \vee q$ ' will be true if at least one of its two components, p and q , is true].

The second rule of inference which I am going to use is more familiar than the first. If we denote the negation of p by ' $\text{non-}p$ ', then it can be stated in this way

$$\frac{\text{non-}p \quad p \vee q}{q}$$

which may be put in words: (2) 'From the two premises $\text{non-}p$, and $p \vee q$, we obtain the conclusion q .'

The validity of this rule can be established if we consider that $\text{non-}p$ is a statement which is true if and only if p is false. Accordingly, if the first premise $\text{non-}p$, is true, then the first component of the second premise is false; thus if both premises are true, the second component of the second premise must be true; that is to say, q must be true whenever the two premises are true.

In reasoning that, if $\text{non-}p$ is true, p must be false, we have made implicit use, it may be said, of the 'law of contradiction' which asserts that $\text{non-}p$ and p cannot be true together. Thus if it were my task at this moment to argue in favor of contradiction, we should have to be more cautious. But at this moment, I am only trying to show that using valid rules of inference, we can infer from a couple of contradictory premises any conclusion we like.

Using our two rules we can indeed show this. For assume we have two contradictory premises - say

- (a) The sun is shining now
- (b) The sun is not shining now

From these two premises any statement - for example, 'Caesar was a traitor' can be inferred, as follows.

From the first premise (a) we can infer, in accordance with rule (1), the following conclusion:

(c) The sun is shining now v Caesar was a traitor.

Take now (b) and (c) as premises, we can ultimately deduce, in accordance with rule (2)

(d) Caesar was a traitor.

It is clear that by the same method we might have inferred any other statement we wanted to infer; for example, 'Caesar was not a traitor'. We may thus infer ' $2+2=5$ ' and ' $2+2\neq 5$ ' - not only every statement we like, but also its negation, which we may not like.

We see from this that if a theory contains a contradiction, then it entails everything, and therefore, indeed, nothing.¹⁰

Can a dialectics which is critical and revolutionary be scientific, even though its aim, as we have shown, is to abide only to empirical research and verification? Science teaches us that it is unscientific, impossible, to draw value judgements, choices of finalities, from its descriptive statements. How can the category of contradiction be a scientific and critical tool at the same time?

In addition, isn't the theory of abstract labor as alienated labor (abstract labor, that is, estranged from concrete labor) a dogmatic and Hegelian construction subtly impersonating the apriori Hegelian dialectical scheme of alienation, alienation that will necessarily disappear with the advent of the communist mode of production? Alienation, that is, guarantees the collapse of capitalism and the advent of a better society. Why did Marx then recur to this idealistic operation in which subject and predicate are inverted and the concrete is hypothesized, an operation that, in his early works, he had

¹⁰ K. Popper, Conjectures and Refutations, Harper and Row, New York and Evanston, 1963, 1963, p.319

vehemently criticized in Hegel if not to insure the presence of alienation in capitalism most basic contradiction, contradicting therefore his empirical approach?

In answering these questions, we will present two opposing arguments: one that considers the dialectics, a complete scientific endeavor not tainted by any unscientific procedure or assumption. and the other that instead maintains the dialectics is faulted by metaphysical claims.

According to the first argument, Marx did not oppose formal logic. In reading Capital, one is struck by Marx's severe criticisms of bourgeois economists not only for their undialectical approach but also and mainly for their logical contradictions. Formal logic, however, in order to exist with dialectics has to be separated from the static ontology and the epistemology that it informs and assigned a definite field of operation and efficacy.

In view of the fact that Marx extensively uses formal logic and of his understanding of the dialectic not as a system of logic but as an empirical tool of research, completely separating, as we have seen, facts from concepts, that is ontology from logic, dialectical contradiction then cannot be conflated with logical contradiction. The mutual necessitation of the two opposites in a contradiction and their unstable equilibrium is therefore ontological, that is physical. In his Notes on Adolf Wagner, Marx says:

"De prime abord I do not start from "concepts"...what I start from is the simplest social form in which the labour product is represented in contemporary society, and this is the commodity. I analyze this, and indeed, first in the form in which it appears [...] thus it is not I who divide "value" into use-value and exchange-value as oppositions into which the abstraction 'value' divides itself, but the concrete social form of the labor product."

Use value and exchange value are not just abstractions about reality; they constitute reality. Their unity and opposition is the essence of the commodity. Scott Meikle explains:

"The commodity is the unity of use value and exchange value, in precisely the same way that water is H₂O, that light is a stream of photons, or that gold is the element with the atomic number 79. All these statements are necessarily true. They state truths that are true of necessity, not in virtue of any logical or conceptual connexions, but in virtue of the essences or real natures of the entities in questions. Water is necessary H₂O, anything that is not H₂O cannot be water, however closely it may resemble water in appearance, and 'cannot' is ontological not epistemic."¹¹

Marx himself indicates, the argument continues, that his use of contradiction, as Della Volpe, the early Colletti and Althusser have also pointed out, is that of real, dynamic, not logical opposition.

"We saw in the former chapter that the exchange of commodities implies contradictory and mutually exclusive conditions. The further development of the commodity does not abolish these contradictions, but rather provides the form within which they have room to move. This is, in general, the way in which real contradictions are resolved. For instance, it is a contradiction to depict one body as constantly falling towards another and at the same time constantly flying away from it. The ellipse is a form of motion within which this contradiction is both realized and resolved."¹²

In the Introduction to the Grundrisse, after discussing the mutual necessitation of production and consumption, he says: "nothing is easier for a Hegelian than to posit production and consumption [as] identical...the important [point, though] to be emphasized is that...they appear, in any case,

¹¹ Issues in Marxist Philosophy, Volume I, edited by J.Mephram and D.H.Ruben, Humanities Press Inc., Atlantic Highlands, N.J., p.16.

¹² K.Marx, Capital I, NLB, London,1976, pp.184-85.

as moments of a process in which production is the real starting point and of which it is also the transcending moment."

Marx often pointed out that his description of capitalistic society is a "genetical presentation" of an organic whole "the understanding, of the real formative process in its different phases", starting from an embryonic form just as it happens in nature (Marx strongly admired Darwin's work) from which everything else is begotten. All the contradictions of capitalism are the result of the contradiction within the commodity between use-value and value, between useful or private labor and abstract social labor. This internal contradiction within the commodity is externalized as the contradiction between the commodity and money which in turn generates the contradiction between capital and wage labor. The contradiction between capital and wage labor means in social terms the contradiction between the owner of money and the owner of that unique commodity, labor power, whose use-value has the property of being the origin of exchange-value and therefore of capital itself. It is a dialectics of centripetal and centrifugal forces. Scott Meikle says:

"The poles in an opposition are not united. They also repel one another. They are brought together in a unity, but within that unity they are in tension. The real historical existence of the product of labour in the commodity-form provides an analogue of a centripetal force that contains the centrifugal forces of the mutual repulsion of use-value and exchange-value within it. But in its simple form, the commodity is an unstable equilibrium. It is pregnant with possibilities, which history may present either with the conditions for the realization of those possibilities, or with the indefinite variety of conditions that will frustrate their realization. Given the right conditions, the embryo will develop its potentiality; and the simple form of value will undergo the metamorphoses that take the commodity from its embryo, through infancy to early adolescence with the attainment of the universal form of value, money. This line of development is not accidental or fortuitous; it is not a process of aggregating contingent and extraneous additions. It is, rather, a process

of development of the potentialities within, and the increasing differentiation of an original whole. If history does not block the growth of exchange activity, then that growth will find out the inadequacy for the simple form of value.¹³

Physical necessity then means a potentiality in the Aristotelian sense, a tendency of development in a certain direction, which will be realized given the right conditions. Physical necessity then can not be necessarily identified with actual occurrences

Marx often speaks of the tendential nature of the economic laws that he is describing. In explaining the law of the tendency of the rate of profit to fall, he says:

"Such a general rate of surplus-value-viewed as a tendency, like all other economic laws-has been assumed by us for the sake of theoretical simplification. But in reality it is an actual premise of the capitalist mode of production, although it is more or less obstructed by practical frictions causing more or less considerable local differences...But in theory it is assumed that the laws of capitalist production operate in their pure form. In reality, there exists only approximation; but, this approximation is the greater, the more developed the capitalist mode of production and the less it is adulterated and amalgamated with survivals of former economic conditions."¹⁴

This concept of science legitimates the unity of theory and revolutionary practice. If science deals with the tendential nature, with the physically necessary possibilities of development of the capitalistic system, then one can use scientific results to actualize or block those potentialities.

In regard to his theory of abstract labor, Marx is perfectly aware that such a theory embodies the same speculative and mystical procedure that he vehemently criticizes in Hegel. The 'mystical' and reified relationship renders 'difficult its [theory of abstract labor] comprehension'.

¹³ Issues in Marxist Philosophy, Volume I, pp.26-27

¹⁴ K. Marx, Capital, III Progress Publishers, Moscow, 1966, p. 213

"Within the value-relation and the value-expression included in it, the abstractly universal does not count as a property of what is concrete, and sensibly-real, but the opposite holds: what is sensibly-concrete counts as mere appearance-form or determinate realization-form of the abstractly universal. It is not that the labour of tailoring, which resides for example in the equivalent coat, possesses within the value-expression of linen the universal property of also being human labour. The opposite holds: Being human labour counts as its essence, being the labour. The opposite holds: Being human labour counts as its essence, being the labour of tailoring counts only as the form of appearance or definite form of realization of this its essence... This inversion whereby the sensibly-concrete counts only as appearance-form of the abstractly universal, and it is not to the contrary that the abstractly universal counts as property of the concrete—this inversion characterizes the value-expression. At the same time it renders difficult its comprehension. If I say, on the other hand, the Law, (this abstract entity) realizes itself in Roman Law and German Law, (these concrete laws), then the connection becomes mystical."¹⁵

Whereas, however, the reification of the abstract concept of law is a result of the thinker's speculative procedure, the mystical and inverted relationship between abstract and concrete labor is for Marx a determinate social form of labor. The mode of abstraction is material, arising out of the actual relationship of commodity production, out of the commodity form itself. Therefore reality itself is, for Marx, 'inverted', upside down, alienated. All the inverted, fetishistic contradictions of capitalism are determined then by its very alienated nature which tends to its auto-destruction as the law of the tendential fall of profit shows. The overthrow of the inverted reality and the realization of the socialization of property within a just a free society through revolution is then a realistic goal. Chris Arthur says:

"...since the mode of abstraction is material, arising out of the actual relationships of private producers, Marx is not to blame for thinking it. He far from accepts this inversion as the ultimate truth, as his critical

¹⁵ This quotation is taken from Chris Arthurs, *Dialectics and Labour in Issues in Marxist Philosophy* Volume I, p. 104.

concept of 'commodity fetishism' shows. He shows that the commodity form of the product of labour gives rise to the diremption between concrete labours and their abstract essence, and expresses the essential unity of social labour as an abstract totality. Unlike Hegel, Marx does not pass off the abstract universal as a concrete whole. His theory is immanently critical of the estrangement of the abstract from the concrete in commodity production. He seeks the supersession of the contradiction not in a speculative reconciliation but in an historical change, through which property is socialized in order to match the increasing socialization of the productive forces."¹⁶

The early Colletti explains:

"...Marx does not restrict himself to criticizing the 'logical mysticism' of the economists, their 'trinity formula': Land, Capital, Labour. Their 'fetishism' is explained by the fetishism of reality itself, that is of the capitalist mode of production. This is quite evident in a whole series of expressions. Capital contains such phrases as: 'the mystical character of commodities', or 'The whole mystery of commodities, all the magic and necromancy that surrounds the products of labour as long as they take the form of commodities'; or finally that the 'mystical veil' is not an invention of the bourgeois interpreters of the 'life-process of society which is based on the process of material production', but actually belongs to this process, which therefore appears to political economy as what it really is.

In fact, reality itself is upside down. It is therefore not just a question of criticizing the way in which economists and philosophers have depicted reality. It is necessary to overturn reality itself - to straighten it up and 'put it back on its feet'. 'Until now the philosophers have only interpreted the world:the point however is to change it'.¹⁷

The other argument maintains that the Marxian contradiction is logical, in which the two opposites, each being a negative relation to the other constitute the two sides of a unity which has collapsed in them, and that the theory of alienation is a dogmatic a priori scheme that Marx had inherited from Hegel. The dialectic therefore is vitiated by a strongly unscientific strain.

¹⁶ Ibid, pp. 107-108.

¹⁷ L. Colletti, *From Rousseau to Lenin*, Montly Review Press, New York, 1972, p. 233.

There are two Marxes then: the scientist who considers reality in the same way as the political economists he is criticizing, a positive field of investigation with its laws, and the metaphysician who sees reality as negative, alienated, unreal: one to be overthrown and negated. The late Colletti says:

"On the one hand, there is the Marx of the prefaces to *Capital*, who puts himself forward as the man who has developed and completed as a science the political economy founded by Smith and Ricardo. On the other hand, there is the Marx who is a critic of political economy (not of bourgeois political economy, but of political economy tout court), the man who has intertwined (and over-turned) the arguments of Smith and Ricardo with a theory of alienation of which the economists know nothing. In the first case, his scientific-economic argument is directed at a reality which is viewed in the same positive way that every science views it. In the second case, the reality which is the subject of discussion is upside-down, 'stood on its head': it is not reality *sic et simpliciter*, but the realization of alienation. It is not a positive reality, but one to be overthrown and negated.

One hardly needs to emphasize how profound this divergence is. Political Economy, qua science, investigates and uncovers objective economic laws (the famous 'economic laws of motion of modern society') which are wholly analogous to the laws of nature and which Marx himself calls, in the preface to *Capital*.

From the other point of view these laws, which appear to have a material or objective character, are nothing other than the fetishistic objectification of human social relations which are beyond the control of men themselves. They do not represent natural objectivities, but alienation.¹⁸

L. Colletti argues that the theory of alienation and the theory of logical contradiction are one single theory. In a logical contradiction as in alienation what is inseparable is separated. "Separation", Marx says, "appears as the normal relation in this society." In this manner the fetishistic or alienated nature of the contradictions of capitalist society are postulated a priori; by

¹⁸ 'Marxism and the Dialectic' in *New Left Review*, 93, (1975), p. 22.

an understanding that the "original unity" of man with nature and of man with man has been broken in capitalistic society. capitalistic society is a

society in which, while individuals live together they are not only divided and competitive with each other, but precisely because they are separated from each other, they come to be separated from the society itself, i.e. from the complex of relations between them. It is society in which, since everyone is independent, their mutual relations too become independent of everyone. So that the network of social relations (the society) takes on a separate existence of its own in money and capital - and since its existence is independent, it lies beyond the control of very men it relates. It is, in a word, the contradiction between individual and class between nature and culture...Modern society is a society characterized by division (alienation, contradiction). What was at one time united, has now been split and separated. The 'original unity' of man with nature and of man with man has been broken."¹⁹

To support his claim, Colletti quotes the following crucial passage, in which Marx first explains the concept of the possibility of crisis which arises through the contradiction between the separation of commodity and money exemplified in the separation between purchase and sale and the circulation or metamorphosis of commodity. Then he adds that the possibility of crisis is a cumulative process implied already by all the contradictions within commodities, that is by their very nature of being logical contradictions in which what is inseparable is separated.

"No one can sell unless someone else purchases. But no one is forthwith bound to purchase, because he had just sold. Circulation bursts through all restrictions as to time, place, and individuals, imposed by direct barter, and this it effects by splitting up, into the antithesis of a sale and a purchase, the direct identity that in barter does exist between the alienation of one's own and the acquisition of some other man's product. To say that these two independent and antithetical acts have an intrinsic unity, are essentially one, is the same as to say that this intrinsic oneness expresses itself in an external

¹⁹ Ibid, pp. 27-28.

antithesis. If the interval in time between the two complementary phases of the complete metamorphosis of a commodity become too great, if the split between the sale and the purchase becomes too pronounced, the intimate connection between them, their oneness asserts itself by producing a crisis. The antithesis, use-value and value; the contradictions that private labour is bound to manifest itself as direct social labour, that a particularized concrete kind of labour has to pass for abstract human labour; the contradiction between the personification of objects and the representation of persons by things [Versachlichung: reification]; all these antitheses and contradictions, which are immanent in commodities, assert themselves, and develop their modes of motion, in the antithetical phases of the metamorphosis of a commodity. The modes therefore imply the possibility, and no more than the possibility, of crises. The conversion of this mere possibility into a reality is the result of a long series of relations, that, from our present standpoint of simple circulation, have as yet no existence."²⁰

The contradiction between commodity and money appears clearly to be a logical opposition resulting in their reification. Colletti explains:

...if it is true that as regards commodities and money - the 'two complementary phases of the complete metamorphosis of a commodity' - 'the split between the sale and the purchase become too pronounced', then it must be true that the intimate connection between them, their oneness, asserts itself by producing - a crisis.

Note, the poles of the contradiction in this instance are independent and separated, it is true-and yet they are inseparable, untrennbar. In so far as they are separated, they are taken on a real aspect; but in so far as they are inseparable, they have become real and independent and yet not truly so. They have been made as real as things, while still not being things; they are, in short, a product of alienation, they are entities which are unreal in themselves and yet have been reified.²¹

The theory of alienation embodied in the logical contradictions of the capitalistic system guarantees then a priori its autodestruction: the supersession of alienation, the negation of the negation with the realization

²⁰ Ibid, pp. 24-25. Earlier, Colletti had interpreted this passage in a completely different manner. See pp.77-78

²¹ Ibid, pp. 25-26.

of a free and just society. The concept of alienated labor allows Marx to arrive at this conclusion from the most fundamental capitalistic law. Whereas for classical political economy the law of value is the key to understanding the equilibrium of the capitalistic mode of production, for Marx, instead it is the irrefutable proof of its disequilibrium, of its irrationality.

Of the two arguments, the latter one seems to me more convincing. Marx's dialectic, as H. Kelsen has pointed out, has wrongly combined what is and what it ought to be, causes and ends, facts and values. This is not to maintain a positivistic conception of science. Every scientific statement is value judgemental. But, it is not teleological in the Hegelian sense. It is impossible, that is, to show without a metaphysical presupposition that the laws of history realize at the end of their consummation a value, an end. The theory of alienation and logical contradiction cannot be dissociated from Hegel's a priori teleology of history. No matter how materialistic or factual they are made, they are one and the same thing. For this reason, they have been rejected by Della Volpe and Althusser. Althusser says:

Of Course ... what immediately disfigures the Hegelian conception of History as a dialectical process is its teleological conception of the dialectic, inscribed in the structures of the dialectic at an extremely precise point: the Aufhebung (transcendence-preserving the transcended-as-the-internalized-transcended), directly expressed in the Hegelian category of the negation of the negation (or negativity).²²

Even though faulted by the metaphysics of the history of Hegel and his logical contradiction, Marx's dialectical system, however, stands out for his

²² Quotation taken from A.Callinicos, Althusser's Marxism, Pluto Press Limited, London, England, 1976, p. 67.

great deal of undisputable empirical knowledge so that W. Loenteif has called Marx "the great character reader of the capitalist system."²³ Notwithstanding the fact that many Marxist key predictions contained in Capital, such as the falling rate of profit, have failed to materialize, the essential characteristic of the capitalistic system, as D. Horowitz points out, in the Marxian vision

- that its ends are dominated by the needs of capital rather than by social needs - has, if anything, become more apparent with increasing material wealth, i.e. with the increasing power of the productive framework alongside the increasing poverty of its human content. Contemporary capitalism, like that of Marx's original model, remains a system dominated by the drive to accumulate wealth in its abstract money form, a feature which it shares, significantly, with Keynes' 'monetary economy': 'production is only production for capital and not vice versa, the means of production...mere means for a constant expansion of the living process of the society of producers'. The means (the expansion of capital wealth) dominate the ends (the expansion of real wealth), so that just 'as in religion man is governed by the products of his own brain, so in capitalistic production, he is governed by the products of his own hand'. This domination of society and its real needs, by the needs of the capitalist market, as been well expressed by a contemporary British Marxist:

How many business men resolutely decide that they must leave schools and hospitals to rot, and press on with doubling their TV commercials and lacquering their reception rooms with the money saved? Do any at all? On the contrary, how many mightn't even feel a stealthy susurrus of dismay if they learnt that this was the end outcome of their harmless, familiar routines?...What finally defines the whole system is that it utterly expunges men from the place of its essential working. These decisions are not taken in the board room or the bank manager's suite or even the exclusive club or the pleasure yacht. They are taken nowhere. They are not taken, they are not decisions: fatalities. Nobody calculates them and enacts them they happen unmeant.²⁴

²³ Marx and Modern Economics, edited by David Horowitz, MacGibbon and Kee Ltd., 1968, p. 98

²⁴ *Ibid*, p. 15-17.

2. *Literary Theory and Criticism*

Lukács pioneering work in combating the "vulgar sociology" of art and in establishing the relative autonomy and intrinsic worth of art has to be recognized as a remarkable achievement. There is also great truth in Lukács's literary criticism of some specific literary works such as Tolstoy's, Mann's or Balzac's: in his subtle dialectical skill in showing how history pervades the literary work through form, understood as structuration or configuration given to content, with its emphasis upon typicality and narration. Lukács concept and attempt to validate the idea that only through narrative with its dynamics of story telling and dramatization "can the dialectic of human existence and consciousness be expressed" has stirred up serious thinking and fruitful research in other fields as well with the result that it is considered by some an epistemological category. Knowledge of reality occurs in the form of storytelling. Even a scientific theory is a form of narrative. In the preface of his Political Unconscious, F. Jameson says:

It should meanwhile be obvious that no work in the area of narrative analysis can afford to ignore the fundamental contributions of Northrop Frye, the codification by A.J. Greimas of the whole Formalist and semiotic traditions, the heritage of a certain Christian hermeneutics, and above all, the indispensable explorations by Freud of the logic of dreams, and by Claude Levi-Strauss of the logic of "primitive" storytelling and the *pensee sauvage*, not to speak of the flawed yet monumental achievements in this area of the greatest Marxist philosopher of modern times, Georg Lukács. These divergent and unequal bodies of work are here interrogated and evaluated from the perspective of the specific critical and interpretive task of the present volume, namely to restructure the problematics of ideology, of the unconscious and of desire, of representation, of history, and of cultural production, around the all-informing process of narrative, which I take to be (here using the shorthand of philosophical idealism) the central function or instance of the human mind. This perspective may be reformulated in terms of the traditional dialectical code as the

study of *Darstellung*: that untranslatable designation in which the current problems of representation productively intersect with the quite different ones of presentation, or of the essentially narrative and rhetorical movement of language and writing through time.¹

Even in his most felicitous moments, however, Lukács' theory shows one of its fundamental weaknesses. It does not consider language as the substance of literary works. Lukács aesthetic-cultural judgement, therefore, not mediated by an analysis of the internal, linguistic aspects of the literary work, is often generic and unsubstantiated. At the end of Lukács literary analysis, one cannot keep from asking, as in the case of Balzac: is Balzac great because he is a historian or because he is an artist? Lukács never gives a direct clarification of the artistic reasons of the greatness of Balzac.

Lukács category of totality which found its expression in the realist novel of the nineteenth century, is reductionistic, dogmatic and annoyingly evaluative. It blinds his effort to understand modernist literature and the dialectics of personality. Lukács fails to see that the psychopathology that he condemns represents not a rejection but a denunciation of the reality from which it stems and which takes precedence over it.

With Musil - and with many other modernist writers - psychopathology became the goal, the *terminus ad quem*, of their artistic intention. But there is a double difficulty inherent in their intention, which follows from its underlying ideology. There is, first, a lack of definition. The protest expressed by this flight into psychopathology is an abstract gesture; its rejection of reality is wholesale and summary, containing no concrete criticism. It is a gesture, moreover, that is destined to lead nowhere; it is an escape into nothingness. Thus the propagators of this ideology are mistaken in thinking that such a protest could ever be fruitful in literature. In any protest against particular social conditions, these conditions themselves must have the central place. The bourgeois protest against

¹ Frederik Jameson, *The Political Unconscious*, Cornell University Press, Ithica, New York, 1981, pp.12-13.

feudal society, the proletariat against bourgeois society, made their point of departure a criticism of the old order. In both cases the protest - reaching out beyond the point of departure - was based on a concrete terminus ad quem: the establishment of a new order. However indefinite the structure and content of this new order, the will toward its more exact definition was not lacking.²

In the above quotation one is struck by the prescriptive arrogance of statements such as "thus the propagators of this ideology are mistaken in thinking that such a protest could ever be fruitful in literature." One, however, should keep in mind that Lukács critical criterion is not to analyze how modernist writers express psychopathology in whichever ideological ways they want, but that they should express it accordingly to his conception of social totality. T. Eagleton acutely points out: "What Lukács is calling for, then, is essentially for the modern age to move forward in the nineteenth century."

In accusing modernist literature in being unable to be typical and, therefore, realist, he erroneously considers the typical as the universal category of realism misunderstanding Marx's and Engels' reflections on realism in art and ignoring the historical limitations of their taste. He doesn't understand that for "modernist" time the pathological is more realistic, better suited to express the complexity of our society, to portray and denounce the alienation, the angst, and the absurdity of our predicament than the typical. Salinari says:

Del resto lo stesso concetto di tipico - che Lukács tende a vedere come una categoria del realismo - é strettamente connesso alla poetica di quella stagione letteraria, all'aspirazione propria del realismo ottocentesco di giungere a una unità organica nella figura, nella rappresentazione del vivente, di elementi razionali ed elementi intuitivi, di universale e individuale. Non aver tenuto conto dei limiti

² Maynard Solomon, *Marxism and Art*, First Vintage, New York, 1974, p. 397

storici del gusto di letteri di Marx ed Engels e della stessa definizione del realismo che essi ci danno (senza per altro pretendere mai di farne una nozione valida per tutti i tempi e tutti i luoghi ma riferendosi sempre alla battaglia culturale che essi in quel momento conducevano) ha portato il maggiore critico marxista vivente, Gyorgy Lukács, ad alcuni gravi errori: a fare del tipico - come già si é accennato - una categoria universale del realismo; a considerare, di conseguenza, la grande narrativa realistica dell'Ottocento come un modello e come il punto piu elevato raggiunto dal romanzo moderno; a giudicare, infine, la letteratura posteriore come una deviazione, in senso naturalistico o intimistico, da quel modello, come una letteratura di decadenza. E invece non sarebbe stato difficile accorgersi, in una diversa angolazione della ricerca, che nelle condizioni storiche sviluppatesi dopo il '48 e soprattutto nel periodo dell'imperialismo, la letteratura non poteva che essere atipica e non per questo (in certi casi s'intende) cessare di essere realistica, cessare, cioè, di assolvere a quella funzione di rappresentazione non deformata della realtà e di demistificazione dei valori <<ufficiali>> di cui abbiamo parlato.³

L. Goldman's genetic structuralist analysis in the Hidden God which shows the homology between the significant structure of a literary work, the mental structure of the world-vision of the social class to which the author belongs, and the socio-economic structure of such a class is a remarkable sociological study. It is an in depth, painstakingly researched attempt at verification of the concepts of historical totality and mediation. Even though the "world vision" is not an immediate, empirical fact but a conceptual working hypothesis, Goldman shows its cognitive value and fruitfulness in relating various parts of the superstructure-literature, philosophy, science religion - to each other and in turn to class relationship. Goldman is certainly at his best when he identifies the same triangular structure of the tragic Jansenistic world view (Man desperately torn between the rationalism of the valueless human world deserted by providence and deprived of clear moral

³ Carlo Salinari, Scritti sull'arte di K. Marx e F. Engels, Laterza and Figli Spa, Roma-Bari, 1978, pp. 17-18.

laws and the absolute authority of a hidden, not directly present, God) in Racine's plays. On the surface the content or the world vision of a religious, puritanic doctrine like Jansenism and that of Racine's pagan, worldly plays, could hardly be more heterogeneous.

There are, however, some major flaws in Goldman's genetic model. The workability and the feasibility of the concept of "potential consciousness" and the strict homology between ideology and class situation seem extremely doubtful.

To accept it [the concept of potential consciousness] as a tool of historical research implies that we can deduce from the situation of a particular class what its consciousness would have been if it had corresponded perfectly to that situation. This, however, is a fantasy. Even if we suppose with Goldmann - contrary to the evidence of history, to common sense, and even to Marx - that every world-view stands in a one-to-one correspondence with the class situation in which it arises, the deduction would still be impossible, for we should also have to know the general laws according to which particular class situations always produce particular forms of ideology, art, philosophy or religion. We do not know any such laws and we never shall, for the possibility of doing so is excluded by the nature of the subject under examination, which is the whole process of history, unique and unrepeatable. There can be no law which says that 'whenever conditions are exactly as they were in France in the middle of the seventeenth century they will produce the doctrines of Gassendi, Descartes, Pascal, tec.' To formulate the idea of seeking such 'laws' suffices to demonstrate its absurdity.⁴

In the end, Goldman's model, as Eagleton says in Marxism and Literary Criticism, is "too trimly symmetrical, unable to accomodate the dialectical conflicts and complexities, the unevenness and discontinuity, which characterize literature's relation to society". It ignores the complex relationship between the individual ideology, language and society.

⁴ Leszek Kolakowski, Main currents of Marxism, Oxford University Press, New York, 1978, pp. 336-338.

Much more than in Lukács, the question of the specificity of literature remains unanswered in Goldman. The notions of coherence and adequate expression are conventionally trite and vague. They are brought into the argument as *Deus ex machina*. Goldman never explains how and why they confer a literary value on the sociological content.

With its emphasis upon formal procedures and techniques as producing an autonomous semantic space in which reality is kept at a distance and negated, Adorno's model re-establishes again the priority of strictly aesthetic criteria and opens up modernist writings to Marxist literary theory.

In Proust, for instance, the interior monologue does not cut the protagonist's alienated subjectivity off from the world, but gives us and negates at the same time a true picture of reality in its universal atomistic state where "alienation rules over men turning into mere shadows of themselves". In Beckett's plays, where the unity and coherence of the self is shattered and the meaninglessness and the incapacity of communication of language itself is revealed in a world of despair, alienation and emptiness, the lack of characterization of the protagonists, the plotlessness, and the absurd gaps in dialogs and situations create the same aesthetic effect: reality is kept at a distance, transcended and negated.

The degree of art's liberating potential and the possibility of minimizing its false aura of authenticity and uniqueness are strictly related then, according to Adorno, to the novelty and difficulty of the techniques and stylistic devices employed in a literary work. Difficult texts upsets the reader's unthinking and automatic acquiescence in the status quo. No matter how ingenious is the artist's inventiveness, however, techniques always find

their explanation in the socio-economic-psychological reality. In Philosophy of the New Music, he says:

It is hardly an accident that mathematical techniques in music as well as logical positivism originated in Vienna. The fondness for number games is as peculiar to the Viennese mind as the game of chess in the coffee house. There are social reasons for it. All the while intellectually productive forces in Austria were rising to the technical level characteristic of high capitalism, material forces lagged behind. The resultant unused capacity for figures became the symbolic fulfillment of the Viennese intellectual. If he wanted to take part in the actual process of material production, he had to look for a position in Imperial Germany. If he stayed home, he became a doctor or a lawyer or clung to number games as a mirage of financial power. Such is the way the Viennese intellectual tries to prove something to himself, and - bitte schon! - to everyone else as well.⁵

Psychoanalysis provides Adorno's Marxist model with the capacity to analyze in depth the mediation between the individual, society and artistic techniques. In the following analysis of Huxley's Brave New World, for instance, Adorno applies the Freudian categories of sublimation and repression. He points out that Huxley's criticism of our society, where "substitution of means for all ends" and the consequent reification of human behavior (a "fetishistic love" that extends from gadgetry to pleasure "pleasure itself degenerates to the misery of 'fun' and to the occasion for the narcissistic satisfaction of having 'had' this or that person") prevail, fails to understand the link between the "dehumanization of the industrial age" and the prohibitive, repressive demands of the puritanic code. Locked up in his rigid, schematic, puritanic morality, Huxley is unable to distinguish "between the liberation of sexuality and its debasement", and fails to indicate the human

⁵ Quotation taken from: Fredric Jameson, Marxism and Form, Princeton University Press, Princeton, New Jersey, 1971, p 7.

behavior that could be conducive to freedom and happiness. The schematism and rigidity of Huxley's view are felt also in the technical devices of the literary work, "despite many ingenuities of execution". Adorno says:

The blame rests with the substitution of means for all ends. The cult of the instrument, cut off from every objective aim (in Brave New World, the implicit religion of today - the auto - becomes literal with Ford for Lord and the sign of the Model T for that of the cross), and the fetishistic love of gadgetry, both unmistakable lunatic traits ingrained in precisely those people who pride themselves on being practical and realistic, are elevated to the norm of life. But that substitution is also in force in areas of the Brave New World where freedom seems to have won out. Huxley has recognized the contradiction that in a society where sexual taboos have lost their intrinsic force and have either retreated before the permissibility of the prohibited or come to be enforced by external compulsion, pleasure itself degenerates to the misery of 'fun' and to an occasion for the narcissistic satisfaction of having 'had' this or that person. Through the institutionalization of promiscuity, sex becomes a matter of indifference, and even escape from society is relocated within its borders...

His [Huxley's] portrayal of organized orgiastics, however, has an undertone which casts doubt upon his satirical thesis. In its proclamation of the bourgeois nature of what claims to be unbourgeois, the thesis itself becomes ensnared in bourgeois habits. Huxley waxes indignant at the sobriety of his characters but is inwardly an enemy of intoxication, and not only that from narcotics, which he earlier condemned, thus endorsing the prevailing attitude. Like that of many emancipated Englishmen, his consciousness is preformed by the very Puritanism he abjures. He fails to distinguish between the liberation of sexuality and its debasement. In Huxley everything occurs on a more sublimated level than in the Lawrence of the four-letter words, but everything is also more thoroughly repressed. His anger at false happiness sacrifices the idea of true happiness as well...

Because mankind, tainted with original sin, is not capable of anything better in this world, the bettering of the world is made a sin. But the novel does not draw its life from the blood of the unborn. Despite many ingenuities of execution, it fails because of a basic weakness - an empty schematism.⁷

⁷ idem, p. 117.

Adorno's theory, however, with its emphasis upon techniques is unduly formalistic. Techniques, even though historically determined, seem to be fetishized. They are endowed with the intrinsic power of negating reality. Besides, one cannot keep asking what happens to poetical language when it distances itself from reality since for Adorno "language", the embodiment of the identity principle, "becomes a measure of truth only when we are conscious of the non identity of an expression with what we mean."

In Della Volpe language becomes the center of a rigorous materialistic analysis of the literary work whose aim is to show the mutual necessitation between literature and history, "la possibilita semantica di una circolazione del pensiero storico nella poesia", strictly within the linguistic boundaries of the work itself.

The dialectics of determinate abstraction individuates the presence of history in the poetic language as the center of a semantic-formal dialectics of poetry and history: the existence and transcendence of the omnitextual univocal disorganic language of history within the polysemic, connotative, organic language of poetry.

Il concetto di dialettica semantica ci permette ora di spiegare e giustificare il pathos oggettivo ed eventualmente storico della poesia sopra constatato (v. cap. I, ** 5 sgg.). Tale questione si chiarisce osservando: 1) che col riconoscimento dell'essenziale componente linguistica della poesia é provata - per il postulato della identità (dialettica) di pensiero e linguaggio, che ne é a sua volta verificato - l'appartenenza della poesia al pensiero in genere come unità - discorsiva e non mistica - del molteplice; 2) che ne risulta la possibilità semantica (la sola non mitica) di una circolazione del pensiero storico (scientifico) nella poesia, come dire del pensiero univoco in quello polisenso, e viceversa, tramite il medio della lingua e propriamente tramite lo onnitestuale idest il letterale-materiale; 3) che in tale circolazione - data la struttura della dialettica semantica suesaminata -

il ripensamento poetico, cioè polisenso, di significati nella fattispecie storici conserva e muta ad un tempo tali significati.⁸

In this manner, with the demonstration of the origin and transcendence of poetry from history and in history, a cultural-aesthetic interpretation of the literary work and the necessity of a critical paraphrase aiming at capturing the dialectical passage from thought-language to style-language on the basis of a historical and functional philology is scientifically legitimated.

E si vede allora che il primo compito del critico di poesia e di letteratura sarà di discernere se e dove e quando i valori semantici (ma c'è valore o pensiero che non sia sema?) del testo in esame rientrano nella categoria del polisenso o in quelle dello univoco o dello equivoco (discorso volgare) addirittura: compito non assolvibile che dalla percezione esatta del locus semantico di quel testo (percezione che condiziona il "gusto" o senso dello "stile"): cioè se quel testo sia - o come un tutto o come un elemento - un che di contestuale-organico e non invece un che di onnicontestuale o addirittura onnitestuale: e il resto seguirà da sé: la ricostruzione della genesi dell'eventuale poesia come polisenso da e oltre il letterale-materiale, quindi l'esercizio di una filologia interamente funzionale, di cui la parafrasi critica del riconosciuto contesto è precisamente il momento dialettico positivo che agevolerà la enucleazione progressiva delle connotazioni trascendenti il denotativo o letterale-materiale e loro puntuale validità.⁹

The critical paraphrase, for instance, in comparing Browning's famous line "So wore night; the East was gray" to the "letterale materiale" the thought-language, "so the night passed", or Malherbe's "et les fruits passeront la promesse des fleurs", to the "harvest will be good", reveals "lo scarto", the semantic difference, that is, between the polysemic and the univocal. It

⁸ Galvano della Volpe, Critica del Gusto, G. Feltrinelli, Milano, 1960, pp. 83-84.

⁹ Idem, pp. 82.

shows how poetry develops multiple meanings out of single historical ones through a process of rejection and assimilation.

It must be pointed out that Della Volpe's conception represents a valuable solution to the impasse - to which Lukács theories partially contributed - of the contemporary Italian Marxist-literary milieu in which the cultural-ideological judgement of a literary text was not rooted upon the strictly linguistic-poetical characteristics of the text. Poetic language or style was unduly neglected. It was considered only as an embellishment, barely inherent to the sociological content of the text.

There is, however, something disturbing in Della Volpe's too well-knit, rationalistic theory. It is sometimes reductionistic and schematic. Reason and the emphasis upon technique are often hypostasized to the detriment of feeling, imagination, and the complexity of individual and group psychology. Della Volpe's cultural judgement, therefore, sometimes portrays an impoverished reality; it does not probe into the dialectical relationship between socio-economic ideas and individual and group psychology. He points out, for instance, that T.S. Eliot's poetical-religious pathos of the denunciation of the contemporary bourgeois man is rooted in the crisis of the moral values of the bourgeois tradition; but he never analyzes the relationship between the bourgeois moral crisis and T.S. Eliot's religious poetical consciousness and its unconscious ramification in its depth and dialectical complexity. Such a relation is generally given, postulated by means of the structural component of the literary work. Della Volpe says:

Vediamo come lo spiritualismo, che Eliot ha in comune con costoro e i predecessori simbolisti, specificatosi in spiritualismo tra luterano e cattolico, operi quale catalizzatore poetico della crisi dei valori morali

laici tradizionali borghesi, già precipitanti in seguito alla prima guerra mondiale.¹⁰

Della Volpe, besides, never treats the relationship of art to ideology. This is the major concern of Althusser and the Althusserians.

Althusser's and Macherey's more developed and elaborate model of literature as a form of practice which hollows ideology and literary criticism also as a form of transformative labor which places itself not in the same space as the text itself but in an invisible space, in that which it is not said, making the text appear other than it is, represent a radical epistemological break from what has come before and a more materialistic approach. It inaugurates a new field of vision: the author's inability to control the inner logic of the textual elements of fiction which produces rather than reproducing ideology, the incompleteness and heterogeneity of the text, the presence of history in its absence, and criticism not as an interpretation but as a form of knowledge brought in by the informed Marxist reader.

The incompleteness or disparateness of the text is not, however, one that criticism can correct by adding something to it or choosing one of its meanings as more profound than the others.

Critical discourse does not attempt to complete the book, for theory begins from that incompleteness which is so radical that it cannot be located.

Thus, the silence of the book is not a lack to be remedied, an inadequacy to be made up for. It is not a temporary silence that could be finally abolished. We must distinguish the necessity of this silence. For example, it can be shown that it is the juxtaposition and conflict of several meanings which produces the radical otherness which shapes the work: this conflict is not resolved or absorbed, but simply displayed.

Thus the work cannot speak of the more or less complex opposition which structures it; though it is its expression and embodiment. In its

¹⁰ Idem, p.36.

every particle, the work manifests, uncovers, what it cannot say. This silence gives it life.¹¹

The incompleteness of the text then is a determinate incompleteness which cannot be modified. It is inscribed in the very nature of the text, in that which gives life to it. The text then is complete in its incompleteness. What the text is lacking -its absence- is precisely what makes it as an object. The incompleteness of the text is necessarily produced by the conflict within the text between the literary form and its ideological content: by the conflict and incompatibility, that is, of several meanings. What the author wants to say is thwarted, contorted, and modified by the inner logic of the medium and the genre he is using. "It is the very coherence of the textual forms which produces the incoherence of the ideological content".¹²

In Les Paysans, for instance, Balzac's intention is to unify ideologically two projects - to observe, to know the peasants , and to judge them - and technically - in one type of narrative - two different kinds of writings to which the two projects correspond.

We must now return to the ideological project, temporarily forgotten. The narrative as conceived by Balzac must, we remember, realise two requirements at once. It must take the place of two narratives at once. By means of the narrative we can see and we can judge: each of these attitudes implies a different partition of reality. The problem faced by the writer is thus how to reconcile, how to connect and adapt these two shapes?¹³

¹¹ Pierre Macherey, A Theory of Literary Production, Routledge and Kegan Paul, Ltd, London, 1978, p. 84

¹² Terry Eagleton, Against the Grain, Verso, London, 1986, p. 17

¹³ Pierre Macherey, A Theory of Literary Production, 1978, pp. 284-285.

The exigencies of Balzac's narrative, however, upset his intention and reveals the contradictory nature of the two projects which materialize, therefore, in two different kinds of utterances: descriptive-fictional utterances and judgemental-ideological utterances. At the same time the narrative hollows the ideological utterances showing a fundamental disparity in them. The incompleteness or disparateness of the text is then a necessary consequence of its production.

One could, in a very general way, distinguish two types of utterances in the Balzacian narrative: certain utterances are directly linked to the functioning of the fictional system; other utterances are 'detachable' - they seem to have been taken as they are from ideology and inserted into the texture of the novel (and could probably return just as easily to their place of origin). If, in many cases, they are not distinguishable, they are indissociable: the novel is made from their contrast. The literary text does not constitute a homogeneous whole: it does not inhabit a single place prepared in advance to receive it. However, these detachable utterances are not detached utterances: they are in the work not as real utterances, but as fictional objects; in the work they are the term of a designation, of a demonstration; in spite of appearances their status is not directly ideological; the mode of their presence is that of a presentation which hollows them, exhibits a fundamental disparity in them. Thus, they are not in the text as intruders, but as effects; they have meaning only by that metamorphosis which makes of them elements among others in the process of fictional production.¹⁴

Macherey shows with great acumen how judgemental-ideological utterances, in which peasants are compared to salvages, contrasting with descriptive-fictional utterances, in which peasants are portrayed in their rural but unnatural milieu, are hollowed revealing a main gap in the text. Balzac does not realize that the nature in which the peasants live is a socio-historical reality: it is nature appropriated by capitalistic mode of production. The

¹⁴ idem, p. 297.

savage metaphor is out of place. It does not correspond to Balzac's distorted presentation of reality. The peasant is not a true savage. The narrative vindicates the peasants against Balzac's entrenched prejudices.

Thus, to take an immediate and elementary example, if there is a description it must, in principle and from the first, be distinct; but it must also corroborate an accusation. Thus the man of the people, not as a general idea but as a real plea in the novel, is, as already announced in the preface to Les Paysans, the savage. This metaphor obviously implies the idea of distance; the peasant is not a man like any other.

'What can be the ideas, the morals, the habits of such a being? What is he thinking of?' thought Blondet, seized with curiosity. 'Is he my fellow-creature? We have nothing in common but shape, and even that!' (Les Paysans, Vol. I ch. 2)

The image will recur endlessly. It is introduced by Blondet:

'Here's one of Cooper's redskins,' thought Blondet; 'one needn't go to America to study savages.' (Ibid)

'Well, well!' cried Blondet, laughing, 'so here we are, like Cooper's heroes in the forests of America, in the midst of traps and savages (Ibid., vol. I, ch. 5)

In its multiple uses, the image finally acquires, to some extent, an autonomous value. It characterises the peasant by demonstrating his original relationship to nature; but in this case it is allegorical, that is to say, inadequate. The peasant is not a true savage; the nature which he inhabits is unnatural - diversified and permeated by the different modes of appropriation. It presupposes the existence of a society. But the comparison has an exotic value, above all in its remote displaced character: it does not correspond exactly to a reality which it represents by distortion

The artificiality of the savage metaphor becomes also apparent when Mme Soudry compares the usurer, Rigou, to a savage.

The tall, stiff usurer always had an imposing effect upon Madame Soudry's company, who instinctively recognised in his nature the cruelty of the tiger with steel claws, the craft of a savage. (Ibid., vol. II, ch. 2)

This clearly shows that

"the comparison with the savage signifies a profound misunderstanding: by its incoherence, this is what Balzac's text itself is saying. To see a savage within the peasant, as do Blondet or Brossette, is not to see the peasant entirely as he is: the image is significant principally because of the gap which paradoxically links it to its model."¹⁵

It is in this defect, in this gap, that the text becomes meaningful. There the absence of history is felt.

The most flagrant flaw in Althusser and Macherley's theories is their formalism. In ascribing to literary form the intrinsic power to contradict ideology, they hypostasize it. Is form above dialectics?

In his analysis of literary works Eagleton brings forth a less formalistic conception of the literary phenomenon: as a form of signifying practice that functions at the point of contradiction between competing ideologies. Moreover, his conception of literary mode of production (LMP) places the text more comprehensively within the specific material and social determinations of its making. It investigates the dialectical relationship between literary structures of production, distribution, exchange and consumption - consumption understood, however, not as reader's consumption, that is, interpretations, but as how the literary object is given for consumption - and points out how these structures, usually presented as historically extrinsic to a literary text, are also internal to it. They fashion its making.

Every LMP is constituted by structures of production, distribution, exchange and consumption. Production presupposes a producer or set of producers, materials, instruments and techniques of production, and

¹⁵ Idem, pp.285-6.

the product itself. In developed social formations, an initial private stage of production may be transmuted by a subsequent social mode of production (printing and publishing) to convert the original product ('manuscript') into a new one ('book'). The forces of literary production consist in the application of labour-power organised in certain 'relations of production' (scribes, collaborative producers, printing and publishing organisations) to certain materials of production by means of certain determinate productive instruments. These forces of literary production determine and are over-determined by the modes of literary distribution, exchange and consumption. The handwritten manuscript can only be distributed and consumed on a hand-to-hand basis, within, let us say, a courtly caste; the multiply dictated work (one copied simultaneously by several scribes) is able to achieve wider social consumption; the ballads peddled by a chapman may be consumed by an even wider audience; the 'yellowback' railway novel is available to a mass public.¹⁶

In the relationship that Eagleton establishes between the text and ideology, ideology, however, is given an enormous amount of power. In avoiding to fall into a formalistic position, he hypostasizes ideology. Besides Eagleton's theory of value fails to give an adequate explanation of the intrinsic or extrinsic reasons that convey a value to literary text. A text certainly does not acquire value because of the circumstances of its production.

All the authors considered, however, have failed to produce a truly materialistic analysis of literature and literary criticism. They have unhesitatingly based their inquiry upon the problems and concerns of bourgeois traditional aesthetics. Therefore, next to their materialistic and historic approach to map out the economic, political and ideological constraints of a literary work, there is a strong, antimaterialistic trend which undermines and blatantly contradicts their endeavor: the idealist presupposition that there is a theory of art or literature valid for all forms of literary writings, that literary writings, that is, share some formal properties

¹⁶ T.Eagleton, Criticism and Ideology, NLB, 1976, pp. 47-8.

or essence. As Macherey has pointed out in his late work, the question "What is literature" is a false question because it already implies an answer: "that literature exists as a thing, as an eternal and unchangeable thing with an essence."¹⁷

Because of idealist presuppositions, they fall, therefore, into contradictory conclusions such as Della Volpe's treatment of the semantic autonomy of literary text as an autonomy from other texts, thus isolating it from the historical ties to which it belongs, or Lukac's assertion that realism will always portray a totality and will always be progressive, or Adorno's, in spite of his claims against any identity statements, that formal devices of contemporary writings are intrinsically negative and subversive. Then if the "literary" works are characterized by unchanging formal properties, what weight does the statement and the alleged evidence that they are molded by the conditions of their production have?

It is in Althusser and in the Althusserians, however, that one can really detect in the stitchwork of their analysis the impossibility, if not the absurdity, of constructing a materialist approach to literary writings within the constraints of bourgeois epistemological and aesthetic categories. And this is the more evident since practice is construed as a real materialistic process of transformation. For what sense does this have if literature and ideology are understood as invariant structures which will combine to produce the same effect no matter what the historically concrete conditions of the production of literary works are. Tony Bennett says:

As a result, 'practice' turns out to be a redundant category. Or, more accurately, it is conceived as a teleological process of the adjustment of the real to the ideal. It is a ghostly process in the sense that its product

¹⁷ 'An Interview with Pierre Macherey', *Red Letters*, no. 5, Summer 1977, p.3.

is always 'already there' as a formal essence which governs the constitutive features of any science, any ideology or any work of literature quite irrespective of the historically concrete processes of their making. In the last analysis, it is not real, concrete individuals who are subjects of practice, but abstract structures. The work of transformation that is effected in the interchange between a particular literary text and a particular ideology is, in effect, the work of one abstract structure on another. Behind every particular process of literary transformation, the disembodied gladiators of 'literature' and 'ideology' are locked in an eternal combat and, so far as Althusser is concerned, it is here that the real struggles take place.¹⁸

In order to build, then, a materialistic understanding of literary works one has to start from the concept of practice freed from eternal epistemological and aesthetic forms of cognition. Literary works are a specific practice of writing circumscribed and historically conditioned which can never be compressed into a single formula. Some works may distance ideology, for instance, whereas others may support it. Bourgeois aesthetics and criticism have to be displaced not merely in their answers but also in their founding questions and concerns.

...If we interpret the concept of 'literature' extensively to refer to all forms of writing, and if we go beyond the parameters of the received tradition-comprised, by and large, of the belles lettres of the bourgeois epoch-to include not only medieval literature but the literature of ancient China and that of feudal Japan, not to mention the vast range of contemporary writing which customarily goes under the heading of either 'mass' or 'popular' culture, we confront a range and variability of writing which cannot be compressed within a single formula no matter how liberally it is interpreted. Althusser's mistake is that, although in fact concerned with bourgeois belles lettres, he misleadingly equates them with 'literature' as such. By thus falsely abstracting bourgeois belles lettres from the historical matrices of their production, he 'misrecognizes' their specific nature by construing and explaining it in aesthetic instead of historical terms.¹⁹

¹⁸ Tony Bennett, *Formalism and Marxism*, Methuen and Co Ltd, London, 1979, pp 131-2.

¹⁹ *Ibid*, p. 133.

A historical concrete analysis of the different relationships which may exist between different forms of literary writings and the ideologies which conditions them has to take place. It is an analysis, however, which cannot stop, if it has to be materialistic and dialectical, at the historical matrices of production of literary texts since it is consumption, the way which the texts are read that completes the process of production. The subsequent mode of existence of texts then is also an integral part of what constitutes them. Francis Mulhern clarifies:

What the entire history of discourse on literature shows is how much, in how many different circumstances, a text can be made to signify; what has to be confronted in bourgeois criticism is not only the ideological import of its practices but the fact of its results: an infinite variety of interpretations and judgements, all grounded more or less unimpeachably in 'the words on the page'.²⁰

There is no such thing, therefore, as the text with a fixed and final form and meaning. "The text is not an 'event' but a 'function' transposable in time and space."

The literary-political value of the text, then, transcends the process of its production and depends on the text's position in the different systems of relationships between texts into which it is inscribed during different moments of its historical existence. Literary texts are continually reproduced, constantly rearticulated in relation to one another, acquiring, therefore, different political meanings within different historical and ideological contexts.

At the end, however, if, on the one hand, the Marxist analysis, in revealing the historicity and dialecticity of the text as a series of different interpretations, points to the politics of literary criticism, on the other, it

²⁰ F. Mulhern, 'Marxism in Literary Criticism', New Left Review, 108, 1978, p. 82.

shows on its sleeves, so to speak, its own political intent. One can calculate the political function of a text only from a definite ideological standpoint. There can never be a neutral, scientifically objective dialectics. The text does not in itself distance ideology. It is Marxist criticism that intervenes politically upon the text and makes it reveal or hollow ideology.

Two questions follow: can the Marxist-political dialectics still claim cognitive supremacy over other literary interpretations? And if it cannot claim any epistemological advantages, is it true or better by virtue of its politics?

On one side, there are Marxists that, even though conceding a scope of application and a limited validity to other interpretative codes, still maintain the epistemological superiority of the Marxist interpretative code. One of their chief exponents, F. Jameson, in the preface of the Political Unconscious, says:

Always historicize!... Interpretation is here construed as an essentially allegorical act, which consists in rewriting a given text in terms of a particular interpretive master code. The identification of the latter will then lead to an evaluation of such codes, or, in other words, of the "methods" or approaches current in American literary and cultural study today. I will here argue the priority of a Marxian interpretive framework in terms of semantic richness. Marxism cannot today be defended as a mere substitute for such other methods, which would then triumphalistically be consigned to the ashcan of history; the authority of such methods springs from their faithful consonance with this or that local law of a fragmented social life, this or that subsystem of a complex and mushrooming cultural superstructure. In the spirit of a more authentic dialectical tradition, Marxism is here conceived as the "untranscendable horizon" that subsumes such apparently antagonistic or incommensurable critical operations, assigning them an undoubted sectoral validity within itself, and thus at once canceling and preserving them.²¹

²¹ F. Jameson, The Political Unconscious, Cornell U. Press, Ithaca, 1981, p.81.

Jameson agrees with deconstructionism that history is "accessible" only "in textual form"²². For him, however, notwithstanding their ambivalence and ambiguity, texts do refer mediately to an external and objective reality. Texts are symbolic acts, strategies of containment which provide formal or imaginary solutions to irreconcilable social contradictions. Criticism has to reveal such strategies by

a rewriting of the literary text in such a way that the latter may itself be seen as the rewriting or reconstruction of a priori historical or ideological subtext, it beings always understood that that subtext is not immediately present as such, not some common-sense external reality, nor even the conventional narratives of the history manuals, but rather must itself always be (re)constructed after the fact!²³

Repeating the Althusserian formula, Jameson is saying that the real is drawn into the formal operations of the text at the same time that the text is operationally reacting against it, at the same time, that is, that the text is trying to obliterate it.

On the other side, there are those that, abandoning the cognitive claims of Marxism, emphasize its truthfulness and superiority in terms of its political and moral ideology. Embracing a stategic relativism, they accept

²² Deconstructionism maintains that the text is self-reflective and non referential, and therefore refractory to any interpretation. Any interpretation can be deconstructed, that is, dismantled. There is no doubt that textual discourse is referential: the point is that it "can never signify its referent." By pointing out that all texts are rhetorical, Paul De Man says: "rhetoric is a text in that it allows for two compatible mutually self-destructive points of view, and therefore puts an insurmountable obstacle in the way of any reading or understanding." (P.De Man, *Allegories of Reading*, Yale U. Press, New Haven, 1979, p.131.) Rhetoric is that type of discourse which by engendering two meanings that are mutually exclusive, the literal and the figurative, refuses to communicate or refer unambiguously. The referent cannot be perceived as a realm outside the text. One cannot distinguish the outside and the inside of the text. But if the referent cannot be perceived as something outside the text, is it justified to claim its existence? If it exists only in textual form, then reality, history is a text, that is, it is unintelligible.

²³ *Ibid.*, pp.225-226.

other views only in so far as they work for a potentially transformative understanding of society in socialistic terms. T. Eagleton, the chief exponent in his late works of this reborn Leninist instrumentalism, points out the valuational character of and the political use that is made of a literary text in any interpretation.

He says:

Political argument is not an alternative to moral preoccupations: it is those preoccupations taken seriously in their full implications. But the liberal humanists are right to see that there is a point in studying literature, and that this point is not itself, in the end, a literary one. What they are arguing, although this way of putting it would grate harshly on their ears, is that literature has a use. Few words are more offensive to literary ears than 'use', evoking as it does paperclips and hairdryers. The Romantic opposition to the utilitarian ideology of capitalism has made 'use' an unusable word: for the aesthetes, the glory of art is its utter uselessness. Yet few of us nowadays would be prepared to subscribe to that: every reading of a work is surely in some sense a use of it. we may not use *Moby Dick* to learn how to hunt whales, but we 'get something out of it' even so. Every literary theory presupposes a certain use of literature, even if what you get out of it is utter uselessness. Liberal humanists criticism is not wrong to use literature, but wrong to deceive itself that it does not. It uses it to further certain moral values, which as I hope to have shown are in fact indissociable from certain ideological ones, and in the end imply a particular form of politics. It is not that it reads the texts 'disinterestedly' and then places what it has read in the service of its values: the values govern the actual reading process itself, inform what sense criticism makes of the works it studies.²⁴

Then, in emphasizing the rhetorical character of every literary theory, he subtly argues about the superiority of Marxist politics in terms of its relevance and humanness. Differing from other forms of politics that are supportive of the status quo, Marxist politics can abolish the structures of privilege and oppression that plague our society divided by class and gender.

²⁴ T. Eagleton, *Literary Theory*, University of Minnesota Press, Minneapolis, 1983.

Marxist ethics can produce "better men" by an account of the experience of the oppressed.

Current Marxism, then, has lost its theoretical and epistemological boldness. Why should a Marxist "historicizing" be superior to others just because of its semantic richness? It defies any logical or epistemological criterion and it begs the question. Marxist historicizing is true by virtue of its semantic richness and semantic richness is true by virtue of its more comprehensive historicizing. Semantic richness certainly does not mean richness in truthfulness. Besides, the way that Jameson indicates to detect a subtext through a Marxist interpretative text or narrative does not stand. One cannot get to the real through a textual understanding of it. One can locate the ideological in the text only if one knows what the real is. One can approach the real in textual form, that is, only if he knows what the real is and not viceversa. And finally, if the text is intelligible, if it points to the referent, that is, this has to be shown on a theoretical level, not assumed. Jameson's contention that the right analytic terminology or code could mediate between the text and reality and show the unity of the social totality begs the question again.

The intention of analytic terminology or code which can be applied to two or more structurally distinct objects or sectors of being. As we [earlier] argued, it is not necessary that these analyses be homologous, that is, that each doing the same thing, having the same structure or emitting the same language. What is crucial is that, by being able to use the same language about these quite distinct objects or levels of an object, we can restore, at least methodologically, the lost unity of social life, and demonstrate that widely distant of the social totality are ultimately part of the same global historical process!²⁵

²⁵ Political Unconscious, Cornell U. Press, Ithaca, 1981, p.225-226.

On the other hand, why should a theory be accepted because of its political and ethical values? If these values are better they have to be born out and they can only be born out if the theory from which they stem is corroborated by reality. That is, what Marxism, in its merits and flaws is all about: a theory of politics based upon an analysis of reality which claims to be scientific. These days, with the demolition of the positivistic certainty and understanding of the concepts of reality, evidence and observation, these concepts have become very troublesome. Because of their ambiguity and their theory-ladennes, the philosophy of science itself is in turmoil. Therefore, they are carefully avoided or uncritically dismissed. Corroboration of a theory has become a very complex matter. How, then, can Marxism show that its concept of reality is not ideological or textual? In the preceding chapter, we showed the unscientific strain of the Marxist dialectics. How can the dialectics be purged of its a priori foundation and made into a scientific and critical tool without betraying Marx's fundamental concepts? How can it show that the socialization of the means of production, in which the producers are no longer dominated by the productive forces, is historically possible without recurring to the theory of alienation which includes a positing of the negation of the negation? If the "good" Marxist society, the socialist society, is historically possible not because of a logic immanent in history but because of the work of "better men", as Eagleton maintains repeating an old critical theory argument, then Marxism, deprived of its scientific claims, becomes only ideology.

APPENDIX

A Note on the Hegelian Dialectics

Much of the discussion about the dialectics is based upon the distinction between "logical" and "real" opposition or contradiction and upon the knowledge of the essential features of the Hegelian dialectic.

In his critique of Leibniz' idealistic philosophy based upon the tenet that the principle of thought is also the principle of reality which entails that logical possibility is itself ontological possibility, Kant distinguishes between logical and real opposition. The first consists in affirming and denying simultaneously the predicate of a thing: for instance, in stating at the same time that a body is and is not in motion. The result of this contradictory statement is, according to Kant, the empty set, that is, such a body does not exist and therefore cannot be represented. "The object of a concept which contradicts itself is nothing, because the concept is nothing, is the impossible."¹ Therefore one of the two terms of the contradiction must be eliminated. Here, like Leibniz, Kant is emphasizing that the law governing thought is the principle of non-contradiction. Without this law it is impossible to refute any proposition, and therefore to assert the truth of anything. But unlike Leibniz, who, because of his idealistic equation, denies the existence of opposition in reality, since for him opposition is only logical, Kant maintains that oppositions exist in reality but are not logical. Since the law of non-contradiction is merely a principium rationis, the consistency of

¹ I.Kant, Critique Of Pure Reason, translated by Norman Kemp Smith, Modern Library, London, 1953, p. 295.

thought with itself is something other than the coincidence of thought with reality.

"There is no conflict in the concept of a thing unless a negative statement is combined with an affirmative; merely affirmative concepts cannot, when combined, produce any cancellation. But in the sensible intuition, wherein reality (e.g. motion) is given, there are conditions (opposite directions), which have been omitted in the concept of a motion in general that make possible a conflict (though not indeed a logical one), namely, as producing from what is entirely positive a zero(=0). We are not, therefore, in a position to say that since conflict is not to be met with in the concepts of reality, all reality is in agreement with itself."²

"Two forces, "that is" one imparting movement to a body in one direction, and the other imparting an equal effect in the opposite direction do not contradict [logically] each other: they are both possible as predicates of a single body. The outcome is equilibrium, which is a thing (representable). This is an instance of true opposition. In fact the effect of one of the two tendencies, were it acting in isolation, is neglected by the other, and both these tendencies are true predicates of a single thing and are attached to it simultaneously."³

For Hegel, instead, real oppositions are logical. Against the principle of identity and non-contradiction, he maintains that "everything is inherently contradictory, and in the sense that this law in contrast to the others expresses rather the truth and the essential nature of things." He maintains that one of the fundamental prejudices of logic as hitherto understood and of ordinary thinking, is that contradiction is not so characteristically essential and immanent a determination as identity.

² Ibid., pp.259-290.

³ L.Colletti, *New Left review*, 93, 1975, p.6, quotation from Kant's "The Attempt To Introduce The Concept Of Negative Quantities Into Philosophy" 1763.

"If it were a question of grading the two determinations and they had to be kept separate, then contradiction would have to be taken as the profounder determination and more characteristic of essence. For as against contradiction, identity is merely the determination of the simple immediate, of dead being; but contradiction is the root of all movement and vitality; it is only in so far as something has a contradiction within that it moves, has an urge and an activity."⁴

Further it

"is rather the negative as determined in the sphere of essence, the principle of all self-movement, which consists solely in an exhibition of it. External, sensuous motion itself is contradiction's immediate existence. Something moves, not because at one moment it is here and at another there, but because in this here, it at once is and is not. The ancient dialecticians must be granted the contradictions that they pointed out in motion; but it does not follow that therefore there is not motion, but on the contrary, that motion is existent contradiction itself... Similarly, internal self-movement proper, instinctive urge in general... is nothing else but the fact that something is, in one and the same respect, self contained and deficient, the negative of itself."^{5*}

Therefore the ontological cause of life in the universe is a logical contradiction, and something is alive only in so far as it is itself and the negative of itself at one and the same time. But this negation, Hegel points out, is what constitutes the dialectic of the real.

"The properly dialectical constituent-element is the act-of-dialectical-self-overcoming (eigenes Sichaufheben) of these finite specific-determinations (Bestimmungen) and their transformation (Übergehen) into their opposites (Ent gegen gesetzte)... Dialectic... is this immanent going beyond (/Hinausgehen), in which the one-sidedness and the limitation (Beschränktheit) of the specific-determinations of the understanding are represented (dargestellt) as what they are,

* 4-5. G.W.F.Hegel, The Logic, translated from the encyclopaedia of the philosophical sciences, by Willaim Wallace, Oxford University Press, London, 1892, pp.439-440.

namely, as their own negation. Everything that is finite (Alles Endliche) is an act of dialectical self-overcoming..."⁶

Concrete real being, then, is unity within opposition; it is identity in difference: both identity, identity to itself, and negativity, different from itself. In a sublated (dialectically overcome) status, which is called totality, identity, negativity and totality are complementary aspects of one and the same real being. This means that the dialectical contradiction presents opposites that negate and imply each other (identity) because they constitute the two sides of a unity or essence, which has sundered itself in them. But it is negativity, the act of self-overcoming, the dialectical force in the universe.

If the finite, however, the particular (the material world), is negative according to Hegel because it does not have true reality, that is, being in itself, but has as its "essence" and foundation that which is "other" than itself, i.e. the infinite the immaterial, thought, which is positive, then in order to be what it is, it must become the other: it must negate itself. The dialectic, then, is negation of the negation. The finite "is not" when it is finite, it is when it "is not".

"it is the very nature of the finite to transcend itself, to negate its negation and to become infinite. Thus the infinite does not stand as something finished and complete, above or superior to the finite, as if the finite had an enduring being apart from or subordinate to the infinite... But the finite itself, in being raised into the infinite, is in no sense acted on by an alien force; on the contrary, it is its nature to be related to itself as limitation... And to transcend the same, or rather, to have negated the limitation and to be beyond it.. The infinite is its affirmative determination, that which it truly is in itself thus the finite has vanished in the infinite and what is, is only the infinite."⁷

⁶ Quotation of Hegel, Encyclopedia vol. V, p.105, taken from Kojève, Introduction to Hegel, Basic Books, New York, 1969, pp. 198-9.

⁷ Hegel, The Logic, p.138.

Bibliography

- Adorno, Wiesengrund, Theodor. Negative Dialectics, The Seabury Press, New York, 1973.
- Adorno, Wiesengrund, Theodor. Aesthetic Theory, B.Blackwell, Oxford, England, 1982.
- Adorno, Wiesengrund, Theodor. Prisms, MIT Press, Cambridge, Mass., 1981.
- Adorno, Wiesengrund, Theodor. The Positivist Dispute in German Sociology, trans. by G.Adey and D.Frisby, Heinemann, London, 1969.
- Adorno, Wiesengrund, Theodor. "Culture Industry Reconsidered", in New German Critique, Fall 1975.
- Adorno, Wiesengrund, Theodor. "Adorno's Letters to Benjamin, 18 March 1936", New Left Review, 81, 1973.
- Adorno, Wiesengrund, Theodor. The Jargon of Authenticity, Northwestern University Press, Evanston, Ill., 1973.
- Adorno, Wiesengrund, Theodor. "Adorno on Satre and Brecht", New Left Review, 87-88, 1974.
- Althusser, Louis and Etienne. Balibar, Reading Capital, NLB, London, 1970.
- Althusser, Louis. For Marx, Verso, London, 1969.
- Althusser, Louis. Politics and History, NLB, London, 1972.
- Althusser, Louis. Lenin and Philosophy and Other Essays, NLB, London, 1971.
- Benjamin, Walter. Illuminations, Schocken Books, N.Y., 1969.
- Bennett, Tony. Formalism and Marxism, Methuen and Co, Ltd., London, 1979.

Buck-Morss, Susan. The Origin of Negative Dialectics, The Free Press, N.Y., 1977.

Callinicos, Alex. Althusser's Marxism, Pluto Press, London, 1972.

Carver, Terrell. Karl Marx Texts on Method, Basil Blackwell, Great Britain, 1975.

Colletti, Lucio. Marxism and Hegel, NLB, London, 1973.

Colletti, Lucio. From Rousseau to Lenin, Monthly Review Press, N.Y., London, 1972.

Colletti, Lucio. "Marxism and the Dialectic", New Left Review, 93, 1975.

Della Volpe, Galvano. Critica Del Gusto, Feltrinelli, Milano, 1960.

Della Volpe, Galvano. Logica Come Scienza Storica, Editori Riuniti, Roma, 1969.

Della Volpe, Galvano. Rousseau E Marx, Editori Riuniti, Roma, 1974

De Man, Paul. Allegories of Reading, Yale U. Press, New Havem, 1979.

Demets, Peter. Marx, Engels and the Poets, The University of Chicago Press, Chicago and London, 1959.

Eagleton, Terry. Criticism and Ideology, The Thetford Press Ltd., London, 1978.

Eagleton, Terry. Literary Theory, University of Minnesota Press, Minneapolis, 1983.

Eagleton, Terry. Marxism and Literary Criticism, University of California Press, Berkeley and Los Angeles, 1976.

Eagleton, Terry. Against the Grain, Verso, London, 1986.

- Engels, Friedrich. Anti-Durhing, Progress Publishers, Moscow, 1947.
- Goldman, Lucien. The Human Sciences and Philosophy, J.Cape, London, 1969.
- Goldman, Lucien. The Hidden God, Routledge and Kegan Paul, London, 1964.
- Goldman, Lucien. "Genetic Structuralism" in The Sociology of Literature and Drama, ed. by Elizabeth and Tom Burns, Penguin, Harmondsworth, Middx, 1973.
- Gramsci, Antonio. Selections from the Prison Notebooks of Antonio Gramsci, ed. and trans. by Hoare and Nowell Smith, Lawrence and Wishart, London, 1971.
- Gramsci, Antonio. Letteratura E Vita Nazionale, Einaudi Editore, Milano, 1966.
- Gruppi, Luciano. Storicita E Marxismo, Editori Riuniti, Roma, 1976.
- Hegel, Georg, Wilhem, Friedrich. The Science of Logic, Allen and Unwin, Ltd., London, 1961.
- Hegel, Georg, Wilhem, Friedrich. "The Logic", trans from the Encyclopedia of the Philosophical Sciences, by W.Wallace, Oxford University Press, London, 1892.
- Horowitz, David, ed. Marx and Modern Economics, MacGibbon and Kee Ltd., 1968.
- Jameson, Frederick. The Political Unconscious, Cornell U. Press, Ithaca, N.Y., 1981.
- Jameson, Frederick. Marxism and Form, Princeton U. Press, Princeton, N.J., 1971.
- Jay, Martin. Adorno, Theodore, Harvard U. Press, Cambridge, Mass., 1984

- Jefferson, Anne and Robey, David, eds. Modern Literary Theory , Barnes and Nobles, Totowan, N.J., 1982.
- Kant, Immanuel. Critique of Pure Reason, trans. by N.K.Smith, London, 1953.
- Kolakowski, Leszek. Main Currents of Marxism, Oxford U. Press, Oxford, London, England, 1978.
- Kuhn, Thomas. The Structure of Scientific Revolutions, University of Chicago Press, Chicago, 1970.
- Lukács, Georg. History and Class Consciousness, MIT Press, 1971.
- Lukács, Georg. The Historical Novel, Beacon Press, Boston, 1963.
- Lukács, Georg. Writer and Critic and Other Essays, The Merlin Press Ltd., London, 1970.
- Lukács, Georg. Studies in European Realism, The Merlin Press Ltd., London, 1972.
- Lukács, Georg. The Meaning of Contemporary Realism, London, 1963.
- Macherey, Pierre. A Theory of Literary Production, Routledge and Kegan Paul Ltd., London, 1978.
- Marx, Karl. "General Introduction" to the Grundrisse in Grundrisse, Penguin, Harmondsworth, 1973.
- Marx, Karl. Capital vol.I, edt. by F.Engels, International Publishers, N.Y., 1975.
- Marx, Karl. Capital vol.I, Penguin, Harmondsworth, Penguin, 1976.
- Marx, Karl. Theories of Surplus Values part 3, Lawrence and Wishart, London, 1970.
- Marx, Karl. Capital vol.III, Progress Publishers, Moscow, 1966.

- Mepham, John and Ruben, David, Hill, eds. Issues in Marxist Philosophy vol I and III, Humanities Press, Atlantic Highlands, N.J., 1979.
- Mulhern, "Marxism in Literary Criticism", New Left Review, 108, 1978.
- Musolino, Rocco. Marxismo Ed Estetica in Italia, Editori Riuniti, Roma, 1971.
- New Left Review, eds. Adorno, Theodor, Aesthetic and Politics: Debates Between Block, Lukács, Brecht, Benjamin, Adorno", NLB, 1977.
- Popper, Karl. Conjectures and Refutations, Harper and Row, N.Y. and Evanston, 1963.
- Popper, Karl. The Open Society and Its Enemies, v.II, Princeton University Press, Princeton, N.J., 1962.
- Radnitzky, Gerard and Anderson, Gunnar. Presupposti E Limiti Della Scienza, Edizioni Borla, Roma, 1980.
- Salinari, Carlo. Scritti Sull'Arte di K.Marx e F.Engels, Laterza e Figli Spa, Roma-Bari, 1978.
- Sartre, Jean Paul. Critique of Dialectical Reason, NLB, London, 1976.
- Sartre, Jean Paul. Search for Method, Vintage Books, N.Y., 1963.
- Schmid, Alfred, History and Structure, MIT, Cambridge, Mass., 1981.
- Scholes, Robert. Textual Power, Yale U. Press, New Haven and London, 1968.
- Solomon, Maynard. Marxism and Art, Vintage Books, N.Y. 1974.