

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 9000058

**Marx's "capital" and ethical theory: A critique of fetishism in
Bentham and Kant**

Pittman, John Peter, Ph.D.

City University of New York, 1989

Copyright ©1989 by Pittman, John Peter. All rights reserved.

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

A

MARX'S CAPITAL AND ETHICAL THEORY:
A CRITIQUE OF FETISHISM IN BENTHAM AND KANT

by

JOHN PETER PITTMAN

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

1989

c 1989

JOHN PETER PITTMAN

All Rights Reserved

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

January 30, 1989
Date

Mary Werholsky
Chair of Examining Committee

January 30, 1989
Date

Charles Landman
Executive Officer

Gertrude Ezorsky

Bertell Ollman

Marx Wartofsky
Supervisory Committee

The City University of New York

Table of Contents

Introduction.....	1
One: Marx.....	30
Two: Bentham.....	108
Three: Kant.....	159
Conclusion.....	233
Bibliography.....	254

INTRODUCTION

1

I will be trying to show the importance of Marx's late political-economic writings as an essential preliminary to the discussion of "Marxist ethics". Although much literature has been produced, especially in the last ten years, on the topic of Marxism and ethics, there has yet been no large-scale attempt to relate Marx's systematic critique of political economy to the discussion. I think the failure to link the problem of "Marxist ethics" to the problematic Marx formulated in Capital and related writings seriously compromises the viability of the entire project of locating a "Marxist ethic" by framing the problem in a way that undervalues Marx's most considered and systematic theoretical achievement.

I think there are several reasons for this lacuna. Certainly the notorious difficulty and the sheer bulk of the political-economic writings are a cause for hesitation, especially for those only marginally interested in the technical political-economic issues that constitute the focus of most of those texts. Also, the widespread belief that Marx's political-economic views, rooted in the methods and assumptions of eighteenth-century classical political economy, have been superseded by the subsequent history of economic theory, and are now no more than archaic holdovers

from the prehistory of science, has undoubtedly swayed many looking for Marx's lasting contribution to ethical theory.

A more fundamental factor, however, is the very conception of ethical theory dominant in contemporary/postwar anglo-american philosophical practice. That conception is itself the result of the compartmentalization and segregation of the disparate fields of philosophical inquiry. Throughout this century, at least, ethical theory has been preoccupied with the formal structure of morality as such, uncomfortable with the substantive questions which had formerly been the meat of the discipline, and almost totally disengaged from the social and political issues from which ethical inquiry had its socratic birth. This condition, both result and cause of the triumph of the "fact-value distinction" specifically and the positivist-minded program for philosophy generally, has quite recently come under attack. But it prevails nonetheless. One indication of its tenacity can be found in a recent series of books, published by Oxford, on Marxist scholarship. Following entries on Marxism and Literature, Marxism and Politics, and Marxism and Anthropology, each dealing integrally with the respective disciplines, there appeared Marxism and Philosophy and Marxism and Morality. Though both were written by philosophers, they dealt with mutually exclusive subject matters: neither raises any of the substantive issues dealt with by the other.

This domination of philosophical practice by a

neo-Kantian problematic, especially evident in the relation of ethical theory to other philosophical disciplines, generates another kind of obstacle to pursuing Marxist ethical theory into the political-economic writing. Since the publication of the translations of the early works of Marx in the 1950s, debates about the relative significance of the successive stages of Marx's life-work have focused on the apparent incompatibility of the early work, such as the Paris Mss., with Marx's mature political writings. The issue is sometimes formulated as a struggle between the "humanists", attempting to recover the "genuine" Marx from underneath the weight of Stalinist falsification, and the "dogmatists", fighting to preserve the ideal, inherited from Engels and the Second International, of Marx the scientist fighting against bourgeois-ethical obscurantism. Such a formulation surely would dispose those interested in the "ethical side" of Marxism toward ignoring the later writing as irrelevant.

I will argue against some of the approaches which have traditionally been taken in the attempt to provide foundations for ethical theory. This is essential to addressing the "Marxism and ethics" debate, especially since much of the discussion has revolved around the attempt to fit Marx into one or more of the traditional pigeonholes of ethical theory. The traditional dichotomy of teleological and deontological ethical theories is, I think, susceptible to criticisms derived from those which

Marx directed at the political economists he read and analyzed.

Specifically, I will focus on Bentham's utilitarianism as the prototype of a teleological ethical theory, and on Kant's moral theory as a prototype of a deontological theory. I choose these two theoreticians because they are the "founders" of what are probably the most important and long-lived major traditions of strong ethical theory - ethical theory productive of actual principles and procedures allegedly effective for the resolution of common moral problems. I will concentrate specifically on the writings of Jeremy Bentham and Immanuel Kant because both these authors occupy definitive positions as founders or watershed theorists in ethics, are contemporary, and worked at approximately the time of the development of classical political economic theory - the theoretical work Marx critically elaborated. The claims I make will, therefore, strictly speaking, apply only to the Benthamite form of utilitarianism, and to Kant's own work rather than the elaborations of these men's work by succeeding generations of theorists. But I hope to capture what is crucial and characteristic to these approaches to ethical theory in my analysis of the writings of these "founders"; so, hopefully, the conclusions I arrive at - primarily, that a Marxist, or one who accepts substantial portions of Marx's critique of political economy, can be neither a Kantian nor a (Benthamite) utilitarian in ethical theory - will be

germane to the ongoing discussion of Marxism and ethics.

In this introductory chapter I will sketch out the argument I hope to advance and defend in the dissertation. First I will try to summarize briefly what I take to be the relevant methodological and theoretical positions elaborated by Marx through and in his analysis of political economy. Secondly, I will sketch in rough outline how I hope to employ that critical apparatus worked out in the first part to the Kantian and (Benthamite) utilitarian ethical theories.

2

Marx's "Economics" was, almost from the beginning, conceived by him as having two sides - an analysis of the system of political economy and a critical history of theories of political economy. The three volumes of Capital constitute the first side, and the three volumes of the Theories of Surplus Value make up the second side. That neither of these sides is sufficient by itself is a consequence of the intermediate position Marx occupied on the methodological question of grounding the categories of political economy. Although Marx rejected the empiricist confidence of the founders of political economy, which allowed them to appeal to "immediate data" and take as their categories those used by the capitalists themselves, Marx also denied the Hegelian approach to resolving such problems by generating the categories out of a pregiven logic of concepts implicit in consciousness itself. Marx

thus needed both an account of how capitalism develops along with the categories of political economy and a principle showing how and why such an account had not been elaborated before Marx's.

These considerations take us to the very heart of Marx's theoretical position: Marx's reconstruction of the classical theory of value. There were two basic difficulties which the earlier theorists were unable to resolve, thereby compromising the theory of value. The difficulties were of two kinds. There was the problem of the origin of profit, given the assumption that all commodities trade at their values: this was a problem internal to the theory, threatening the coherence of the account on the most basic level. The second problem was a problem of "saving the appearances": how to explain the "seeming" divergences from the law of value on the basis of the law. Marx's solution to these problems was central to his claim to have put political economy on a firm footing. This claim has been challenged most forcefully and most often on the grounds that Marx's reconstruction of the theory of value is inadequate, incoherent, or just irrelevant.

Marx achieves his solution by formulating the problem from the standpoint of the "historical hypothesis": he begins with the principle that capitalism is one determinate mode of production in an historical progression of such modes, rather than a universal and absolute natural

order of things achieved by the conquest of an imposed and enforced ignorance. A consequence of this is that it is the specific social form that the historically general expropriation of surplus product takes in capitalist conditions that becomes the object of analysis. Thus, whereas for the founders of classical political economy, the value-form assumed by commodities is a natural property akin to their physical properties, for Marx the value-form becomes an accomplishment of the socialized activity of human producers organized by the relations of capital. The focus of analysis is thereby shifted from the characteristics of the commodities and their relations with one another to the activities of the producers and their social relations. This is expressed, in terms of political economy, in the redirection of attention from the circulation of commodities and their exchange for one another to the human activities in which these commodities originate - production and the relations of production. Marx also analyzes the circulation of commodities, but only as a moment in the analysis of the capitalist production process.

Marx is able to resolve the first problem with the classical theory of value, the problem of profit. The solution to this problem, contained in the first volume of Capital, begins in the analysis of the character of the commodity itself. Marx uncovers a profound duality rending the phenomena basic to the capitalist mode of production, a

duality generated by the analysis of the commodity into its constituents use-value/ exchange-value. Marx traces this polarity to the dual character of labor as both concrete and abstract labor. The two-sidedness of labor produces a commodity which has both the usefulness consequent to its physical properties and a value proportional to the abstract labor it "embodies". Marx is then able to account for profit by establishing that the value of reproducing a worker's daily labor is less than the value that labor creates daily. The origin of profit is thereby explained within the ambit of the theory of value, because that theory incorporates the analysis of labor as involving abstract labor.

Here again, Marx's analysis can only be sustained by making sense of the idea of abstract labor. While an empiricist construal would only tolerate abstract labor as an instrumental construct of the scientific observer, and a Hegelian idealist would allow for abstract labor only as the "false consciousness" of a moment in the teleological unfolding of the absolute, Marx advanced a realist account of abstract labor as an objectively existing characteristic of labor. The reality of abstract labor is not that of the "natural", but is the product of human activity, firstly productive activity. Labor in the capitalist mode of production is abstract because it is free labor - freed not only from all ties to the land but also freed from any necessary employment. It is labor that is adaptable to the

diverse uses to which capital can put it, labor adaptable to the various productive processes in which it comes to be employed by capital. That diversity of processes is the product of labor itself. Abstract labor is labor that is represented in money-form as exchange-value; it is the accomplishment of human laborers themselves.

Abstract labor is not a kind of labor, it is a constitutive feature of all labor that is subordinated to capital. Labor that is subordinated to capital finds its reason for being not in the character of the activity it carries out, or the usefulness of the commodity it produces, but in its ability to nourish and enrich capital - specifically, "it's" capital, rather, the capital whose labor it is. This capital is always one capital competing with many others, and its continued existence depends on its standing relative to every other capital. But capital is only the organizing form of human productive activity; thus, the condition for the existence of any labor process within the capitalist mode of production is the nexus of its (capitalist) relations with other labor processes. These relations between labor processes are only possible because these labors are all also instances of abstract labor, appearing as exchange-values, in addition to being determinate concrete labors as well.

Thus it is the notion of abstract labor which is the social reality expressed in a sequence of what Marx called value-forms - the commodity, money, and capital itself. It

is the elaboration of the concept of abstract labor that allowed Marx to reformulate the classical political economists' theories of value and profit, by expanding and clarifying what Ricardo introduced - barely - as the "overplus" of value. I will discuss this elaboration in more detail in chapter one.

The second problem unresolved in the classical theory of value was the problem of the seeming empirical disconfirmation of the law of value. According to this law, commodities exchange at their prices of production, and since prices of production are calculated based on the average profit in the given branch of industry, it is evident that in specific cases, for capitals returning greater than the average profit, the prices of production will diverge from the values of the commodities produced. This problem, known as the transformation problem among political economists, is addressed in the third volume of Capital. Marx argues there that the law of value can only assert itself in the capitalist mode of production as a long-range regularity, through the short-term fluctuations that are ineluctable consequences of capitalist competition. Marx claims that the law of value is, strictly speaking, only applicable for the totality of exchanges in the economy overall, but not for a given single firm nor even for a single branch of industry. In the capitalist mode of production, the law of value can only manifest itself through the competition of many capitals; but

competition among capitals is only possible insofar as local particularities in market conditions are expressed in the relative prices of the commodities of different capitals. Further, the reproduction of the social capital depends on the adequate distribution of capital throughout the branches of production; such distribution can only be achieved and maintained when capital transfer is spurred by the variation of rates of profit in different branches of production.

The transformation problem is thus a problem with no solution - for the isolated firm or branch of production. On the scale of the total reproduction of the social capital, however, a solution is possible: the aggregate of the prices of production equals the aggregate of the values. But in the capitalist mode of production, the economic "agents" - that is, the agents of capital, the capitalists - are all concerned only with local calculations, and these local calculations are carried out in terms of prices of production, and average rates of profit, and not in terms of values. It is only from the standpoint of social capital that the value analysis becomes necessary: but social capital as such finds no representation in the social consciousness of the capitalist mode of production. The center cannot hold for capitalism because "the center" - the social center of gravity around which all particular events and processes are oriented - cannot be represented in the terms with

which the "agents" represent what they take to be "their" own activity.

The scare quotes in the previous sentence point to a way that Marx's solution of the value problem also provides him with the key to seeing the source of his predecessors' misunderstandings. The founders of political economy began with the categories employed by the capitalists in their own activity as representatives of capital, and were unable to go beyond that set of categories. They took it as essential to represent the activity of economic agents as the basis of economic life, but they took as the paradigm of such activity the activity of the capitalists themselves. Furthermore, they described this activity in terms of the categories accepted by the capitalists themselves. Most characteristic of that activity - from the capitalists' point of view - is the exchange of commodities in order to realize a profit. The workers figure in this view only as the sellers and bearers of a commodity crucial to the production process - labor power. From this - the capitalists' - standpoint, the actual production process becomes merely the process of consumption of a set of commodities that have been withdrawn from the market - a secondary, insignificant moment of the process of creating profit. It is the commerce in commodities that is seen by capitalists as the life process of capitalism.

Thus, although labor enters into the calculations of the capitalist in the form of wage expenses, it does so in

a way that obscures the role of labor as the source of surplus value or profit. Because the capitalist's calculations are in terms of prices of production and average rates of profit within an industry or sphere of production, the costs he incurs, whether for machinery, wages or raw materials, appear as undifferentiated "factors" of production. This social form of calculation disguises the qualitatively different roles that each of the "factors" plays in the production process.

Marx wants to make clear how the classical political economists' insistence on the logical primacy and incorrigibility of the participants' categories and consciousness of their own activity, in the context of "civil society", serves to reproduce the character of that activity as presupposing a mediation by an objectivity that is (an impersonal) wholly other. It is the market mechanism which is assigned ultimate ground in the form of cost-calculation that capital imposes on the disposers of society's productive resources. The market, as a confrontation between buyers and sellers, that is, representatives of commodities (or of money), comes to represent the relations between sectors and branches of a socialized labor process as a quantitative ratio of prices, itself the correlation of seemingly simple properties of things.

3

Ethical theory since the end of the eighteenth century

has also begun with the individual as participant in civil society. Characteristic of that approach are the ethical theories of Kantian deontology and of Benthamite utilitarianism. Both begin with the free, independent individual in the attempt to rationally construct a formula or principle by which to justify their acts.

I will argue that there is a homology between the way these two ethical theories attempt to solve the problem of providing a rational grounding for the conduct of "free agents" - participants in civil society - and the characteristic mode of concealment that is inscribed in classical political economy's methodology of building on the participant's categories taken to be incorrigible. Further, I claim this concealment is an inescapable feature of theories which employ methodologies of the type advanced by these views.

This "concealment" is not a conscious one, nor is it a form of the "cunning of reason", insofar as that conception involves that of a transhistorical subject whose action is teleological and constitutes history as a self-development necessary to its own realization. Rather, the "concealment" is a feature of that form of consciousness which commodity production makes possible and requires, and which the sinuous traditions of theorizing under the impact of the disintegration of the Classical-feudal world-system made necessary. This "concealment" is revealed as such not through the achievement of a fresh and untainted view of an

unperturbed natural condition, but because the maturity of commodity production in the second half of the nineteenth century, with its attendant social crises and contradictions, made the very idea of a natural condition, free of a social dynamic, suspect.

One way of misconstruing the point I want to make would involve the view that the ethical theories of Bentham and Kant were mere ideologies because they took the problem to be solved as one of rationally adjusting the activity of individuals to a condition of conflict viewed as ineliminable and natural. They failed to identify the real sources of the conflicts that they were attempting to mollify, and treated the forms of activity of the individuals around them as unproblematic and given. Perhaps this is to be expected of moralists, but philosophical theorists of morality should give us more.

But surely it is unrealistic to expect that Kant would have identified the basic contradictions of the bourgeois mode of production, a mode of production that was in its youth even in England, where it was most mature, and hadn't yet made very considerable inroads in the Prussia in which Kant lived. Nor would it be viable to maintain that Kant's views were merely "reflections" of an already given structure of appearances that misled them, as well as the classical political economists, into misidentifying the crucial features of their social situations.

Indeed, an attempt to treat those philosophical

theories as "mere ideologies" would be question-begging. For whether that ideological character is the result of their perpetuating a "structure of concealment" that preexisted their efforts, or is simply due to the coincidence of the emergence of class interests with the popularity of their views, such an account fails to take these views seriously as philosophical theories, it fails to notice their achievements. And surely any Marxism that limits its treatment of other theories to such an "ideologizing" account invites similar treatment of its own achievement.

Still, I want to argue that if Marx's account of the capitalist mode of production is accepted, some basic features of the dominant traditions of ethical theory will be illuminated. What I want to show is that there is a "fit" between what Marx called commodity fetishism, and took to be a fundamental structure of appearances of the capitalist mode of production, and the problematic that ethical theorists since the late eighteenth century have addressed. This claim falls short of providing what would be an explanatory account of how and why the theorists mentioned worked out the views that they held. My account also is not intended to suggest that the ethical theories I am discussing were propagated or popularized or became widely accepted only because they provided a rationalization or "cover" for social policies or views that advanced or represented the class interests of one of

the contenders for hegemony within civil society. The account of the origin and development of, eg. Kantian ethical theory must crucially begin with an "internalist" account of the tradition that Kant grappled with; and the social viability of a philosophical theory can only be accounted for in terms of a far richer mix of social, cultural and theoretical considerations than I intend to advance here. For I am not concerned here with the historical analysis of Kantian theory as such, but with the critique of certain overall themes in the ethical theory of bourgeois society. What I will be concerned with are the strategic and structural features that these theories have in common and how those features are susceptible to a critical-analytic treatment similar to the one found in Marx's Capital. The significant result of this analysis will be to show that certain forms of treatment of moral issues are incompatible with a theoretical commitment to Marxist analysis.

I take Kantian and utilitarian ethics to represent the two dominant poles of thought in modern, and, indeed, contemporary positive ethical theory. They are often represented as the prime contenders for the best version of a fully developed theory and justificatory elaboration of morality. Kantianism is the prime example of a deontological theory - one in which duties require acts satisfying certain criteria - whereas utilitarianism is an example of a teleological view - for which actions are

justified by appeal to their maximizing of some initially identified attribute. Both theories also situate themselves within broader philosophical frameworks in the works of their prime exponents, and these more encompassing philosophical worldviews are themselves culminations of traditions of theory that extend to the beginnings of the modern era. Kant's philosophy is the first systematic flowering of the German idealist philosophical enlightenment, while utilitarianism can for our purposes be embedded in the wider domain of British empiricist philosophical theory. That these philosophical accounts of morality are elements of sophisticated global theories, and that they have benefitted from nearly two centuries of development, suggest that they are the most considered accounts of morality current.

The standard accounts of these views generally emphasize their points of difference. The most important difference is between the Kantian emphasis on dutifulness and the command of conscience, and the utilitarian concern with the enjoyment of pleasure and the attainment of happiness. This substantive difference is borne out by the contrasting structures mentioned earlier. Because utilitarianism begins with an identification of happiness as its end, all other considerations become merely technical: empirical questions that can be given over to experts, or legislators. Kantianism, which values above all the inward reception of the commandments of reason, works

to bracket all empirical questions addressed to inclination and desire: having no need to anticipate consequences, it can dwell on the form of the command, without soiling itself with means-end calculations.

Other differences follow from these. For Kant, it is the will that does everything that's important; so there is no room for feeling in Kant's account of what is involved in moral goodness. Utilitarianism must of necessity spend much of its theoretical energy in the attempt to provide a role for the feelings in the achievement of the greatest happiness. Thus, whereas for utilitarianism it will be a factual matter that indeed the passions are ordered in such a way as to allow for the likelihood or at least possibility that the greatest good can be achieved, Kant, ignoring such considerations, can forgo the commitment they seem to presuppose to wantonly cheerful empirical assumptions that look suspiciously like the providential invisible hand of Adam Smith. But what the Kantian saves himself by not having to sweat the empirical details he gives away in attempting to show how a will bereft of all content can have formal properties that generate the specific duties prescribed by a Pietist upbringing in the middle of the eighteenth century.

The differences between the Kantian and the utilitarian have been widely noted; their formal similarities have escaped attention and give me my focus. Both theories attempt to derive a morality of rules from a

single abstract principle. In the case of Kant, that principle is the categorical imperative; for utilitarians, the greatest happiness principle. Though significantly different, these are both universal prescriptions - one is a formula, the other is a command - that claim to have the warrant of reason itself. Each of these treats the individual as the independent, free and rational legal person of contract law, and for both it is such individuals that are the agents addressed by the theory. It is such agents whose interests both theories set themselves to reproduce - Kantianism by fixing formal constraints on the kind of interests or intentions that ought to be acted on at all; utilitarianism by specifying interest in terms so general (pleasure & pain) that all conflict of interest becomes the abstract one of the distribution of previously packaged satisfactions.

I will try to show that each of these ethical theories reproduce features of a perspective that is distinctive of commerce, that is, of generalized commodity production. They do so both in what they agree on, and in the divergent emphases peculiar to each. Insofar as they reproduce this perspective characteristic of capital, they also succumb to its blindnesses. Again, I am not claiming that this is true because these theories are theories of capitalist origin or inspiration, nor that they are therefore merely apologia for the system of capital. But I do think that this "fit" is characteristic of these theories, and that it cannot

easily be removed, if at all, from theories of these kinds.

The blindnesses of commerce, and of capital also, include an inability to grasp the conditions of its own existence in theory, to reproduce those conditions in practice. This is in part a matter of capital's existence as many capitals, each caught in relations both of antagonism to and dependence on other capitals. Thus, though each capital functions so as to accumulate in a way that is in principle unlimited, the accumulation process undercuts the market in a way that threatens the accumulation process itself. Furthermore, the reproduction of each capital depends upon the reproduction of the social conditions of that capital; since those social conditions fall outside the ambit of any capital's calculations, the system of capital(s) is reproduced only incidentally, in a haphazard, uncertain and chaotic way, and not as a result of capital's own activity. Finally, the existence of labor as the condition of capital is also reproduced only incidentally, unintentionally, and in spite of capital's activity, which constantly threatens the reproduction of labor.

Of course there is an awareness on the part of capital of the conditions of its existence - this awareness constituted the source of its positive demands in the period of its fight for political legitimacy. The necessity for free trade and free markets, as well as for free labor, that constituted much of the political program of the early

representatives of capital, was primarily an abstract acknowledgement by capital of its requirements. But what that acknowledgment elides is that free labor is the activity of human beings who have lives and purposes of their own, and whose continued existence, not to say flourishing, requires the continual reproduction of the material elements of that existence; that free trade involves the determination of local conditions of life by a global system of capital that is not itself subordinate to local demands; and that free markets are those in which the process of allocating social resources is ultimately independent of the needs of social reproduction.

Both Kantianism and utilitarianism, I will argue, reproduce these features in different ways. Both of these stem from the general requirement, which they share, for grounding moral choices on abstract and universalizing principles. Kant insisted that a right act is one that stems from a good will, and that a good will is one that employs the categorical imperative in choosing the maxims it acts by. The categorical imperative is the abstract requirement that activity not be inconsistent with the possibility of social reproduction. But because the categorical imperative is applied to maxims singly, rather than as a system, it is not able to reveal their interconnections and mutual incompatibilities, but only their separate coherences taken singly. Further, because the categorical imperative is not a productive, but only a

critical instrument, it can do no more than ratify or reject maxims that, because traditional, have acquired a force already in the moral deliberations of agents. This is an indication of the fact that the copernican revolution in philosophy was and was widely seen as an attempt to accomodate the positions of an established tradition of thought to new social realities. But also, that the representation of social reproduction in the Kantian framework both isolates that representation from the substantive empirical features which would make such a representation powerful, and - because of its reference to single maxims - constrains such representations to a form that disallows the kind of complexity that social reproduction necessarily has under conditions of the universality of commodity production and abstract labor.

Kant urges us to consider our acts not as to the effects they might produce, but as to the formal properties of the maxims they follow from. He denies to our deliberations any legitimate moral concern for personal, individual advantage or interest, and forces us to attend solely to the intrinsic value of our intention. It is not what is actually accomplished, but what is willed and how it is willed, that determines moral worth.

Such a view makes most sense in a situation in which an agent is powerless to bring about the results she wills, or one in which the activities of agents become themselves the playthings of "natural" forces that the human actors

cannot themselves control. It is an outlook that seems almost designed to suit conditions in which not only the means, the actual concrete activities and processes productive of a result, but also the result itself insofar as it is considered relative to our actual empirical needs, desires, and capacities, have been abstracted from the basic criteria and ends that determine human activity and practice. By withdrawing moral consideration from the sphere of action to that of intention, Kantianism seems to endorse a dichotomy of intention or purpose and activity or the material production of effects, in a way that allows for the opposition of free moral human activity to existing human practices conceived as necessarily stemming from objective and "natural" conditions.

Indeed, Kant's systematic philosophical view necessitates such a detachment of the causal efficacy of action from its intentional origin, of nature from morality. It will be recalled that the formulation of the problem of freedom for Kant involves the incompatibility of an empirically-given universe of causal necessitation and the autonomy of the purposes that a free being wills as her own. So, Kant had to make room for faith: our freedom cannot be a truth of this empirical world - it is a question on which we can have no definite satisfaction, but only hope. But it is precisely this kind of restriction of knowledge, coupled with a view of human (productive) activity as circumscribed by relations that result from the

"natural" properties of the objects of human need and activity generally, that, I hope to show, characterizes the "social perspective" of commodity production itself according to Marx.

The presentiment that a transcendent form of will must supervene upon the naturally given relations of human actions, if free activity is to be possible, appears in Kant's doctrine in the form of the categorical imperative. That the subordination of the individual will to an order of reason that transcends the individual should be commanded is an indication that the individual's relation to the social totality is initially one of indifference if not antagonism; that the commandment is reason's own and so, in a sense, the individual's as well, suggests that insofar as the individual will is constituted as a purely self-interested yet rational one, its interaction with other similarly constituted wills must be mediated by a purely abstract and indifferent generality in which they somehow both share. This generality of reason, however, because it must be purely external to their confrontation to attract their resort to it, must by its very externality inform their situation and render its particularities substantively insignificant. That is, I will argue, the perspective of the exchange transaction, of the market.

That version of the categorical imperative which dictates that we treat persons always as ends and not as means only seems to go beyond the earlier formulation: it

appears to get beyond the perspective of exchange, of commodity owners confronting one another in the market. Commodity owners are not interested in other commodity owners, whether as means or as ends, but in the commodities that those owners represent. This is why Marx speaks in Capital as though it were the commodities confronting one another, rather than the owners of commodities. The act of exchange - in the context of simple commodity circulation at any rate - is an act in which each party treats the other only as a means, but through which each attains their own end and makes possible the attainment of the end of the other, as well. It seems, then, that exchange, considered formally, at least, can accomodate even the "principle of personality."

Considerations such as these point to the way in which the Kantian ethical theory is embedded in a set of assumptions and a problematic that, I will argue, reproduces features of experience that the system of capitalist commodity production takes as obvious. In doing so it shows itself to be incompatible with the critique of capital and the perspective that derives from that critique.

Similar considerations arise for the case of Bentham's version of utilitarianism. The idea of a hedonic calculus, by means of which utilitarian calculations can be performed to determine the maximal state of wellbeing, has long been the focus of philosophic discontent. Even leading writers

of the "school", such as John Stuart Mill, have adduced reasons for questioning the very possibility of such a calculus. Yet it is crucial to the appeal and distinctiveness of utilitarianism that such a calculus be possible. Without it utilitarianism would reduce to the mere exaltation of happiness without any distinctive approach to its attainment. Once the idea that pleasures, as constituting the sole ingredients of happiness, can be measured and compared, is added to the claim that happiness as the aggregation of pleasures should be the end of all endeavors, the characteristically utilitarian view takes shape.

In this form the doctrine has been shown to suffer from a problem similar to one that infects Kantian ethics. The greatest happiness principle seems to be too general to allow us to choose between acts if the two options seem to generate the same level of utility. That this is not likely to happen, given the complexity of the consequences of acts, is a consideration that seems to be overridden by the suggestion that utilitarian calculations can only be expected to canvass a small field of the grossest consequences, and by the argument, advanced by John Stuart Mill, that normal persons will somehow all attain a similar taste in pleasures, making for a uniformity that seemingly eases the problem of calculation. (Though I don't discuss John Stuart Mill, I think that my analysis here is not undermined substantially by his sophistications of

utilitarian theory.)

This difficulty arises from what I take to be the hidden metaphor informing the entire utilitarian project, particularly in its Benthamite incarnation. It seems to me that the ideas of happiness, pleasure and utility that utilitarian utilizes rest in part on an image of the satisfaction of appetite through consumption. Pleasure is thus an end-state achieved by means of an activity taken in its character as a subjective experience. Pushpin is as good as poetry only when they are both seen in their character as satisfactions consequent upon the alleviation of a felt deficiency or pain. As such they could even be measured against one another, not insofar as they are distinct pleasures, the outcomes of characteristically specific activities, but only because they are the repositories of an abstract property of need-satisfaction. This abstract property is quantifiable, measurable and subjectively efficacious. But it is not itself any concrete, physically specifiable activity or property of activities.

Not only does the Benthamite utilitarian paradigm replicate the mode of analysis characteristic of the value-problem in political economy, its characteristic terms of analysis reproduce the fetishism of commodities that Marx showed to underline the classical problematic of value and its intractability. Social relations viewed through Benthamite lenses become relations of utility: a

function of the distribution of pleasures taken as thing-like products of activities not in themselves subject to the hedonic calculus. This view also seems to endorse an unnecessarily aggregative conception of the society of utility: what is maximized are the discrete pleasures of distinct individuals. This is a problem that Bentham, at least, never confronted. Whether it can be confronted successfully, within a utilitarian framework, is a more general problem I have not tried to pose.

I conclude, however, that Marx's critical conception of the socially specific phenomenal forms of value - and the obscurity of their expression consequent to the centrality of commodity exchange relations in the reproduction of capitalist production - presents a prima facie case for rejecting any easy identification of the norms of Marxist theory and practice with either Kantian or Benthamite ethical theory.

I begin with a chapter on Marx, and then present critical readings of Bentham and Kant in the second and third chapters. Finally, I sum up the argument.

ONE: MARX

Marx wrote no extended discussions of morality; he was consumed by political economy. His economic work was largely a response to and criticism of the established theorists of political economy. Capital is as much a discussion of political economists as it is a positive "economic" doctrine. It is there that we can see how Marx worked out a critical method of analysis and exposition in an attempt to revolutionize social theory and reality.

In this chapter I try to isolate key elements of that critical method; in subsequent chapters I will use those elements to criticize two forms of moral theory.

I begin the chapter with a section on what I call Marx's "historical hypothesis." There follow sections on Adam Smith and David Ricardo, the economic theorists Marx regarded most highly. A section on the concept of social form leads to the major sections of the chapter, on abstract labor and fetishism. Then a short section on money, and a conclusion.

1

Marx's writings on political economy are all worked out in the form of critiques. This means, obviously and first of all, that Marx takes as his point of departure the writings of other theorists, and attempts to expose the flaws and weaknesses in their approach and the

contradictions in their results. Rather than claiming to begin afresh, looking with new eyes at old matter, Marx begins with the work of the established writers in the field. Marx focused on Smith, and especially on Ricardo, because he was convinced that they had had the last word up till then concerning the basic principles of scientific political economy. In 1851, after reviewing the most recent literature on the subject in the British Museum Library, Marx wrote Engels:

Au fond, since A. Smith and D. Ricardo this science has made no progress, although much has been done in specific investigations, including some very sophisticated ones. (1)

Thus, while Marx discussed dozens of economic writers extensively, returning again and again to difficulties and surprises in their views, he devotes by far the most attention to Adam Smith and David Ricardo.

Marx subjects the doctrines of these founders of "classical" political economy to scrutiny from the perspective of what might be called his "historical hypothesis". This hypothesis, summarized by Marx in the famous 1859 Preface to the Contribution to the Critique of Political Economy as "the guiding principle of my [political-economic] studies," is the schema of historical development which has come to be known as "historical materialism":

In the social production of their existence, men inevitably enter into definite relations, which are independent of their will, namely relations of production appropriate to a given stage in the development of their material forces of production. The

totality of these relations of production constitutes the economic structure of society, the real foundation, on which arises a legal and political superstructure and to which correspond definite forms of social consciousness....At a certain stage of development, the material productive forces of society come into conflict with the existing relations of production or - this merely expresses the same thing in legal terms - with the property relations within the framework of which they have operated hitherto. From forms of development of the productive forces these relations turn into their fetters. Then begins the era of social revolution. (2)

It is this hypothesis, with its metaphorical "base" and "superstructure", which, misconstrued in a mechanistic way, earned for Marxism the tag "economic determinism": because of this the "hypothesis", and especially its summary in the 1859 Preface, has been the center of a controversy among academic Marxists. But the central import of this doctrine for the critique of political economy is, I think, straightforward: since capitalism is an historically specific mode of production and is not the privileged expression of any natural order, it is constituted by contradictory relations of production the development of which determines its life-course. Any analysis of the capitalist mode of production which aims at being scientific must therefore uncover these contradictory relations and attempt to model the development of the capitalist mode of production in terms of the logic of these contradictions.

While I have called this an "historical hypothesis" it is important to note that it is historical only in one and not in another of the senses of that term. It is historical

in that it advances a principle for the study of the development of social formations in general, and of bourgeois society particularly. But Marx did not see it as an empirically grounded overview of "what happened in history," not even a skeletal one. It is much more a heuristic, not at all a narrative. Indeed, in a letter written in 1877 (but never sent) to the editors of a Russian journal, Marx complained about an article they had printed in which the author had insisted on

transforming my historical sketch of the genesis of capitalism in Western Europe into an historico-philosophical theory of the general path of development prescribed by fate to all nations, whatever the historical circumstances in which they find themselves....

The issue on that occasion was the possibility of a non-capitalist transition to communism in Russia; still, Marx is generally scornful of any attempt to analyze specific social developments "by using as one's master key a general historico-philosophical theory, the supreme virtue of which consists in being supra-historical." (3) Specific historical developments can in no way be deduced or predicted by means of such an "historical hypothesis." It functions rather to orient research to the significance of contradictions in social productive activity for social developments generally. As such, it is a specification of Marx's polemical claim that "the anatomy of...civil society...has to be sought in political economy." (4)

The employment of this historical hypothesis in the analysis of the classical political economists yields Marx

an evaluation of both the insights and the blind spots in their view of capitalism. Specifically, it gives Marx a key to understanding and transcending the limitations afflicting the central core of the classical theory - the labor theory of value. Having identified the defects in the standard formulation of the concept of value, Marx was able to reconstruct that concept in a way that brought out precisely those contradictory relations constituting it that the standard account of the labor theory of value, that of Adam Smith and David Ricardo, had elided.

This approach also provided Marx with the basis of his own account of the development of the capitalist mode of production. His writings on the system of the political economists were not critiques merely of the political economists, but just as much critiques of the capitalist mode of production itself. Marx's writings were critiques in the second sense in that they exposed the contradictions inherent in the capitalist mode of production, as well as indicating how those contradictions arise and how they express themselves in the struggles between various classes of agents of production. Writing to Engels in 1868 about a parliamentary report on Irish Tenant Right he had found in a secondhand bookshop, Marx exclaimed:

While the economists treat the question whether rent is payment for natural differences in land, or merely interest on the capital invested in the land as a pure conflict of dogmas, we have here an actual life-and-death struggle between farmer and landlord on the question of how far, in addition to payment for different qualities of land, rent should also include interest on the capital invested in the land, not by

the landlord but by the tenant. It is only by replacing conflicting dogmas by the conflicting facts and real antagonisms which form their hidden background that political economy can be transformed into a positive science. (5)

This approach to the critical assimilation of the works of classical political economy confronted Marx with the question: how far was it possible to think the "real antagonisms" of bourgeois society employing the categories of the classical political economists, who failed to grasp precisely those antagonisms which any scientific treatment of the subject had to grasp? As I pointed out above, Marx did not claim to make a fresh start, but saw himself as building on the accomplishments of others, if not "standing on the shoulders of giants." This is surely in keeping with Hegelian norms of rigorous scientific procedure: resisting the temptations of an empiricist identification of the theoretical level with the level of the empirically given requires a selfconscious reconstruction of the conceptual nexus implicated in any theory. That is, Marx had to ground the categories he employed in a way that the classical political economists failed to do, merely taking them for granted. Thus, early on, in an 1858 letter to Lassalle, Marx called his project

a critique of the economic categories, or, if you like, the system of bourgeois economy critically presented. It is a presentation of the system and simultaneously, through this presentation, a criticism of it.... (6)

Marx occupied an intermediate position on the methodological question of grounding the science of political economy. Although rejecting the empiricist

confidence of the founders of political economy (which will be brought out shortly), Marx also denied the Hegelian attempt to resolve the problem by thinking the object of knowledge as completely constituted by a process of reason's coming to be - an attempt that requires us to think the present as reason fully realized for itself. According to Marx,

Hegel fell into the illusion of conceiving the real as the product of thought concentrating itself, probing its own depths, and unfolding itself out of itself, by itself....[whereas actually t]he real subject retains its autonomous existence outside the head just as before.... (7)

Marx could not be satisfied with the Hegelian-phenomenological solution to the problem of grounding such a genetic account, a solution that depends on the possibility of showing the necessity of the starting point by making it the beginning of an ascent up to the totalizing comprehension of Absolute Knowledge. This route was available to Hegel because he took the movement of categories as in principle being self-justifying: since history is constituted by the development of spirit, and logic captures in its purity the structure of that movement, the logic of categories need not be distinguished from the "real antagonisms" of historical development. Such an approach is thus ultimately supra-historical, in the sense noted above, that it imposes an apriori conception without needing to attend to the specificity of a recalcitrant object. It was for just such a treatment of economic categories that Marx criticized Proudhon in a

letter of 1865:

he shares the illusions of speculative philosophy for he does not regard economic categories as the theoretical expression of historical relations of production, corresponding to a particular stage of development in material production, but arbitrarily transforms them into preexisting eternal ideas, and...in this roundabout way he arrives once more at the standpoint of bourgeois economy. (8)

The absence of an historical and epistemological grounding of the classical account of political economy threatened Marx's entire project with a radical arbitrariness, since that classical account was the starting point for the critical elaboration of Marx's own theory. So Marx's "Economics" was, almost from the beginning, conceived by him as having two sides - a critical analysis of the "system of political economy" as the theoretical elaboration of the self-understanding of the agents of capitalist production and an unearthing of the actual contradictory tendencies underlying the phenomenal forms of the capitalist mode of production.

These considerations take us to the very heart of Marx's theoretical position: Marx's reconstruction of the classical theory of value. Marx often gives the impression that the inconsistencies and dilemmas that confronted the classical political economists were, from a logical point of view, consequences of their inadequate elaboration of a theory of value. In what follows I will briefly sketch out the theory of value as Smith and then as Ricardo formulated it. Then I will discuss a number of technical problems in classical political economy and show how Marx traced them

to inconsistencies in the classical theory of value. Finally, I will discuss Marx's formulation of the theory of value, resuming briefly the main results Marx derived from it.

Marx argued, in part, that the classical political economists were encouraged in their "naturalist" interpretation of bourgeois society by certain structural features of early capitalist production. These include the centrality of exchange and the market, the developing role of money, and the *prima facie* social integrity of the commodity - its unquestioned relation to value. Marx put forward the phrase "fetishism of commodities" to characterize the effect of this complex of features; he traced the results of this fetishism in the works of the political economists. By making explicit this "move" of Marx's, I hope to ground and motivate my analysis, later in this work, of the theories of Jeremy Bentham and Immanuel Kant. I will argue specifically that their moral theorizing also bears traces of fetishism, and so must be critically reworked in any Marxist use of them.

2

In Adam Smith's Inquiry into the Nature and Causes of the Wealth of Nations, first published in London in 1776, the first three chapters of Book I are concerned with the division of labor. It is in chapter four, on money, that the concept of value is first mentioned. The concept of value is distinguished there into "value in use" as opposed

to "value in exchange" - the one being "the utility of some particular object," the other "the power of purchasing other goods which the possession of that object conveys." (9) Smith alludes to "the rules which men naturally observe in exchanging [goods, which] determine what may be called the relative or exchangeable value of goods." Before launching into the discussion of exchangeable value Smith warns that it is "a subject in its own nature extremely abstracted" and pauses long enough to

very earnestly entreat both the patience and attention of the reader: his patience in order to examine a detail which may perhaps in some places appear unnecessarily tedious; and his attention in order to understand what may, perhaps, after the fullest explication which I am capable of giving of it, appear still in some degree obscure. (10)

The analysis of exchangeable value proper is given in chapter five, "Of the Real and Nominal Price of Commodities, or their Price in Labour, and their Price in Money." It is worth noting that Adam Smith's discussion of exchangeable value is occasioned by, and occurs under the cover of, a discussion of the prices of commodities, that is, what he refers to as the "rules" of exchange. The discussion of exchange is occasioned in turn by that of the division of labor, which Smith takes as his first, and is one of his most characteristic subjects. The discussion of exchangeable value, given these considerations, and the comments quoted above, seems to have been a most unhappy expedient for Adam Smith.

In the first paragraph of chapter five Smith gives

straightaway his definition of value, in the sense of exchangeable value. Noting that the division of labor makes it impossible for a man to produce all the objects he needs and wants by his own labor, Smith notes that

the far greater part of them he must derive from the labour of other people, and he must be rich or poor according to the quantity of that labour which he can command, or which he can afford to purchase. The value of any commodity, therefore, to the person who possesses it, and who means not to use or consume it himself, but to exchange it for other commodities, is equal to the quantity of labour which it enables him to purchase or command. Labour, therefore, is the real measure of the exchangeable value of all commodities.
(11)

Here Smith gives an account of value that relies, firstly, on an implicit reference to what seems to be the subjective or mental: the value of a commodity is qualified as relative "to the person who possesses it and means not to use or consume it himself." It is as though my meaning to use the commodity I possess extinguishes its value; as though its value is somehow intentional or mental. Or perhaps a possessor who means to exchange a commodity is only interested in its exchangeable value, and not its value in use. Still, there is a residual sense that this exchangeable value does not yet have the fixity of an established, objective fact, that it somehow depends on the interests or the intentions of the possessor of the object.

And yet, secondly, this value is a thing of which "labour is the real measure," and not the possessor's labour, but the labour of other people, at that. Because the value of my commodity is measured in terms of an

other's labor, this model of value points to an exchange-agreement. This suggests a process of bargaining, a negotiation through which the exchangeable value is established, and not even once and for all, but simply for this particular exchange. Considerations of the intensity and ingenuity of labor enter in, but

it is not easy to find any accurate measure either of hardship or ingenuity. In exchanging, indeed, the different productions of different sorts of labour for one another, some allowance is commonly made for both. It is adjusted, however, not by any accurate measure, but by the higgling and bargaining of the market, according to that sort of rough equality which, though not exact, is sufficient for carrying on the business of common life. (12)

Thus the first-paragraph definition of exchangeable value makes labor the "real measure" in a very "real" sense: it is the "real" labor of the purchaser of my commodity which becomes for both of us, the medium in which its "worth" is determined by the "higgling" that we engage in. This "worth" is one we come to agree on, for we have both willingly taken part in the act of bargaining which sets the value. This is the "real" measure also in contradistinction to money, which is the "nominal price". What Smith is implicitly describing in the beginning of the chapter is a barter economy, and money is introduced by Smith later in the discussion. So far, then, labor is the measure of value in the marketplace bargaining sense: a commodity's value is determined by the amount of effort the buyer is prepared to give up for it.

Smith labors in the second paragraph as well to

justify the "reality" of labor as the measure of
 exchangable value:

The real price of everything, what everything costs to the man who wants to acquire it, is the toil and trouble of acquiring it. What everything is really worth to the man who has acquired it, and who wants to dispose of it or exchange it for something else, is the toil and trouble which it can save to himself, and which it can impose upon other people. What is bought with money or with goods is purchased by labour as much as what we acquire by the toil of our own body. That money or those goods indeed save us this toil. They contain the value of a certain quantity of labour which we exchange for what is supposed at the time to contain the value of an equal quantity. (13)

Labor here reveals itself to be, in all its various guises and manifestations, nothing but the "toil and trouble" involved in the acquisition of a commodity. What we are most anxious to do, Smith seems to be saying, is to save ourselves whatever exertion we can; we thus count ourselves more "worthy" to the extent that we can "impose upon other people" to perform our toil for us. It is to the extent that money or goods save us this toil that they have a value, that we value them, and, so, here it seems to be the [universal] repulsiveness of labour that marks it as the "real measure" of exchangeable value. Labor is the measure of value because it is what we least want to "give up." Labor is valued, or has value, because it is the loss, the giving up of what we value most - our ease and our happiness.

But there is also something rather peculiar in the phrasing of the last sentence of the passage last cited. The money or goods are said there to "contain the value of

a certain quantity of labour." Up till this point goods were said to "have" a value, why now do they "contain" that value instead? If this seems a trifling difference, there is another compounded to it. The value that the money or goods are said to contain is "the value of a certain quantity of labour." But what sense can it make in this context to speak of the "value of labour," if labor is itself the measure of value?

There is, perhaps, an account of this passage that makes sense of the use that Smith makes of "contain". Smith seems to use the containment-phrasing he does in order to explain how "[w]hat is bought with money or with goods is purchased by labour": if the goods or money "contain" a given quantity of labor, then any commodity acquired from the exchange of said goods or money can indeed be said to have been "purchased by labour," that is, by just that given quantity of labor "contained" in the goods or money. The difficulty is that Smith does not speak of the quantity of labor being contained but of the value of the quantity of labor being contained in the goods. Perhaps the phrase "the value of" was mistakenly inserted by Smith twice into a sentence that could more coherently have been written, as it was by Marx, as

They [the money or goods] contain a certain quantity of labour which we exchange for what is supposed at the time to contain an equal quantity. (14)

Such a reading is indeed suggested by contextual information. The sentence appearing immediately before the

one I have been discussing relates the money or goods we intend to exchange to the "toil of our own body" that it spares us: "That money or those goods indeed save us this toil." The word "save" is ambiguous here. It can have the sense of "prevent expenditure of." In that case the goods, by being exchanged, prevent us from expending our labor, indeed just that quantity of labor involved in producing that money or those goods. But "save" can also have the sense of "store": in which case the goods serve as a store of our toil, our labor, which is preserved for future use. This second interpretation seems to favor the reading of the "containment"-phrasing suggested above - that the commodity I possess can "contain" "a certain quantity of labour." But that is not what Adam Smith says. There seems to be a slippage in phrasing just where we would want Adam to be most adept. In these two paragraphs we have seen two distinct notions of exchange value, neither fully elaborated. One makes value an intentional, mentalist outcome of a specific bargaining process; the other renders it a substance, saved and contained in the commodity object.

Yet Adam Smith ends this notorious second paragraph in a way that suggests that he was thinking along the lines just indicated, in terms of a substantial residue of a labor process. He is still trying to justify the idea that labor is the "real price" of goods. He now appeals to an original transaction.

Labour was the first price, the original purchase-money that was paid for all things. It was not by gold or by silver, but by labour, that all the wealth of the world was originally purchased; and its value, to those who possess it, and who want to exchange it for some new productions, is precisely equal to the quantity of labour which it can enable them to purchase or command. (15)

The appeal here to an original metaphorical "purchase" or acquisition has force only if this original acquisition is taken as paradigmatic of all subsequent acquisitions. What Smith seems to be getting at is this: labor is the real price of goods because all goods are originally wrested from the bosom of nature by the expenditure of just a "certain quantity of labour." Because labor was the "original purchase-money...paid for all things," it is the force productive of their individual, self-subsistent existence. And if their mode of existence as commodities would be measured, the extent of the force needed to produce them is, perhaps, an appropriate measure to use. So much Adam Smith seems almost to be saying, but doesn't seem to say.

Smith is at such great pains to show that labor is the "real measure" of value, because it manifestly isn't the obvious one. Smith accounts for the prevalence of gold or silver (money) as the measure of value by their convenience.

The greater part of people,...understand better what is meant by a quantity of a particular commodity than by a quantity of labour. The one is a plain and palpable object; the other an abstract notion....Hence it comes to pass that the exchangeable value of every commodity is more frequently estimated by the quantity of money...which can be had in exchange for it. (16)

A quantity of labor is an abstract notion: and yet it is, according to Smith, the real measure of value. The problem with money as a measure is that it, like every other commodity, varies in value. In arguing this, Smith cites the discovery of mines in America in the sixteenth century, explaining that

[a]s it cost less labour to bring those metals from the mine to the market, so when they were brought thither they could purchase or command less labour.... (17)

Here again, Smith seems to be trading on the labor expended on the commodity to account for the commodity's value measured in terms of what has been called "commandable labour" - the labor that can be commanded in exchange for a given commodity.(18) Yet Smith refuses to equate the two, or even to treat them as in general equivalent. It seems that we have, at best, the labor expended on a commodity as the source of its value, but not as the measure of that value - the measure being the commandable labor.

Since the value of gold, measured in commandable labor, fluctuates like that of every other commodity, it

can never be an accurate measure of the value of other commodities. Equal quantities of labour, at all times and places, may be said to be of equal value to the labourer. In his ordinary state of health, strength, and spirits; in the ordinary degree of his skill and dexterity, he must always lay down the same portion of his ease, his liberty, and his happiness. The price which he pays must always be the same, whatever may be the quantity of goods which he receives in return for it....Labour alone, therefore, never varying in its own value, is alone the ultimate and real standard by which the value of all commodities can at all times and places be estimated and compared. It is their real price; money is their nominal price only. (19)

Thus Smith takes the value of labor to be invariable and so for that reason "the ultimate and real standard" of value. And this is because of what is given up: "to the labourer" equal quantities of labor represent equal renunciations of "his ease, his liberty, and his happiness"; again we have the image of "toil and trouble", of expenditure of effort as in itself something to be compensated for. That view seems to rival the view that it is the division of labor that makes the compensation for the individual's labor necessary. But this may be because here the idea of value is qualified: it is from the laborer's point of view that the matter is being considered. Here is a laborer who is exchanging his labor for "a quantity of goods", and so it must be a situation in which the division of labor holds: for why else exchange ? Still, it is his "ease, liberty and happiness" that he is surrendering: the odiousness of the labor seems here to be an independent factor, additional to the existence of a division of labor, demanding that labor is compensated, and that it is compensated in proportion to the ultimate and real standard which it represents. It is not as physical expenditure, pure and simple, that labor is the measure of value, it is only because labor is a loss of happiness and ease, a sacrifice which must be compensated through exchange. We value commodities, that is, in the same way, and because, we value our own happiness and ease.

There is also a strange sort of slippage that takes place in this passage. Adam Smith is here contrasting gold

as a measure of value with labor. The advantage of labor is just that it is invariable. But that invariability appears at the end of a passage which begins by attending exclusively to the laborer's point of view. "Equal quantities of labour, at all times and places, may be said to be of equal value to the labourer." (emphasis added). Here "value" might almost be taken as reporting the laborer's feelings. But by the end of the paragraph, where labor is declared the sole "ultimate and real standard" of value, all subjective references have been dropped. That the labor represents the surrender of the laborer's "happiness" is no longer mentioned. Indeed, it is not even the individual laborer's labor that is cited in characterizing the standard of value. The generality that is thereby achieved perhaps adds plausibility to the claim that we have arrived at an invariable standard: it is not any particular laborer's viewpoint that is consulted, but average, that is, abstract, labor. But what justifies the substitution of average labor for the particular laborer whose labor was in fact "the original purchase-money" of the commodity? And how can that help Adam Smith establish the invariability of the value of labor, if the value of labor can only be characterized by reference to the laborer's perspective? Finally, what sense can it make to speak of abstract labor as a measure if abstract labor is a "notion" only?

Immediately in the next paragraph we discover the

source of some of these ambiguities and slippages: for this laborer is not just a participant in a division of labor, exchanging his goods for others. It is his own labor that he exchanges for goods, and he confronts not just another laborer but an employer.

But though equal quantities of labour are always of equal value to the labourer, yet to the person who employs him they appear sometimes to be of greater and sometimes of smaller value. He purchases them sometimes with a greater and sometimes with a smaller quantity of goods, and to him the price of labour seems to vary like that of all other things. It appears to him dear in the one case, and cheap in the other. In reality, however, it is the goods which are cheap in the one case, and dear in the other. (20)

This 'person', notice, is fooled into thinking that the value of the labor he employs varies. So, sometimes he pays the laborer more, sometimes less, for what is the same quantity of labor. But, in fact, according to Adam Smith, the laborer is right in his belief that his labor always has the same value. Smith seems to believe that he has already established that the laborer's view of this matter is the right one. Clearly he thinks the employer's is not. Yet it seemed that his discussion was moving away from such "perspectivism" altogether.

Notice also, however, that if "commandable labor" is indeed the "labor" mentioned as the "ultimate and real standard," then the value of labor cannot be invariable as Smith claims. Smith goes on to define the real price of labor as "the quantity of the necessities and conveniences of life which are given for it." (21) Smith qualifies this conception of the "real price" of labor by noting that this

is a way of speaking in the "popular sense". Yet Smith has just claimed that the quantity of goods returned to the laborer is greater or smaller, depending on the cheapness or dearness of those goods. How then can the value of labor be invariable, if it is measured by commandable labor, yet the prices of those commodities which constitute the "real price" of labor vary like all other commodities?

If the introduction of the employer seems, in the above passage, to throw a number of points into doubt, that is not accidental. For though Smith up until this point had discussed the major features of exchangeable value in the context of what seemed to be a barter situation, of independent producers confronting one another with goods they want to exchange, he discusses the modern economy as characterized by relations of a different kind. I quote here at length:

In that early and rude state of society which precedes both the accumulation of stock and the appropriation of land, the proportion between the quantities of labour necessary for acquiring different objects seems to be the only circumstance which can afford any rule for exchanging them for one another. If among a nation of hunters, for example, it usually costs twice the labour to kill a beaver which it does to kill a deer, one beaver should naturally exchange for or be worth two deer. It is natural that what is usually the produce of two days' or two hours' labour, should be worth double of what is usually the produce of one day's or one hour's labour....In this state of things, the whole produce of labour belongs to the labourer; and the quantity of labour commonly employed in acquiring or producing any commodity is the only circumstance which can regulate the quantity of labour which it ought commonly to purchase, command or exchange for.

As soon as stock has accumulated in the hands of particular persons, some of them will naturally employ it in setting to work industrious people, whom they

will supply with materials and subsistence, in order to make a profit by the sale of their work, or by what their labour adds to the value of the materials. In exchanging the complete manufacture either for money, for labour, or for other goods, over and above what may be sufficient to pay the price of the materials, and the wages of the workmen, something must be given for the profits of the undertaker of the work who hazards his stock in this adventure. The value which the workmen add to the materials, therefore, resolves itself in this case into two parts, of which the one pays their wages, the other the profits of their employer upon the whole stock of materials and wages which he advanced....

In this state of things, the whole produce of labour does not always belong to the labourer. He must in most cases share it with the owner of the stock which employs him. Neither is the quantity of labour commonly employed in acquiring or producing any commodity, the only circumstance which can regulate the quantity which it ought commonly to purchase, command, or exchange for. (22)

A consideration similar to that concerning the employer applies as well to the landlord. Thus Smith is able to conclude that the value of any commodity resolves itself into three component parts: the wages of labour, the profit of stock, and the rent of the land. As he puts it, "[w]ages, profit, and rent, are the three original sources of all revenue as well as of all exchangeable value." (23) It is here that Adam Smith's theory of value ends up, with what some have called a cost of production account of the value of commodities. (24) And here is the source of Adam Smith's persistent refusal to equate the "commandable labour" with the labour involved in the production of the commodity, the "contained" labor. For according to this most recent account, these two will always be different in conditions of capitalist production. The labor theory now appears to characterize only the "rude state of society"

which precedes capitalist development. Here the rule of exchange according to labor time is "natural", seemingly because of the simplicity of conditions. Yet these are precisely the conditions which make the averaging of labor - upon which the account of labor as an invariable measure of value seemed to depend - least likely to occur.

We have seen Adam Smith trying to present a coherent account of value, but without substantial success. Smith alternates between sometimes considering "labor contained", and other times "labor commanded", as the measure of value, without equating them. He seems to have begun his account with the view that value is an intentional state, a valuation reached through marketplace bargaining and a product of the perspective and interests of the laborer or producer of the commodity. In that context labor becomes a measure because of the laborer's interest in avoiding exertion, thereby preserving his happiness, freedom, and ease. That view seemed to give way to the view that labor is the measure of value because the commodity "contains" labor, the physically conceived expenditure of energy that brings the commodity into being and gives it its existence. This view shifts the measure of value from the labor-commanded to the labor-contained; value becomes a more universal and objective feature insofar as labor itself becomes invariable in its physical effects. Yet this last view gives way to Smith's denial of the identity of labor-contained and labor-commanded, a denial entailed by

his cost-of-production account of the relation between wages, profits, and rents. Yet it will become evident that this cost-of-production solution of the problem is not satisfactory: it creates further difficulties which turn out to be intractable. The writer who made this apparent, and attempted to overhaul Adam Smith's theory, was David Ricardo.

3

David Ricardo begins his book, The Principles of Political Economy and Taxation, with a chapter "On Value". That chapter, by far the longest in the book, begins with a section whose heading reads:

The value of a commodity, or the quantity of any other commodity for which it will exchange, depends on the relative quantity of labour which is necessary for its production, and not on the greater or less compensation which is paid for that labour. (25)

That statement cleanly cuts through the ambiguities that Smith wrestled with. It is the quantity of labor involved in the production of the commodity itself, and not the quantity of labor that can be "commanded" in exchange for it, that determines the value of a commodity. In support of this view Ricardo quotes just those passages from the Wealth of Nations in which Smith adheres to it. He then goes on to underscore the "utmost importance" of this doctrine for political economy, adding that "from no source do so many errors, and so much difference of opinion in that science proceed, as from the vague ideas which are attached to the word value." (26)

Ricardo then notes that Smith fell into inconsistency because after he "accurately defined the original source of value", he "erected another standard measure of value" which is sometimes labor and sometimes corn. Ricardo argues that Smith's "commandable labor" view has the consequence that a man whose labor becomes doubly efficient, and who is thus able to produce twice the quantity of goods he did previously in the same period of time, would necessarily acquire in exchange twice the quantity of goods he had gotten previously. He goes on to add:

If this indeed were true, if the reward of the labourer were always in proportion to what he produced, the quantity of labour bestowed on a commodity, and the quantity of labour which that commodity would purchase, would be equal, and either might accurately measure the variations of other things: but they are not equal; the first is under many circumstances an invariable standard, indicating correctly the variations of other things; the latter is subject to as many fluctuations as the commodities compared with it. (27)

Here, the objection to Smith's view focuses on the disparity between the product of wage-labor and its remuneration: since wages are fixed by a socially accepted minimum of sustenance, increases in the productivity of those industries producing the wage-laborer's necessities do not automatically result in raising the minimum level of sustenance. This point was of critical concern for Ricardo, being close to the crucial discussions of 1813-1816 around the Corn Laws, during which Ricardo's theoretical positions were formed. For it was the view of the pro-Corn Law party that the repeal of the Corn Laws would lead to a fall in the price of corn, which would in turn lead to a lowering

in all prices, bringing on depression. (28)

Ricardo attempts to modify the theory of value that he has rescued from Adam Smith: he tries to show how the circumstances that Adam Smith takes to require the abandonment of the theory can in fact be incorporated into an "embodied labour" theory of value. He shows how the theory can be adapted to account for the existence of fixed capital - tools, instruments and machines - and its contribution to the value of the product. The value of the tools, itself constituted by the labor embodied in them, is transferred in the course of their use to the commodities these tools are used to produce. This transfer is more or less rapid depending upon the durability of these tools and instruments themselves. Ricardo, using several hypothetical examples, shows how a rise or fall in the value of labor will either raise or lower the relative value of commodities, depending upon the relative proportion of fixed to circulating capital. [Ricardo calls capital used in the employment of laborers circulating capital, as well as other capital that "is rapidly perishable, and requires to be frequently reproduced"; capital invested in buildings and durable machinery is fixed capital. (29)] Ricardo thus maintains that

the difference in the degree of durability of fixed capital, and this variety in the proportions in which the two sorts of capital may be combined, introduce another cause, besides the greater or less quantity of labour necessary to produce commodities, for the variations in their relative value - this cause is the rise or fall in the value of labour. (30)

The examples Ricardo adduces as evidence for these modifications in the labor theory of value all employ standard accounting techniques presumably employed by contemporary capitalists. For example, in showing that "commodities which have the same quantity of labour bestowed on their production, will differ in exchangeable value, if they cannot be brought to market in the same time," Ricardo utilizes the following example.

Suppose I employ twenty men at an expense of \$1000 for a year in the production of a commodity, and at the end of the year I employ twenty men again for another year, at a further expense of \$1000 in finishing or perfecting the same commodity, and that I bring it to market at the end of two years, if profits be 10 per cent., my commodity must sell for \$2310; for I have employed \$1000 capital for one year, and \$2100 capital for one year more. Another man employs precisely the same quantity of labour, but he employs it all in the first year; he employs forty men at an expense of \$2000, and at the end of the first year he sells it with 10 per cent. profit, or for \$2200. Here then are two commodities having precisely the same quantity of labour bestowed on them, one of which sells for \$2310 - the other for \$2200. (31)

Ricardo here claims to have demonstrated how two commodities differing in value can arise from identical quantities of labor. The variation in value is attributable to the different times required to bring the respective commodities to market. Notice, however, that in calculating the values or natural prices of these commodities, he adds to the total wages bill a figure representing the total capital expenditure multiplied by the general rate of profit over the number of years required to bring the commodity to market. Ricardo seems to have assumed both a general rate of profit and that the figure arrived at by

such a calculation would equal the value of the commodity. He nowhere shows where the general rate of profit comes from, or that the accounting techniques he employs yield a value-figure. But if the general theory of the value of a commodity states that the value is determined by the amount of labor necessary for the commodity's production, then a method of calculating values or natural prices which involves adding a proportional amount of profit onto the total capital expenditure to arrive at the price seems *prima facie* to be at variance with the general theory. (32)

It is difficult not to think that there are really two theories of value being employed in the same argument: one is an "embodied labor" standard, the one Ricardo is explicitly arguing for in this first chapter; the other is a "cost of production" theory like the one Adam Smith believed he needed to substitute for the labor standard that he qualified as applying only to the first, "rude state of society." Ricardo admits, in a footnote on Malthus in the same first chapter, that he takes the value and the cost of production of a commodity to be the same. Yet he doesn't show why this is so, or how it could be. He seems to have made the same move that he criticized Adam Smith for making: surreptitiously replacing the labor theory with another that is not congruent with it.

The category of cost of production depends on that of the general rate of profits: as we have seen, in the first chapter Ricardo seems to assume the existence of a general

rate of profit. In the chapter "On Natural and Market Price" Ricardo argues that it is

competition which so adjusts the exchangeable value of commodities, that after paying the wages for the labour necessary to their production, and all other expenses required to put the capital employed in its original state of efficiency, the remaining value or overplus will in each trade be in proportion to the value of the capital employed. (33)

This "adjustment", Ricardo claims, "prevents the market price of commodities from continuing for any length of time either much above, or much below their natural price." But this means that the natural price of each commodity - that is, its value - has an "overplus" of value, above and beyond that of the labor necessary for its production and that transferred from the fixed capital. Where does this "overplus" come from ? That is a question Ricardo never seems to ask. Marx, however, reworks Ricardo's "overplus" into the "surplus value" upon which his archaeology of the forms of revenue, and so much else as well, hangs.

Again in the sixth chapter of his Principles, "On Profits", Ricardo discusses at length how alterations in the value of labor, or the price of corn, effect the distribution of the product between the capitalists and the laborers. He says

Neither the farmer who cultivates that quality of land, which regulates price, nor the manufacturer, who manufactures goods, sacrifice any portion of the produce for rent. The whole value of their commodities is divided into two portions only: one constitutes the profits of stock, the other the wages of labour. (34)

Ricardo had already determined, in the preceding chapter, that the wages of labor, or the "natural price of labour",

is "that price which is necessary to enable the labourers, one with another, to subsist and to perpetuate their race, without either increase or diminution." (35) Thus the value of labor is determined in a way that does not refer back again to the amount of labor involved or embodied in it, as is the case with most other commodities. So Ricardo is on the verge of opening up a gap between the determination of the value of commodities, and the determination of that determinant's value. Though Ricardo never suggests that the "value of labor" constitutes an exception to the general principle of determination of value, he at the same time never pursues the implications of the seeming paradox that, given commodities whose value is determined by the labor embodied in them, there remains after the realization of that value an "overplus" above the value of labor that constitutes the profits of stock. It seems that, just as in the case of the general rate of profit, Ricardo took the very fact of profit itself to be unproblematic and obvious.

Early in his career as an economic theorist, Ricardo was concerned with the Corn Law controversy. In that discussion Ricardo's worry was that the high price of corn, buoyed by the restriction of imports, forced wages up, and thereby reduced the profits of stock, upon which the accumulation of national wealth depended. (36) The notion that wages and profits vary inversely to one another, and together constitute the value of the commodity, seems to imply that profits, as well as wages, originate in the

labor necessary for the production of the commodity. Still, when Ricardo gets down to cases, he always writes as though the profit were a given percentage of capital outlay. He comes perilously close to Adam Smith's formulation that "Wages, profit and rent are the three original sources of all revenue as well as of all exchangeable value." (37) But such a formulation stands the theory of value on its head, and throws the whole conception into confusion, since calling profit, for example, a source of exchange value seems to qualify the claim that labor alone is the source of exchange value.

I have tried to show that both Smith and Ricardo, whom Marx considered the scientific pioneers of political economy, encountered problems in attempting to reconcile their general theory of value with the phenomena of wages, rent and especially profit. I will show that Marx's resolution of the difficulties in the labor theory of value led him to develop an account of the capitalist mode of production that shed light on the theoretical difficulties of his predecessors. Later I hope to show how this account of the structural illusions of commodity circulation and capitalist production can also illumine the conceptual difficulties confronting Kantian and Benthamite moral theory.

4

In considering Marx's solutions to these difficulties, which were also difficulties for him insofar as he began

where the classical political economists left off, and tried to resuscitate the labor theory of value, it is worth quoting at length from a letter Marx wrote to Engels, shortly after the appearance of the first volume of Capital. Marx, commenting on Duhring's review of the book, notes that Duhring

does not sense the three fundamentally new elements of the book:

- 1) That in contrast to all former political economy, which from the very outset treats the different fragments of surplus value with their fixed forms of rent, profit and interest as already given, I first deal with the general form of surplus value, in which all these fragments are still undifferentiated - in solution, as it were.
- 2) That the economists, without exception, have missed the simple point that if the commodity has a double character - use value and exchange value - then the labour represented by the commodity must also have a two-fold character, while the mere analysis of labour as such, as in Smith, Ricardo, etc., is bound to come up everywhere against inexplicable problems. This is, in fact, the whole secret of the critical conception.
- 3) That for the first time wages are presented as an irrational manifestation of a relation concealed behind them, and that this is scrupulously demonstrated with regard to the two forms of wages - time rates and piece rates. (38)

The first thing to notice is that this statement by Marx, specifying what he considered to be the most important fundamental theoretical innovations of his political-economic conception, hits first of all on precisely that area in which the difficulties of the classical writers became most apparent. In the brief resume I sketched above, it was precisely the determination of the different forms of revenue - wages, profits, and rent - in their relation to the value of the product and to the theory of value generally, that seemed to pose the most

immediate difficulties for Smith and Ricardo. It seemed as though the theory of value, evoked by the attempt to provide a foundation for an account of the "natural prices" of commodities, was completely forgotten as soon as the question of the distribution of the "revenue" came into view. Thus the appearance I noted of there being two distinct theories of value in both Smith and Ricardo. Marx's solution of the difficulty involves firstly a full recognition of it: profit and rent as forms of revenue cannot simply be taken as given in their distinctness: to do so is to undercut from the beginning the possibility of giving a unified account of the phenomena of capitalist economy.

One alternative to taking the categories of revenue as given is to show how they represent divisions of the total social product that are constituted by the relations between agents of production. This is the procedure that Marx employs. This procedure necessitates discussing the social product as a totality, and of explaining its division into parts, in value terms. For this purpose Marx develops the notion of surplus value, an adaptation of Ricardo's "overplus". So, for Marx, profit and rent, as well as interest, become fragments of the larger category of surplus value which underlies them.

Marx begins by formulating the problem of the division of the social product on the basis of what I have called the "historical hypothesis": he begins with the idea that

modern society is one determinate mode of production in an historical multiplicity of such modes, rather than a universal and absolute natural order of things achieved by the conquest of an imposed and enforced ignorance, as was the enlightenment view. A consequence of this is that it is the specific form that the division of the social product - or as Marx was to put it, the historically general expropriation of surplus product - takes in capitalist conditions that becomes the object of analysis for the first time. Though the political economists were aware of the existence of classes, and were comfortable with the notion of the expropriation of the laboring class under the feudal system, there had been no theoretical formulation of the material conditions determining the relations of classes developed from a political-economic point of view. As we saw above in examining Adam Smith's and Ricardo's conceptions of value, the political economists relied on an image of the primitive, as well as of the historically pre-capitalist economies, as governed by the forms of relation characteristic of capitalist production - the commodity, money, and capital. Because of this characteristic view, these writers were unable to formulate the task of a theory of capitalist economy as the particular form of the process of social reproduction under conditions of generalized commodity production. In aiming to provide such a theory, Marx begins with the commodity as the characteristic product, precondition and embodiment of

capitalist production relations, and yet sets those relations within the historical conjuncture of the disintegration of feudal social relations and the origins of modern industrial technology.

Thus, whereas for the founders of classical political economy, the commodity is a naturally occurring form of the product of labor, the exchange value of which is a natural property akin to their physical properties, and is taken to be such unproblematically by them, for Marx the commodity as the form of the product, and exchange value as its value-form become accomplishments of the socialized activity of human producers organized by the sole nexus of developing commodity exchange.

Every product of labour is, in all states of society, a use-value; but it is only at a definite historical epoch in a society's development that such a product becomes a commodity, viz., at the epoch when the labour spent on the production of a useful article becomes expressed as one of the objective qualities of that article, i.e., as its value. It therefore follows that...the gradual transformation of such products into commodities, proceeds pari passu with the development of the value-form. (39)

Because the commodity and its value-form are no longer merely a natural given, but are taken to be the historical product of social activity, the focus of analysis is shifted from the characteristics of the commodities and their relations with one another to the activities and relations of the agents of production who bring the commodities themselves into existence and exchange them for one another. This redirection of attention from the circulation of commodities to their production and

reproduction, which might be ascribed to a "productivist bias" - the temptation to "reduce" all questions to the "basic" as opposed to superstructural determinations - is in fact only an extension of the effort to "get inside the skin" of the commodity and reveal its source as a phenomenal form of the social product. Marx also analyzes the circulation of commodities, insofar as this is an essential moment of capitalist reproduction as well as a theoretical precondition for capitalist production itself. But it is only in an analysis of the capitalist production process that Marx is able to find a basis for the theory of value and also resolve the symptomatic problem of the classical theory of value, the problem of profit. Only if the commodity is treated as a form of value, can profit, rent, and interest also be analyzed as products of the capitalist production process.

The production process of capitalism is both, on the one hand, a labor process, and on the other, a process of the production of commodities. As the founders of political economy understood, the commodity has a double aspect, an exchange value and a use value: the founders focused on this dual character of the commodity, making it the starting point of their value theory, their theory of price. The first volume of Capital also begins with the analysis of the commodity. But Marx extends the elementary opposition posited by the classical writers. He elaborates a duality as rendering all the phenomena basic to the

capitalist mode of production. This duality is a feature of Marx's theory distinct from the elaboration of merely technical distinctions. Marx made many technical distinctions which did not exist in the political-economic literature before him: he distinguished constant from variable capital, rate of profit from rate of surplus value, price of production from market price, for example. These distinctions are involved in the articulation of a theory of "the economic law of motion of modern society"(40) in which dual and opposed facets or tendencies are shown to work themselves out in interconnection: an increased rate of surplus value expressed in a falling rate of profit, the accumulation of capital and growing social product as involving an increasingly redundant working population, the accumulation of capital as itself threatening the reproduction of social capital, etc. These are all dualities or tensions generated by Marx out of the initial analysis of the commodity into use-value and exchange-value.

But what is the source of this duality in the commodity itself ? This is a question the classical political economists did not ask. They took commodities and commodity production as natural features of human life considered generally. Adam Smith rooted commodity production in "a certain propensity in human nature...to truck, barter and exchange one thing for another."(41) Marx, on the contrary, traced this polarity of use-value

and exchange-value in the commodity back to the character of the labor that produces the commodities. I want to turn now to that crucial bridge in Marx's critical conception.

5

After establishing, in the first couple of pages of Capital, that the exchange-value of a commodity is distinct from, and cannot be reduced to, its use-value, Marx concludes that "exchange-value, generally, is only the mode of expression, the phenomenal form, of something contained in it, yet distinguishable from it." He continues by noting that

This common "something" cannot be either a geometrical, a chemical, or any other natural property of commodities. Such properties claim our attention only in so far as they affect the utility of those commodities, make them use-values. But the exchange of commodities is evidently an act characterised by a total abstraction from use-value. (42)

Thus, if the exchange of commodities, by abstracting from the use-values of commodities, expresses a "something" that they all contain in common, this "something" can only be uncovered theoretically by performing mentally the same process of "abstraction". This Marx does, in a passage that I will quote at length:

If then we leave out of consideration the use-value of commodities, they have only one common property left, that of being products of labour. But even the product of labour itself has undergone a change in our hands. If we make abstraction from its use-value, we make abstraction at the same time from the material elements and shapes that make the product a use-value; we see in it no longer a table, a house, yarn, or any other useful thing. Its existence as material thing is put out of sight. Neither can it any longer be regarded as the product of the labour of the joiner, the mason, the spinner, or of any other definite kind of

productive labour. Along with the useful qualities of the products themselves, we put out of sight both the useful character of the various kinds of labour embodied in them, and the concrete forms of that labour; there is nothing left but what is common to them all; all are reduced to one and the same sort of labour, human labour in the abstract.

Let us now consider the residue of each of these products; it consists of the same unsubstantial reality in each, a mere congelation of homogeneous human labour, of labour-power expended without regard to the mode of its expenditure. All that these things now tell us is, that human labour-power has been expended in their production, that human labour is embodied in them. When looked at as crystals of this social substance, common to them all, they are - Values. (43)

Thus Marx arrives at his notion of abstract labor as the correlate of - abstract - value. Abstract labor is, for Marx, that feature of commodity-producing labor that produces commodities as values. In the first paragraph of the passage above Marx speaks of abstract labor as a "sort of labour," namely human labour. This suggests that in discussing abstract labor we are dealing with a universal of the sort that taxed Plato so and led him to the realist position which bears his name. Yet so far, in Marx's presentation, there is no question of reification: it is clear that Marx is speaking of a way of looking at the production of commodities, and abstract labor is still only a conceptual entity, the result of an intellectual process of abstraction.

In the second paragraph of the passage, however, I detect the beginnings of a departure from the strictly nominalist interpretation of "abstract labor". For now the commodity is considered as the "congelation of homogeneous labour, of labour-power expended without regard to the mode of its expenditure." The phrasing of this clause (which reproduces the

phrasing of the original German) seems to shift the locus of the "abstracting force" from the intellect of the reader or investigator, onto the activity of the original producer of the commodity. In the identification of abstract or homogeneous human labor with "labor power expended without regard to the mode of its expenditure," the lack of regard might be read as a tactic on the part of the reader or investigator of value, but it might more comfortably be read as a failure of regard on the part of the laborer, at whose expense the entire process is occurring, and who thus might be laboring somewhat abstractedly. In this case abstract labor really does become a "sort of labour" - it is no longer merely human labor viewed through the prism of an abstracting intellect, but labor which is somehow in itself, or objectively abstract. This points to a full-blooded realism of abstract labor which is nowhere evident in the founders of classical political economy.

This realist, philosophically pregnant interpretation of the notion of abstract labor is reinforced a couple of pages later, in the second section of the first chapter, entitled "The Twofold Character of the Labour Embodied in Commodities." Here the formulation of abstract labor also involves another conceptual neologism of Marx's as well - that of labor-power. There was a hint of this in the passage above, and it is expanded in the second section discussion, where they are introduced together.

Productive activity, if we leave out of sight its special form, viz., the useful character of the labour, is nothing but the expenditure of human labour-power. Tailoring and weaving, though qualitatively different

productive activities, are each a productive expenditure of human brains, nerves, and muscles, and in this sense are human labour. They are but two different modes of expending human labour-power. Of course, this labour-power, which remains the same under all modifications, must have attained a certain pitch of development before it can be expended in a multiplicity of modes. But the value of a commodity represents human labour in the abstract, the expenditure of human labour in general. (44)

Here the value-creating character of labor is firmly tied to the notion of labor-power: the various specific acts of labor are now "but different modes of expending human labour-power." This is a further bit of abstraction: each specific laboring act becomes the expenditure of a labor-power which "remains the same under all modifications." Notice that labor-power is here also given a dynamic and historical mode of existence; labor-power has a history and gives rise to abstract labor only when it has "attained a certain pitch of development."

The notion of labor-power is itself an innovation of Marx's whose significance can hardly be overstated. Engels, in his characteristically suggestive preface to the second volume of Capital, claims that "[b]y substituting labour-power, the value-producing property, for labour [Marx] solved with one stroke one of the difficulties which brought about the downfall of the Ricardian school, viz., the impossibility of harmonising the mutual exchange of capital and labour with the Ricardian law that value is determined by labour." (45) Once it is accepted that it is abstract labor that creates value, and abstract labor is conceived as the expenditure of labor-power, the

possibility arises of explaining profit and giving a radically new presentation of the wage-relation. Since the use-value of any commodity is realized in the consumption of it, the laboring activity of the worker represents the realization of the commodity that the laborer sells to the capitalist. That commodity is therefore labor-power.

This means that the wage is not in fact the form of appearance of the value of labor. It is actually a misrepresentation of the value of labor-power, an irrational appearance, as Marx puts it. The laborer is not paid for the labor she performs, but for the capacity to labor that she has sold the use of to the capitalist for a given period of time. Given this distinction, Marx is able to account for profit on the assumption that the value of the labor-power the laborer sells is less than the value created in the expenditure of that labor-power. The distinction between the labor-power the worker sells and the labor that is performed by the laborer eliminates the confusions and ambiguities attached to the phrase "value of labor." The origin of profit is thereby explained within the ambit of the theory of value, because that theory incorporates the analysis of labor as involving abstract labor under conditions of generalized commodity production.

So Marx sums up the second section:

On the one hand all labour is, speaking physiologically, an expenditure of human labour-power, and in its character of identical abstract labour, it creates and forms the value of commodities. On the other hand, all labour is the expenditure of human labour-power in a special form and with a definite aim,

and in this, its character of useful labour, it produces use-values. (46)

It is labor which has this two-sidedness that produces a commodity which has both the usefulness which generally depends on - but isn't determined by - its physical properties, the products of a specific "concrete" material activity, and a value, proportional to the "abstract labor embodied" in it. Just as Adam Smith showed that there is no direct connection between the use-value of a commodity and its exchange-value, so Marx extended this to the process of the production of the commodity: there is no direct connection between that aspect of labor that shapes the physical characteristics of the commodity, the concrete labor - which is always of necessity a particular sort of physical activity - and that aspect of the labor, the abstract labor, that produces an object with value.

There are two features of the summary statement of Marx's quoted above that go against the "realist interpretation" urged above. Firstly he claims to be "speaking physiologically" of the expenditure of labor-power; secondly, he writes unqualifiedly of "all labour." Both of these locutions cast doubt on the status of abstract labor as an actual, self-subsistent historically constituted reality by suggesting a timeless, naturally constituted condition of all human labor. Yet as the title of the section makes clear, referring specifically to the "labor embodied in commodities," Marx is only treating commodity-producing labor here. And

labor-power, though socially conditioned, may still be physiologically-based; its expenditure being an expenditure of energy, of "human brains, nerves, and muscles."

Marx's analysis of capitalist production can only be sustained by making sense of the idea of abstract labor and specifically of what I take to be his realist interpretation of that notion. While an empiricist construal would only tolerate abstract labor as an instrumental construct of the scientific observer, Marx, I believe, advanced a realist account of abstract labor as an objectively existing yet socially determined and historically transient characteristic of human productive activities. Though abstract labor appears in Capital initially as an aspect or feature of labor, the analysis makes it clear that Marx regards it as a dynamic feature of labor, that is, a feature of labor that is not merely the mute genus containing the abundant and living particulars of laboring activity, but that animates and strives to determine and dominate the development of human labor-power itself.

Abstract labor is not a kind of labor, it is a constitutive and characteristic feature of all labor that comes to be dependent on commodity exchange or is subordinated to capital. The reality of abstract labor is not that of the "natural" - it is not an invariant substratum supporting but also determining all social formations - but is the product of historically developed

human activity, firstly productive activity. Labor in the capitalist mode of production is abstract because it is, firstly, free labor (in the "negative" sense) - freed not only from all ties to the land and other conditions of its existence, but also freed from any necessary employment. Abstract labor is thus, secondly, characteristic of labor whose manifestation takes the form of the employment of a readily available source of labor-power by "means of production" which have taken on the form of a preexistent and independent power regulating social production. It is, thirdly, labor that is adaptable to the diverse uses to which capital can put it, labor adaptable to, and therefore indifferent to, the various productive processes in which it comes to be employed. That diversity of processes is the product of the development of the labor process itself, which is also the development of capital. Fourthly, abstract labor is labor that finds its purpose not in the character of the activity it carries out, or the usefulness of the commodity it produces, but in its ability to nourish and enrich - to reproduce - capital. I want to go over these criteria seriatim.

1) Abstract labor is characteristic of "free labor." The latter phrase has a multiple sense. Free labor is labor that is not tied to the land, but is free in the sense of being legally unfettered and mobile. The creation of such labor (in the OED's sense of "the general body of laborers and operatives") is the historic outcome of the decline and

decay of the feudal system. Labor which is free in this sense thereby acquires one of the properties of commodities in general - it, or its employment, can be bought and sold (here labor figures in the sense of labor-power). The process of separating the laborer from the land is also the process of separating him from the means of his subsistence. Free labor, therefore, unless it can acquire the means of its own reproduction, not only can, but must "alienate" itself. As Marx put it:

Capitalist production is distinguished from the outset by....the fact that being a commodity is the dominant and determining characteristic of its products. This implies, first and foremost, that the labourer himself comes forward merely as a seller of commodities, and thus as a free wage-labourer, so that labour appears in general as wage-labour. (47)

But the condition of the laborer's being able to "alienate" his labor is the existence of the conditions of labor in the form of an independent power, in the form of capital.

2) Because abstract labor is the product of "free labor," abstract labor is the result of a labor process whose formal condition is the wedding of an available source of labor-power with "means of production" that take the form of a previously constituted and independent "factor" of production. This is, from the point of view of the laborer, a wedding of labor, in the form of the laborer, and its condition of existence - the wage; and from the point of view of the capitalist, that is of capital, it is a wedding of capital with its condition of existence - wage-labor. Here, the specific form that labor

takes is immaterial to the object of the laborer, which is the wage; similarly, the material character of the production process is dictated only by the specific character of the "means of production" in which capital is immediately realized, but is immaterial to the ultimate object of capital in seizing just this materialization - its realization of profit. This realization of profit can only take place if the labor that capital employs both preserves the accumulated value that capital represents, and at the same time creates new value that is the source of profit.

3) Abstract labor is characteristic of labor which is adaptable to and indifferent to a variety of concrete labor-processes, products, purposes and outcomes. It is "labour-power expended without regard to the mode of its expenditure." (48) It is not simply that all concrete labor processes under the sway of capital are also abstract labor processes, as well. Rather, capitalist production relations generally develop in the direction of creating a labor that is increasingly homogeneous in its degree of energy expenditure and conditions of production. "[C]apital is by nature a leveller, since it exacts in every sphere of production equality in the conditions of the exploitation of labour," writes Marx in the chapter on "Machinery and Modern Industry," discussing child labor legislation.(49) This is particularly true given what Marx calls the real - as opposed to the formal - subsumption of labor to the

relations of capital (50), that is, the determination of the entire character of the production process by the requirements of capital. The real subsumption of labor to capital is borne out in the factory system, in which

in the place of the hierarchy of specialized workmen that characterises manufacture, there steps, in the automatic factory, a tendency to equalise and reduce to one and the same level every kind of work that has to be done by the minders of the machines.... (51)

This process of the real subsumption of labor to capital creates conditions for the expanding incorporation of scientific innovation into a production process that is becoming more complex as more and more spheres of production come under the sway of capital, a vastly greater number of commodities are produced than ever before, and the intricacies of the production of even simple commodities pushes the number of concrete production processes into exponential ascents. This situation leads to the increased rationalization of production, through which the productivity of labor is augmented while the actual labor process is often simplified. The labor processes increasingly acquire similar technological bases, involving conflated repertoires of similar itineraries of physical act.

4) Labor that is abstract labor is therefore labor that has surrendered the possibility of determining the ends of the labor-process. Even more strongly, it is labor whose very form of existence puts its own necessary object - the condition of its reproduction as labor - outside the

sphere of accomplishment of the productive process in which it is employed. It is labor whose function in the production process is not determined by itself but by capital. It is labor whose product is doubly abstract: it produces for itself, it appropriates to itself, a product that is merely a register of its own productive power, that is devoid of any specific form, while its product from the point of view of capital as well is only the physical form of what is crucially a definite amount of accumulated value.

Capital always takes the form of "this capital" - one capital competing with others; its continued existence depends on its standing relative to every other capital. But capital is only an organizing form of human productive activity; thus, the condition for the existence of any labor process within the capitalist mode of production is the nexus of its relations with other labor processes. These relations between labor processes are only possible within the capitalist mode of production because these labors are all instances of abstract labor, in addition to being determinate concrete labors as well. Abstract labor is the accomplishment of the activities of human laborers themselves, though they may not recognize it as such.

Here an objection might be made. In discussing abstract labor in this way I appear to be describing a type of labor, or rather a feature which only a particular type of labor - labor that is subordinated to capital -

possesses. The definition of Marx's cited above, in which abstract labor seems to figure as a theoretical construct achieved by "abstracting" from the concrete physical particularities of weaving and tailoring, appears to contradict my construal of abstract labor in two ways. First, I attempt to give what I call a "realist" account of abstract labor, whereas Marx might be taken to be writing in a nominalist mode. Second, in striving to enforce my interpretation of abstract labor as real, I have gradually shifted to speaking of abstract labor as (characteristic of) a distinct and selfsubsisting kind of labor, rather than as a characteristic of all particular concrete labors. This seems to be committing a type of reification that is contrary to the spirit of Marx's undertaking.

This objection can be stated in a sharper form by taking the example Marx himself employs, of the tailor and the weaver, somewhat more seriously. What this example suggests is a situation of simple commodity production, in which independent individual producers confront each other as commodity owners who exchange their goods to satisfy their individual needs as consumers. If the labor theory of value is correct, then these commodities exchange in proportions determined by embodied labor-time. But if this is true then the labor expended by the tailor and the weaver, though not labor subordinated to capital, and though it pretty clearly does not satisfy the criteria mentioned in points 2) through 4) above, is nonetheless

labor of which abstract labor is an aspect. The problem, then, is that the "realist" interpretation of the labor theory of value seems to restrict its application to fully developed, mature capitalist production and disallow its use to describe the early, simple commodity production of independent producers. The connection I have made above, between abstract labor, and the domination of labor by capital, is thrown into doubt by the existence of simple commodity production by independent producers.

I think that the objection involves the affirmation, as exclusive, of a disjunction that is in fact an inclusive one. That is, abstract labor is both a feature of all particular labors under conditions of simple commodity production, and also becomes a more and more dominant feature of the labor that is employed and dominated by capital. This is a process which coincides with the historical development of capitalism. The decisive difference leading to the transformation of simple commodity production into mature capitalist production is that labor-power becomes a commodity, and wage-labor replaces the labor of independent producers as the predominant source of value. Corresponding to this is the transformation of the private property of the independent producer into the capital of the capitalist manufacturer. The significance of this change is that with it the production-process is revolutionized: it loses its identity as a labor process undertaken and organized by the

individual producer, whose character is dictated as much by tradition and individual skill as by the demands of the market. Production becomes mass-production, organized and under the supervision of the representatives of capital, in which the energies of wage-laborers are transmuted into the substance of capital accumulation. This process is accompanied by the draining from labor of the concrete characteristics it embodied under conditions of simple commodity production: labor as abstract value-producing labor becomes the determining aspect which dominates the entire production process. Labor becomes the expenditure of labor-power as the labor-power of the laborer becomes a commodity, that commodity whose employment becomes the means of reproduction of capital.

But before I get ahead of myself, I want to make one more point about simple commodity production. Though commodity production by independent producers fails to fully display the features I identified above as characteristic of abstract labor (or abstract-labor-producing labor), it nonetheless is pregnant with those features, though in an undeveloped form. The labor involved in the production of commodities by independent producers is free labor, and it is labor expended "without regard" to the mode of its expenditure in this sense: the independent laborer produces commodities not for their use-values, but solely for their mutual exchangeability with other commodities that are use-values

for them. The labor of the independent producer of commodities is not wage-labor - it is not given over to a labor process controlled by capital. Yet there is a sense in which the independent producer also relinquishes control: his activity is determined by a market that he cannot control, by commodities that he has need of but no claim to, except by exchanging his own labor - in the form of commodities - for them. And though the independent producer owns his own means of production, he must employ them to secure his means of subsistence, and he can only do this by transforming them into commodities that he can bring to the market. In this sense, the labor of the independent commodity producer is also given over to control by factors beyond the reach of the producer himself.

This is certainly not to say that the situation of an independent producer is equivalent to that of the wage-laborer. The independent producer is the owner of the commodities she produces, the wage-laborer is not. In the face of the obvious differences, there is a temptation to glamorize the position of the petty independent producer as an Eden of private property from which bourgeois society has fallen. Marx's response to this was consistently critical. While reminding his readers of the sordid actual history of the early period of bourgeois property, he went on to point out the limited and local character of independent bourgeois production, and how the development

of the world market consequent upon the extension of bourgeois relations throughout western Europe had undermined the very conditions of independent commodity production.

Thus the realist interpretation I mentioned above demands a conception of abstract labor as an aspect of labor - specifically of the "free" labor constitutive of the relations of simple commodity production - that comes to more and more characterize and determine the entire character of the labor-process involved in the capitalist production process. This also implies that the labor theory of value does not apply in the same way to all periods in the history of the capitalist mode of production. Capitalism "grows into" the labor theory of value.

This conception of abstract labor - as arising with the growth of exchange under conditions of simple commodity production by independent private producers and developing as simple commodity production gives way to capitalist production, with its characteristic path of development - is evident in the texts of Marx's political-economic writings. In the famous section of the first chapter of Capital on "The Fetishism of Commodities" Marx says that

[the] division of a product into a useful thing and a value becomes practically important, only when exchange has acquired such an extension that useful articles are produced for the purpose of being exchanged, and their character as values has therefore to be taken into account, beforehand, during production. From this moment the labour of the individual producer acquires socially a two-fold character. On the one hand, it must...satisfy a definite social want, and thus hold its place as part and parcel of the collective labour

of all, as a branch of a social division of labour that has sprung up spontaneously. On the other hand, it can satisfy the manifold wants of the individual producer himself, only in so far as the mutual exchangeability of all kinds of useful private labour is an established social fact.... (52)

It is only when the character of commodities as values is taken into account during the production process that labor becomes split into concrete and abstract labor. So it seems as though abstract labor comes into existence when and as a certain form of accounting on the part of private producers develops. Such a situation arises under conditions of simple commodity production by private individual producers: in which case this is an accounting of the private labor of the individual in relation to "the collective labour of all," a collective labor that has arisen as a result of a spontaneous social division of labor. That spontaneity and the limited scale and scope of simple commodity production may remind one of the "higgling and bargaining of the market": here the determination of value, and the corresponding calculation of (abstract) labor-time, gives the appearance of arbitrariness and conventionality that is characteristically identified with the market-place, and seems to fit better with a nominalist interpretation of abstract labor. But if simple commodity production corresponds to the earliest stage of capitalist production, that mode of production develops into the "real subsumption of labor under capital," with which "the corresponding development of the exchange-value of the products emerges." Under conditions of the real subsumption

of labor by capital,

instead of the scale of production being controlled by existing needs, the quantity of products made is determined by the constantly increasing scale of production dictated by the mode of production itself. Its aim is that the individual product should contain as much unpaid labour as possible, and this is achieved only by producing for the sake of production. (53)

It is only in the course of this development, according to Marx, that the product becomes "an adequate embodiment of the law of value which develops fully only on the foundation of capitalist production." (54) This development of the product as an exchange value, and the corresponding development of the production process, also represents a development of the labor process, and so a development of abstract labor. The "spontaneous" genesis of simple commodity production, just as much as the perpetual revolutions in the productive process that are a constant feature of developed capitalist production, introduces a transformation of the labor process, by compelling the products of the individual producer to secure for him a definite proportion of the social wealth of "collective labour."

I have been trying to support the view that Marx uses the category "abstract labor" to designate a socially constituted and historically developing objective characteristic of the labor processes of the capitalist mode of production. Abstract labor is an abstraction, but it is one that is brought about in actuality by the development of the capitalist system. This abstraction not

only comes about but gradually comes to be a more and more dominant feature of the labor process of capitalism; abstract labor in itself, though only an aspect of the labor process, is one that plays an increasingly central role in the "rationality" of the capitalist mode of production. Marx, in comments in the 1857 Introduction to the Grundrisse emphasized the actuality of abstract labor in the following terms:

Indifference towards any specific kind of labour presupposes a very developed totality of real kinds of labour, of which no single one is any longer predominant. As a rule, the most general abstractions arise only in the midst of the richest possible concrete development, where one thing appears as common to many, to all. Then it ceases to be thinkable in a particular form alone. On the other side, this abstraction of labour as such is not merely the mental product of a concrete totality of labours. Indifference towards specific labours corresponds to a form of society in which individuals can with ease transfer from one labour to another, and where the specific kind is a matter of chance for them, hence of indifference. Not only the category, labour, but labour in reality has here become the means of creating wealth in general, and has ceased to be organically linked with particular individuals in any specific form. Such a state of affairs is at its most developed in the most modern form of existence of bourgeois society - in the United States. Here, then, for the first time, the point of departure of modern economics, namely the abstraction of the category "labour", "labour as such", labour pure and simple, becomes true in practice. (55)

In this passage Marx describes the conditions leading to the full development of abstract labor as involving the creation of wealth in general by means of the employment of labor which, because of its indifference, must invariably take the form of the labor of the bearer of the commodity labor-power. The creation of wealth in general - that is, of value - by means of the employment of the commodity

labor-power, just is the characteristic "life-process" of capital itself.

I think that the importance of the abstract labor concept for Marx's critique cannot be overestimated. He himself calls it "the whole secret of the critical conception." It is precisely this concept that is missing from the doctrine of Adam Smith and David Ricardo, and it is worth mentioning that its is the most conspicuous absence from the early economic writing of Marx himself. Marx's assessment of his predecessors, in a footnote in the section on fetishism of volume I of Capital, is plain:

As regards value in general, it is the weak point of the classical school of Political Economy that it nowhere, expressly and with full consciousness, distinguishes between labour, as it appears in the value of a product, and the same labour, as it appears in the use-value of that product. Of course the distinction is practically made, since this school treats labour, at one time under its quantitative aspect, at another under its qualitative aspect. But it has not the least idea, that when the difference between various kinds of labour is treated as purely quantitative, their qualitative unity or equality, and therefore their reduction to abstract human labour, is implied. (56)

The inability of the political economists to come to grips with abstract labor might be due in part to an overly empiricist cast of thought on the part of the men who were the friends - and intellectual intimates - of David Hume and James Mill, respectively. Even though Marx, in the passage above, writes as though abstract labor might be counted merely as a mental abstraction on the part of the observer, such an interpretation is not consonant with the role he assigns to abstract labor in his critical recasting

of value theory. It plays a dynamic role, more and more coming to dominate - in the guise of capital - the production process as a whole. And it is precisely this dynamism that the classical political economists were unprepared and unable to confront. For they did not suspect that capitalist production had a socio-historical dynamic rather than a mere natural order, that is, they did not imagine nor think it as an historically specific form of production. So, they did not suspect that the phenomenal forms in which capitalist relations appeared were specific also. In the text to the note of Marx's just quoted, Marx points out that the founders

never once asked the question why labour is represented by the value of its product and labour-time by the magnitude of that value. These formulae, which bear it stamped upon them in unmistakeable letters that they belong to a state of society, in which the process of production has the mastery over man, instead of being controlled by him, such formulae appear to the bourgeois intellect to be as much a self-evident necessity imposed by Nature as productive labour itself. (57)

Thus we return to the "historical hypothesis", as I have called it, and its central role in the critique that Marx formulates of his predecessors (and contemporaries) among the political economists.

6

I have stressed the importance of the concept of "abstract labor" for Marx's critique; its obverse side is the phenomenon of the fetishism of commodities, which runs through the entire length of Marx's mature political-economic writings and is at the center of its

critical focus. They are obverse in that abstract labor is the form of human productive activity whose reality and power is phenomenally shown in the fetish character of value-forms generally. The fetishism of commodities is the modality through which "the process of production has the mastery over man, instead of being controlled by him," as Marx puts it above. The fetishism of commodities describes a form of appearance of the social production process: the social relations of producers takes the form of relations between things. These value relations in turn are merely relations between the things - products - which seem to bear values in the same way they bear their natural properties. So the products of human labor - the results of human social activity - appear to the agents of production as the seemingly natural (I will write "naturalist") forces that circumscribe and determine the course of the agents' own activity.

In the first published presentation of his political-economic theory, the Contribution to the Critique of Political Economy of 1859, Marx writes that

...it is a characteristic feature of labour which posits exchange-value that it causes the social relations of individuals to appear in the perverted form of a social relation between things. The labour of different persons is equated and treated as universal labour only by bringing one use-value into relation with another one in the guise of exchange-value. Although it is thus correct to say that exchange-value is a relation between persons, it is however necessary to add that it is a relation hidden by a material veil....Exchange-value thus appears to be a social determination of use-values, a determination which is proper to them as things and in consequence of which they are able in definite proportions to take one

another's place in the exchange process, i.e., they are equivalents, just as simple chemical elements combined in certain proportions form chemical equivalents. Only the conventions of our everyday life make it appear commonplace and ordinary that social relations of production should assume the shape of things, so that the relations into which people enter in the course of their work appear as the relations of things to one another and of things to people. (58)

Though Marx does not call this phenomenon "fetishism" in this text, his characterization of it here is conformable to the discussion in the section on fetishism of Capital. I want to bring out several points concerning the fetishism of commodities here.

In the first place, fetishism is a form of appearance that is produced wherever commodities are: Marx claims that "...the Fetishism which attaches itself to the products of labour, so soon as they are produced as commodities...is therefore inseparable from the production of commodities."(59) It is because he believes fetishism to be the unfailing accompaniment of commodity production - and not, as has been claimed, because Marx was anxious to derogate the critics of value theory - that the section on fetishism concludes the discussion of commodities.(60) Though fetishism occurs wherever commodity exchange does, it acquires the force of the "commonplace" only when commodity production becomes generalized, and, particularly, when labor-power itself comes to be treated as a commodity. Those are the conditions that developed capitalist production brings about wherever it establishes itself. Here again the features of commodity production

resultant from abstract labor acquire a growing significance and extension as the forms of abstract labor themselves develop in the capitalist mode of production.

Secondly, though the fetishism of commodities is a form of appearance of the relations between producers, it would be wrong to treat this fetishism as a mere appearance, a sort of false consciousness, a mistaking of what is the case. Fetishism is not a matter of psychology, even "market psychology" - it is the result of the necessary form of appearance of social relations of production in the capitalist mode of production and of the practices that reproduce those relations. This is because capitalist labor processes are related through - mediated by - the social interchange of commodities, which is an ineluctable feature of a mode of production centered in the market. Thus money, and capital itself, are social relations, which arise and are expressed in determinate forms of the circulation of commodities. They are therefore forms of a process in which social relations, mediated through the the interchange of commodity objects, come to be represented or embodied in a specific set of those objects.

Therefore the fetishism of commodities, as well as other forms of fetishism, do not afflict only certain political economists or other bourgeois theorists, but are social products of abstract labor to which all agents of production are subject. Fetishism is a condition of the

reproduction of the capitalist mode of production. It is the necessary commonsense reflection of the everyday practices that constitute and reproduce capitalist production relations. Though the social relations of labor are in fact obscured by the form they take in the exchange of commodities, the relations of commodities in exchange are just as much actual relations of production as the labor processes they veil. It is worth noting that, in describing the fetishism-effect in chapter one of Capital, Marx emphasises the permanence of the opacity of capitalist exchange relations relative to the potentially critical discovery represented by the labor theory of value

[W]hen we bring the products of our labour into relation with each other as values, it is not because we see in these articles the material receptacles of homogeneous human labour. Quite the contrary: whenever, by an exchange, we equate as values our different products, by that very act, we also equate, as human labour, the different kinds of labour expended upon them. We are not aware of this, nevertheless we do it....The recent scientific discovery, that the products of labour, so far as they are values, are but material expressions of the human labour spent in their production, marks, indeed, an epoch in the history of the development of the human race, but, by no means, dissipates the mist through which the social character of labour appears to us to be an objective character of the products themselves. (61)

That fetishism is not merely a matter of ideas is indicated by the fact that it is not susceptible to correction theoretically as an incorrect idea might be. It is an appearance that persists, even for those who have "theoretically overcome" it. The practical elimination of fetishism is an historical process, not a personal one. As Marx writes a few pages later,

The life-process of society, which is based on the process of material production, does not strip off its mystical veil until it is treated as production by freely associated men, and is consciously regulated by them in accordance with a settled plan. (62)

(This is, perhaps, a socially-specific invocation of the claim that reason has insight only into that which it produces after a plan of its own.)

Commodity Fetishism is sometimes regarded as Marx's final word on the "necessary illusions" that are part of the structure of the capitalist mode of production. In fact, the fetishism of commodities is only the first form of fetishism that is encountered in Marx's analysis of capitalist production. Marx extends the notion of fetishism to apply to money and capital as well. Thus, in the 1859 presentation, writing of fetishism, Marx goes on to claim that

[t]his mystification is still a very simple one in the case of a commodity. Everybody understands more or less clearly that the relations of commodities as exchange-values are really the relations of people to the productive activities of one another. The semblance of simplicity disappears in more advanced relations of production. All the illusions of the Monetary System arise from the failure to perceive that money, though a physical object with distinct properties, represents a social relation of production. As soon as the modern economists, who sneer at the illusions of the Monetary System, deal with the more complex economic categories, such as capital, they display the same illusions. This emerges clearly in their confession of naive astonishment when the phenomenon that they have just ponderously described as a thing reappears as a social relation and, a moment later, having been defined as a social relation, teases them once more as a thing. (63)

Other forms of fetishism become increasingly important as these more developed forms of appearance of social labor come to play a decisive role in the social production

process. But Marx's exposition depends on the logical primacy of commodity fetishism, since all other forms of social wealth arising in the capitalist mode of production are for him developments of the commodity-form.

Thus, just as my "realist" interpretation of Marx's concept of abstract labor involves the articulation of a series of increasingly developed forms of abstract labor in modelling it as an increasingly dominant feature of the social labor process in the capitalist mode of production, so the conception of fetishism also requires a dynamic of a succession of forms of disassembling social practice. This unfolding is not necessarily manifest as a linear temporal series; money fetishism does not necessarily appear after commodity fetishism per se. The dynamic here is primarily of a logical development. Abstract labor and fetishism are thus aspects of the same process: the spontaneous elaboration of social labor through the activity of formally independent agents of production in the absence of conscious social regulation. This process involves the development of forms of the appearance/existence of abstract labor, the three decisive such forms being, in the order Marx treats them, and which he claims is their logical order - the commodity, money, and capital.

Abstract labor and fetishism are both features of the form of appearance of social labor under conditions of generalized commodity production. Labor is social insofar as it presupposes a given degree of development of

technique and of the material infrastructure of production, as well as advancing that development; and insofar as this development gives rise to a technical division of labor in which distinct tasks or roles in production devolve upon different individuals. This technical order is overlaid with property and power relations which come to be identified with the technical underpinning. What distinguishes social labor in the capitalist mode of production is not only its degree of development but also its mode of appearance: social labor appears as - takes the form of - abstract labor because and as the products of social labor appear as exchange-values. This phenomenal form of social labor is itself the first moment of the fetishism of commodities. The social character of labor appears in this way because as formally free the agents of production are only related socially through the relations of their commodities. In the 1859 presentation Marx writes that

the conditions of labour which creates exchange-value are social categories of labour or categories of social labour, social however not in the general sense but in the particular sense, denoting a specific type of society....Furthermore, in exchange-value the labour-time of a particular individual is directly represented as labour-time in general and this general character of individual labour appears as the social character of this labour. The labour-time expressed in exchange-value is the labour-time of an individual, but of an individual in no way differing from the next individual and from all other individuals in so far as they perform equal labour; the labour-time, therefore, which one person requires for the production of a given commodity is the necessary labour-time which any other person would require to produce the same commodity.
(64)

The social character of the individual's labor is expressed in its being socially useful - and this takes the form of its being productive of both use-values and productive of value(s) as well. In the fetishism section of Capital Marx writes about this duality as an expression of the social character of labor:

The two-fold social character of the labour of the individual appears to him, when reflected in his brain, only under those forms which are impressed upon that labour in everyday practice by the exchange of products. In this way, the character that his own labour possesses of being socially useful takes the form of the condition, that the product must be not only useful, but useful for others, and the social character that his particular labour has of being the equal of all the other particular kinds of labour, takes the form that all the physically different articles that are the products of labour, have one common quality, viz., that of having value. (65)

When the production of social wealth takes the form of commodity production, all the social productive relations are mediated by relations between commodities. Thus the social usefulness of labor-processes can only be gauged via the relations of commodity exchange. These relations thereby enforce standards of productiveness and establish a norm of average - abstract - labor. This also brings about the establishment of exchange-proportions between various commodities. "When these proportions have, by custom, attained a certain stability, they appear to result from the nature of the products...."(66) Thus the value-forms, and the relations which they express, establish themselves through the exchange of commodities both serve to apportion the social productive resources in the absence of any conscious such apportioning on the part of the productive

agents, and also represent to the agents of production themselves the relations so established between their disjoint labor processes as a relation dictated by the properties of their products.

The effect is the same as if the different individuals had amalgamated their labour-time and allocated different portions of the labour-time at their joint disposal to the various use-values. The labour-time of the individual is thus, in fact, the labour-time required by society to produce a particular use-value, that is to satisfy a particular want. (67)

What goes on "behind the backs" of the agents of production is not merely the determination of the values of commodities but a sort of social allocation - though a form of social allocation which can only operate through a series of breakdowns. Thus, as Marx suggests above, the appearance produced by the mediation of social relations by commodity exchange is initially of a cooperative interplay of the activities of men with the powers of things - the origin of Adam Smith's "invisible hand."

The fetishism of commodities, and other illusory appearances that arise along with the value-form of appearance of social labor, though they are necessary and ineliminable features of the everyday world of the capitalist mode of production, can and do contribute to the misunderstanding of the processes of capitalist production. According to Marx, it is the opaque character of the products of social labor appearing as commodities that was at the heart of the classical economists' only partially successful formulations of the theory of value. In the

fetishism section of Capital Marx expresses this idea in a passage in which he discusses the historical context of the origins of political-economic thinking.

Man's reflections on the forms of social life, and consequently, also, his scientific analysis of those forms, take a course directly opposite to that of their actual historical development. He begins, post festum, with the results of the process of development ready to hand before him. The characters that stamp products as commodities, and whose establishment is a necessary preliminary to the circulation of commodities, have already acquired the stability of natural, self-understood forms of social life, before man seeks to decipher, not their historical character, for in his eyes they are immutable, but their meaning. Consequently, it was the analysis of the prices of commodities that alone led to the determination of the magnitude of value, and it was the common expression of all commodities in money that alone led to the establishment of their characters as values. It is, however, just this ultimate money-form of the world of commodities that actually conceals, instead of disclosing, the social character of private labour, and the social relations between individual producers. (68)

Here it might be appropriate to say a bit about Marx's view of the role of money.

7

The classical political economists began, in formulating the labor theory of value, with the problem of the determination of prices. Prices are the money-expressions of value relations, and the analysis of prices therefore presupposes a theory of money. Money, however, is a commodity that has assumed the special form of universal equivalent, of that commodity in whose bodily form all other commodities express their values. Money can, therefore, only be understood through, and as a constituent part of, an understanding of the commodity-form itself. But

the commodity-form is intelligible only as a social form of the product, only once the social equivalence relations that constitute the value-form are seen as relations of socialized labor. It is just this social constitution of value-creating labor that is obscured by the commonsense acceptance of the money-form as an unproblematic everyday feature of the commodity-world. Money, Christlike, takes upon itself the burdens and the sins of all commodities: in representing them (as values), it misrepresents itself (as just another commodity).

In the early chapters of Capital, Marx analyzes the money-form of value as a logical development of the commodity-form. In the second chapter of Capital, which follows the section on fetishism, he does this in a way that also reflects the historical development of the money-form. Uncovering the historical development of the money-form is a critical part of seeing through the mystification inherent in the money-form - the "magic" of money. Money is the universal equivalent,

[b]ut a particular commodity cannot become the universal equivalent except by a social act. The social action therefore of all other commodities, sets apart the particular commodity in which they all represent their values. Thereby the bodily form of this commodity becomes the form of the socially recognised universal equivalent. To be the universal equivalent, becomes, by this social process, the specific function of the commodity thus excluded by the rest. Thus it becomes - money. (69)

That is not to say that this process occurs independently of the action of human agents, or that parochial and traditional considerations do not enter in and initially

determine it. Marx is aware that the role of general social equivalent that is required by exchange

comes and goes with the momentary social acts that called it into life. In turns and transiently it attaches itself first to this and then to that commodity. But with the development of exchange it fixes itself firmly and exclusively to particular sorts of commodities, and becomes crystallised by assuming the money-form. The particular kind of commodity to which it sticks is at first a matter of accident....In proportion as exchange bursts its local bonds, and the value of commodities more and more expands into an embodiment of human labour in the abstract, in the same proportion the character of money attaches itself to commodities that are by Nature fitted to perform the social function of a universal equivalent. Those commodities are the precious metals. (70)

The development of the world market thereby promotes and propels the development of abstract labor, of the value-form as the expression of abstract labor, and of the money-form as the materialization of the value-form of the commodity. These three are mutually conditioning and mutually constituting forms of the materialization of social labor. Once this process of development has firmly secured the money-form as universal money - gold-bullion - the results of the process acquire the fixity of natural phenomena and the activity of the agents of production as determined by these seemingly "natural" forms, becomes "second nature."

What appears to happen is, not that gold becomes money, in consequence of all other commodities expressing their values in it, but, on the contrary, that all other commodities universally express their values in gold, because it is money. The intermediate steps of the process vanish in the result and leave no trace behind. Commodities find their own value already completely represented, without any initiative on their part, in another commodity existing in company with them. These objects, gold and silver, just as they come

out of the bowels of the earth, are forthwith the direct incarnation of all human labour. Hence the magic of money. In the form of society now under consideration, the behaviour of men in the social process of production is purely atomic. Hence their relations to each other in production assume a material character independent of their control and conscious individual action. (71)

Once the money-form is produced, "spontaneously", by the aggregate actions of the agents of production, its character as a product of their activity becomes obscured by its form as embodied in specific commodities, that is, by the form that their own relations as commodity-owners and activity as commodity-producers continues to take. The products of human activity only appear as commodities insofar as they appear as exchange-values: the possibility of such an appearance or mode of social existence is created by the existence of a universal equivalent. Thus, logically, the development of the commodity-form necessitates the development of the money-commodity. These two are both modes of appearance of social labor - which can only manifest itself and develop, given conditions of the formal freedom and equality of the individual agents of production and the absence of collective social control. The absence of social control here takes the form of the mediation of social relations by the exchange-relations of commodities and the consequent fetishism of commodities.

8

Let me sum up the argument up to this point. I have been trying to indicate the radical departure of Marx's theory of value from the train of thought pursued by Adam

Smith and David Ricardo. Marx's approach to political-economic problems was determined by what I have called his "historical hypothesis" - that the capitalist mode of production is a transient stage rather than a final endstate of the development of human society. This view allowed Marx to seek the contradictory determinations of economic phenomena which were working toward the dissolution of the capitalist regime; it also forced him to conceptually subvert the naturalistic complacency of even the most elementary, seemingly innocent constituents of the world of everyday political-economic concepts. Marx's critique of political economy is the articulation of this view through the elaboration of the logic of the political economists' categories, and the empirical substantiation of that elaboration. He did this by developing the distinction between the social form of appearance and the materially determined content of political-economic actuality. He employed this distinction to uncover the conditions of possibility of simple commodity production as the first moment in the development of the social relations of mature capitalism. These include the value-forms of the commodity and money as expressions of the development of abstract labor as the form of appearance of social labor.

By exhibiting the social determination of the forms of value - the exchange-value form of the commodity and the money-form - Marx was able to bring the social relations of the agents of production into focus as the scientific

object of political economy, while still "saving the appearance" of market-determination by showing the necessary effects of the mediation of social relations through commodity relations. Thus the theory of value formulated by Marx is not a theory of price-determination as it is with the classical political economists. Marx's theory of value is actually an analysis of the forms of appearance of the materially-determined conditions of social labor given generalized commodity production and the historical conditions of bourgeois society. Not merely the quantitative but also the qualitative determination of value - the value-form as the social form of wealth - is the subject of Marx's theory of value. As such, the concept of the fetishism of commodities is a moment of Marx's theory of value uncovering the sources of the mystery of value, of the obscurity, and vagueness, which the classical political economists found plaguing the subject.

NOTES

1. Quoted by A. Anikin, A Science in its Youth, Moscow: Progress, 1975, p. 257.
2. Karl Marx, A Contribution to the Critique of Political Economy, Moscow: Progress, 1970, pp. 20-21. (Hereafter cited as CCPE)
3. Marx/Engels Selected Correspondence, Moscow: Progress, 1975, pp. 293-4. (Hereafter cited as MESC)
4. CCPE, p. 20.
5. MESC, p. 200.
6. MESC, p. 96.
7. Karl Marx, Grundrisse: Foundations of the Critique of Political Economy, New York: Vintage, 1973, p. 101. (Hereafter cited as G)
8. MESC, pp. 144-145.
9. Adam Smith, The Wealth of Nations, Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1970, p. 131. (Hereafter cited as WN)
10. WN, p. 132.
11. WN, p. 133.
12. WN, p. 134.
13. WN, p. 133.
14. Karl Marx, Theories of Surplus Value, Moscow: Progress, (Vol. I, 1963; II, 1968; III, 1971), I, p. 77. (Hereafter cited as TSU)
15. WN, p. 133.
16. WN, pp. 134-5.
17. WN, p. 135.
18. Ronald L. Meek, Studies in the Labor Theory of Value, 2nd Ed., New York: Monthly Review, 1974, p. 66 et seq.
19. WN, p. 136.
20. Ibid.

21. Ibid.
22. WN, pp. 150-152.
23. WN, p. 155.
24. See, for example, Charles Gide and Charles Rist, A History of Economic Doctrines, Boston: D.C. Heath, n.d., p. 78.
25. David Ricardo, The Principles of Political Economy and Taxation, 3rd Ed., London: Dent, 1973, p. 5. (Hereafter cited as PPET).
26. PPET, p. 7.
27. Ibid.
28. See Jacob H. Hollander, David Ricardo: A Centenary Estimate, 1910, Baltimore, pp. 84-5.
29. PPET, pp. 18-19.
30. PPET, p. 18.
31. PPET, p. 23.
32. Ricardo, in another example in the same section, explicitly acknowledges that this is what is going on: "If I had a machine worth \$20,000 which with very little labour was efficient to the production of commodities, and if the wear and tear of such a machine were of a trifling amount, and the general rate of profit 10 per cent., I should not require much more than \$2000 to be added to the price of the goods, on account of the employment of my machine.... p. 24 (emphasis added). The wording here makes both profit and wear and tear appear to be additions to price.
33. PPET, p. 50, italics added.
34. PPET, p. 64.
35. PPET, p. 52.
36. Hollander, Op. Cit., pp. 77-78.
37. WN, p. 155.
38. MESOC, pp. 186-187.
39. Karl Marx, Capital, Vol. I, New York: International, 1967, p. 61. (Hereafter cited as C1).
40. C1, p. 10.

- 41. WN, p. 117.
- 42. C1, p. 37.
- 43. C1, p. 38.
- 44. C1, p. 44.
- 45. Karl Marx, Capital, Vol.II, Moscow: Progress, 1967, p. 17.
- 46. C1, p. 46.
- 47. Karl Marx, Capital, Vol.III, Moscow: Progress, 1971, p. 879.
- 48. See the quotation cited in note 42 above.
- 49. C1, p. 397.
- 50. This distinction was made and elaborated by Marx in a text that was intended as the final seventh part of the first volume of Capital. Entitled "Results of the Immediate Process of Production," it was omitted from the final version of the first volume by Marx, and only appeared in English in 1976, as an appendix to the Penguin edition of Capital I.
- 51. C1, p. 420.
- 52. C1, p. 73.
- 53. "Results of the Immediate Process of Production", included as an appendix to Capital, Volume I, trans. Ben Fowkes, New York: Uintage, 1976, pp. 1037-1038.
- 54. Ibid., p. 1038.
- 55. G, pp. 104-5.
- 56. C1, p. 80.
- 57. C1, p. 81.
- 58. CCPE, p. 34.
- 59. C1, p. 72.
- 60. Alex Callinicos has criticized the fetishism notion, in the spirit of Althusser, as being a Hegelian holdover in a revolutionary new type of scientific text. Callinicos attributes the location of the fetishism section to a conscious formal mimicry by Marx's of a central chapter of Hegel's Science of Logic representing the transition from

the Doctrine of Being to the Doctrine of Essence. Marx employs this formal model, according to Callinicos, in an attempt to break out of the impasse brought on by Samuel Bailey's criticism of the Ricardian formulation of value theory. See Callinicos' (unpublished) dissertation, "The Logic of Capital," Oxford, 1978.

61. CCPE, pp. 34-35.

62. C1, p. 74.

63. C1, p. 80.

64. CCPE, pp. 31-32.

65. C1, pp. 73-74.

66. C1, p. 74.

67. CCPE, p. 32.

68. C1, p. 76.

69. C1, p. 86.

70. C1, pp. 88-89.

71. C1, pp. 92-93.

TWO: BENTHAM

Utilitarianism represents one of the main currents in contemporary moral theory. My claim is that utilitarianism, at least that version of it formulated by Jeremy Bentham, is based on commonsense views about "goods" and their relation to human agents, views which depend for their cogency in part on the "invisibility" of the social relations that sustain the interchange of "goods" utilitarianism attempts to theorize. This is an instance of the feature of "enlightenment" social theory brought out sharply by Marx in his critique of the political economists.

Using some of the conceptions developed by Marx and examined in the previous chapter, I try in this chapter to reveal these features in Jeremy Bentham's version of utilitarianism. I choose Bentham to represent utilitarianism because he is generally taken to be the originator of the tradition of Anglo-American utilitarianism, and because he was a contemporary of the classical political economists whom Marx discussed. Both of these considerations make Bentham a logical starting-point for my project.

Though contemporary utilitarian theory arguably owes as much to John Stuart Mill, and to subsequent developments, as it does to Jeremy Bentham, I have not

attempted to encompass the post-Benthamite developments in my discussion. What Mill did was to try to rectify what he perceived to be inadequacies in Bentham's presentation by broadening the notion of utility to meet the contemporary objections, mainly to Bentham's hedonism. In doing so, however, Mill gave up the simplicity and thus some of the appeal of the original conception. Whether Mill's efforts boosted the fortunes of utilitarian theory or ultimately helped to undermine it is the subject of considerable discussion even today. I could not possibly discuss the sophistications brought to utilitarian theory by Mill and subsequent writers in a careful way within the confines of a dissertation: I have chosen not to do so at all.

This chapter is divided into two sections. In the first I present Bentham's account of utilitarian theory, and in the second I offer a "reading" of that account derived from Marx's critique of political economy.

1

Utilitarianism is a distinctively modern form of ethical theory. Elements of the classical utilitarian doctrine, hedonism, for example, can be traced back to writers of classical antiquity. But the full conception had to await the eighteenth century "enlightenment" for English and French writers to work it out in details.

A close inspection of the theory reveals clearly the traces within it of its enlightenment origins. This is true in spite of the substantial changes the theory has

undergone in the course of its two-hundred years of development. This is because utilitarianism, at least in its Benthamite incarnation, is a strong form of ethical theory: it claims to formulate rational criteria - in the spirit of modern scientific methodology - for resolving all practical questions, whether they concern "private" or "public" life. Indeed, it presents one criterion only - the Greatest Happiness principle, or the principle of utility - as the ultimate rational foundation for any ethical reasoning that can call itself "enlightened", or even "reasoning". As Bentham has it

Systems which attempt to question [the principle of utility], deal in sounds instead of sense, in caprice instead of reason, in darkness instead of light. (1)

Though Bentham subsequently retreats from the tone of "metaphor and declamation," he does not retreat from this assessment of the relation between utilitarianism and its rivals.

Utilitarianism, at least in its Benthamite incarnation, is a psychological, as well as an ethical hedonism. The problematic it constitutes is therefore one of the opposition of prejudices to reason. Though insisting on the difference between "is" and "ought", the doctrine is that the considerations in each sphere run in precisely the same tracks of connection and derivation.

Psychological hedonism is an account of the nature of human motivations: the view is that, in fact, human beings act always so as to pursue pleasure(s) and avoid pain(s).

Ethical hedonism is an ethical claim about what ought to be pursued as the end of human action: the ethical hedonist believes that only pleasure(s) are good in themselves, only pain(s) are evil and ought to be avoided. Benthamite utilitarians affirm both doctrines: only pleasures are and ought to be pursued for their own sake, only pains are and ought to be avoided.

Bentham affirms both these views in the very first paragraph of the most important of his writings that he published himself, the Introduction to the Principles of Legislation and Morals of 1789. There he writes:

Nature has placed mankind under the governance of two sovereign masters, pain and pleasure. It is for them alone to point out what we ought to do, as well as to determine what we shall do. On the one hand the standard of right and wrong, on the other the chain of causes and effects, are fastened to their throne. They govern us in all we do, in all we say, in all we think: every effort we can make to throw off our subjection, will serve but to demonstrate and confirm it. In words a man may pretend to abjure their empire: but in reality he will remain subject to it all the while. The principle of utility recognises this subjection, and assumes it for the foundation of that system, the object of which is to rear the fabric of felicity by the hands of reason and law. (2)

The tone of this passage, of resignation to an invariable natural necessity, is uncharacteristic of Bentham, and does not reassert itself anywhere else in the text. Bentham does reiterate, more clearly, the doctrines of psychological and ethical hedonism. In the chapter "Of Motives", Bentham, in arguing that there is no such thing as a motive bad in itself, writes about his examples

In all this chain of motives, the principal or original link seems to be the last internal motive in

prospect: it is to this that all the other motives in prospect owe their materiality: and the immediately acting motive its existence. This motive in prospect, we see, is always some pleasure, or some pain; some pleasure, which the act in question is expected to be a means of continuing or producing: some pain which it is expected to be a means of discontinuing or preventing. A motive is substantially nothing more than pleasure or pain, operating in a certain manner.

Having summarized his hedonistic account of the psychology of motivation, Bentham adds a statement of his considered ethical view of pleasures and pains:

Now, pleasure is in itself a good: nay, even setting aside immunity from pain, the only good: pain is in itself an evil; and, indeed, without exception, the only evil; or else the words good and evil have no meaning. And this is alike true of every sort of pain, and of every sort of pleasure. (3)

Much of the subsequent discussion in the Introduction is concerned with the sources, kinds and values of pleasure(s) and pain(s). But Bentham does not - in the Introduction at any rate - try to demonstrate or prove his ethical hedonist claim. Rather, he proceeds by more or less equating pleasure with happiness, and then providing an argument that the principle of utility - the greatest happiness principle - is the sole legitimate principle of morality.

It is a strength of utilitarianism that its account of the actual motivations of moral agents fits flush against the value content of its foundational ethical principle. Surely that people do in fact pursue pleasure makes pleasure a more plausible candidate for the good in itself, if only because it seems more likely to be acted on, being a motivation already. If agents already act upon the motivation that the utilitarian moralist wants to instill,

the task of the moralist becomes one of bringing consistency, regularity and rationality to a mode of acting that is already extant. So Bentham's cause was one of enlightenment, of combating the prejudices that cover over and obstruct the rule of natural motivations. Of the principle of utility, Bentham claims that by

the natural constitution of the human frame, on most occasions of their lives men in general embrace this principle, without thinking of it: if not for the ordering of their own actions, yet for the trying of their own actions, as well as those of other men. There have been, at the same time, not many, perhaps, even of the most intelligent, who have been disposed to embrace it purely and without reserve. There are even few who have not take some occasion or other to quarrel with it, either on account of their not understanding always how to apply it, or on account of some prejudice of other which they were afraid to examine into, or could not bear to part with. For such is the stuff that man is made of: in principle and in practice, in a right track and in a wrong one, the rarest of all human qualities is consistency. (4)

Thus Bentham is the paradigmatic enlightener: ignorance, prejudice and mental sloth are his enemies; his instruments, reason and law.

Utilitarianism - per Bentham - takes pleasure and pain as givens. Pleasures and pains are sensations or states of consciousness. Bentham writes in the Introduction that "pleasures and pains may be called by one general word, interesting perceptions." (5) Further on, Bentham writes of pains and pleasures as "produced in men's minds by the action of certain causes." (6) Elsewhere Bentham refers to pleasure interchangeably as a sensation or perception. (7) In the fifth chapter of the Introduction, "Pleasures and Pains, Their Kinds", Bentham writes of pleasures and pains

as "experienced", as "derived from," "resulting from" or "accompanying" states of consciousness, beliefs, or acts of contemplation.(8) Pains are "acute and uneasy sensations," and "disagreeable sensations."(9)

There is a mechanistic causal model behind this conception: physical stimuli or patterns of motion or activity produce physiological states to which correspond sensations either pleasant or unpleasant. In discussing the sources of pain and pleasure, viewed as efficient causes or means of "giving a binding force to any law or rule of conduct," Bentham distinguishes four sources or sanctions: physical, political, moral and religious. Then he adds that

[O]f these four sanctions the physical is altogether, we may observe, the groundwork of the political and the moral: so is it also of the religious, in as far as the latter bears relation to the present life. It is included in each of those other three. This may operate in any case, independently of them: none of them can operate but by means of this. (10)

The source of every pleasure or pain is some physical event or stimulus. This cause, by imparting a force or impulse upon some bodily or sense organ, produces a state of consciousness. This physical-physiological determination of sensations is mediated only by the variability of what Bentham calls the sensibility. In the chapter "Of Circumstances Influencing Sensibility," Bentham puts the case as follows:

[T]he quantity of pleasure and pain runs not uniformly in proportion to the cause; in other words, to the quantity of force exerted by such cause. The truth of this observation rests not upon any metaphysical nicety in the import given to the terms cause, quantity, and force: it will be equally true in whatsoever manner

such force be measured. (11)

This makes clear that pleasures are always caused mediately by physical stimuli, in a manner that is in principle observable, calculable and predictable.

Though the effect, in terms of pleasures and pains, is always mediated by what Bentham calls the bias of a person's sensibility, Bentham devotes a solid chapter of the Introduction to a discussion of the many "circumstances influencing sensibility." Bentham makes two physical analogies, in attempting to characterize these circumstances. In one of these, the motion and direction of a ship propelled by the wind is influenced by the circumstance of the motion and resistance of the water. Bentham clearly believes that the circumstances in the case of human sensibilities are calculable to a degree of precision analogous to the case of the ship in the water. He discusses thirty-two distinct circumstances, and provides instructions for the calculations that are to be made with them. The entire enterprise, which he admits to only having begun, he dubs "moral physiology." (12)

The object of such a discipline is to be able to administer pains and pleasures, in the form of punishments and rewards, so as to maximize adherence to a system of law fashioned in the image of the greatest happiness principle. A method for the precise calculation of pains and pleasures as a function of physical forces and of the circumstances influencing the sensibility of individuals allows for the

transindividual comparison of the relative effects of the application of equal forces on distinct sensibilities. Such a method has the effect of evening out or levelling the effects of the punishing cause: more generally, of making all individual sensibilities as it were transparent to calculation, reducible to a standard bearer of states of consciousness.

It is worth noting here that there is no reason why this standard bearer of states of consciousness must be a human being, or rather why the concept cannot be generalized further to include non-human sentient beings. Indeed, in detailing the circumstances influencing sensibility, Bentham manages to consider most if not all the circumstances distinguishing one person from another, as recipients or sufferers of pleasure and pain. This makes possible the notion of a human being stripped of all distinguishing characteristics, a pure human bearer of states of - pleasurable or painful - consciousness. Such a pure human differs from some other non-human sentient being only in "purely natural" physiological circumstances which it should be possible to reduce in a similar way to measurable, calculable parameters. If pleasure and pain are real homogeneous entities, the pain of a poisoned rat is commensurable with that of a jilted lover.

It is because states of consciousness can thus be regarded only insofar as they are the outcome of the physical action of outward stimuli upon the physiology of

naturally constituted standard sentient beings, that the pleasures and pains with which the utilitarian deals are susceptible to transindividual quantitative comparisons. This is the means by which Bentham is able to transform pleasures and pains into parcels of pleasure and pain, which he calls "real homogeneous entities." (13) It is this approach toward the universalizability of the conditions of morally relevant pain-bearership that allow Bentham to make these famous comments in a note to the last chapter of the Introduction:

The French have already discovered that the blackness of the skin is no reason why a human being should be abandoned without redress to the caprice of a tormentor. It may come one day to be recognized, that the number of the legs, the villosity of the skin, or the termination of the os sacrum, are reasons equally insufficient for abandoning a sensitive being to the same fate. What else is it that should trace the insuperable line? Is it the faculty of reason, or, perhaps, the faculty of discourse? But a full-grown horse or dog is beyond comparison a more rational, as well as a more conversable animal, than an infant of a day, or a week, or even a month, old. But suppose the case were otherwise, what would it avail? the question is not, Can they reason? nor, Can they talk? but, Can they suffer? (14)

From the formal point of view, there are no sufficient reasons, according to Bentham, for disallowing non-human bearers of pains and pleasures from ethical considerations. It is the pleasure or pain, and not the particularities of the bearer of it, that is always the focus for a Benthamite utilitarian.

So far I have tried to show how Bentham's physicalistic point of departure leads to a pattern of argument for disregarding - or working around - the

particular characteristics of the bearers of pleasure and pain. By factoring out the bearer, as it were, we arrive at the pleasure itself as a purely physicalistic, "natural" entity. Though this is not the same thing as measuring the pleasure, it makes the measurement of the pleasure possible. Measuring pleasure turns out to involve a number of distinct considerations.

Bentham elaborates a method of calculating or measuring what he calls the "value" of particular pleasures or pains in the fourth chapter of the Introduction. Bentham's concept of "value" is different from the political economists', yet it is intended to serve the same function, in a different sphere, that theirs does. The value of a pleasure or pain is determined as a complex function of its intensity, duration, certainty, propinquity, fecundity, purity and extent.(15) These are taken to be definite, calculable and naturally-given properties of the pains and pleasures themselves. These are not conventional, nor historically variable, quantities. Their character as natural properties stems from the physical characteristics of the exciting cause of the pleasure or pain itself. Each exciting cause, being a physical event of stimulation, has a precise degree of force, duration of application, probability of occurrence, temporal location relative to the present moment, and a set of specific causal interconnections with other causes or sources of related pleasures and pains. Bentham employs

these physicalist properties, considered as properties of the cause of pleasure or the act which constitutes such cause, to measure the goodness of the tendency of the act, and he employs them considered as properties of the pleasures and pains themselves, to construct a measure of the value of the pleasure or pain. In the Introduction he does not work out a determinate formula for the value as a function of these variables. It seems clear that he intends that this be the ultimate outcome of his utilitarian project, even though he concedes that such a calculation may not be practical in many cases. (16)

The end of policy, whether personal or governmental, is, for the Benthamite utilitarian, happiness or felicity. Happiness is achieved simply by maximizing pleasures and minimizing pains. Actually, happiness for the Benthamite is not strictly speaking, something to be achieved: such a conception would involve absolutizing what for a Benthamite is a strictly relative term. With happiness it is always a matter of more or less, according to Bentham. The more pleasure, the more happiness: the less pain, the less unhappiness. Bentham nowhere goes beyond this. He uses "happiness" synonymously with "pleasure", an identification he explicitly makes in a late work. He makes a distinction of sorts in writing:

Happiness is a word employed to denote the sum of the pleasures experienced during that quantity of time which is under consideration, deduction made or not made of the quantity of pain experienced during that same quantity of time. (17)

Since pleasures and pains registered and compared can be evaluated relative to the physicalist criteria enumerated above, acts can be graded on a scale of the amount of happiness they produce. That act, or policy, or rule, is right which produces the greatest amount of happiness. Bentham describes the goal of the legislator in these terms:

the happiness of the individuals, of whom a community is composed, that is their pleasures and their security, is the end and the sole end which the legislator ought to have in view: the sole standard, in conformity to which each individual ought, as far as depends upon the legislator, to be made to fashion his behaviour. (18)

Here the aggregative concept of happiness stands out: security is a good solely insofar as it forms the condition for the untroubled pursuit of pleasures.

Happiness is reducible to pleasure, to pleasurable states of consciousness. Because happiness is just a matter of pleasures and pains, the happiness(es) of distinct individuals are homogeneous: "happiness" is, for the utilitarian, a mass noun. Happiness can thus be maximized over a population: the happiness of a population is the aggregate of the happiness(es) of the members of the population. Already in the first chapter of the Introduction Bentham sets out the additive concept of the community: after specifying that "[t]he interest of the community is...the sum of the interests of the several members who compose it", he "clarifies" the expression "interest of the individual" with this statement.

A thing is said to promote the interest, or to be for the interest, of an individual, when it tends to add to the sum total of his pleasures: or, what comes to the same thing, to diminish the sum total of his pains.
(19)

Because happiness is a summable homogeneous mass, there can be no principled basis for the exclusion of any quantum of happiness from the summation. Sentience alone, as Bentham seems to suggest above, is the condition for consideration in the course of ethical calculation. The effectivity of an act or policy, the extensiveness of the net of its consequences, alone determines the range of consequences that must be considered. Boundaries and limits on the range of calculation can be imposed only by considerations of expediency, not of principle: the requirement that calculations be "manageable", the utility of respecting conventional political divisions, etc. In one of his last written memoranda, Bentham characterized himself as follows:

J.B. the most ambitious of the ambitious. His empire - the empire he aspires to - extending to, and comprehending, the whole human race, in all places, - in all habitable places of the earth, at all future time. (20)

This ambition of Bentham's - whose instrument, he adds, is philanthropy - is fully consistent with the theory Bentham develops. Indeed, the theory requires such an ever-expanding ambit of ethical concern, which, as we saw, Bentham does not confine to the human alone.

Happiness, physiologically considered and, ultimately, physically determined - as it is for the Benthamite

utilitarian - escapes every point of view, and is independent of perspective and ownership. Happiness as a sum of pleasures, is an objective, physically determined quality, not a subjective, personal one. It is felt, or experienced, and this is a crucial fact about it. But this fact, because it holds universally for all happiness(es), and does not effect their relative valuation, drops out of the Benthamite utilitarian's considerations. What each happiness counts for is strictly a function of its physical coefficients, and is in no way effected by its "social coordinates" relative to the site of calculation. Bentham might therefore be seen as doing for happiness what his beloved predecessor Locke did for the so-called secondary qualities.

Thus the imperative toward universalization arises both from the indeterminacy of perspective of Benthamite utilitarianism's key category, happiness, and from the specificity of its fundamental procedural mechanism, maximization. If happiness is to be maximized, its extension - the expanse of its domain - necessarily becomes a focus of attention. Each counts for one, then, because each is, due account being taken of what Bentham calls "bias of sensibility," equally a bearer of pains and pleasures, happiness and sorrow. Because each counts for one, the success of a utilitarian policy is proportional to the extent of its effectivity, the size of the community it creates.

Utilitarian policy and practice, per Bentham, does aim to create a community - of knowledge and regard. This community is defined by attitudes and practices of its members. Each member knows the considerations entertained by and the principle informing the deliberations of all the others. This is the source of the security and certainty of expectation that makes possible the achievement and maintenance of happiness by each individual. Every individual, in principle, enters the calculations of each, equally and without distinction.

Bentham, in the preface to his Introduction, makes clear that he thinks of himself as creating a new science - "political and moral science." (21) Based as it is on the empirically established causal connections of pleasure and pain to the aversions and pursuits of human beings, Bentham regarded his utilitarianism as a deductive theory, modelled on the Euclidean presentation of plane geometry as well as on Newtonian physical science. The fundamental principle - the greatest happiness principle - is not, according to Bentham, susceptible of any "direct proof." This is because "that which is used to prove everything else, cannot itself be proved: a chain of proofs must have their commencement somewhere." (22) The first principle is rather "proven" dialectically: by a process of elimination. Bentham argues that every attempt to overthrow the greatest happiness principle in fact covertly appeals to it.

Thus all complexity and all sources of divergent

considerations are weeded out of ethical reasoning from the start. It seems as though no moral dilemmas can arise, since the only source of ambivalence would be a dead-even tie between the utilities of two alternative courses of action: none of the bite of a dilemma in that. The complexity, for the Benthamite, is all in the chains of consequence.

There is one striking ambivalence in Bentham's Introduction that slackens the march of triumphant certainties. It surfaces in the last chapter, in the course of a discussion of the relation between legislation and private ethics. The difficulty is prefigured on the very second page, where Bentham first formulates the principle of utility as

that principle which approves or disapproves of every action whatsoever, according to the tendency which it appears to have to augment or diminish the happiness of the party whose interest is in question....

This indeterminate expression awaits specification: whose interest should be in question ? Bentham is of two minds - torn between the individual and the community. So the question arises most sharply in the discussion of the relation between legislation and private ethics, which he sums up like this:

Private ethics teaches how each man may dispose himself to pursue the course most conducive to his own happiness, by means of such motives as offer of themselves: the art of legislation (which may be considered one branch of the science of jurisprudence) teaches how a multitude of men composing a community, may be disposed to pursue that course which upon the whole is the most conducive to the happiness of the whole community, by means of motives to be applied by

the legislator. (23)

This answer is at least straightforward: private ethics guides the individual in pursuing his own happiness by manipulating his existing motives, whereas legislation guides the community of individuals in pursuing its/their happiness(es) through the manipulation of existing motives and the creation of new ones by means of punishments etc.

Bentham's discourse does not abide by this conception, however. In the course of the discussion there are passages like these:

There is no case in which a private man ought not to direct his own conduct to the production of his own happiness, and of that of his fellow-creatures....Every act which promises to be beneficial upon the whole to the community (himself included) each individual ought to perform of himself. (24)

It is clear from the context of these remarks that Bentham is discussing the demands of private ethics. Moreover, Bentham characterizes the man who acts upon the dictates of private ethics as a man of prudence, probity and beneficence.(25) This surely suggests a conception of private ethics enlarged beyond the simple pursuit of one's own happiness.

The difference between these two conceptions of private ethics lies in the dictates of probity and beneficence, since prudence involves nothing more than a correct understanding of the circumstances on which the happiness of the individual depends. Probity and beneficence both suggest a concern for the happiness of others over and above a self-interested concern with one's

own happiness. Bentham asks

What motives (independent of such as legislation and religion may chance to furnish) can one man have to consult the happiness of another?...In answer to this, it cannot but be admitted, that the only interests which a man at all times and upon all occasions is sure to find adequate motives for consulting, are his own. (26)

Bentham goes on to invoke the motives of sympathy, and "the semi-social motives of love of amity and love of reputation," while clearly conceding the superiority, in most cases, of the self-interested motives to those that are even partially other-regarding or "semi-social". As Sidgwick notes, Bentham "does not go on to affirm that a completer knowledge of consequences would show him [the utilitarian calculator] always adequate motives for aiming at general happiness." (27)

The upshot is a stronger and a weaker version of the Benthamite utilitarian "private ethic": the one involving effective motives of benevolence producing acts not narrowly self-interested; the other restricting motivation to a prudent and understanding pursuit of private interest. The first view is, perhaps, morally more appealing, but less realistic; the second, morally weaker version is more plausible, closer to observable behavior. Sidgwick suggests, based on Bentham's later, posthumously published manuscripts, that the gap between the two versions can be closed on the assumption that there is in fact a "universal harmony of interests," that is,

that, in actual human life as empirically known, the conduct most conducive to general happiness always

coincides with that which conduces most to the happiness of the agent. (28)

Whether or not this was, as Sidgwick claims, Bentham's view, his writing suggests another way of posing the problem. Given the world as it is, it is incumbent upon those who will to embrace the stronger version of "private ethics." These are the utilitarian legislators, whose efforts will be bent toward creating a society in which a "universal harmony of interests" exists. The utilitarian legislator employs the same procedure as any utilitarian calculator; only his goal is more expansive. The object of the utilitarian legislator is to maximize the happiness of an entire community, and to devise law and policy to that end. The utilitarian legislator must therefore be more of a psychologist, more of a social engineer than the ordinary utilitarian calculator. His challenge is to orchestrate the fates of the individual citizens so that their individual interests each commands each of them to act in such a way as to maximize the interest of the community. That is a problem of social engineering: its solution creates the conditions for the community of utilitarians. The success of the utilitarian legislator is the condition of possibility of the utilitarian citizen calculator.

It is not, therefore, accidental or strange that Bentham was one of a line of enlighteners for whom the "enlightened despot" or legislator was a hope for the reform of institutions. The despot, under advisement from utilitarian legislators, would introduce measures designed

to bring about a situation in which the demands of duty and of interest are in fact identical. In such a situation, the interest of every individual will coincide completely with their duty as "utilitarian citizens." That is, their own interests will motivate them to perform that act which is required by the greatest happiness principle itself. This is a situation in which one just does - from considerations of what is in one's interest - what one ought to do according to the principle of utility.

That the optimal utilitarian situation is imposed by a despot or a legislator, from above, on an - at best - passive population, is merely a practical expedient in the face of reality and does not decisively upset the calculations upon which the prescription of such a situation is based. So long as the result is achieved, the mode of its achievement is immaterial. It is, after all, not the form of activity itself that figures in the calculation of utilities, but only the net sensible result that is produced. Pleasure, or happiness, is always a product, an effect: the activity producing it, and its quality as a function of the form of the activity that produces it, cannot enter into a Benthamite utilitarian's consideration, except insofar as it effects the duration, intensity or other parameters in terms of which all utilitarian assessments are made.

There is a sense, then, in which the characteristic problem that - logically speaking - utilitarianism is

structurally fit to handle is what might be called the "coordination problem." This is the problem of how a multitude of separate individuals, each pursuing their own interest, can coordinate their activities so that the interests of each are satisfied. For presumably these persons' interests are at least in part contradictory or incompatible: the satisfaction of some individuals' interests is likely to be possible only at the expense of the frustration of some other individuals'. The resolution of this problem can come in the form either of a procedure for optimizing the overall satisfaction of aggregated individual interests, or else of a set of initial conditions or framework which assures that the individuals' endeavors to advance their interests result in acts that in fact tend to maximize the overall utility or happiness. The first one of these alternatives is the Benthamite doctrine of the utilitarian "citizen" calculator's reasoning procedure, and the second is the task formulated for, or by, the Benthamite utilitarian legislator.

It often seems as though the utilitarian calculator just is the legislator, or at least is modelled on the image of the ideal legislator. What appear to be the cardinal virtues of the legislator - impartiality and benevolence - are also the strengths of the utilitarian, built into the calculative procedure of the system. Just as the ideal legislator does not make personal decisions nor pursue personal goals, but rather takes all decisions and

chooses all goals in the name of a larger collectivity, so the utilitarian calculator does not pursue only her own happiness, but rather factors in her happiness as one of many in a long column of figures. The ability to seemingly forsake one's own perspective is a daunting demand of the utilitarianism of Bentham.

Thus, seemingly, the distinction between the personal and the global - between the private and the public - is effaced by the Benthamite utilitarian conception, at the same time as it is enforced. Precisely the same considerations - and only these - enter into the reasoning in each sort of situation: only the maximization of happiness is to be consulted. If, in "private" calculations, I can afford to restrict the ambit of my regard to a few persons, this is only because such a situation has been created by the action of the utilitarian legislator as in principle maximizing utility overall. But there are no differences in kind between the calculations of the utilitarian citizen and those of the legislator. The legislator merely sets the stage for the activities and deductions of the utilitarian citizen. Procedurally and methodologically, the model utilitarian citizen calculator is a legislator in himself. Bentham calls ethics "in as far as it is the art of directing a man's own actions...the art of self-government."(29)

It seems to be a peculiarity of the procedure of ethical reasoning suggested for the utilitarian calculator,

that, though she must take into account the peculiarities of character and custom in the determination of the constituents of the happiness of other persons, and of how to achieve those happiness(es), she must consciously ignore those features relative to her own needs and desires. Though she can act to satisfy her own desires as the desires of one of the many persons whose desires must be counted, she cannot allow those desires, personal habits of sentiment or affection, or feelings of disfavor or aversion to influence or skew the calculative process itself. These personal sentiments or aversions are morally relevant in determining the actions of the agents and thereby producing the happiness(es) of others, but are morally irrelevant overall in the deliberations of the agents themselves.

Utilitarianism is, from one point of view, that is, relative to the object of the utilitarian calculator's act, indifferent to custom and tradition, looking only to pleasure and happiness. That is to say, in trying to further the pleasures and the happiness of other persons, an agent, as utilitarian calculator, must respect their habits, preferences, and customs. One can only directly or immediately be made happy in the way that one customarily or traditionally expects and has come to find one's happiness. To maximize the happiness or the pleasures of a person, one must take them as they are, respecting their tastes, habits and sensibilities. This, presumably, applies not only to others but also to oneself: if I want to please

myself, I can only do so by taking some, at least, of my desires, customary satisfactions, or tastes, as given.

Yet the utilitarian, as moral agent, cannot take herself as given: her desires, tastes and customary preferences cannot be allowed free play in the way they might have been otherwise. To be a utilitarian means to be capable of and willing to disregard or at least override one's own preferences and tastes in the name of maximizing utility overall. More: to be a utilitarian involves enshrining an ideal of the good agent as the goal of one's own endeavors, the object of one's personal yearning. One has to want to identify oneself as a person of a certain kind - one who can show complete evenhandedness and impartiality in calculating aggregate utilities. And this involves precisely a dissatisfaction, at least to some extent, with the person one is: that is with the unceasing demands of one's customary preferences and settled tastes. To be fully impartial, to be fully able to consider the overall utility as one's conscious goal, is to seek to strip oneself of the personal, idiosyncratic, that is to say the customary, traditionally ingrained patterns of preference and choice.

From one point of view, then, utilitarianism is ambivalent toward custom and tradition: insofar as they predispose and form our sensibilities for particular kinds of pleasures, they are necessary to the very project of pleasure-production and happiness-maximization. Yet any

specific body of custom, conventional as it is, cannot be given an unqualified endorsement, for there is no sense, apparently, to judging one set of customs preferable to another save on the basis of the quantity of pleasure it produces. Yet, it seems, initially, at any rate, that customs do not vary in the quantity but only in the quality of the pleasure they produce, or provide the possibility for.

The question suggests itself here: what desires, or patterns of preference would the "ideal utilitarian citizen" possess, or what set of customary practices would define her desires and aversions ? The utilitarian wants to maximize the pleasures and happiness all around. Thus the very concept of a utilitarian has necessary reference to pleasure and so presumably also to needs, desires. But which ones ? Either the already existing ones, those that just happen to be there, or to some ideal pleasures, desires and needs. These ideal pleasures etc., it seems, cannot derive any of their hue or coloring from so thin a specification. They remain indeterminate. Thus the utilitarian seems to be in the contradictory position of trying to free us of our customary preferences while still requiring a system of such preferences and being incapable of formulating an alternative system of its own.

2

The Benthamite system and project, this presentation of which is modelled mainly on the Introduction, seems to

have retained its overall contours throughout the course of Bentham's writings.(30) I now want to indicate the ways in which Bentham's views seems to replicate those features of the structure of classical political economic discourse that Marx regarded as illusory. The illusions involved a translation into theoretical terms of what he calls the fetishism of commodities and of related illusions. Marx viewed these illusions as stemming in part from an uncritical acceptance by the theoretician of various appearances and categories of everyday thinking about economic phenomena specifically connected to the rise of commercial activity and of the market, and in part from an attempt to impose a preconceived mode of analysis modelled on that of natural sciences rather than work out a method of analysis adequate to the task.

It will be worthwhile at this point to recall briefly a few key features of Marx's critique of the political economists. Both Smith and Ricardo, as well as their followers, start their investigations with the categories that the participants in the economic activity of their times, particularly the merchants and industrialists, commonly employed in the course of their activity - value, price, wage, profit, rent, interest, capital, and labor. Smith and Ricardo attempted, employing these categories, to sketch out and account for the regularities and functional relations existing between these "factors" in the economic life of their times. Examples of such "regularities" are

the inverse relation between profits and wages, the law of diminishing returns in agriculture, and the principle of comparative costs. Ricardo, urged on by James Mill, attempted to organize his analysis in the form of a deductive system of propositions building on the law of value.

Both of these writers, and the classical school generally, take the labor theory of value as given. Though Ricardo introduces nuances into the presentation, they both interpret the theory in the same way. Value relations and exchange-values, as well as other economic categories, are taken to be co-extensive with the division of labor, and thus given a transhistorical validity (Ricardo, for example, even speaks of "the hunter's capital, the weapon").

Value and exchange value are not distinguished, and though value is taken to be quantitatively determined by labor-time, the nature of value, its substance or status, is not investigated, and its qualitative relation to labor is not specified in any way. Value seems to be a property of commodities in the same way that use-value is: as a function of its physical, naturally-given properties, as a physicalist property. Value is only treated in its manifestation as exchange-value, that is, as the basis of the cost or price of the commodity, and not as an otherwise subsistent dynamic determination of economic phenomena. Exchange value is not distinguished as the form value takes

under specific conditions. Another way to put this is that the political economists consider value, that is exchange value, only in its quantitative aspect as a numerical proportion between two things, and not in its qualitative aspect as expressive of a relation between the producers of those things. Because the classical writers do not thus substantiate their notion of value, but treat it as a merely instrumental construct necessary to account for price, it is unavailable to them as the underlying reality of which wages, profit, rent, and interest are merely the successive phenomenal forms. Thus the attempt to "determine the laws which regulate" how "the produce of the earth...is divided among the three classes of the community" must from the beginning have recourse to a given rate of profit as well as wage rate: for there can be no internal connection between these two, except on the basis of the notion of value.

Also accepted is the common sense account of wages as the price or value of labor. According to this conception, the wage transaction is an exchange of equivalents in which the laborer receives the full value of the labor he has performed. Against this view, Marx points out that it is not labor itself that is the commodity the laborer sells to the capitalist, but labor power. The labor process is the process of the consumption of the labor power by the capitalist. This is an important shift because it creates difficulties for the apologetic argument that the wage

relation is no more than an exchange of equivalents. But it also represents a continuation of an analysis of labor itself which constitutes a distinctive feature of Marx's political economy. For the classic founders of political economy did not analyze labor itself, but restricted themselves to considering the products of labor as values.

These instances represent an interlinked set of theoretical hiatuses in the edifice of classical political economy that all stem in one way or another from the absence of any analysis of labor as a social process. The labor process is regarded here merely as a field for technique and physical wisdom - its intricacies and detail are not political-economic concerns but technological ones. Only the labor-time involved in the production of the commodity is relevant to the classical political economists - and that only for determining its value as the regulator of cost-price. But this labor-time necessary for the commodity's production is regarded as a purely physical(ist), technically-determined feature of the production process. Value is not produced by labor, on this view; rather, the expenditure of labor creates an object that - somehow - has a value. Value thus is not a representation of the social constitution of the commodity as a product of labor, but only a physicalist property of the commodity as the outcome of a physically determined technical process.

The tendency of the capitalist mode of production is

to generalize commodity production: since commodities are more and more produced with commodities from commodities - everything becomes a commodity. In becoming commodities, objects become (acquire) values. In this process the value-character of the commodity becomes not only a more universal but also a more significant and dominant feature of objects generally. Not only do objects become commodities, and thus values: this very process is also one in which the concept of "the object" becomes commodified. Objects come increasingly to be seen as having the characteristic of commodities - of possessing a determinate quantitatively measurable "value". In general, "value" is a conceptual determination quivering between the moments of the physicalistically objective property on the one hand and the merely subjective idiosyncratic judgment "of the beholder" on the other. But its social legitimacy - its social form as a category of political economy and as a commonsense category of economic agents - derives from a model of the reality of the physical object. What the individual values atypically, as an individual, is quaint, peculiar, the result of sentimentality, unless it ratifies the socially commonplace valuation of things seen as rooted in their objective properties. There may be things that are not commodities, that do not have a price: but this is a matter either of uselessness or lack of use-value (worthlessness), abundance, or the "sentimentality" or "inclinations of those who are desirous to possess them."

Jeremy Bentham begins with a category, or a pair of categories - pleasure and pain - that he takes uncritically as the foundation of his system. The consequence of this uncritical positing of pleasure is its character of "givenness". Pleasure and pain are regarded, by Bentham, as necessarily and distinctly identifiable sensations or perceptions. Our awareness of them is immediate and incorrigible. Bentham takes this capacity for awareness as a physically and biologically determinate universal feature of human beings. Physically induced visceral sensation is the paradigm of incorrigible awareness.

Yet at the same time, pleasure is for Bentham a pure universal, a generality. Every pleasure is a quantity of pleasure, an amount of what Bentham calls the "homogeneous real entity" pleasure. What experience amounts to, if we act prudently and calculate correctly, is an immense accumulation of "particles" of pleasure. There is never any suggestion in Bentham that he considers pleasures in this way solely as a means of constructing a viable ethical theory; this is the way pleasure(s) look to Bentham, this is how he thinks he feels them, or how he thinks the feeling of them. This way of thinking of them is not, however, a philosophical accomplishment of his, on his view, but simply a matter of accurately describing what all persons can observe for themselves.

Pleasure is a result, a product, an effect: what produces it is the activity of some exciting cause upon the

sensibility of a subject. If one acts to produce pleasure, the exertion is logically distinct from and physically mediated relative to the resulting sensation. The agent's activity, and the process that it inaugurates and which consummates it with a perceptual residuum of a quantity of pleasure, derives its sole significance for Bentham from this residuum, its and the agent's end. All activities are thus considered in the image of production. Production of a specific sort, it should be noticed: an activity whose end and aim is not merely an object satisfying some determinate and strictly local, singular need or desire, but rather an article of a generic substance, fashioned with an eye more toward what it will add to an ensemble than to its own distinct identity.

The image of commodity production can thus be seen secretly inspiring the sense of the prophet Bentham's utilitarian "golden age." For the political economists' "labor," he writes "action"; for their "value" inserts "pleasure"; then, standing back, he unfurls the banner under which he proposes to lead us out of the Egypt of our ignorance: "the maximization of happiness" replaces "the accumulation of capital" of Ricardo and the political economists, as the first and last commandment. But whereas Ricardo, who "regards the capitalist mode of production as the most advantageous for production in general, as the most advantageous for the creation of wealth" wants "production for the sake of production" (31), Bentham wants

happiness for the sake of - happiness, that is, literally, for the sake of - good feelings all around. Marx writes the following about Ricardo's conception and its critics:

To assert, as sentimental opponents of Ricardo's did, that production as such is not the object, is to forget that production for its own sake means nothing but the development of human productive forces, in other words the development of the richness of human nature as an end in itself. To oppose the welfare of the individual to this end...is to assert that the development of the species must be arrested in order to safeguard the welfare of the individual....Apart from the barrenness of such edifying reflections, they reveal a failure to understand the fact that, although at first the development of the capacities of the human species takes place at the cost of the majority of human individuals and even classes, in the end it breaks through this contradiction and coincides with the development of the individual....(32)

The most significant contrast to notice between the Benthamite end of the legislator's efforts and what Marx interpretively grafts onto the perspective of Ricardo, as against the complaints of his critics, is this: in Marx "the development of human nature" is linked to the development of individuality as such, if only in an indirect, historically mediated way. There is no mention of happiness here, as there is so rarely in the corpus of Marx's writing. Bentham, surveying the long "war which industry and ingenuity maintain with fortune" that has brought the "uninterrupted progress" of mankind out of the "past ages of ignorance and barbarism," expresses hopes for the "golden age", which

it is but too true, is not the lot of the generation in which we live: but, if it is to be found in any part of the track marked out for human existence, it will be found, I trust, not in any part which is past, but in some part which is to come. (33)

Here too the contrast between Bentham and Marx is basic. But I digress too long.

I have discussed Bentham's treatment of pleasure, such as it is: his focus on the quantitative determinateness of all its instances, his insistence on its character as sensation, that is, as accompaniments or results of sensations, perceptions or sometimes beliefs. It seems that Bentham was ambivalent about whether pleasures are sensations or perceptions on their own, which accompany or result from other sensations; or whether pleasures are features of sensations that are, in themselves, neither pleasurable nor unpleasurable. In the Introduction chapter on the kinds of pleasures and pains, Bentham alternates between these two views: he describes, e.g. the pleasures of wealth (number two on his list of "simple pleasures", right after the pleasures of sense) as "those pleasures which a man is apt to derive from the consciousness of possessing any article...."(34) Here the pleasure appears to be a sensation of its own, which is elicited by a preceding state of consciousness. And this is the rule with his characterizations of pleasure. Curiously, when Bentham comes to write of pains, he initially seems to shift perspective: he describes the pains of hunger and thirst as "the disagreeable sensations produced by the want of suitable substances which need at times to be applied to the alimentary canal."(35) Here the pain is just the sensation of hunger itself, the disagreeable quality of

that very sensation, and not some extra sensation added on. In general, though, his treatment of the other pains follows the model established for the pleasures.

Each of these alternatives poses distinct difficulties for Bentham's preferred account of things. For if pleasure is only an aspect of the distinct sensations that are pleasant, and is never available by itself, isolated and without admixture, it's not clear how one would go about measuring it - determining its "intensity, duration" and so forth, as Bentham proposes. If the experience of pleasure is a distinct sensation caused by some other - simple or complex - sensation, or accompanying it, it's hard to imagine what the object of it could be. For example, consider two of the "simple" pleasures Bentham lists in his brief catalogue, and his descriptions of them. The pleasure of health Bentham describes as

the internal pleasureable feeling or flow of spirits (as it is called,) which accompanies a state of full health and vigour; especially at times of moderate bodily exertion. (36)

Compare with this Bentham's description of "the pleasures of power":

the pleasures that accompany the persuasion of a man's being in a condition to dispose people, by means of their hopes and fears, to give him the benefit of their services: that is, by the hope of some service, or by the fear of some disservice, that he may be in the way to render them. (37)

Is it plausible to describe these two pleasures as being but two instances of the occurrence of the same sensation ? Or of their differing merely in intensity, duration,

propinquity, or some other measure of their "value" ? Or are these really, as Bentham seems to suggest, different "kinds" of pleasure ? And if so, doesn't this add a problem about their alleged commensurability, their mutual convertibility ? This is surely a familiar line of thought.

As I have mentioned already, there are strictly analogous problems about value, problems that afflict the common sense understanding of the phenomena of the capitalist mode of production, and that recur in the discussions of the political economists, as I have tried to show. Value is conceived commonsensically as a property of the commodity-object. This precisely is fetishism - social relations appearing as properties of objects. But value - as the property of an object or of a system of objects - can itself only appear as value given some material medium that serves the social function of representation of value: that medium, of course, is money.

The decisive role of the money-commodity in commodity-producing societies produces a further sort of fetishism above and beyond the simple fetish of the commodity. Money comes to have a magic power by means of which it can represent value in general as the determinant of so much in social life. Marx argues that it is only the "social action...of all other commodities" that creates the money-form of value, but that this process is hidden by the money-commodity system itself.(38) The mysteriousness of the commodity comes to be overshadowed by and translated

into the magical power of money. This double displacement, analyzed in detail in the first chapter of Capital, allows the conceptual difficulties to be transmuted into the mystical substance of gold, and the lingering wisps of confusion about entities, properties, and relations are swept away in the feverish rush to calculate and to amass.

It is therefore, perhaps, a telling fact that, early in his career as a utilitarian enlightener, Bentham entertained the idea that money should be used, and in fact is used, as a measure of pleasure. Bentham spent some time early on trying to work out the details of such a scheme. Apparently he abandoned the plan only because of the difficulties presented by the so-called principle of diminishing marginal utilities - exhibited by the fact that a given amount of money seemingly purchases a lesser pleasure - and so is more dispensable - for the richer man than for the poorer. As Bentham puts it:

Caeteris paribus - to every particle of the matter of wealth corresponds a particle of the matter of happiness....But the quantity of happiness will not go on increasing in anything near the same proportion as the quantity of wealth. (39)

For Bentham, the matter of wealth is money: that of happiness is pleasure. It is only the failure of their strict correlation that deterred Bentham in his projected hedonometry. (40)

What is interesting are the terms in which Bentham initially advanced the idea of employing money as the measure of pleasure and pain. In an early unpublished

manuscript written around 1782, he makes a lucid analogy.

The thermometer is the instrument for measuring the heat of the weather: the barometer the instrument for measuring the pressure of the air. Those who are not satisfied with the accuracy of these instruments must find out others that shall be more accurate, or bid adieu to Natural Philosophy. Money is the instrument for measuring the quantity of pain or pleasure. Those who are not satisfied with the accuracy of this instrument must find out some other that shall be more accurate, or bid adieu to Politics and Morals. (41)

Notice that the question raised by Bentham here is one of accuracy, not of the appropriateness or relevance of money to the measurement of pleasure. Money is declared to be, in actuality, the measure of pleasure: this is not a proposal or suggestion, but - it is claimed - a reality. If this view is right, then the notion of the value of a commodity must be taken by Bentham to be somehow emblematic of, or a surrogate for, pleasure. If the money-price is a monetary expression of "value", then "value" for Bentham can only be "pleasure", on the view that money is in fact the measure of pleasure.

There is a similar sort of slippage at the end of the Introduction chapter on value. Bentham there explicitly equates the value of "an article of property, an estate in land, for instance" with "the pleasures of all kinds which it enables a man to produce," that is, with the value (quantitative measure) of the pleasures its possession affords. Thus Bentham presents himself as merely generalizing and systematizing common usage - the valuing of things, via the medium of money - in the conception of a systematic "hedonometry." But of course, an estate in land,

to pursue Bentham's example, enables a man to produce pleasures of all kinds only because the existence of the universal equivalent, the money-commodity, and of the highly developed system of commodity-production that develops with and through it, enable articles of wealth with one set of natural properties to be transformed - socially - into other articles with other natural properties productive of distinct and diverse pleasures. Bentham, who does not see money as the socially necessary medium of all value-relations, and consequently does not understand the convertibility of all commodities as values into one another as the accomplishment of the social relations of simple commodity production, takes money to be a simple measure, and the convertibility of commodities as the natural interchangeability of naturalistically conceived pleasures. Bentham's treatment of pleasure conformably with the political economists' "value" - that which is measured in the money-price of a commodity - was crucial to the notion of a hedonometry employing money. This notion, in turn, was but a strong form of Bentham's requirement that pleasure(s) be measurable, the foundation of his version of utilitarian theory.

Bentham himself saw, in the early manuscripts at least, such an intimate relation between his overall views and his attempted use of money as a measure of pleasure. Though he is somewhat apologetic about his contemplated (and, he seems to think, confusingly, the actual)

employment of money (42), he also warns his reader:

Let no one therefore be either surprised or scandalized if he find me in the course of this work valuing every thing in money. 'Tis in this way only we can get aliquot parts to measure by. If we must not say of a pain or a pleasure that it is worth so much money, it is in vain in point of quantity to say anything at all about it. (43)

The last sentence here makes the claim clear: Bentham seems to have believed that the practical significance of the measurability of pleasure depends on the possibility of valuing it in money terms. To evaluate something is, for practical purposes, to measure it, that is, to put a price on it. This striking identification seems to have been obvious to Bentham. Yet such an identification is plausible only to the degree that the price of a commodity-object is treated as a naturalist function of its physical properties. Bentham's comparison of money to the thermometer and barometer - with its implicit identification of pleasure as the "natural element" whose uncharted turbulence the Benthamite must measure and subdue - conveys his sense of the deathlessness of the money-relation, of its static, naturalist character. That he sees pleasure in the same way, as frozen in immediacy as the qualities recorded by the above mentioned meteorological instruments, is indicated in his pseudo-tautologous claim that his penal prescriptions - based as they are on his notion of pleasure -

if they are just and proper now, would at any time have been so, and will be so every where, and to the end of time. They will hold good as long as pleasure is pleasure and pain is pain. (44)

Pleasure and pain, conceived naturalistically, are ever the same, since the conditions of their production are ever the same. This presumably means that the kinds of pleasure also are invariant historically (45): for otherwise the purely naturalist account of pleasure, on which Bentham's entire conception hangs, is destroyed. Thus Bentham's account entails the undecidability within the theory, of the questions: What sorts of pleasure should we promote ? Which activities or experiences should we teach our children to take pleasure in ? For if these questions can be sensibly asked, and if answers to them can be sensibly proposed, clearly the program of maximizing pleasures must be incomplete at best, that is, not the basis for a viable practical morality at all.

This difficulty - which in effect amounts to a shortcircuiting of the crucial ethical questions confronting any hedonism - Why pleasures ? which pleasures ? - stems, I think, from the imperative Bentham placed himself under, of measuring and maximizing - that is, of calculating - as the model of ethical thinking. But whatever the origin of this decisive feature of Benthamism, it is clear that in this case at least, Benthamite philosophy leaves everything substantially the same. While the pleasures of wealth, the pleasures of a good name, and the pleasures of power, are treated as basic simple pleasures, the very notion of a pleasure of labor Bentham regards as senseless:

Aversion is the emotion - the only emotion - which labour, taken by itself, is qualified to produce...In so far as labour is taken in its proper sense, love of labour is a contradiction in terms. (46)

Here, clearly, the abstract concept of labor, as the means - indifferent, troublesome, exhausting - to a purely generalized and homogeneous, merely quantitatively distinguishable end (a living (wage)), is taken as the paradigm of "labour in its proper sense." What occasions this interpretation, by Bentham, of labor - that is, human productive activity - as necessarily abstract labor, is the fact that wage-labor is the prevalent form of appearance of labor as such, and specifically the form of the development of abstract labor, in the period of the development of mature capitalist relations, that is, of the transition from what Marx calls the "formal subsumption" to the "real subsumption" of labor to capital. This "labour in its proper sense", as Bentham calls it, is, I think, not only given the significance of labour in general, that is, labor of whatever kind and under whatever conditions, but is also invisibly made the paradigm of all human activity. For a Benthamite, remember, all activity is merely the indifferent means to the production of a quantity of - homogeneous and merely quantitatively distinguishable - pleasure. The Benthamite is the agent who calculates with the sole end of maximizing happiness - that is, maximizing pleasure. Action is ethically right only as the condition of the production of the maximum of pleasure. All human activity is, for the Benthamite calculator, solely a means

of producing a residue of feeling, which is evaluated for theoretical and practical purposes solely in terms of its quantitative dimensions. Thus the Benthamite theoretical apparatus presents us with the peculiarity of treating a particular social form of the labor process not merely as the universal character of labor itself, but as the structural type of all human activity whatsoever. But whereas for labor Bentham can feel only aversion, he celebrates the possibilities of human activity, but only once it is plotted in the all-seeing eye, and choreographed by the hidden hand of the utilitarian legislator.

Even ethical reasoning itself, which is for Bentham a form of calculation, bears the marks of being a distant copy of the paradigm of abstract labor. Abstract labor is a form of labor, a form of human activity, that is indifferent to its specific concrete manifestation. The utilitarian calculator is indifferent to the concrete details of the situation at hand - the kinds of concrete pleasures possible in a given case: the question becomes one of quantities of homogeneous pleasure and pain. Abstract labor is labor that is not tied to one particular concrete task or set of tasks: utilitarian calculation is to be applied in all situations, to all sorts of action and consequence. Abstract labor is labor that is subordinated to the production of value as the sole end: utilitarian calculation is geared to the production of homogeneous pleasure as its sole end. The end of abstract labor is not

the laborer's own end: the value produced by abstract labor is both quantitatively distinct from and qualitatively different from the value of the product that is required by and produced for the laborer (the value produced by the laborer is capital which has augmented itself, whereas the value that (seemingly) accrues to the laborer - in the form of a wage - as a consequence of the labor process, is only the means to other commodity-objects as use-values necessary for the reproduction of labor-power). So much is also true for the end of the utilitarian calculator: for producing a general happiness he is allowed some specific happiness of his own (and the former is only an abstract means, for him, to the sensuous latter). Abstract labor is labor in which the individuality of the laborer's exercise of her powers is submerged: the resultant depends not on the laborer's individual powers but on the individual's mere conformity to a pattern of action that is purely general and specifically not susceptible to variations introduced by the distinctive perspective or powers of the individual. This feature is preserved in utilitarian calculation: a mode of thought that, I have argued, is conditioned on the suppression or containment of all personal preferences and desires.

Happiness, the Benthamite *summum bonum*, is not conceived primarily as an activity or a mode of activity. The activity of maximizing pleasures and minimizing pains is a means to happiness; it is not happiness itself. The

activity of maximizing pleasures - the utilitarian activity - begins with a calculation and culminates in the implementation of a strategy of action productive of pleasure. Happiness, says Bentham, consists in the enjoyment of pleasures.(47) Enjoyment is, first of all, the process or state of deriving gratification from an object. It is the immediate experiencing of pleasure. It therefore falls outside the concept of activity as a kind of causality of pleasures that is articulated in Bentham. Here, there is no indifferent means to an end considered only in its generic accumulation. Here the felt quality at last redeems the unmatched expense of all preceding effort. This quality of the experienced pleasure does not enter into the calculations nor the evaluation, but it is the indispensable condition for validating the activity as pleasure-effective. Whereas the activity is specified in terms of quantifiable physical characteristics that are naturalistically effective as pleasure-producing, the pleasure itself is an interior, nonreducible immediate experienced. The experience of it is not so much an act as it is a being-acted-upon of sensibility.

I have been arguing that the Benthamite version of utilitarianism is inadequate as a basis for whatever might be called a "marxist ethic": it is so because the elaboration of all its key categories reveals the hidden structure of the commodity fetishism which becomes an important feature of the commonsense conception of social

reality under conditions of generalized commodity production. Bentham was thus ultimately unable to think beyond those conditions, that is, to think them as historically specific, socially determinate conditions of human life. (This is exactly what Marx attempted to do.) Instead, Bentham takes the forms and relations of human productive activity complicit in the reproduction of those conditions as paradigmatic of human activity conceived generally as the unbending foundation of any social order. His conception of the tasks and possibilities of ethical and political theory is correspondingly "fetishized." The conceptions he fashions his theory with - of pleasure, the value of pleasure, of calculation as the form of practical reason and utility-maximization as the form of ethical activity - all bear the traces of Bentham's generalizing about the phenomena of commercial activity and capitalist production. I have tried to show how these marks of their origin ultimately incapacitate these categories, creating "first-order" difficulties that the theory is hard-pressed to resolve.

These features of Bentham's utilitarian theory are similar to some of the conceptual difficulties in Smith and Ricardo that occasioned Marx's critical elaboration of the political economists, discussed in the previous chapter. These sorts of problems, though exacerbated by the demands of an empiricist epistemological standpoint, are not the monopoly of late eighteenth-century English-speaking

theory, however. I argue in the next chapter that the leading contemporary challenger to Benthamite utilitarian ethical theory - Kantian ethical theory - is also ineliminably stained with fetishistic thinking and so also fails to provide an adequate grounding for any "marxist ethics."

NOTES

1. Jeremy Bentham, Introduction to the Principles of Morals and Legislation, Oxford, 1907, p. 2. (Hereafter cited as IPLM)
2. Ibid., pp. 1-2.
3. Ibid., pp. 101-102.
4. Ibid., p. 4.
5. Ibid., p. 33.
6. Ibid., p. 43.
7. In an unpublished manuscript of 1776 cited by David Baumgardt in Bentham and the Ethics of Today, Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1952, p. 566. (Hereafter cited as BET)
8. IPLM, pp. 33-42.
9. Ibid., pp. 38, 39.
10. Ibid., p. 27.
11. Ibid., p. 43.
12. Ibid., pp. 44-68.
13. Ibid., p. 44.
14. Ibid., p. 311.
15. Ibid., p. 30.
16. Ibid., p. 31. Bentham did make at least one sustained attempt to work out a detailed formula expressing the value of a lot of pleasure as a function of its physical parameters. See the unpublished manuscript of circa 1782, included as appendix IV in Baumgardt.
17. The identification of happiness as a synonym of pleasure is made in A Table of the Springs of Action, where Fifty five terms of pleasure, sixty seven of pain are given. See Baumgardt, p. 376. The passage quoted in the text is on p. 448.
18. IPLM, p. 24.
19. Ibid., p. 3.

20. A Bentham Reader, edited by Mary Peter Mack, New York: Pegasus, 1969, p. 369. (Hereafter cited as BR)
21. IPLM, p. xii.
22. Ibid., p. 4.
23. Ibid., p. 323.
24. Ibid., pp. 313-314.
25. Ibid., p. 312.
26. Ibid., pp. 312-313.
27. Henry Sidgwick, Outlines of the History of Ethics, Boston: Beacon, 1968, p. 243.
28. Ibid., p. 244.
29. IPLM, p. 310.
30. On the overall continuity of Bentham's views, see Ross Harrison's Bentham, London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1983.
31. Karl Marx, Theories of Surplus Value, Volume II, Moscow: Progress, 1968, p. 117.
32. Ibid., p. 118.
33. BET, p. 153.
34. IPLM, p. 34.
35. Ibid., p. 38.
36. Ibid., p. 34.
37. Ibid., p. 35.
38. Karl Marx, Capital Volume I, New York: International, 1967, pp. 87, 92.
39. BR, p. 268.
40. See the discussion of Bentham's views on money and the marginal utility of money in Harrison, pp. 156-160.
41. BET, p. 562.
42. "I beg a truce here of our man of sentiment and feeling: while from necessity and it is only from necessity, I speak and prompt mankind to speak a mercenary

language." BET, p. 562.

43. BET, p. 562.

44. Ross Harrison, *Op. Cit.*, p. 181.

45. A claim echoed, strangely, by the French critic Roland Barthes, who promulgated the slogan: No progress in pleasures ! What voluptuous pairings do history and ahistoricism, those witty matchmakers, conjure up !

46. Quoted by Rajani Kanth in his Political Economy and Laissez-Faire, Totowa, NJ: Rowman & Littlefield, 1986, p. 54.

47. IPLM, p. 70.

THREE: KANT

In this chapter I argue that Kantian moral theory is susceptible to criticisms along the same lines as the critique of political economy. I argue first that Kant's project of a critique of pure reason, though introduced in the second preface to the first critique by an analogy with the experimental sciences, relies rather on an overly intellectualist and observer-oriented conception of theoretical reason. Then, in discussing specifically Kant's argument in the third antinomy as a model of his conception of transcendental illusion, I argue that Kant's object-constitutivism, because he conceives it as transcendental rather than social activity, generates aporia reminiscent of those of the political economists Marx criticized. Finally, I show how this transcendentalization engenders some distinctive features of Kantian moral theory itself.

It may at first be questioned whether the discussion of Kant's first critique, and of his epistemology generally, isn't beside the point in a critique of Kantian moral theory. Kant's views of property and morals may be instances of bourgeois ideology, but, it might be argued, surely it would be a caricature to claim that his view of knowledge is. This objection misconstrues my argument, conflating it with a more familiar and, perhaps,

discredited paradigm of Marxist critique. I do not claim that Kantian theory can be faulted for illicitly embodying the perspective of particular class interests, or for being an ideology masquerading as an impartial theory. I argue rather that Kantian theory overall reproduces features of the problematic Marx criticized in the political economists as expressing the effects of fetishism in theory.

Fetishism, because it involves the mediation of social relations by objective properties, asserts its effects in the most basic categories of thought - objectivity, thinghood, experience, activity, and measure - and not merely in agents' concepts of duty, value, or obligation. Therefore the argument I want to give involves an account of Kantian epistemological theory and its relation to the social problem of the objectivity of the commodity, as well as to the difficulties in Kantian ethical theory as such.

1

According to Kant, all of the most cherished and elaborated attempts at knowledge in the realm of traditional metaphysics - the attempt to come to knowledge of the existence of God, of the possibility of freedom of the will, of the immortality of the soul - have been illusory. The illusion lies not merely in that one particular answer to the question (eg. of the existence of simple bodies) is affirmed rather than another, nor that a logical or factual error has been committed in reason's procedure. Kant takes these illusions to be more basic than

that; he identifies them as instances of transcendental illusion, a "natural and inevitable illusion" which "does not cease even after it has been detected and its invalidity clearly revealed." Transcendental illusion arises because

there are fundamental rules and maxims for the employment of our reason...[which] have all the appearance of being objective principles. We therefore take the subjective necessity of a connection of our concepts, which is to the advantage of the understanding, for an objective necessity in the determination of things in themselves. This is an illusion which can no more be prevented than we can prevent the sea appearing higher at the horizon than at the shore.... (1)

Yet reason, on Kant's view, does not merely suffer from this rational affliction: it can detect and correct it as well. That is what Kant claims to have accomplished. He does so through precisely that mode of discourse which is most infected with the illusion itself: dialectic. Kant calls dialectic - as it was employed by the "ancients" - "the logic of illusion," and describes it as "a sophistical art of giving to ignorance, and indeed to intentional sophistries, the appearance of truth." (2) The artifice of the sophists is not the only form in which dialectic appears, for Kant characterizes the paralysis of reason in its stalemate of polarized speculation as the outcome of

a natural and unavoidable dialectic of pure reason - not one in which a bungler might entangle himself through lack of knowledge, or one which some sophist has artificially invented to confuse thinking people, but one inseparable from human reason, and which, even after its deceptiveness has been exposed, will not cease to play tricks with reason and continually entrap it into momentary aberrations ever and again calling for correction. (3)

To this naturally recurring dialectic Kant opposes his own dialectic which he calls a "critique of dialectical illusion."⁽⁴⁾ This critique is never finished with once and for all, but must continually renew its work of purification, since the source of reason's perpetual delusion is reason itself. Thus the key to such a critical self-containment of reason - and here "reason is indeed meant to be its own pupil"⁽⁵⁾ - is to provide a canon of the healthy and justified propositions and procedures of reason in its naked and unadorned state, as well as a criterion for distinguishing its legitimate from its illegitimate activities. This amounts to a

call to reason to undertake anew the most difficult of all tasks, namely, that of self-knowledge, and to institute a tribunal which will assure to reason its lawful claims, and dismiss all groundless pretensions, not by despotic decrees, but in accordance with its own eternal and unalterable laws. ⁽⁶⁾

This passage is Kant's first characterization of the project of a critique of pure reason, at the very beginning of the preface to the first edition. It is worth noting the legalist metaphor employed here, which involves a barely concealed inconsistency. This is a tribunal at which the judge is also the prosecutor and the defendant. But also: the "lawful claims" of reason are determined by reference to an already given set of "eternal and unalterable laws" - of reason. That is, pure reason is taken as validating its own claims and procedures; but it can only do so by employing some original procedure that it calls its own

(and that Kant calls transcendental arguments). This is the difficulty which elicited Hegel's comment that knowledge is thereby represented as a - readymade - instrument, "as though men could set forth upon the search for truth with spears and staves." (7)

The trial takes place, however, and it is the star witnesses whose surprise testimony carries the day. The witnesses which Kant relies on to produce his canonical propositions and his valid rational procedures, are the scientific discourses of eighteenth century mathematics, Euclidean geometry and Newtonian mechanics. In effect, it is (traditional) metaphysics that is on trial; the standard of judgment is scientific knowledge; the verdict - condemnation. The proceedings are conducted meticulously, but the sentence is never carried out. Kant as judge demands not the overthrow, but the "radical reform"(8) of metaphysics: after its reeducation he "promises to metaphysics...the secure path of a science".(9) It seems indeed that the new, modern regime is a regime of science: even critique is called a "perfectly new science." (10)

Despite all this, Kant does not intend to take science as a given: though the propositions of science are canonical for him, he does not merely assume that the sciences of mathematics and physics provide us unalloyed truths. He wants to establish how these sciences as productive of necessary and universal truths, are possible. He attempts to do this by showing that these sciences are

founded in reason's "eternal and unalterable laws." So critique becomes the dual project whereby metaphysics is completely revolutionised (11) in the image of the sciences, while the claim of the sciences to genuine knowledge is validated by means of a "deduction of our power of knowing apriori" which constitutes "the first part of metaphysics" itself. (12)

That a "revolution" in metaphysics was possible at all was undoubtedly suggested to Kant by the developments which culminated in modern (mechanistic) scientific theory. Kant makes this explicit in his preface to the second edition of the first critique (which appeared exactly a century after Newton's Principia. I want to show that the second edition preface contains Kant's distinctive reading of the content and method of that scientific revolution, and will argue for an intimate connection between Kant's interpretation of scientific method, his strategy in metaphysics, and his conclusions about practical reason and the possibilities for moral theory.

Kant attempts to motivate his proposal for revolutionizing metaphysics by taking the sciences as a model of human knowledge. This time it is the history of the sciences that Kant takes as a clue to the future of metaphysics. Both mathematics and physics "entered upon the sure path of science" only as a result of intellectual revolutions. But, I will argue, Kant interprets the revolutionary new methods of these sciences in an overly

intellectualist way.

In the case of mathematics, this revolution was "brought about by the happy thought of a single man" who, while investigating the properties of the isosceles triangle, first divined that the true method by which mathematics could be advanced was

to bring out what was necessarily implied in the concepts that he had himself formed apriori, and had put into the figure in the construction by which he presented it to himself. (13)

Thus the mathematician forms a concept in his mind, presents that concept to himself in a figure which he has himself constructed, and then demonstrates the necessary relationships of (within) the concept by means of auxiliary constructions imposed on the figure. Only such a method, according to Kant, could produce knowledge that is both necessary and universal, because it is apriori.

A similar revolution also gave rise to the sciences of nature: Kant identifies this revolution with the names of Copernicus, Galileo, Torricelli, and Bacon. Galileo and Torricelli, in bringing the experimental method into the investigation of nature, effected a basic transformation in the procedures of knowledge. Kant interprets this transformation as arising from the principle

that reason has insight only into that which it produces after a plan of its own, and that it must not allow itself to be kept, as it were, in nature's leading-strings, but must itself show the way with principles of judgment based upon fixed laws, constraining nature to give answer to questions of reason's own determining....while reason must seek in nature, not fictitiously ascribe to it, whatever as not being knowable through reason's own resources has to be

learnt, if learnt at all, only from nature, it must adopt as its guide, in so seeking, that which it has itself put into nature. (14)

These formulations constitute a series of successively more radical statements of reason's power in determining the conditions of its relationship with nature. The first figure, of the mathematician constructing demonstrations of the necessary relations nestled within his apriori conceptions, barely threatens the autonomy of a nature that is only marginally of interest. Here is the rationalism of Plato, denuded of its mystical Pythagorean militancy.

With the post-copernicans, we find reason approaching nature, questioning nature, but not yet dictating to nature. There is a significant slippage between the first and last phrases of the passage quoted just above. We begin with the experimenter, who can comprehend nature because he produces an experiment that he has planned, and thereby can ask the questions he wants of nature, rather than simply observing at random. What he produces - an experimental design, an apparatus, an instrumentality for measurement - only becomes a part of nature in the sense that it forms a subsystem of the natural susceptible to greater and more precise experimental manipulation and measurement. The experimenter learns about nature by learning about the natural interactions of and changes produced in the apparatus. Here perhaps we can discern a conception of reason, even in its pure form, as one of a system of human activities - activities which are fully effective and

comprehensive of the objects of nature themselves.

By the end of the passage, however, we have a reason that while seeking (law) in nature, adopts as its guide what it has put into nature. Here the sense is not of the experimenter's putting his apparatus "into nature" - eg. putting the seismometer on the ocean floor - but rather of putting the laws themselves into nature, projecting them into the appearances - only to discover them there later. If we take this notion in conjunction with the figure of the mathematician investigating the relations inscribed within his own concept, we get the sense of discovering laws in nature by demonstrating the necessary implications of our own concepts. There is a shift here from reason as expressed in an activity of production according to plan, to one of scientific activity as deducing the implications of a concept: from a productive activity, that is a physical, interactive one of constructing natural subsystems for experimental purposes, to a conceptual, purely intellectual activity, in which reason seemingly interrogates itself alone.

This becomes clear in the figure that Kant settles on to convey the sense of the intellectual revolution that he has in mind for metaphysics - the figure of Copernicus. Kant describes Copernicus as having introduced "a changed point of view" into planetary astronomy.

Failing of satisfactory progress in explaining the movements of the heavenly bodies on the supposition that they all revolved around the spectator, he tried whether he might not have better success if he made the

spectator to revolve and the stars to remain at rest.
(15)

This changed point of view thus involves the attempt, "in a manner contradictory of the senses, but yet true, to seek the observed movements, not in the heavenly bodies, but in the spectator." (16) Kant suggests that a "similar experiment can be tried in metaphysics" (17) - so far as the analogy between natural science, as a species of rational knowledge, and metaphysics may permit.

The analogy between Copernicus' revolution in point of view and the possibilities for metaphysics depends on how Copernicus' shift in viewpoint is generalized. Kant's formulation of the principle implicit in Copernicanism derives its orientation from Kant's placement of apriori knowledge at the center of his concern. Copernicanism's lesson for any future metaphysician Kant sketches as follows:

Hitherto it has been assumed that all our knowledge must conform to objects. But all attempts to extend our knowledge of objects by establishing something in regard to them apriori, by means of concepts, have, on this assumption, ended in failure. We must therefore make trial whether we may not have more success in the tasks of metaphysics, if we suppose that objects must conform to our knowledge. (18)

The shift Kant suggests - from the attempt to make our knowledge conform to objects to the demand that objects conform to our knowledge - is necessitated by his refusal to give up the possibility of apriori knowledge. Kant wants to preserve the possibility of successful "attempts to extend our knowledge of objects ...apriori, by means of

concepts," and to do so he is prepared to sacrifice knowledge's conformity to the objects themselves as well as a richer conception of reason's scientific activity. Thus it is his apriorism that leads Kant straight to the inconceivable ding-an-sich. Copernicus may have "saved the appearances"; Kant, as we shall see, ends up virtually destroying the "things themselves."

There has been a shift in the terms of analogical comparison: whereas earlier we had the experimenters, Galileo and Torricelli, putting questions to nature by "producing [experimental systems] according to a plan," we finally have the spectator, the Copernican, hypothesizing an actual motion of the earth to account for the apparent motion of the stars. This is a step away from the idea of scientific reason as a human material activity, fully active in, and interactive with, the objects of its knowledge, which by effectively interfering with their action is affected actively by them. Instead we have a scientific method withdrawn and inward, as little interactive as a spectator of the stars.

Consider in this context the celebrated passage in the second critique in which Kant identifies "the starry heavens above me" as one of the two things that "fill the mind with ever new and increasing admiration and awe, the oftener and more steadily we reflect on them." (19) The passage, often invoked as an index of the unity of theoretical and practical reason in the critical

philosophy, attests as well to the vestigial, yet edifying, pedagogic authority assigned by Kant to the "physico-theological proof" of the existence of god. When juxtaposed to the Copernicanism of the first critique, this "admiration and awe" shine with a different light, I think. If the view of the stars leads Kant to reflections which, as he says, "annihilates, as it were, my importance as an animal creature," this is just because Kant's speculatively interpreted copernican standpoint, to which objects must conform, "annihilates" the integrity of nature and subjects it to the autonomy of speculative reason - the requirements of apriori knowledge. While Copernicus imparted to the earth a "natural" motion - motion of a kind identical with that of the other planets - what Kant implants in his metaphysical spectator does not partake of the "nature" of the "objects", but rather constitutes that nature itself. Thus Kant's critique of pure reason devalues the natural, in the interests of the apriori: by placing "the observed movements...in the spectator," "reason" finds itself - and nothing "natural" - there. This reason, though, is not (so much) in the stars, but in ourselves: it is "our" reason that moves Kant's awe and admiration. As he says in the third critique, sublimity "does not reside in any of the things of nature, but only in our own mind, insofar as we may become conscious of our superiority over nature within, and thus also over nature without us." (20) Reason's superiority is "ours", yet for all that reason, in its

theoretical as well as its practical employment is, even more than the motion of the copernican earth which we inhabit, in us but not of us.

I have tried to indicate how Kant's reading of the methodological innovations of modern science can be seen as reflecting his approach to the task of "revolutionizing" metaphysics. The image Kant settles on, after pausing over Galileo's and Torricelli's experiments, is Copernicus' "thought experiment." Kant generalizes the idea of a thought experiment in arguing that the necessity and universality of science can only arise if the objects of knowledge are determined by the conceptual form of our intellectual activity. This intellectual activity is, in turn, necessary in the sense of being apriori, that is, involuntary and absolute, constituting, it seems, any possible finite intelligence.

2

Kant tries to account for the certainty of the contemporary sciences by positing as their basis a structure of experience - and so a set of principles as implicit in experience - constituted by the apriori activity of our minds. This activity productive of experience has two moments. The first is the production of a manifold of the dispersed and heterogeneous "sensible given" by the faculty of sensibility - a diverse and heterogeneous given just because splayed through temporal and spatial continua. The second moment is the synthesis

and unification of the manifold of sensibility in the unitary grasp of a single consciousness through the transcendental synthesis of apperception and the apriori mediations of the pure concepts of the understanding.

This twofold process Kant takes to be the process of the constitution of a common human experience. This experience is constituted as consciousness of physical objects. Each of the two moments of the process mentioned above is conceived as the confrontation of a formal and abstract structuring with a material content. Both of these elements are treated as givens, though the "givenness" of each element is interpreted differently. In both moments the formal element is taken to be a mode of subjective activity and the material element is taken to be a representation of the object's activity. (The meaning of "subjective" and "object" here are clearly not to be counterposed in the ordinary way.) This distinction arises because implicit in Kant's method from the beginning is the dichotomy between empirical and apriori knowledge: the synthetic apriori is merely an attempt to unify these two kinds of knowledge on the basis of the subordination of the empirical to the apriori.

Thus Kant must assume a bare objectivity which however is not and cannot be a given for consciousness, which is in principle excluded from consciousness. This exclusion is necessary because Kant takes the natural necessity to which our experience conforms to be a merely formal necessity,

given through the synthetic apriori. This means that the givenness of content is preserved as that of a non-subjective other, and must be itself, as a givenness, connected to a "giver." This gives rise to Kant's noumenal object. And yet, since we are precluded from applying the pure concepts to what is not a possible experience, we cannot think the noumenon through any of the categories elaborated and defended in the transcendental deduction. This problematic concept denotes the bare possibility of an object that is inaccessible to us because it does not impinge on our faculty of receptivity, yet is nonetheless somehow "behind" the given of sensibility.

Similarly Kant can only achieve the unity of consciousness by conceiving an other [to empirical] consciousness, "standing behind it," so to speak. This is the apriori agent whose activity culminates in the sensibility and categories of understanding as settled forms of conscious experience. This apriori activity cannot be "our" activity if that means the activity of our empirical selves: since we are not ordinarily aware of it - it is not activity in our experience - and its existence is only established by transcendental arguments. It is an activity that disappears completely into its product - empirical consciousness. Here again, because consciousness in general is treated as a receptivity - its content deriving from beyond it - its unity also must be established from outside it.

So if Kant is successful in showing the necessary construction of common experience as the result of the activity of subjectivity, he does this only by generating a mysterious transcendental subjectivity (noumenal self) behind our empirical subjectivity, and a mystical noumenal object behind the object of experience. These are "mystical" entities in two ways. First, they are mystical in the sense that we must posit them to preserve the coherence of the Kantian account, yet we cannot coherently think them at all. Secondly, they are mystical in the more straightforward sense of being imaginable only as supersensible entities, perpetually inaccessible, beyond space and time, inscrutable. Kant expresses the first sense of this mysteriousness inadequately in calling them "problematic" concepts and claiming that although we cannot know them, we can at least think them as possible, as "limiting" concepts. The idea behind this move is apparently that while in knowing an object we determine it, in thinking it only we preserve it as unconditioned. But, as Hegel pointed out, we can only think the indeterminate or unconditioned by not thinking at all (since all thinking is determinate). Put differently, thinking an object involves thinking an objectivity, but Kant has devised the analytic in such a way that only what is physicalistically representable can be objectively thought. Thus Kant is confronted with a choice of either subjectivizing all experience as well as thought, or removing the physicalist

restriction on the objectivity of thinking. That he ultimately chooses the first route is due to what Hegel called Kant's "tenderness for things."

This last remark begs to be developed a little, and I want to do so in a left-Hegelian direction. Kant argues that we can only make sense of a doctrine of our experience as natural by positing an otherness beyond the natural as conditioning it. Yet he goes on then to "conceptualize" this other in the form of a supersensible object. This is, I think, because Kant's model of objectivity is the thing, the physical object.

(That this is so can be seen from the entire enterprise of the first critique. The analytic, and at its core the transcendental deduction, is concerned to establish that the employment of the apriori categories is essential to and constitutive of objective experience as such. This experience is objective experience, however, because the understanding has worked up the given of sensible intuition into the stuff of objecthood. Because Kant speaks of the faculty of sensibility as our only source of intuitive apprehension, it is only the senses that, for humans, are candidates for supplying the material that understanding orders into objecthood. The objecthood of such material is physical objecthood.

That physical objecthood is thus taken by Kant to be the central case of objectivity as such is in keeping with the task of philosophically legitimating the physical

science whose basic object was the laws of interaction of macroscopic bodies. By contrast with the principles of the understanding, the principles of unity of theoretical reason lack objectivity because they do not connect with the matter of sensibility.)

This difficulty, which is constitutive of the Kantian problematic, has its exact parallel in the empirically-minded political economists' attempt to comprehend the commodity as a physicalistically-interpretable reality. As I argued earlier, Marx attempted to resolve this problem in political economy by elaborating the concept of human social productive activity as taking specific forms under conditions of generalized commodity production. Here Marx's approach is a development of and a departure from the Kantian conception. For Marx, objectivity is the product not of the apriori constitutive activity of consciousness, but of the object-constitutive activity of human social labor. The product-object takes the form of the commodity only in conditions of the regulation of social labor by the market; the social labor of individuals takes the form of abstract labor only in similar market conditions. Because under such conditions the social character of their own labor shows itself in social agents' experience only in an exchange relation between commodities, the social relations between agents of production, which are in fact their own achievement, appear as imposed upon them by physicalist

properties of the objects that are their products. These commodity-objects, precisely because they come to be the bearers of social relations which they impose on the agents themselves in a way that appears to be independent of the agents' activities, become invested with a mystical power. They come to be mysterious objects in the consciousness of the agents of production.

Because commodities are objects that appear to have mystical powers, they appear to act somehow on their own. The laboring activity that produces them is consequently devalued as the source of their - "mystical" - objectivity. The human labor productive of commodities thus also becomes mystified and its character obscured. The mysteriousness of the labor "embodied" in commodities emerges immediately in the wage-form, which depends on the identification of the commodity as a value with the specific act of labor performed by the laborer. The mysteriousness of labor also expresses itself in theoretical form, initially in the paradox of the quantitative determination of profit which arises in the early discussions of the political economists. This paradox becomes a full-fledged metaphysical anxiety in the generalized critique of Ricardian value theory initiated by Samuel Bailey.

These difficulties involved in political economy's notion of labor arise in part because of the early political economists' rather uncritical acceptance of the common economic agents' categories and modes of expression.

Though Kant generally avoids such uncritical assimilation of commonsense representations, a problem similar to the one about labor arises for Kant's notion of apriori synthetic modes of consciousness and experience. These are posited by Kant as constituting (empirical) human consciousness as imbued with a necessity that transcends the sensible given and makes possible a coherent experience of a world. This necessity is therefore transcendental also in the sense of transcending all individual empirical consciousness and so providing for a universality that is both intra- and intersubjective. We have seen that Kant interprets this transcendental character of the apriori as pointing to a noumenal reality "beyond" empirical consciousness. This reality, which must be conceived as constituting the form of my (particular) experience, cannot be coherently conceived as itself particular without begging the question - it must be a universal since it functions conceptually as grounding the objective as an intersubjectivity.

In the transcendental deduction, the objectivity of the pure concepts of the understanding as well as their inherent necessary limitation to objects of possible experience is argued for through their necessary connection to the transcendental unity of consciousness. This suggests that it is a conscious act by which means the "fit" between the transcendental apperception and the pure concepts is assured. But this act is not one of empirical consciousness

- so it must be one of transcendental consciousness. But transcendental consciousness, to be a consciousness at all, must be "my consciousness" for some "I". So the transcendental subjectivity, that is, the activity which produces the apriori constitution of empirical consciousness, must, it seems, be a personal consciousness, yet it cannot be without begging the question of the objectivity of its products.

Another way of stating the problem is this. Kant wants to provide assurances of intersubjective agreement, and so of objectivity, in the absence of the possibility of appealing to the content of consciousness, which is irretrievably inner or private. He attempts to do so by invoking a necessary and universal form of consciousness which bears within it the ground of objectivity and the conditions of possibility of scientific discourse. This form of consciousness can only provide for intersubjectivity if it is universally "distributed" amongst human (or finite sensible) beings. This "distribution" cannot be a natural fact, however, since nature is constituted precisely by the necessary form of our (finite) consciousness. Kant must either supply some nonnatural, transcendent warrant for this universality or take it as an article of faith. Yet the physicalist restriction of the analytic seems to preclude the first option.

This is strictly analogous to political economy's

labor problem. For political economy, labor is productive of a commodity that is both a use-value and an exchange-value. But the physical labor process can result only in the physical characteristics of the commodity - its material but not its formal properties. The commodity's "mystical objectivity" - its exchangeability with other commodities - cannot be the product of the specific acts of labor of the individual productive agents, and yet it must be so, if there is to be a coherent account of the commodity at all.

I think that it is not accidental that Kant's difficulties regarding the apriori faculties and the transcendental object should parallel so closely the problematic of labor and the commodity in writings of contemporary political economists. This parallel can be regarded as determined in two interrelated ways.

First, Kant's theorizing can be seen in its historical context as a metaphysically defined treatment - in the German manner - of issues being subjected to a more commonsensical investigation by his practically oriented intellectual counterparts in Britain. Certainly crucial in both cases was the Newtonian mechanical theory and its significance for "civil society": a question concerning the prospects for human freedom within a natural order. In both cases, the natural order is conceived as a generalized Newtonian world in which social objects, that is, human products, institutions and social relations, as well as

bare physical objects, are determined in their action by universal laws. This natural order reaches into the human breast as well; human actions and motivations are also naturally determined. The problem of freedom thus arises in a two-fold sense. Can independent human agents acting freely (in the negative sense) - and so pursuing only their own self-interest - constitute a social order that is reproductive and socially vital? But also - is such a natural social existence a form of freedom or is it a distraction from the true human "vocation"? While Kant addressed that fundamental issue from the standpoint of the problem of the possibility of metaphysical knowledge, Smith and Ricardo grappled with it in the context of national economic policy. This similarity of focus and disparity of form of investigation are attributable, perhaps, to the disparity in the development of commodity production and circulation and to differences in the philosophical traditions.

Second, one can emphasize the Kantian critical origin of dialectical methodology and try to reveal the dialectical basis of Marx's articulation and resolution of the conceptual antinomies of political economy. What stands out in the intellectual lineage from Kant to Marx is the conception of appearances, as distinct from the real, as constituted by the form of human activity itself. This conception, which is basic to the critical philosophy, is also key to Marx's conception of Capital as critique.

Marx's constitutivism is an historicized version of the Kantian absolutist doctrine, however. While for Kant the thing-in-itself is an absolute inaccessible to human knowledge as such, for Marx the reality that is overlaid by the appearances of commodity production is that of the socially-mediated nature-imposed metabolic interchange of humans with nature. I tried earlier to sketch a conception of the social form of value as a constitutivist feature of the commodity - a "feature of the commodity" that is constituted historically by the social practice of commodity exchange itself - as a crucial element in Marx's resolution of the difficulties confronted by the political economists. This Marxian constitutivism is the basis for the critique of the political economists in the same way that Kant's analytic, with its immanent noumenalism, sets the stage for the Kantian criticism of the metaphysicians' speculative arguments. The difference, however, is that while Kant's polemic is transcendently-grounded, Marx's is rooted in what I have called his "historical hypothesis," that is, in the historical development of commodity production into early capitalism. This difference allows Marx's critical use of the concept of fetishism - an elaboration of transcendental illusion - to be generalized, in the way I have attempted, to provide arguments about the Kantian critical philosophy itself.

3

Transcendental illusion is ineliminable, for Kant, because the orientation of the understanding toward comprehensive systematic unity must be effected by pure reason, and this orientation can only be achieved through the representation of unity in the form of an object. Transcendental illusion thus takes its naive form in the belief that the existence and accessibility of transcendent objects such as the soul and God can be theoretically justified. Its theoretical expressions include the proofs of the immortality of the soul and the traditional proofs of the existence of God, and the interminable debates characterizing old-style metaphysics concerning topics cosmological - the origin of the world, the existence of simple constituents of all things, the possibility of freedom of the will. These last-mentioned disputes Kant recast into the form of the antinomies of pure reason, pairs of opposed arguments which, though valid, support opposite and seemingly contradictory positions on these issues. This form of presentation dramatizes Kant's charge that transcendental illusion, unchecked, threatens the complete disintegration of reason itself.

Kant resolves the antinomies by showing, in each case, their origin in an ambiguous employment of the concept of an object - used inconsistently in the sense of an object of experience, and also in the sense of a thing-in-itself.

On the supposition that appearances, and the sensible world which comprehends them all, are things in

themselves, these proofs are indeed well-grounded. The conflict which results from the propositions thus obtained shows, however, that there is a fallacy in this assumption, and so leads us to the discovery of the true constitution of things, as objects of the senses. (21)

This ambiguity arises in relation to the thought, which pure reason formulates, of the unconditioned as the totality of the ascending series of empirical conditions. This totality of the completed series of conditions is conceived as given all at once, timelessly, so to speak - as if it were a thing-in-itself that is given - whereas every empirically given series of conditions is given as a succession of conditions in time. Thus the opposed arguments, and the theses and antitheses they defend, are dialectical rather than contradictory, Kant argues, because they involve a suppressed equivocation on the sense of "object" - and can be so interpreted as to take on identical truth-values.

The third antinomy counterposes a thesis affirming that beside natural causality there is also a causality of freedom, to an antithesis denying freedom altogether. The contest is between a proponent of transcendental freedom, regarded as "a power of spontaneously beginning a series of successive things or states"(22), and what Kant quite revealingly calls "transcendental physiocracy" - "the defender of an omnipotent nature." (23) The defender of freedom argues that if "everything takes place solely in accordance with laws of nature," then "there will always be only a relative and never a first beginning" of any causal

series. This, however, contradicts reason's own demand that "nothing takes place without a cause sufficiently determined apriori." (24) This last is just the law of nature, which thus turns out to be self-contradictory when taken in unlimited universality. The "transcendental physiocrat" argues, in turn, that if there is a special "causality of freedom," then this "causality itself will have an absolute beginning" since "every beginning of action presupposes a state of the not yet acting cause." Yet this causality cannot have an absolute beginning, since that "presupposes a state which has no causal connection with the preceding state of the cause." (25) Thus, for the antagonist of freedom, "transcendental freedom stands opposed to the law of causality....It is not to be met with in any experience, and is therefore an empty thought-entity." (26)

Kant asserts that these are merely "pseudo-rational" arguments - and are opposed to one another as if they are contradictories - because of a common failure to distinguish between objects as appearances, and objects as things in themselves.

The common but fallacious presupposition of the absolute reality of appearances here manifests its injurious influence, to the confounding of reason. For if appearances are things in themselves, freedom cannot be upheld. Nature will then be the complete and sufficient determining cause of every event. (27)

Indeed, this saving distinction was worked out fully only by Kant himself, for whom it takes the form of the distinction between empirical realism and transcendental

idealism. By adopting this latter distinction, Kant thinks we open for ourselves the possibility of a double perspective, regarding freedom and natural necessity as compatible and complementary: while natural causality governs objects of experience, a causality of freedom can be conceived as governing objects as things-in-themselves. Kant distinguishes the "empirical character" of a subject in the sensible world, which connects it to other appearances and makes it a member of a causal series, and as such empirically determined, and the "intelligible character," which acts as cause of the empirical character's actions without itself being under any conditions of sensibility. This intelligible character Kant identifies with the pure apperception, and with the pure faculties of understanding and reason. Because reason, "as a purely intelligible faculty, is not subject to the form of time, nor consequently to the conditions of succession in time" (28), we can conceive it as a form of causality, in its practical employment, that is not timebound and so not sensible. But the laws of nature, because restricted to conditions of the sensible, are inapplicable to the "intelligible character" and its causality. Thus, "causality through freedom is at least not incompatible with nature." (29)

This conclusion is aimed only at demonstrating the absence of any incoherence in the notion of a "causality through freedom" and so establishing its formal

possibility. By establishing this, Kant claims to have shown that the antinomy is based on "sheer illusion." The caution with which Kant handles the notion of "causality through freedom" suggests that he does not reject the "physiocrats'" claim that this idea is an "empty thought entity." That is, after all, how he characterizes the negative-sense "noumenon" of the Analytic, which he specifically invokes in his characterization of "intelligible character," the vehicle for his new conception of causality.(30) This strategy, of invoking the "noumenon" - a concept Kant had previously characterized as "empty" - to establish the possibility of a "causality without time" - an instance of an employment of concepts Kant had previously described as having "no meaning which might yield a concept of some object"(31) - verges on the sort of dialectic Kant himself ridiculed as "a logic of illusion....a sophistical art of giving to ignorance...the appearance of truth, by the device of imitating the methodical thoroughness which logic prescribes...." (32)

Kant's ultimate aim of reigning in pure reason involves him in the demonstration that reason's speculative employment is illusory. But the illusion can only be uncovered by appealing to the concept of a noumenon - a transcendental ground of experience. Yet for his purposes Kant must think this object not only as a transcendental object - a mere non-appearing other to the given of

appearance - but as transcendent, as the bearer of a new type of causality, lodged securely in an intelligible world of its own. This fuller, positive conception alone is sufficient to back up Kant's charge concerning the illusory character of pure reason's speculative employment. In ruling out appeals to any purely speculative revelation of the absolute, Kant must invoke a sort of secularized negative theology of the "unconditioned." Yet in formulating the concept of an atemporal causality, Kant cannot remain within the bounds of a "negative" conception but must go on to affirm the other, positive side, as well.

As I have argued, and in keeping with the character of all negative theologies, the "positive side" can only be conceived by Kant in a mystical way. Because Kant identifies the object-constitutive activity of pure understanding with the natural necessity of a merely sensible physical world - that is, because understanding services the senses, providing the "conceptual apparatus" for the objectivity of their given - the activity of reason comes to be evaluated according to a standard of objectivity that takes the objects of appearance - things - as paradigmatic. This is evidently Hegel's meaning in speaking of Kant's "tenderness for things." Because it is things that are paradigmatically objective for Kant, the transcendental ideas fail the test of objectivity because they are not physicalist enough, and pure reason's activity is reinterpreted as merely regulative, and so only

"indefinitely" objective. Yet when it comes to thinking the "noumenon" and "intelligible character" that are necessary for resolving the antinomies, Kant applies the same categories that serve in the analytic to underpin rational physics, though they are now somehow shorn of their temporal and spatial schemata. Thus, even the other of experience is conceived by Kant along physicalist lines. It is his "tenderness for things" which determines - as much as his Newtonian mechanistic conception of physics does - that Kant's account of our natural experience be wedded to a secularized negative theology of the mystical "unconditioned."

It is worth recalling here that the "noumenon" is a concept of the pure understanding, and does not originate with reason at all. That is, pure understanding creates a singularity in its own field of appearance that reason not only cannot eliminate but must positively articulate as the source of its own self-correction: the recognition of the noumenal/phenomenal distinction is reason's key to the criticism of transcendental illusion. Though reason must represent the unity toward which it aims in the form of an object, these transcendental ideas have less objectivity for theoretical purposes than the "noumenon" itself.

The "noumenon" is a singularity for Kant's pure reason in the same way that "value" is a singularity in political economy's field of explanation. Both these concepts function to complete and make coherent the world of

experience constituted by the synthetic apriori activity of the understanding in the one case, and the productive activity of economic agents in the other. In both cases, however, the unifying theoretical activity of reason is unable to integrate these limiting concepts into an explanatory system based on the understanding's achievement.

In Kantian theory this "singularity" is the result of a gap between the faculties of pure understanding and reason, a gap which stems from their differential relation to sensibility. While pure understanding is characterized by Kant as intimately connected to sensibility, as oriented by the task of unifying sensibility's given, there is no immediate relation of reason proper to sensibility as such. It is the resultant gap between the two pure faculties that is the source of transcendental illusion: reason must represent the unity of the objects of understanding as itself taking the form of a (transcendent) object because pure understanding, oriented as it is by the needs of sensibility, takes physical objecthood - thinghood - as paradigmatic of objectivity. So reason can only lead understanding to objective unity by representing it as the unity of an object - specifically, unity of a thinglike, physical object.

Another way of expressing the difference is this. The apriori function of the faculties is taken by Kant as the form that the universality of knowledge takes for human -

and, apparently, all finitely rational - knowers. Because human knowledge is conditioned by our faculty of sensibility, this universality expresses itself for us - in our experience - in the form of physical objecthood and its subsumption under natural laws. Though we misapprehend this objectivity as a given of the activity of the objects themselves, where it is in fact the achievement of the apriori activity of our pure cognitive faculties - and this is precisely the critical translation of perspective signified by the empirical realism/transcendental idealism pair - it is nonetheless the form of the sensible physical thing that is objective. In this Kantianism and naive realism are one. But it is just this insistence on the physicalist character of objectivity that condemns theoretical reason to its adjunct role relative to understanding.

Theoretical reason's objectivity, if it is to have any at all, must transcend the individual object to encompass the system of objects. Kant must deny this kind of objectivity just because he takes spatio-temporal finitude as characteristic of the (phenomenologically) objective - the physical object of sensible experience - and yet insists on ascribing a physicalistically interpreted objecthood on the nonappearing other of this (phenomenological) object-ive. These both share the objectivity of the physical thing (except that while the (physical) object is unified through the activity of pure

understanding, the unity of the transcendental object is the purely negative unity of an empty concept) and so the objectivity of a totality of objects is denied altogether. Thus what might have been a "higher" objectivity of pure theoretical reason is given up, by Kant, in order to preserve the autonomy of the finite sensible thing and its shadowy attendant, the mystical other-object. This abdication of reason's cognitive role in the face of the understanding's limitation by the conditions of sensibility, is what Hegel, for whom the very finitude of the sensibly given object was a mark of its supersession by and in a more objective totality, was complaining about.

This complaint, directed at Kant's attitude toward the thing as the paragon of objectivity, can also be directed at Kant's image of the activity of knowledge, an activity which Kant takes as constituting the object of knowledge at the same time. This object-constitutive activity of knowledge is conceived by Kant in the image of the gaze of the individual observer of phenomena - here the "Copernicanism" of the second preface should be recalled. What constitutes the objects of experience is the activity of the understanding upon the given of sensibility; this is "internal" to and constitutive of the individual subjective unity of experience, even though it cannot be identified with the empirical subject of experience. This activity effects only the phenomenal object, the object-for-me: the object-in-itself is in no way determinable by this

activity. But as thus unifying and effecting the phenomenal object, this activity must have a unity of its own: this unity is conceived as the unity of a transcendental subjectivity. This is the transcendental equivalent of the unity of the sense organ and central nervous system in constituting the sensory image. Although this is a highly "problematic" conception - in the Kantian sense - the coherence of the constitutivist doctrine depends upon it. Here, just because the transcendental is defined as the other to the physiological, as for example in the third antinomy, its character as an individual unity - of activity and of subjectivity - mimics that of the biological individual.

Hegel's speculative complaint was developed - in a different direction - by Marx, the critic of political economy. Kant's characterization of the situation is not simply a characterization in which the role of reason has not been given its due: it is rather the characterization of a situation which is not sufficiently due to reason. That is, reason has not sufficiently developed to recognize its own role in the situation, and so that role appears to be - and is - less than it could be. The lack of comprehension is centered on the apriori as the form of universality of human knowledge. This key Kantian idea correctly points to the primacy of the form of the knowing activity in constituting the form of the object of knowledge. But because Newtonian mechanics looms so large,

and is interpreted in an empiricist way, as the law of appearances only, the activity of knowledge is conceived in a "transcendental" - as opposed to "physiological" or "physiocratic" - way. Because explanation is identified with strictly mechanistic theory, "transcendental subjectivity" can only be a supernatural "spontaneity" that eludes all theoretical articulation and acquires the character of a given - indeed this is the condition of what Kant calls "transcendental freedom." So the object-constitutive activity of pure understanding, conceived as a form of activity that is really conditioning of the object, to the extent of constituting a world of sense, is conditioned by the relative passivity of sensibility and is severed from the activity of theoretical reason, regarded as "inward" and merely regulative.

Here we can say, from the standpoint of Marx's critique of generalized commodity production: the situation in which the activity of the constitution of objects is severed from the possibility of a theoretical grasp of the relations between those objects is the product of the specific social form of that object-constitutive activity. As Kant saw, the object-constitutive activity which makes knowledge possible could not be natural; the conditions of experience - as conditions of knowledge - must be of the knowers' own making or control. Here the experimentalism of the second preface, captured in its programmatic "reason has insight only into that which it produces after a plan

of its own," provides the key for Kant's critical project. This experimentalism ultimately became a "Copernican" "observationalism" under the pressure of Kant's apriorist, transcendentalizing ambitions. This philosophical agenda created the conditions in which Kant failed to entertain the possibility that the object-constitutive activity which determines the form of knowledge is a social form of activity that is an historical achievement, and not a transcendental given. On such an interpretation, that activity is imperfectly rational only because its social character appears to the agents of production as a mystical property of the objects that are their products. This appearance is itself constituted by the relations between these agents. These relations are not susceptible to their control (neither individual nor collective), and so their condition is really one which is not produced by reason (them) after a plan of its (their) own. Their relations are in fact mediated by the unity of an object, an ideal object - money - which, because it is thought as the other of the (physical) commodity-object, shares with it the same semblance of non-social (or transcendental) determination. Thus the social relations underlying the relations of commodity-objects are obscured, and the possibility of achieving insight into the determination of the totality of conditions of object-constituting activity are removed behind their seeming "spontaneity."

This complex of determinations is expressed indirectly

in the Kantian conception of reason. That reason is a social, rather than merely a natural, power appears in Kantianism as its transcendental, spontaneous self-determination. This self-determination is, however, conditioned by the diremption of reason into empirical and transcendental aspects. That reason is only imperfectly realized in the object-constitutive activity that conditions human knowledge is expressed by Kant in the ultimately inward and merely heuristic role of theoretical reason relative to the pure understanding. This limitedness takes on the quality of a given, even if a transcendentially given. Transcendental illusion becomes a mysterious failing of theoretical reason, its incapacity to overcome the overwhelming givenness of the sensible. It is a defect in ourselves, in our reason, which is not our doing and is beyond the reach of our reform. Because it is transcendental activity that determines the phenomenal world, and ourselves as members of it, no actual, empirical activity can make a difference in this respect. All we can reform is our expectations and our theoretical ambitions: this is substantially what the Kantian reform of metaphysics comes down to. We might imagine here that, because he asks us to give up so much in the way as knowers, Kant should be prepared to give us something back as agents. We are now in a position to see how these difficulties in the Kantian conception of theoretical reason and its activity condition his conception of

practical reason and the moral life of humanity.

4

There are several ways in which the structural analogies between the Kantian ethical theory and political economy's doctrines of labor and value, and Kantian ethical theory's naturalistic presuppositions about the social forms of commercial activity, can be brought out. I will focus on four moments of the Kantian theory:

- 1) Kant's conception of moral worth;
- 2) the formal determination of the Kantian moral law;
- 3) Kant's suspicion of human sensuousness; and
- 4) the antinomy of practical reason and the Kantian highest good.

Kant begins his elaboration of moral consciousness as generated by the categorical imperative with two commonsense notions. He shows the notions of moral worth and duty to be interrelated in common moral judgments: what makes a person morally worthy is their adherence to the demands of duty in the face of all other considerations. He treats the duties he discusses, in the Grundlegung, as commonly known and accepted - the question he asks is: why does adherence to these duties confer, or indicate, the moral worth of the agent who abides by them?

Kant's initial assumption of duty as a valid concept in accounting for moral life is justified later in the Grundlegung in the derivation of duty from the concept of an imperfectly rational will. But Kant does not provide any

such derivation or justification of the concept of moral worth. This concept he seems to take for granted, though it plays a very substantial part in his analysis. What is taken for granted is that human activities, personalities, and plans or intentions are and should be systematically rated or valued, and that the worth they are assigned is not purely arbitrary or conventional but is capable of rationalization. This is really a presupposition of the entire inquiry; we might expect a discussion of the foundation of morals to include an argument for the necessity of evaluation of this particular moral kind. Why is it that these moral values can be (and why should they be) organized into the form of a system? What is it about these evaluations that makes them specifically moral? The answers to these questions, to the extent that Kant supplies them, indicate the proximity of his theoretical enterprise to that of the political economists and its susceptibility to criticisms similar to those Marx lodged against the political economists. Specifically, that he takes worth, and, as we shall see, "market price" as an expression of natural worth, uncritically as a valid concept based upon contemporary agents' use of it, as of "duty", is a weak point that Kant shares with the political economists and their "value".

At the very beginning of the Grundlegung Kant distinguishes worth into intrinsic, unconditional worth and relative worth, a distinction between that which is good in

itself, good without qualification, and that which is good only in some respects, good in its effects or results.(33) Kant claims that only a good will can claim the unconditional worth of the good without qualification. Acts are thus morally worthy to the extent that the will they flow from or express is good. It is the concept of duty, however, which provides the key to the concept of a good will, and so Kant turns to the analysis of duty. From the examples Kant gives of acts from duty in the Grundlegung, it is clear that the object of analysis is to formulate a criterion for the evaluation of the worth of human acts and wills.

Kant maintains that objects of conditional worth - things - acquire the worth they do because they satisfy some human need. Thus, their worth is relative to the (existence of) the desire whose satisfaction they produce. Such objects therefore have what Kant calls a "market price", (34) which expresses their worth. Furthermore, such objects are interchangeable one with another of the same kind, since their worth is actually a matter of their material need-satisfying properties, properties shared by all objects of a given type. Kant seems to be relating the conditional worth of things with what Smith distinguished as use-value; for Kant, the worth of a thing - its "price" (35) - derives solely from its need-satisfying or utilitarian properties.

By contrast, Kant writes of the absolute worth of

persons - that is, of rational wills. This worth is not relative to any effects produced by such a will, nor to its relation to any faculty of need or desire. The good will has, as Kant puts it, an unconditional, intrinsic worth. This he also calls its dignity. Its dignity stamps it as sui generis: it is not equivalent to, nor exchangeable for, another. This is because its inner principle, insofar as it is autonomous, is not material, but the one transcendental principle of freedom. This dignity is the will's intrinsic worth because it is self-legislating; as autonomous, it need obey only those laws which it gives itself. The autonomous will has dignity not merely because it itself respects the law, but, further, because it is the source of the law. The source of law, however, has a dignity - a worth - higher than that of the law itself. The single moral law is itself the object of respect: Kant holds that to be clear on inspection to anyone aware of the law. The worth - the dignity - of the moral will is thus the dignity of the giver of the moral law.(36) For Kant, the only basis of self-respect, as of respect for persons, is respect for the (dignity of the) law.

But that is not the whole story of human worth, according to Kant. In the Metaphysics of Morals, Kant distinguishes between the "natural man," man in the system of nature - homo phaenomenon - and "moral man," man regarded as a person - homo noumenon.(37) This distinction Kant identifies as that between man as an animal of "common

value" whose rationality "gives him only an extrinsic value in terms of his usefulness," and man regarded as a person, who is "exalted above any price," as possessing a dignity (absolute inner worth). Kant remarks that the extrinsic value, which humans have unequally and which so establishes a hierarchy of more or less valuable humans, is still "lower than [the value of] the universal medium of exchange, money." On the other hand, man's dignity as a person enables him to "exact respect for himself from all other rational beings in the world," and puts him on a footing of equality with all other rational beings.

Thus a human being has two kinds of value - one as an element of the natural system, "his price as a ware that can be exchanged for these other animals, as things," a price higher or lower than that of other humans; the other an intrinsic worth or dignity which sets him or her beyond "natural price" and gives him or her a dignity equal to that of all other finite rational beings. The point of this duality appears to be the felt need of Kant's to distinguish humans as moral beings from an order of values that rests on merely physical relations of utility and need-satisfaction. Humans, Kant is claiming, cannot be valued or esteemed merely relative to their usefulness - and to that of other animals as natural beings. The contrast between natural price and moral worth is here wedded to that between homo phaenomenon and homo noumenon, between the realm of nature and the realm of ends. Things

have a price, for Kant, simply as physical components of the natural system capable of satisfying our material needs. Insofar as human beings also are physical beings, we also have such a price. Persons, by contrast, have an intrinsic dignity because as rational wills we are autonomous, acting only upon laws we have given to ourselves. This opposition, identifying as it does the physical with that whose value is strictly relative and exchangeable, sets the stage for and reinforces the Kantian insistence that what has absolute unconditional worth must be nonphysical.

That such unconditional worth must exist Kant does not argue: he seems to accept the existence of such valuation as given. The texts certainly indicate Kant's acceptance of the price-system as a feature of the natural constitution of things, or at least the absence of any suggestion that the system of prices and needs is anything but natural. Once this price-system's existence is taken as a natural fact - in the absence of any consideration of its origin or legitimacy - a system of opposed and supervenient valuation of humans as nonphysical entities seems necessary to save humans from a seemingly natural commodification. The analysis suggests that Kant's "transcendentalization" of morality may have been motivated in part by his felt need to provide a hedge against the seemingly natural commodification of humanity which his theoretically "naive" - for a critical philosopher - views on money and value

implied.

Only by assuming the necessity and veracity of such a system of moral or nonnatural valuation can Kant prove the reality and necessity of the categorical imperative, which for him is the absolute ground of all moral valuation whatsoever. Kant's formulation of the categorical imperative arises in the Grundlegung from a discussion of the absolutely good will and its basis in acting for duty's sake. Kant claims that there is something beside desire capable of motivating action - namely, respect for the law. Thus, establishing that reason can be practical involves showing that there is actually a fundamental practical principle, that in no way draws upon any material incentive to action. For this principle to be practical given a will that is only imperfectly rational, however, it must take the form of a command and have the force of a duty. Morality, for Kant, is a system of the rational coercion of the self.

This self-coercion is conducted in the name of, in the interests of, a "higher" self - what Kant calls the "invisible self" or moral personality.⁽³⁸⁾ This self is the core of what Kant calls the "homo noumenon." It is the source of all moral law. We are self-legislative insofar as our conscious empirical will, in the sense of our power of choice (*Willkür*) comes to be determined exclusively by our rational will - in the sense of our exercised capacity for practical reason (*Wille*). The purity of practical reason is

the result of "spontaneity," its independence of natural causation. Because pure reason is, at its source, disengaged from the radical relativity and material interconnection of natural objectivity, it can synthesize principles of action that do not perpetuate the human subjection to external necessitation.

Kant is ambiguous about the ground of respect for the law, of the law's unconditional worth. Sometimes it appears to be the result of the intuitive grasp by the moral self of its self-subsistent value, and sometimes a fact about the legislating activity of this self. A good will is one whose acts have as their sole incentive respect for the law. Only respect for the moral law can assure the performance of duty for its own sake. This respect Kant characterizes as "self-wrought by a rational concept" and says "the direct determination of the will by the law and the consciousness of this determination is respect." (39) The will's immediate subordination to the law is consciously reflected as respect. Though respect is a feeling, it seems to be a special case of feeling, elicited only by the conception of the law in itself as the determining ground of the will. But if this respect is to be a practical - as opposed to a pathological - incentive, it must stem from "the conception of a worth which thwarts my self-love." Since respect is, for Kant, "the effect of the law on the subject, and not...the cause of the law," the law's worth does not derive from the respect it arouses

in us, but rather the respect results from the law's antecedently given worth. Though this worth can only be conceived by us as great relative to our own self-love, this worth stands on its own, so to speak, and is not a worth relative to our empirical faculties, needs or desires. (40)

Kant also sometimes writes of the activity of legislation itself conferring worth - this notion is hinted at both with respect to moral legislation and with respect to the "monetary legislation" of the universal medium of exchange. Toward the end of the second analytic section of the Grundlegung, in discussing the source of the moral esteem we have for a good will, Kant suggests that it is the law itself that fixes the worth of things:

A thing has no worth other than that determined for it by the law. The legislation which determines all worth must therefore have a dignity, i.e., unconditional and incomparable worth. (41)

And in the Metaphysics of Morals, in the discussion cited earlier of homo phaenomenon versus homo noumenon, Kant contrasts the value of man the rational animal with the value of money: "considered [as a rational animal] man still has a lower value than the universal medium of exchange, money, the value of which can therefore be called preeminent (*pretium eminens*)."(42) Money's "preeminent value" here seems to arise, on Kant's view, from the fact that while money is the measure and standard of the value of all other things, there is no further independent measure or standard based on which money itself can be

valued. Here the assumption is that while the natural value of things generally is measured in terms of money, money's value is not explicable in terms of any other measure. Analogously, because the moral law is the standard by which the worth specifically of persons is determined, without there being a further measure or standard or measure by which the moral law itself might be gauged, the moral law itself itself must have a transcendent or "super-worth" - a dignity. And, as Kant makes clear in the Grundlegung passage, it is from the dignity of the moral legislation itself that human dignity - and the respect which persons deserve and elicit - derives. If moral legislation is simultaneously "the legislation which determines all worth" - that is, all moral worth - then the law itself achieves a status beyond the worth that it fixes and regulates. Thus it is the activity of legislating - of giving a law that determines moral worth, that gives to the person its dignity - "the unconditional and incomparable worth" that "puts it infinitely beyond price."

The clear and striking analogy Kant makes in these passages, between the function of money and that of the moral law, points up the aptness of the social correlation I have been pressing between the Kantian constitutivism as a foundational account of knowledge based on the paradigm of the physical object and the political economists' attempts to ground an analysis of price on a conception of value as a naturally occurring property of the

commodity-object. The Kantian analogy between moral worth and what might be called natural worth establishes the dignity of the moral law on the basis of a contrast with Kant's naturalistic conception of value and money as being natural features of natural objects, including the human qua animal. Natural worth and moral worth are related as relative worth - worth relative to other ends or purposes - is to intrinsic worth - the worth of the thing-in-itself, so to speak. This gives the evaluative equivalent of the phenomenal/noumenal distinction. Kant claims that the moral law, as a practical apriori principle, is not the result of a naturally occurring, that is, phenomenal causality, but has its origin or ground in a "noumenal activity" which he calls the "spontaneity" of reason. The ratio cognoscendi of this noumenal spontaneity is the moral law as the product of my own moral reflection and as capable of actually determining my will and guiding my activity.

In sum, moral worth or dignity attaches to persons to the extent that they are determined in their action and intention by the moral law. This practical precept, which Kant holds to be implicit in popular moral consciousness, is not simply the outcome of moral agents' apparent deliberations. For those are temporal processes and, as such, are determined through natural causality. But

Reason must regard itself as the author of its principles, independently of foreign influences (43)

and so pure reason in general, and so pure practical reason, originates mysteriously, in a way that is in

principle incomprehensible. Kant admits, at the very end of the Grundlegung, that

we do not indeed comprehend the practical unconditional necessity of the moral imperative; yet we do comprehend its incomprehensibility, which is all that can be fairly demanded of a philosophy which in its principles strives to reach the limit of human reason. (44)

The investigation touched off by Kant's observation that the idea of the absolute worth of the good will "is something so strange" concludes with the observation that the moral law on which that worth depends is ultimately incomprehensible to us as well.

This configuration of mysteries closely parallels the structure of perplexities that emerge from the works of the political economists discussed by Marx in his critique of political economy. In each case we have a troubling notion of worth or value emerging somehow from a seemingly nonnatural - but inadequately theorized - process of determination (value-constitutive abstract labor and object-constitutive reason) that proves, on analysis, to be inarticulable within the ambit of the theory. In each case a clearly stateable principle is said to govern relations in a specified realm or locus without any possibility of specifying precisely the source of this principle or the mechanisms of its effectivity. The source in each case is an abstract and generalized mode of human activity - labor in one case and reason in another - which yet can be given no specific relation to concrete human acts, of making and of thinking, carried out by particular concrete individual

human beings. These similarities are not simply coincidental but reflect substantive conceptual parallels in the Kantian and politico-economic theoretical projects. The major conceptual parallel involves the attempt to make phenomenal features of the sphere analyzed - Newtonian physics on the one hand, the labor theory of value on the other - into transhistorical absolutes in the absence of visible socio-historical determinants of those phenomenal forms. This inattention to the social form of the objective and seemingly natural relations through which things come to be objects of knowledge is concomitant with the notion of the object-constitutive activity as transhistorically characteristic of humans as essentially individual beings, activity capable of being carried out by atomic individuals outside of any specific social context. This necessitates a mystification of the physical properties of objects through the projection onto them of seemingly "natural" properties that are but suppressed and displaced social relations which those objects mediate.

5

I argued above that in the first Critique Kant advances an analysis of human knowing that likewise fetishizes objects of knowledge by imbuing them with a property that cannot be parsed as natural yet "adheres" to all natural objects - and indeed constitutes them as natural - their constitution through the synthetic activity of transcendental subjectivity. This is the Kantian

intellectualist version of the principle that "reason has insight only into that which it produces after a plan of its own." The phenomenal object is completely intelligible in terms of the categories and principles which, in part, determine and constitute its very objectivity. Yet this full comprehensibility extends only to the form which the object shares with all others. The material that is categorially organized and the phantom subjectivity that brings forth the structuring organization itself are both mysterious, in principle inaccessible to consciousness and to knowledge. The rational objectivity of the known - a strictly physicalist objectivity or thinghood - brings with it as its inescapable adjunct the mystical objectivity of the transcendental object and the noumenal subject. That is, the product of knowledge is fully rational - as related to our faculties of knowledge - while the activity that produces it and its material givenness are obscured and mystified.

A similar result obtains in Kantian moral theory. Kant is able to establish, arguably, that there is one apriori practical principle: what he cannot show, in principle, is that this moral law is an unconditional practical necessity, nor can he establish how this moral law is produced by the transcendental subjectivity which must be postulated if morality, on the Kantian view, is to be a possibility at all. The mystification - that is, the insistence on transcendental guarantees of the possibility of moral

willing - is far greater than it is for theoretical reason, because in the former case the sensible or empirical input is diminished, indeed eliminated as much as possible. Kant insists that all trace of the empirical must be bled from moral deliberations, that virtue flows only from adherence to duty and that duty is never decided by inclination, but only by principle.

Kant rejects any role for the promptings of sense, of feeling, in the moral determination of the will because this would constitute heteronomy. It should be recalled that this issue had been settled, in a sense, already at the metaethical level, back in the third antinomy. There it was established that freedom could only be reconciled with determinism if reason as a transcendental power is autonomous, capable of spontaneously inaugurating a new causal series. The "mechanism" Kant adopted there, of an "empirical character" which an "intelligible character" determines by means of "timeless causality," is an attempt to preserve the duality of perspective that is the red thread running through the entire critical philosophy. This duality of perspective, by means of which the empirical self is seen as caught up in the nexus of causal determinations while the noumenal self is an autonomous spontaneity, clearly and simply excludes the empirical from any role in autonomy. Thus sensibility, feeling, need and desire are stricken from the roll of transcendentially valorized faculties. It should be noted that Kant can make

exceptions when he needs to further his overall argument concerning the transcendental pedigree of moral feeling, as he does in the case of the feeling of respect, of which he writes:

In the boundless esteem for the pure moral law...there is something so singular that we cannot wonder at finding this influence of a merely intellectual idea on feeling to be inexplicable to speculative reason, and at having to be satisfied with being able to see a priori that such a feeling is inseparably bound with the idea of the moral law in every finite rational being. (45)

Here the source of Kant's apriorism needs to be recalled.

In the beginning of the chapter I argued that Kant need not have chosen the route of transcendental philosophy: doing so was not a choice forced upon him merely by the logic of his argument, but a decision to interpret in a particularly intellectualist way the principle that "reason has insight only into that which it produces after a plan of its own." Here reason might have been treated as a socially constituted set of theoretical practices (though that could not have been suggested to Kant by his Wolffian academic training). That Kant chose instead to see reason as a transcendental "force" - there can only be a "pure reason" if reason is conceived as disembodied, separable from its subjective or empirical media - is an indication of his intention not to completely give up on metaphysics, to resurrect it after burying it. Here would be a transcendental guarantee of natural science's validity, a guarantee only possible from beyond the natural, and beyond the socio-historical as well. As part of this program,

sensibility in its receptive, rather than its active mode, is curbed, reined in on the transcendental leash. That such domestication is not administered to sensibility as the insistent and demanding interlocutor of will by critical philosophy itself, but is left to the "moral" resources of the individual, is perhaps the reflex of civil society's belief that individuals' activities are only regulated by their own internal and so "moral" volitional careers. The effect, however, is to suppress the social determination of need in a radical way.

And so Kant's apriori forms of objectivity - the transcendental scaffolding of the natural world - becomes merely the effect of a hypermetaphysical realm of supersensuous entities. (It's true that none of these are laid hard claim to, that these metaphysical entities are explicitly entities of faith and not of knowledge. But they manage to insinuate themselves and make themselves useful and necessary as supporting the critical philosophy overall.) At the same time, social theory is suppressed to the point that there appear to be only two orders of existence - the phenomenal-natural and the noumenal-transcendental.

It is in this context that Kant's apriori practical principle, the moral law, can be seen as the apotheosis of the inward subjective condition of an ideal civil society, that is, of a society of independent and self-subsistent individuals absent any central or collective authority or

forum of communal consensus. Kant's notion of a realm of ends is an image of that social order in which neither coercion nor compromise are necessary because there is a unanimity of wills attained through the moral law. This unanimity is not a material but rather a formal one: there is room for differences of desire and inclination, but not for differences of principle. A society of independent atomic individuals which lacks any central authority or explicitly elaborated collective mode for determining the character of social relations, is one in which each individual must be seen as the source, independently, of a principle of social order that is universal to them all. Further, this principle must be not only socially identical for all, but also effective in regulating their action sans external sanction.

The first desideratum points to an inward and common source of ordering principles; the second to the willing and complete subjection of the self to its dictates. Furthermore, this unanimity of will achieved through the law cannot be a natural, just as it cannot be a coerced unanimity: a natural unanimity would not be a moral unanimity at all, since as heteronomous it could not be fully free. So this moral unanimity must be grounded in spontaneity, and not in natural causality. The effectiveness of the universal moral legislation is a challenge for the empirical self, whose task is to subdue its desires and entrust its own neediness to the abstract

objectivity of the law. For Kant morality is "the doctrine of how we are to be worthy of happiness"; and that suggests that a concern about morality is incompatible with a renunciation of the desire for happiness. But my personal happiness can no longer be taken as an immediately attainable end: it is a material ideal whose formal condition is adherence to the dictates of duty as determined by the moral law. In conditions of generalized commodity production, the condition of my material satisfaction as a consumer is also that of the reproduction of the formal conditions of the mode of production.

Kant's test for universalizability, the self-consistency of the hypothetical situation "suppose everyone acted on this maxim," brings out forcefully the social task and motivation of the practical apriori principle. This test not only establishes whether my present act might prejudice the future possibility of others' acting similarly, it raises the necessarily social condition of each agent's acting to the level of a practical principle. This is not merely a matter of our not being able to act outside of a social context, but further that each act is an element of some system of action. The consistency test posits the maxim of my act as universal to determine whether that maxim can sustain a system of acts and so a system of agents. Only maxims capable of generating a self-sustaining system of action pass the consistency test for universalizability.

Let us recall that Kant settled on the universalizability requirement for maxims as a way of formulating a purely formal practical principle.(46) The legislative form is necessarily a universal one; it is abstract because its universality is emptied of all content - all reference to desires, needs, or material objects of the will. These being subjective and not, according to Kant, universal, refer to objects in a way which is not objectively necessary, nor capable of being known apriori. They thus cannot be the basis of pure practical principle.

Here the abstract universality of the form of moral willing can be seen as a reflection of the abstract universality of the commodity-form. The abstract universality of the commodity is the universality of it as a value-form. Because Kant vests objects as such with the abstract formal properties of the commodity-form - every object "naturally" has a value, expressed in its "natural price" - autonomy must take the form of a generalized proscription of all material motives and principles. Since all objects acquire the character of abstract wealth, of value-determination, and this abstract wealth is itself made to seem "natural", the consequent universality and ubiquity of value-determination can only be countered by the introduction of a universal principle of moral evaluation and volition in which the sensuousness of the desire for the object is bled from moral considerations as surely as the concreteness of the object-producing labor is

bled from the process of value-determination. Thus the universality criterion arises in part out of a need to counter a fetishized system of "natural" objects and "natural prices" and provide for a systematic grounding for human relations that makes for reproducible social conditions without the mediation of an external objectivity that can only be seen as introducing heteronomy.

Kant emphasizes that moral action is not merely in accordance with duty, but from duty, from respect for the law. He says that "respect for the law is not the incentive to morality; it is morality itself, regarded subjectively as an incentive." (47) Respect for the law is the moral feeling, elicited because "the moral law inevitably humbles every man when he compares the sensuous propensity of nature with the law." (48) This humbling is based on pain:

we can see apriori that the moral law as a ground of determination of the will, by thwarting all our inclinations, must produce a feeling which can be called pain. (49)

This pain and this humiliation, which weakens our self-conceit, checks our selfishness, transforming it into rational self-love. These are all elements of the moral feeling which arises apriori, according to Kant, from an intellectual cause - the moral law.

This moral psychology show how the Kantian focus on the apriori becomes a method for isolating socially constituted moral characteristics as natural and opposing them to the putatively transcendental force of a moral law. Thus, Kant claims that selfishness is "natural and active

in us even prior to the moral law" and is only transformed into rational self-love by the moral law. Further on, Kant describes self-conceit as a naturally-arising propensity to make self-love "an unconditional practical principle," and argues that only the moral law checks this propensity. So the confrontation which prefigures the struggle of virtue pits selfishness and self-conceit as characterizing "the sensuous propensity" of our nature as beings of need, against respect for the moral law, a feeling known apriori, "produced by an intellectual cause." (50) The point is not merely that this distribution of moral characteristics between the two "sides" is somewhat arbitrary, suppressing as it does any possibility of naturally occurring altruistic determinations of feeling. This account of the "balance sheet" is too close to the model of "possessive individualism" not to arouse a suspicion that Kant's naturalist psychology of egoism is a displacement of social realities onto an atomic-individualist conception of humans as natural "beings of need."

I indicated earlier, in the discussion of Kant's conception of moral worth, how Kant regards the price of a commodity as reducible to the physical need-satisfying properties of the commodity-object. Thus price, for Kant, is a measure of worth deriving entirely from natural features of the (phenomenal) object. In this he clearly marks his difference from the classical political economists. Yet paradoxically, this naturalism of price

seems to propel Kant in a direction opposite from, say, Adam Smith's naturalist ethic. Surely, if price is a natural feature of phenomena, then moral worth ought not to be. And because price is a feature of (phenomenal) objects as such, which are thereby taken to be commodities generally, and by nature, that human needs come to be seen as, in themselves, generative of "possessive individualism" and so hostile to morality. This makes it clearer how Kant could have identified autonomy with a conscious neglect, and conditional suppression, of our sensuous requirements as beings of needs.

While these features of Kantian moral theory can be seen as products of an overall natural/transcendental duality in Kantian thought generated by the apriorism of the first Critique, this overarching duality is itself a function, in large part, of Kant's concern to provide for human freedom against the encroachments of a seemingly fatalist Newtonian mechanism. And not too far beneath this explicitly professed concern we can detect the traditional Christian trinity - God, free will, and immortality. These should not be conceived as timeless concerns, however, but as expressions of the social problems that confronted and animated Kant as a thinker of his time. Newtonian mechanics can only be experienced as a threat to humanity if its force is somehow social or ideal: it is not an external threat, but one from within ourselves. And it can become such a threat just because things come to be seen generally

as commodities of a transcendental production, and human beings, as objects of theory, are thereby in danger of being commodified (by theory). I assume that theory can avoid such a commodification of the human - though it still must necessarily objectify them - and that a necessary condition for its accomplishment of this is the development of a theoretical elaboration of the commodity fetishism along the lines first suggested by Marx. The problem of the commodification of human beings arises in social theory initially only in the period in which Kant, Bentham, and the political economists were writing. Marx's critique was the first and most penetrating attempt to specify precisely the limited social conditions in which objectification assumes the form of commodification. Any attempt to show the merely historical identity of the two must begin with an assessment of Marx's work.

The "transcendentalization" of moral theory consequent to the combined naturalism and mystical objectivism of Kantian epistemology has decisive effects on the matter of Kantian morality. All of the substantive formulations of Kantian moral theory correspond to the actual requirements of a social condition characterized by the unmediated and "spontaneous" encounters of commodity producers in the market. Foremost among these is the assumption that commodities generally exchange at their values, and that, in doing so, the conditions of commodity production are reproduced. Moral agents confront one another with their

intentions and acts, rather than with needs and goods. In both cases, however, there is a problem of evaluation or worth, of equivalence, and of the repetition of the process and the sustainability of the system of action. These considerations are implicit in the categorical imperative: its formal requirement of universality guarantees the conditions of equivalence as well as of the sustainability of the system of action.

The elevation of the moral law to a position of unassailable worth and esteem is concomitant with the devaluation of the moral significance of the maxim of action. The maxim's only moral significance, for Kant, is in its conformity to the universally legislative status of the will. What, materially, the maxim requires and where or how it originates is treated by Kant as irrelevant to moral concern. While the moral law is the object of utmost respect, the maxim is a given of common currency. It is the maxims that guide the act; but it is the mere form of the maxim, and not its substance, that is morally significant, just as only the value of the commodity, and not its actual physical properties, is significant for the act of exchange (even if, as Kant incorrectly thought, these are related). The respect the moral law commands of us, and its inscrutability, are the moral equivalents of the mysteriousness and the exalted value attached by Kant to money as the universal medium of circulation of commodities. This is clearly suggested by the passage from

the Metaphysics of Morals discussed above, in which the "natural man" is distinguished from the "moral man." (This contrast, of course, leaves out of account "man as a social being"; this would most likely be subsumed by Kant under the category "natural man.") The devaluation of maxims relative to the moral law, and the seeming assumption of their naturally occurring plentitude, echoes the political economists' easy acceptance of the commodity-form as the "natural" and spontaneously occurring form of the social product, relative to their frustrating search for an "absolute standard of value."

The Kantian indifference to the source and content of maxims stems from an uncritical acceptance of a seemingly given, somehow spontaneous social process of generation of maxims. How can we be sure maxims will emerge, presenting themselves to practical reason for its approval? Kant doesn't seem bothered by this problem. In discussing examples in the Grundlegung Kant unproblematically takes maxims concerned with lying, suicide, offering help to others, in a way that suggests these were accepted rules of virtue among the circle that Kant was addressing. Yet it is the maxims that really specify the material structure and social substance of the activity, and point to the cultural and material matrix within which it is carried out. It is the maxims which contain the wealth of assumptions and presuppositions - about institutions, property relations, the existence of social media such as money, and other

social variables. The Kantian implication, that all practices capable of being universalized in a self-reproducing social order are morally acceptable, suggests either a social homogeneity of actual institutions or else an extreme moral formalism, neither of which strengthen Kant's view. Kant's seeming neglect of these considerations, victims of his apriorist orientation, helps undercut the putative universality of his moral thinking and points to the social determination of his merely formally universal ethics. Substantively, the ethical life of any particular social order, mediated as it must be for Kant through maxims whose empirical and so institutionally-bound content is distinctive, is only weakly and formally effected by the absolutely valued moral law itself.

Finally, the much maligned Kantian highest good also bears the mark of the necessarily asocial, naturalist cast given to the moral realm by Kant's apriorism. The specifically Kantian notion of the highest good results from the need to resolve the antinomy of pure practical reason. That antinomy arises because virtue and happiness appear to be unrelated, while it is a demand of pure practical reason that they coalesce apriori to form a concept of the highest good. Kant ultimately resolves this antinomy by appealing to the ideas of the intelligible world, of immortality, and of God. The causal connection of virtue to happiness is not an immediate one but is mediated

by God. This mediation is possible without recourse to the miraculous: it need not be restricted to the sensible natural world but can effect us as intelligible, immortal beings.

Crucial to the argument is Kant's diremption of moral knowledge from natural, causal and technical knowledge. The relation of virtue to happiness must be divinely mediated because moral knowledge, necessary for the attainment of virtue, is wholly inarticulate concerning the causes of happiness. Though prudence, or the knowledge of happiness, can never be fully successful, it nonetheless can have no impact at all on virtue. Likewise moral knowledge, for Kant, cannot contribute, even minimally, directly to our happiness. Knowing what we want or need, and how to get it, has no connection to knowing what our duty is.

Thus Kant can advance the demand that we perfect our moral powers without providing thereby any assurance about our welfare: our moral powers are in no way connected to our human needs. Our moral powers are powers of activity in the abstract, powers of reason as an abstract activity. The activity of purifying our intentions is precisely the process of abstracting from the sensuous impulse of our need, of abstracting from our own sensuous situation as beings of experience (that is, beings of the world of sense) in the course of our moral reflections. Hence our moral powers are not even powers of acting at all; they are powers of constraining action in a certain way, and of

aligning our intentions with the demands of an inward formal principle of universality.

Here again we seem to have the reflex of the viewpoint of the independent commodity producer, refracted through Kantian transcendental idealist categories. This becomes apparent from the following considerations. The commercial activity of the independent commodity producer is bounded on one side by his mastery of the technical knowledge involved in his trade. This is natural-technical knowledge of a straightforward kind, essential to the production side of any business. But the independent commodity producer must also have knowledge of market conditions, of the variations of prices and demand. The task of "determining infallibly and universally" such conditions is "completely unsolvable" (as Kant says of the knowledge involved in producing happiness).⁽⁵¹⁾ This means that commercial success, as a means to personal happiness, is to a large extent independent of the individual producers' mastery of production technique, and out of their control altogether. Given what we earlier argued was Kant's "naive" naturalistic view of money and value, these market uncertainties could be taken by Kant as a purely natural feature of our situation as natural beings. The Kantian intelligible world and our capacity for a priori knowledge of it could thus be seen as motivated in part in response to the seeming impossibility of controlling, and even acquiring knowledge of, the forces governing production for

the market. We can make our relations universally constant and intelligible if each adopts a standard that all others have as well; if this standard is internal to us as persons then we will have combined homogeneity of expectation with the inwardness of faith.

Kant's formulation of the antinomy of practical reason is arguably an idealization of the actual social situation and cognitive possibilities of the independent commodity producer under conditions of generalized commodity production. This situation is one of the interdependence of the *prima facie* independent producers, manifested through a mysterious medium - money - whose exigencies are beyond the control of the individual and so constantly threatens the welfare, happiness, and even existence of the individual producer. The realm of ends is simply one in which "means" and "media" have disappeared, because they are both unnecessary - for the individual as pure rational will - and guaranteed - by means of the postulates of immortality and of God. Such a solution to the problem is the logical outcome of a view which takes human powers to be necessarily and inevitably bounded by what is in fact only their historically given social form.

This critique of Kantian ethical theory has proceeded by way of a presentation of a certain naivete of Kant's concerning questions of value, price and money. This "naivete" is made theoretically visible by means of some conceptual apparatus developed by Marx in his critique of

the political economists. The "naivete" is thus relative to Marx's critical theory. This should not be taken as a reproach against Kant, either as a thinker or as a person. I have tried to advance arguments to support my view that this "naivete" was not an accidental concomitant of Kant's general philosophical perspective, but that the very core of the critical philosophy depended on philosophical moves that seem to give expression to the general social conditions which engendered such "naivete" precisely in such a way as to be undetectable to the critical philosophy itself.

Let me emphasize three points about the force of this critique, in conclusion.

First, I do not hold that the historical appearance and ascendancy of critical philosophy can be explained by my critical use of Marx's notion of fetishism and related notions. I also do not maintain that the critical philosophy is merely an elaborately worked-out form of fetishism, the intellectual froth on the waves of ideological illusion. If the development of Kantian theory (and of its "naivete") can be explained as an historical phenomenon, this would not be a matter of economic critique of historical theory: Kant was not just an "economic agent" determined by (historically) empirical conditions. I only claim that the general outlines of the critical philosophy can be interpreted as the attempted resolution of a problematic rooted in the main traditions of western

European philosophical thought in social conditions which are partially captured by Marx's analysis of commodity production and its attendant necessary illusions. In working toward this, I have been arguing that the critical philosophy's basic moves can be related to a form of the social problem that arose with the development of capitalist commercial activity, and can be seen as an attempt to address that form of the social problem by "going transcendental." I do not claim to have explained the social etiology of Kantianism.

Secondly, the Marxian category of fetishism and its related notion of abstract labor, the theoretical underpinnings of my account of Kant's "naivete" and its correlate in the theoretical elaborations of the critical philosophy, can only be employed in this way because it is a part of the development of the Kantian problematic, a tradition of philosophical thought growing out of the critical philosophy itself. The Marxian critique of Kantianism is therefore not so much a polemical criticism of one position by a distinctly other one, but a critique internal to the development of a tradition and clarificatory of its normative foundations.

Finally, and as a consequence of the preceding point, the critique elaborated above cannot occasion an unequivocal rejection of Kantian ethical theory, from the point of view of Marxism. Most basically, the Kantian morality is grounded in an overall philosophical position

in which the appearance/reality distinction plays a decisive epistemological and normative role. Marx does not reject that distinction but only the absolutist form it is given in the critical philosophy as a result of the transcendentalization of the non-appearing. I have tried to show the logic of that qualified Marxist reading of Kantianism, but have not attempted the larger task of tracing the philosophical lineage linking Marx to Kant.

NOTES

The following abbreviations are used to refer to these editions of Kant's works:

CPR - Critique of Pure Reason, tr. by Norman Kemp Smith, New York: St. Martin's, 1965.

CPrR - Critique of Practical Reason, tr. by Lewis White Beck, Indianapolis: Bobbs-Merrill, 1976.

CJ - Critique of Judgement, tr. by James Creed Meredith, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1952.

FMM - Foundations of the Metaphysics of Morals, tr. by Lewis White Beck, Indianapolis: Bobbs-Merrill, 1959.

MM - The Doctrine of Virtue (Part II of the Metaphysics of Morals), tr. by Mary J. Gregory, Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1980.

PFM - Prolegomena to any Future Metaphysics, tr. by Lewis White Beck, Indianapolis: Bobbs-Merrill, 1950.

1. CPR, B 353-4 = A 297-8.
2. CPR, B 86 = A 62.
3. CPR, B 354-5 = A 298.
4. CPR, B 86 = A 62.
5. CPR, B xiv.
6. CPR, A xi-xii.
7. G.W.F. Hegel, Hegel's Lectures on the History of Philosophy, Tr. by E.S. Haldane and F.H. Simpson, New York: Humanities, 1896, Vol. III, p. 428.
8. PFM, p. 5.
9. CPR, B xviii.
10. PFM, p. 9.
11. CPR, B xxii.
12. CPR, B xix.
13. CPR, B xi-xii.
14. CPR, B xii-xiv.

15. CPR, B xvi-xvii.
16. CPR, B xxiin.
17. CPR, B xvii.
18. CPR, B xvi.
19. CPrR, p. 166.
20. CJ, p. 114.
21. CPR, B 535.
22. CPR, B 476.
23. CPR, B 477.
24. CPR, B 474.
25. CPR, B 473.
26. CPR, B 475.
27. CPR, B 564.
28. CPR, B 551.
29. CPR, B 586.
30. CPR, B 569.
31. CPR, B 186.
32. CPR, B 86.
33. FMM, p. 10.
34. FMM, p. 53.
35. Ibid.
36. FMM, p. 54.
37. MM, p. 99.
38. CPrR, p. 166.
39. FMM, p. 17 n.2.
40. FMM, p. 30 n.3.
41. FMM, p. 54.

42. MM, p. 99.
43. FMM, p. 67.
44. FMM, p. 83.
45. CPrR, p. 82.
46. CPrR, pp. 33-34.
47. CPrR, p. 78.
48. CPrR, p. 77.
49. CPrR, p. 75.
50. CPrR, p. 76.
51. FMM, p. 36.

CONCLUSION

The argument I have been giving has focused on the social-theoretic presuppositions of Bentham and Kant, particularly with respect to exchange, value, and money. I have tried to show how these presupposition have "infected" and indeed come to determine the projects embodied in these theorists' ethical or practical-philosophical writings. These presuppositions were, in turn, criticized from the standpoint of Marx's notion of fetishism of commodities, which I argued to be a general category, one Marx brought to bear on money and capital as developed forms of the value relation buried in the commodity itself.

I have been analyzing the relations between the classical labor theory of value formulated by Adam Smith and David Ricardo, and ethical theories of "value" formulated by Kant and Bentham. In both of these cases, I claimed, the notion of value developed as a cornerstone of the ethical theory owes its inspiration and its theoretical necessity to a political-economic conception of value, though not necessarily a fully developed one. Bentham elaborates his notion of the "value" of a pleasure as the cornerstone of his hedonist calculus. There are textual indications that Bentham was consciously mimicking the classical Smithian labor theory of value with his measure of the value of pleasure. "Value" for Bentham was therefore

a technical term which he construed as serving a function parallel, in the framework of his hedonist calculus, to that of "value" in the sense of exchange value in the writings of the political economists. Kant's formulation of the idea of the "absolute worth" of the person is clearly inspired by his acceptance of a pretheoretical concept of the "common value" of all natural things, including humans as "rational animals," as the basis for the "price" of a human being. Although this conception is clearly different from that of the political economists, it crucially shares with that conception the view that value in the economic sense is somehow a natural feature of the commodity-object. It is this that necessitates, within the framework of his critical philosophy, Kant's transcendental turn toward the "person" as noumenon as the bearer of "absolute worth" that he equates with "dignity".

The limit of my investigation here is reached when I have brought out clearly the structural and logical resemblances between the theoretical writings of the political economists Marx criticized and the ethical theories of Bentham and Kant. These resemblances, I claim, allow for the development of a critique of these canonical modern ethical theories that parallels Marx's own critique of political economy. I have also tried to indicate at various points how an uncritical adoption of commonsense categories employed by the agents of commodity production and exchange might have suggested to, e.g. Kant, modes of

analysis that reproduced the fetishism elaborated in the theory of value of the political economists. That Kant takes a concept like "market price" at face value, without attempting to ground it or justify its use, can be shown by attending to his uses of it, their context, and the absence of its elaboration in his text. That this involves a certain naivete on his part can be seen when the resulting discourse is compared with that of, say, Adam Smith, writing at roughly the same time. This "naivete" implies in itself neither intellectual negligence nor theoretical lapse on Kant's part. But I do claim that this "naivete" has an effect on the character and content of Kant's ethical theorizing; it is this connection that I focus on and try to spell out.

I have not tried to provide a causal argument showing that, e.g. Kant's ethical theory is the result of his undeveloped views on "market price" and money. Indeed, I hardly think that is the case. At any rate, estimating precisely the significance of commodity production and its attendant illusions to the development of Kantian doctrine, or even of the contribution of Kant's views on these matters economic to his critical philosophy overall is a task far beyond the scope of this dissertation. It would involve a full discussion of all the significant influences on the development of Kant's thought, a tracing of the intellectual influence connecting Kant to the Leibnizian-Wolffian school, as well as that connecting Kant

to Rousseau and Hume. It would involve a resume of the effect of Pietism on Kant's development, as well as of the social and intellectual climate of eighteenth-century Konigsberg. None of this have I attempted, though it would be necessary to make the full historical argument that my thesis suggests.

. 1

Bentham's project of a "moral arithmetic" depended on the possibility of making happiness, as the ultimate moral good, a straightforwardly summable function of pleasure. Only thereby could a decision procedure capable of deriving practical solutions based on "naturalist" considerations of aggregate happiness alone be established. Bentham pins his hopes for such a procedure on a concept of pleasure which he tries to fashion into the measurable and ultimately homogeneous substance of all happiness(es). In elaborating his conception, Bentham flirts with the idea of letting money stand as the measure of pleasure; he ultimately rejects this possibility because of the problem of marginal utility arises in a seemingly insoluble form. Yet that he seriously considered the possibility suggests that his attitude toward pleasure was shaped or at least influenced by a particular understanding of commodity-value and of the nature of money as a measure or standard of value.

The Benthamite project thus hinges on two crucial "moves": an account of money and value which is "naturalist" in a way that the Marxian notion of fetishism

suggests, and a view of pleasure that is "physicalist" and non-interpretive or culture-independent.

Bentham does seem to take pleasure as a kind of sensation or perception, echoing in this the doctrine of his reputed master in things epistemological, John Locke. As such, pleasure is the mere physical effect of the actions of physical stimuli upon our senses. This view has the consequence that we can, conceptually, sunder pleasures (and pains), as physical sensations, from the activities of which they are the effects or consequences. Activities can thus be ignored in all respects but those determining the quality or nature of the pleasures they induce. It may be that we must investigate and know the causal interrelations of the processes of which our activities are a part, and that such knowledge will allow us to theoretically distinguish pleasures; but the point of such knowledge, for a Benthamite, could only be a furtherance of our pursuit of pleasure generally.

Pleasure is thus not, in itself, in danger of being misidentified by human agents: as a sensation or perception, it is what we paradigmatically have the fullest immediate awareness of, at least on an empiricist construal of knowledge. That is probably part of the point of founding our moral views upon it. It is this character of givenness that our sensations seem to have that may have suggested their ability to lend moral considerations based upon them a kind of certainty and justification.

Finally, because pleasure is so regarded as isolable and as having the character of a raw given of experience, the privacy of the felt pleasure is subverted in principle through the possibility of a natural-physiological "reduction" of the distinct quantitatively-ordered dimensions of pleasure to the anatomically grounded elements of the diversity of sensibility. This homogenization of the experient implies not only the interspecific comparison of pleasures and pains that Bentham explicitly suggests in the last chapter of the Introduction, but also the transparency of cultural or social divides, which seemingly restrict access to privileged modes of feeling and response, to a thoroughgoing physiological etiology of pleasures and pains. For Bentham, it seems, "forms of life" are merely derivative variations on one naturally explicable theme.

This theoretical construction of a moral psychology by Bentham, if taken in the fullest rigor of its presentation, is explicable as a model of ideal human relations elaborated as a naturalism with respect to pleasures and happiness(es). If Benthamism is taken as a social doctrine, this moral naturalism (or materialism) is combined with some straightforwardly "enlightenment" assumptions about the source of existing relations between individuals: natural reason is the sole legitimate source of social order; humans are naturally hedonists; only ignorance, superstition and interest have distorted human relations,

making reform necessary. This formulation of the social problem sets up a problematic in which the principle of utility hardly seems to need a positive defense.

This overall theoretical strategy of Benthamism can be brought into opposition to the core methodological principle informing Marx's critique of political economy. For Marx, the conceptual innovation labor power, as the commodity labor, and abstract labor as the result of the process of the consumption of that commodity by capital, and as the source of commodities as value-forms generally, are categorial expressions of the social forms of the development of human laboring activity upon which the capitalist mode of production is based. I have tried to sketch a defense of what I call a realist interpretation of abstract labor as the concerted articulation of a social division of labor under the direction of capital. Capital, however, is merely a developed form of the value relation involved in the commodity form itself. This seeming circularity of explanatory reference points to the "social invisibility" of those very forms and relations of agents' activities which constitute and reproduce the social process of capitalist production. These relations are "socially invisible" insofar as the agents of production are unaware of them as specific relations and forms of their activity. It is only the physical objects which are technical conditions of the production process that the agents are aware of as defining their mode of activity and

their relationships with one another through that activity. The relations and forms of their activity are taken as derivative from and determined by these objects. To the degree that they are recognized at all, they are as the general forms of human activity itself, as general forms of human relation.

This mode of understanding these relations on the part of the agents of production is not simply the result of preestablished ideas or ideology. The relations and forms of activity are taken to arise from the properties and disposition of the objects around which the mode of production is organized. This is in fact the experience of individual buyers and sellers in the market. There, commodity-objects are not regarded as "bearing" or "embodying" social relations that are separable from their properties as natural or physical objects, relations that are not causally determined physical relations. Their "social standing" relative to one another, and the relations amongst humans they elicit, are pretheoretically regarded as objective both in the sense of being consequences of the natural properties of the objects and in the sense of being indistinguishable from the nature-induced character of productive activity generally.

Bentham's treatment of pleasure can be seen to reproduce this sort of social invisibility, if in a somewhat different phenomenal domain. Bentham's hedonism has the advantage of serving to force out a conception of

pleasure that bears out clearly the bookkeeper's perspective underlying it.(1) The possibility of implementing the Benthamite program, even for the case of one person, presupposes that it is pleasure generally, and not some particular pleasure or set of pleasures, that can significantly be taken as the end of human agents. It is only if the given mode of the enjoyment of pleasures, experience, and goods is treated as the form of enjoyment generally, that pleasure as such can be conceived as the object of that mode of enjoyment. As I tried to show, Bentham doesn't think to treat the determinate mode of enjoyment consequent to a specific process of life-activity as casting into doubt the possibility of a generic pleasure. He seems to regard the conditions of enjoyment attendant to his own theorizing activity as generalized conditions of enjoyment. In this sense, his articulation of "pleasure" makes invisible the social forms that delimit the specific conditions of pleasure-production that his writing presupposes.

This becomes clearer when the central task of the Benthamite, of maximizing pleasure, is itself considered as a form of activity presupposing and reproducing certain relations between human agents. As I argued earlier, the Benthamite enterprise can only be carried out if there are already clearly defined patterns of pleasure-production and of what might be called "hedonic experience" in place. In order for maximization of pleasure to be realizable, the

options for its production must be a specifiable set of given "hedonic" practices whose outcomes may be quantitatively compared with one another. Bentham, who extensively classifies and analyzes the kinds of pleasure in the Introduction, is not likewise concerned with the social basis of the forms of activity which generate just that congeries of pleasures. Conspicuous is Bentham's listing the "pleasures of wealth," distinguished into the pleasures of acquisition and the pleasures of possession, second in his catalogue of "simple pleasures...of which human nature is susceptible,"(2) between the pleasures of sense and the pleasures of skill. Here the institution of private property is taken as a general condition of "human nature", as is the exchange of commodities: it seems most likely that acquisition here is used in the sense of purchase - "to obtain in exchange money or its equivalent." These conditions, insofar as they are taken as generalized human conditions by the Benthamite, are necessarily reproduced in the ideal implementation of the Benthamite program.

More generally, the overall Benthamite scheme of commensurable and exchangeable pleasures unified only by a strategy of maximization is too reminiscent of the commodity owner's perspective regarding his capital to be only coincidentally related to it, I think. It is because of this that Marx claims that Bentham "takes the modern shopkeeper, especially the English shopkeeper, as the

normal man.”(3) I tried to show in chapter two above that there are passages in Bentham’s early writings that strongly suggest he was directly influenced by the conception of money as a measure of value in working out the details of his utilitarianism. But whether or not this was so, it seems evident that the analogy only holds because Bentham’s theory incorporates as natural elements the phenomenal forms of commodity exchange and of the money form of value that accompanies it.

2

If the Benthamite image of a sole valid form of practical reason can be called a naturalist moral extrapolation of the mystified social form exhibited by relations of commodity production and exchange, then Kantian philosophical discourse is the constitutivist variant of the procedure through which commodity relations are posited as the general form of the relations of objects to reason. Central to Kantian doctrine is the claim that it is the activity of reason itself which constitutes the general formal character of objects of knowledge, that is, of objects-as-they-appear and as they are related to human subjects generally. This activity is not, however, the empirical “life of the mind” of which human agents are ordinarily aware, but an apriori structuring activity which is the absolute condition of all such empirical activity. Kant elaborates the apriori forms of intuition - space and time - as well as the necessary categorial form of all

coherent thought, working from the principle that reason has insight only into that which it produces after a plan of its own. Kant's argument is that reason must therefore produce the phenomenal world, the world of appearances; only so is our knowledge possible at all.

I call this view "constitutivist" because it weds the possibility of knowledge to the rational constitution of the phenomenal forms of the object. I argued in the last chapter that Kant's constitutivism has the specific character that it does because Kant begins with a reason that is atomized, internal only to the individual consciousness and indeed constituting the identity of that consciousness itself. Crucially, Kant's reason has no objective - social - existence, and could have none, prior to its articulation by transcendental subjectivity. The internal identity of reason articulated as the condition of individual experience becomes for Kant the prius of reason's existence as a social relation of subjects. While Kant summons considerable philosophical energy to establish reason's objectivity - its necessity as an "interior" condition of experience - its universality as conditioning social relations is confined to an ideal telos of social, and individual, development. This means that, for practical purposes, the object-centered coherence of individual reason mediates and conditions the social relation of subjects.

Kant's apriorism, that is, the demand that the formal

springs of knowledge be independent of all individual experience, implies the demand that the forms of knowledge derive their objectivity not through a relation of individual knowers nor any reciprocal determination of cognitive forms by technical practices, but from their own original character as transcendental activity. Thus the "experimentalism" of the second preface gives way to the "spontaneity" of reason as a self-sufficient source of the formal determination of objects and of consciousness. As I argued earlier, his initial bias toward apriorism necessitated Kant's difficult dualism of phenomenal and noumenal objects. While the phenomenal object has its form of appearance determined by apriori reason, the noumenal object, though a necessary moment of the critical system overall, is unknowable because entirely indeterminable by reason.

Kant's procedure for establishing the necessity of scientific knowledge, and discrediting the claims of metaphysical knowledge, is thus based upon a constitutivist view of the phenomenal object - which he calls empirical realism - combined with a "cognitive indeterminism" of the noumenal object - what he calls transcendental idealism. The theoretical integrity of subjective experience is thus preserved - mostly - while the possibility of any theoretical account of the origin or determination of that experience is rejected as an illegitimate extension of reason's compass.

Reason is thereby limited, in the theoretical domain, to the reporting of the appearances - ones it has constituted, and so objective appearance - nonetheless as appearances only a limitation on reason's theoretical autonomy. Kant argues that such limitation is in fact a positive advantage for reason's practical interest, because it provides for the autonomy of reason practically, an autonomy that could not be preserved against an "omnipotent nature." The constitutivist energies of reason in relation to nature must be slackened before the totality of conditions of experience are determined, in the interest of freedom. If theory is thereby restricted to a part of the generally "intelligible" - specifically to that part experienced as the naturally ordered flux of phenomenal objects - the "intelligible" can be conceived as harboring a further rational but non-constitutivist, transcendental activity of will.

This partition of the reality of reason into distinct spheres with distinct modes of determination is, I have argued, based on the opposition of moral action to what are taken to be the natural forms of appearance of objects generally. These forms, though they are constituted by reason itself, and so are rational, are both absolute in the sense of allowing no variation or development, and constitutive of empirical human reality, that is, human sensuousness, need, and desire. So reason, as "embodied" in "human nature" as a system of immanent regularities in

human social life, must be opposed by another rational determination, one subversive of the "omnipotent naturalism" of sensuousness. Because sensuousness is treated by Kant as a naturally constituted mode of empirical subjectivity, the opposition becomes one between the rationally indeterminate sensuous content or object of will and the possibility of rationally determining the form of will. This inner antagonism of reason is expressed theoretically in the illusion that the good can be the object of a merely empirical willing; an illusion that is a species of the naturally arising and inevitable transcendental illusion.

So moral determination must counteract and resist natural determination, which, because of his apriorism, Kant must conceive in an absolutist way. That moral - "nonnatural" - determination of the human will is capable of existing alongside the seeming natural determination of human action is the burden of Kant's efforts to establish the illusory character of the putatively rational considerations adduced in support of the existence of God, freedom, and immortality. To argue for (or against) these theses is to regard the ideas involved in them as susceptible to full rational determination, that is, to regard them as constitutive of forms of experience. These ideas do not constitute (forms of) experience, but merely regulate the project rationally systematizing that experience. It is in taking these ideas to represent "a

something that is real absolutely and in itself" that we slip into error; this process is inevitable because "reason cannot think this systematic unity [of experience] otherwise than by giving to the idea of this unity an object." Such is the origin of transcendental illusion, according to Kant.

While Kant thereby precludes the possibility of a theoretical resolution of the canonical metaphysical questions, he attempts to show that their resolution in the affirmative is a logical possibility and a practical necessity for the moral agent. The demonstration hinges on the individual agent's acknowledging a single form of willing as morally binding, an acknowledgement derived from the notion of duty alone. This acknowledgement is claimed to entail the doctrines of immortality and theism, via claims regarding the natural limits of empirical human action.

This kantian framework, barely elaborated in my brief summary here, presents in striking theoretically articulated form the perspective of the independent producer in conditions of generalized commodity production and exchange. Because the social character of the independent commodity producer's activity appears as a condition imposed upon him/her by the form the products of that activity must take, the object-constitutive activity of the agent appears formally preordained by the "spontaneous" and "transcendental" activity of a rationally

indeterminable totality of conditions whose phenomenal appearance is as a system of objects. As the social creativity of mediately interconnected individual producers comes to appear to them as a transcendently posited formal condition of the objectivity of their products, these products generally assume the dimensions of the consecrated Host, whose physical properties are but phenomenal accidents mystically wedded to a wholly-other, transubstantial reality. The system of objects created by their labor is unified for the producers only through its representation in the form of an object - namely, money: this object appears, however, to have a merely ideal existence. The agents of production cannot conceive the totality of conditions of their own activity because those conditions are not consciously regulated but mediated through the anarchic "spontaneity" of the market. The requirement that "reason can only have insight into that which it produces after a plan of its own," becomes a program which under such conditions can be realized only for an individual reason, opposed to its transcendently-constituted and so absolute natural conditions of existence; only in a partial and not a comprehensive way; and only if the actively planning reason is separated from the reason having insight by a transcendental "veil of ignorance." Thus reason as the social form of a mode of life is theoretically articulated by Kant as the transcendently imposed universal .

constitution of reason as the condition of individual consciousness.

This constitutivism carries its implications into Kant's moral theory as well. It is because human sensuality shares the apriori determinist constitution of the natural that moral determination must be purely formalist. Because the social form of the mode of producing is represented as a further physicalist property of the objects themselves, alongside the existence of the money-commodity as the necessary medium of exchange, human needs, as conditioned upon the social exchange of commodities, appear as a source of the individuals' dependence on, not other individuals, but a seemingly natural "violence of things." Thus freedom, as the realization of moral personality, is taken to require the absence of such dependence, and, consequently, the opposition of reason to those needs. Yet the needs cannot be suppressed, for they are necessary to our identity as individuals. Moral activity cannot have happiness as its aim, yet it could not survive the subject's indifference to happiness either: morality is, for Kant, the doctrine of worthiness to be happy. Kantian autonomy is thus at its core a response to and rejection of the social conditions of abstract labor: a rejection which, because it takes abstract labor to be a natural condition, in fact sublimates and spiritualizes it while rejecting it. This difficulty establishes the conditions for what Kant calls the antinomy of practical reason. Since our practical

activity is determined as wholly other to object-constitutive activity, and since our need-satisfaction, and so the possibility of our happiness, rest on the latter, at least in part, there seems to be no possible connection between virtue and happiness. This problem is further compounded by the seeming transcendently-imposed form that social creativity takes and the seemingly natural mediation of our relation to our conditions of existence through the money-commodity. Thus the development of my individual and social human powers cannot assure the satisfaction of my needs: only a super-individual reason, with a plan of its own, inaccessible to us, can coordinate the social development of human labors.

What Benthamite and Kantian theories have in common, as is brought out by the brief resumes of the detailed "readings" given of them above, is an insistence on generalizing the activity of independent commodity producers into the necessary or natural form of human activity as such. This proclivity, nurtured by a failure to distinguish the social form of the commodity itself, and of the human activities constitutive of that social form, which is taken as the representative of objectivity overall, is of the same kind that Marx criticized in the political economists. This is sufficient reason, I think, to conclude that Marxist social theory demands, instead of the naturalistic or transcendental treatments of morality

given in the Kantian or Benthamite paradigms, a moral theory that begins by recognizing and theoretically articulating morality as a social form of human activity. This means that the way to a Marxist moral theory could only be through a "sociology of morals." Such an inquiry would more than likely go beyond the social outlook of the authors we have been considering. But that is a question that goes beyond the limited aims of my argument.

NOTES

1. Karl Marx and Frederick Engels, The German Ideology, Moscow: Progress, 1964, p. 280.
2. Jeremy Bentham, Introduction to the Principles of Legislation and Morals, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1907, p. 34.
3. Karl Marx, Capital, Vol. I, New York: International, 1965, p. 609.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

1. Marx's Writings: A. Marx's Political-Economic Writings
B. Other Works

2. Secondary Literature on Marxism:

- A. On Marxism in General
- B. On Marx's Political-Economic Works
- C. On Marxism and Ethics

3. Writings by and about Smith & Ricardo

4. Writings by and about Bentham

5. Writings by and about Kant

1A. MARX'S POLITICAL-ECONOMIC WRITINGS

Capital. Three Volumes. New York: International, 1967.

Contribution to the Critique of Political Economy. Moscow: Progress, 1970.

Grundrisse. Edited by Martin Nicolaus. New York: Vintage, 1973.

"Results of the Immediate Process of Production." In Capital. Volume I. New York: Vintage, 1976.

Theories of Surplus Value. Moscow: Progress; Part I, 1963; Part II, 1968; Part III, 1971.

2B. MARX'S OTHER WORKS

Marx/Engels Collected Works. New York: International, 1975-

Texts on Method. Ed. by Terrell Carver. New York: Barnes & Noble, 1975.

2A. SECONDARY LITERATURE ON MARXISM IN GENERAL

- Acton, H.B. The Illusion of the Epoch. London: Cohen & West, 1955.
- Althusser, Louis. For Marx. New York: Pantheon, 1969.
- _____. Reading Capital. New York: Pantheon, 1970.
- _____. Lenin and Philosophy. New York: Monthly Review, 1971.
- Avineri, Shlomo. The Social and Political Thought of Karl Marx. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1968.
- Berlin, Isaiah. Karl Marx: His Life and Environment. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1948.
- Bologh, Roslyn Wallach. Dialectical Phenomenology: Marx's Method. London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1979.
- Brown, Michael. The Production of Society: A Marxian Foundation for Social Theory. Totowa: Rowman & Littlefield, 1986.
- Bukharin, Nikolai. Historical Materialism: A System of Sociology. New York: International, 1925.
- Cohen, G.A. Marx's Theory of History: A Defense. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1978.
- Fromm, Erich. Marx's Concept of Man. New York: Norton, 1977.
- _____. Socialist Humanism. New York: Anchor, 1966.
- Gould, Carol. Marx's Social Ontology. Cambridge, MA: MIT, 1978.
- Gouldner, Alvin. "The Two Marxisms." In For Sociology: Renewal and Critique in Sociology Today. Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1973.
- Habermas, Jurgen. Knowledge and Human Interests. Boston: Beacon, 1968.
- Hook, Sidney. From Hegel to Marx. Ann Arbor, 1962.
- Ilyenkov, E.V. Dialectical Logic: Essays on its History and Theory. Moscow: Progress, 1977.
- Lefebvre, Henri. Dialectical Materialism. London: Jonathan Cape, 1968.

Lichtheim, George. Marxism: An Historical and Critical Study. New York: Praeger, 1965.

Lukacs, George. History and Class Consciousness: Studies in Marxist Dialectics. Cambridge, MA: MIT, 1971.

Miller, Richard. Analyzing Marx. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1984.

Ollman, Bertell. Alienation: Marx's Theory of Man in Capitalist Society. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1971.

Plamenatz, John. Karl Marx's Philosophy of Man. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1975.

Popper, Karl. The Open Society and its Enemies. Volume Two. New York: Harper & Row, 1962.

Rubel, Maximilien. Rubel on Karl Marx: Five Essays. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1981.

Schaff, Adam. A Philosophy for Man. New York: Monthly Review, 1963.

Taylor, Charles. "Marxism and Empiricism." In British Analytic Philosophy. Edited by Bernard Williams and Alan Montefiore. London, 1966.

Tucker, Robert. Philosophy and Myth in Karl Marx. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1961.

Wood, Allen. Karl Marx. London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1981.

28. SECONDARY LITERATURE ON MARX'S POLITICAL-ECONOMIC WORKS

Callinicos, Alex. "The Logic of Capital." Unpublished dissertation: Oxford University, 1978.

Godelier, Maurice. Rationality and Irrationality in Economics. New York: Monthly Review, 1972.

Ilyenkov, E.V. The Dialectics of the Abstract and the Concrete in Marx's "Capital". Moscow: Progress, 1982.

Mandel, Ernest. The Formation of the Economic Thought of Karl Marx, 1843 to "Capital". New York: Monthly Review, 1971.

Rosdolsky, Roman. The Making of Marx's "Capital". Bristol: Pluto, 1980.

Sayer, Derek. Marx's Method, Ideology, Science, and Critique in "Capital". Atlantic Highlands: Humanities, 1979.

Uno, Kozo. Principles of Political Economy: The Theory of a Purely Capitalist Society. Atlantic Highlands: Humanities, 1980.

Uygodski, U.S. The Story of a Great Discovery: How Marx Wrote "Capital". Kent: Abacus, 1974.

Zeleny, Jindrich. The Logic of Marx. Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1980.

2C. SECONDARY LITERATURE ON MARXISM AND ETHICS

Allen, Derek. "The Utilitarianism of Marx and Engels." In American Philosophical Quarterly X, 3; pp. 189-199.

Ash, William. Marxism and Moral Concepts. New York: Monthly Review, 1964.

Brenkert, George. Marx's Ethic of Freedom. London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1983.

Buchanan, Allen. Marx & Justice: The Radical Critique of Liberalism. London: Methuen, 1982.

Burke, John, ed. Marxism and the Good Society. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1981.

Cohen, G.A. "Capitalism, Freedom and the Proletariat." In The Idea of Freedom: Essays in Honor of Isaiah Berlin. Edited by Alan Ryan. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1979.

Cohen, Marshall, ed. Marx, Justice and History. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1980.

Fisk, Milton. Ethics and Society: A Marxist Interpretation of Value. New York: NYU Press, 1980.

Kamenka, Eugene. The Ethical Foundations of Marxism. New York: Praeger, 1962.

. Marxism and Ethics. London: Macmillan, 1969.

Kautsky, Karl. Ethics and the Materialist Conception of History. Chicago: Charles H. Kerr, 1909.

Lukes, Steven. Marxism and Morality. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1985.

Tucker, Robert. "Marx and Distributive Justice." In The Marxian Revolutionary Idea. New York: Norton, 1969.

Walicki, Andrej. "Marx and Freedom." In The New York Review of Books. Nov. 24, 1983, pp. 50-55.

3. WRITINGS BY AND ABOUT SMITH AND RICARDO

Anikin, A. A Science in its Youth. Moscow: Progress, 1975.

Gide, Charles, and Rist, Charles. A History of Economic Doctrines. Boston: D.C. Heath, n.d.

Hollander, Jacob H. David Ricardo: A Centenary Estimate. Baltimore, 1910.

Kanth, Rajani. Political Economy and Laissez-Faire. Totowa: Rowman and Littlefield, 1986.

Meek, Ronald L. Studies in the Labor Theory of Value. Second Edition. New York: Monthly Review, 1974.

Ricardo, David. The Principles of Political Economy and Taxation. London: Dent, 1973.

Smith, Adam. The Wealth of Nations. Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1970.

4. WRITINGS BY AND ABOUT BENTHAM

Baumgardt, David. Bentham and the Ethics of Today. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1952.

Bentham, Jeremy. Introduction to the Principles of Morals and Legislation. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1907.

Harrison, Ross. Bentham. London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1983.

Mack, Mary Peter. A Bentham Reader. New York: Pegasus, 1969.

Sidgwick, Henry. Outlines of the History of Ethics. Boston: Beacon, 1968.

5. WRITINGS BY AND ABOUT KANT

Beck, Lewis White. A Commentary on Kant's "Critique of Practical Reason". Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1960.

Ewing, A.C. A Short Commentary on Kant's "Critique of Pure Reason". Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1974.

Hegel, Georg Wilhelm Friedrich. Hegel's Lectures on the History of Philosophy. Trans. by E.S. Haldane and Francis H. Simpson. New York: Humanities, 1896, Vol. 3.

Kant, Immanuel. Critique of Pure Reason. Trans. by Norman Kemp Smith. New York: St. Martin's, 1965.

_____. Critique of Practical Reason. Trans. by Lewis White Beck. Indianapolis: Bobbs-Merrill, 1976.

_____. Critique of Judgment. Trans. by James Creed Meredith. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1952.

_____. Foundations of the Metaphysics of Morals. Trans. by Lewis White Beck. Indianapolis: Bobbs-Merrill, 1959.

_____. The Doctrine of Virtue. (Part 2 of the Metaphysics of Morals.) Trans. by Mary J. Gregory. Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1980.

_____. Anthropology from a Pragmatic Point of View. Trans. by Mary J. Gregory. The Hague: Nijhoff, 1974.

Korner, S. Kant. Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1955.

Paton, H.J. The Categorical Imperative. New York: Harper & Row, 1967.

Reiss, Hans, ed. Kant's Political Writings. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1971.

Wolff, Robert Paul, ed. Kant: A Collection of Critical Essays. New York: Anchor, 1967.

Wood, Allen W. Kant's Moral Religion. Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1970.

_____, ed. Self and Nature in Kant's Philosophy. Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1984.