

THE PHILOSOPHY OF **MARX**

ETIENNE BALIBAR



"Succinct and informative"
Fredric Jameson

"A trenchant and exciting analysis of the philosophy of Marx"
Immanuel Wallerstein

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Translated by
Chris Turner



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Marxist Philosophy or Marx's Philosophy?

The general idea of this little book is to understand and explain why Marx will still be read in the twenty-first century, not only as a monument of the past, but as a contemporary author – contemporary both because of the questions he poses for philosophy and because of the concepts he offers it. Limiting myself to what seem to me the essentials, I would like to give readers a means of finding their bearings in Marx's writings and introduce them to the debates which they have prompted. I would also like to defend a somewhat paradoxical thesis: whatever may have been thought in the past, *there is no Marxist philosophy and there never will be*; on the other hand, *Marx is more important for philosophy* than ever before.

We have first to come to some understanding on the meaning of 'Marxist philosophy'. This expression might refer to two quite different things, though the tradition of orthodox Marxism, which developed at the end of the nineteenth century and was institutionalized by the Communist state-parties after 1931 and 1945, considered them indissociable: the 'world-view' of the socialist movement, based on the idea of the historic role of the working class, and the system attributed to Marx. Let us note right away that neither of these ideas is *strictly* connected with the other. Various terms have been invented to express the philosophical content common to Marx's work and to the political and social movement which acted in his name: the most famous of these is 'dialectical materialism', a relatively late term and one inspired by the use Engels had made of various of Marx's

formulations. Others have contended that, strictly speaking, Marxist philosophy is not to be found in Marx's writings, but emerged *retrospectively*, as a more general and more abstract reflection on the *meaning, principles* and *universal significance* of his work; or, indeed, that it still remains to be constituted or formulated in systematic fashion.¹ Conversely, there has never been any shortage of philologists or critical thinkers to emphasize the distance between the content of Marx's texts and their later 'Marxist' fate, and to show that the existence of a philosophy in Marx in no way implies the subsequent existence of a Marxist philosophy.

This debate may be settled in a manner as simple as it is radical. The events which marked the end of the great cycle during which Marxism functioned as an organizational doctrine (1890–1990), have added nothing new to the discussion itself, but have swept away the interests which opposed its being opened up. There is, in reality, no Marxist philosophy, either as the world-view of a social movement, or as the doctrine or system of an author called Marx. Paradoxically, however, this negative conclusion, far from nullifying or diminishing the importance of Marx for philosophy, greatly increases it. Freed from an illusion and an imposture, we gain a theoretical universe.

Philosophy and non-philosophy

A new difficulty awaits us here. Marx's theoretical thinking presented itself, at various points, not as a philosophy, but as an alternative to philosophy, a *non-philosophy* or even an *anti-philosophy*. And it has perhaps been the greatest anti-philosophy of the modern age. For Marx, philosophy as he had learnt it, from the tradition which ran from Plato to Hegel, including more or less dissident materialists like Epicurus or Feuerbach, was in fact merely an individual undertaking aimed at interpreting the world. At best this led to leaving the world as it was; at worst, to transfiguring it.

However, opposed as he was to the traditional *form* and *usages* of philosophical discourse, there can be little doubt that he did himself interlace his historico-social analyses and proposals for political action with philosophical statements. He has been

Dialectical materialism

This term was used to refer to philosophy in the official doctrine of the Communist parties, and it has also been employed by a number of critics of that doctrine (see Henri Lefebvre, *Dialectical Materialism* (1940) trans. John Sturrock, Cape, London, 1968. It was not used by either Marx (who spoke of his 'dialectical method') or Engels (who uses the expression 'materialist dialectic'), but seems to have been invented in 1887 by Joseph Dietzgen, a socialist worker who corresponded with Marx. It was, however, on the basis of Engels's work that Lenin developed this theory (in *Materialism and Empirio-criticism*, 1908) around three guiding themes: the 'materialist inversion' of the Hegelian dialectic; the historicity of ethical principles in their relation to the class struggle; and the convergence of the 'laws of evolution' in physics (Helmholtz), biology (Darwin) and political economy (Marx). Lenin thus takes up a position between a *historicist* Marxism (Labriola) and a *determinist* Marxism, akin to 'Social Darwinism' (Kautsky). After the Russian Revolution, Soviet philosophy was divided between the 'dialecticians' (Deborin) and the 'mechanists' (Bukharin). The debate was settled by General Secretary Stalin who, in 1931, issued a decree identifying dialectical materialism with *Marxism-Leninism* (cf. René Zapata, *Luttes philosophiques en URSS 1922–31*, Presses Universitaires de France, Paris, 1983). Seven years later, in the pamphlet *Dialectical and Historical Materialism* (1938), he codified its content, enumerating the *laws of the dialectic* – the foundation of the individual disciplines and of the science of history in particular, as well as the *a priori* guarantee of their conformity to the 'proletarian world-view'. This system, known as *diamat* for short, was to be imposed on the whole of intellectual life in the socialist countries and, with varying degrees of resistance, on Western Communist parties. It was to serve to cement the ideology of the party-State and control the activity of scientists (cf. the Lysenko affair, studied by Dominique Lecourt in *Proletarian Science? The Case of Lysenko*, trans. Ben Brewster, New Left Books, London, 1977). However, we should add two correctives to this monolithic picture. Firstly, as early as 1937, with his essay 'On Contradiction' (in *Four Essays on Philosophy*, Foreign Languages Press, Peking, 1966), Mao Tse-Tung had proposed an alternative conception, rejecting the idea of the 'laws of the dialectic' and stressing the complexity of contradiction (Althusser would later draw on this in his 'Contradiction and Overdetermination', in *For Marx*, trans. Ben Brewster, Penguin, Harmondsworth, 1969; first French edition, 1965). Secondly, at least one school of thought – that led by Geymonat in Italy – made dialectical materialism the starting-point for a historical epistemology that is not without its merits (cf. André Tosel, 'Ludovico Geymonat ou la lutte pour un matérialisme dialectique nouveau', in *Praxis. Vers une refondation en philosophie marxiste*, Messidor/Éditions Sociales, Paris, 1984).

sufficiently criticized by positivism for doing this. What we need to establish, then, is whether these statements form a coherent whole. My hypothesis is that this is not the case at all, at least if the idea of coherence to which we are referring continues to be informed by the idea of a system. Having broken with a certain form of philosophy, Marx was not led by his theoretical activity towards a unified system, but to an at least potential *plurality* of doctrines which has left his readers and successors in something of a quandary. Similarly, it did not lead him to a uniform discourse, but to a permanent oscillation between 'falling short of' and 'going beyond' philosophy. By *falling short* of philosophy, I mean stating propositions as 'conclusions without premisses', as Spinoza and Althusser would have put it. One example is the famous formula from *The Eighteenth Brumaire of Louis Bonaparte* which Sartre, among others, considered the central thesis of historical materialism: 'Men make their own history, but not of their own free will; not under circumstances they themselves have chosen but under the given and inherited circumstances with which they are directly confronted.'² By *going beyond* philosophy, on the other hand, I mean a discourse which shows that philosophy is not an autonomous activity, but one determined by the position it occupies in the field of social conflicts and, in particular, in that of the class struggle.

Yet let us repeat that these contradictions, these oscillations in no sense represent a weakness on Marx's part. They bring into question the very essence of philosophical activity: its contents, its style, its method, its intellectual and political functions. This was true in Marx's day and is probably still true today. It might therefore be argued that, *after Marx, philosophy is no longer as it was before*. An irreversible event has occurred, one which is not comparable with the emergence of a new philosophical point of view, because it not only obliges us to change our ideas or methods, but to transform the practice of philosophy. Marx is certainly not the only writer in history to have produced effects of this kind. In the modern age alone, there has also been Freud, to mention but one, though he operated in a different field and had other aims. However, comparable examples are, in fact, very rare. The caesura effected by Marx has been more or less clearly acknowledged, more or less willingly accepted; it has even given rise to violent refutations and strenuous attempts at

neutralization. But this has only caused it to haunt the totality of contemporary philosophical discourse all the more and to work on that discourse from within.

This anti-philosophy which Marx's thought at one point intended to be, this non-philosophy which it certainly was by comparison with existing practice, thus produced a *converse* effect to the one at which it was aiming. Not only did it not put an end to philosophy, but gave rise within it to a question which is now permanently open, a question from which philosophy has since been able to draw sustenance and which has contributed to its renewal. There is in fact no such thing as an 'eternal philosophy', always identical to itself: in philosophy, there are turning-points, thresholds beyond which there is no turning back. What happened with Marx was precisely a displacement of the site and the questions and objectives of philosophy, which one may accept or reject, but which is so compelling that it cannot be ignored. After this, we can at last return to Marx and, without either diminishing or betraying him, read him *as a philosopher*.

Where are we to look, in these conditions, for *the philosophies* of Marx? After the remarks I have just made, there can be no doubt as to the answer: in the open totality of his writings and there alone. Not only is there no distinction to be made between 'philosophical' and 'historical' or 'economic' works, but that division would be the surest way to fail to understand anything of the critical relation in which Marx stands to the whole philosophical tradition, and of the revolutionary effect he has had upon it. The most technical arguments in *Capital* are also those in which the categories of logic and ontology, the representations of the individual and the social bond, were wrested from their traditional definitions and re-thought in terms of the necessities of historical analysis. The most conjunctural articles, written at the time of the revolutionary experiences of 1848 or 1871, or for internal discussion within the International Working Men's Association, were also a means of overturning the traditional relationship between society and State and developing the idea of a radical democracy which Marx had first sketched out for its own sake in his critical notes of 1843, written in the margins to Hegel's *Philosophy of Right*. The most polemical of his writings against Proudhon, Bakunin or Lassalle were also those in which

the discrepancy between the theoretical schema of the development of the capitalist economy and the real history of bourgeois society appears and forces Marx to outline an original dialectic, distinct from a mere inversion of the Hegelian idea of the progress of *Geist* . . .

In fact, each of Marx's works is *simultaneously* imbued with philosophical labour and ranged confrontationally against the way the tradition has *isolated* and circumscribed philosophy (which is one of the driving forces of its idealism). But this gives rise to a final anomaly which, in a sense, he experienced within himself.

A break and ruptures

More than other writers, Marx *wrote in the conjuncture*. Such an option did not exclude either the 'patience of the concept' of which Hegel spoke, or the rigorous weighing of logical consequences. But it was certainly incompatible with stable conclusions: Marx is the philosopher of eternal new beginnings, leaving behind him *many* uncompleted drafts and projects . . . The content of his thought is not separable from his shifts of position. That is why, in studying him, one cannot abstractly reconstruct his system. One has to retrace his development, with its breaks and bifurcations.

In the wake of Althusser, discussion in the nineteen sixties and seventies was greatly preoccupied with the 'break' or 'rupture' which he saw as occurring in 1845, with some writers supporting his arguments and others contesting them. That break, contemporaneous with the emergence of the concept of 'social relation' in Marx, was seen as marking a point of no return, the origin of a growing distancing from the earlier *theoretical humanism*. I shall return to this term below. This continued rupture is, in my view, undeniable. Among its underlying causes are a number of immediate political experiences: in particular, the encounter with the German and French proletariats (the British proletariat in Engels's case), and the active re-entry into social struggles (which has its direct counterpart in the exit from academic philosophy). Its content, however, is essentially the product of intellectual elaboration. On the other hand, there

Three sources or four masters?

The presentation of Marxism as a world-view long ago coalesced around the formula, the 'three sources of Marxism': *German philosophy*, *French socialism* and *British political economy*. This derives from the way in which Engels divided up his exposition of historical materialism in *Anti-Dühring* (1878), and sketched the history of the antithetical relations between materialism and idealism, metaphysics and dialectics. This schema would be systematized by Kautsky in a lecture of 1907 entitled 'The Three Sources of Marxism. The Historic Work of Marx', in which the 'science of society, starting out from the standpoint of the proletariat' is characterized as 'the synthesis of German, French and British thought'. The intention was not only to promote internationalism, but to present the theory of the proletariat as a totalization of European history, ushering in the reign of the universal. Lenin was to adopt the formulation in a lecture of 1913, 'The Three Sources and Three Component Parts of Marxism'. However, the symbolic model of a combination of the component parts of culture was, in reality, not new: it reflected the persistence of the great myth of the 'European triarchy', expounded by Moses Hess (who had used the expression as the title of one of his books in 1841) and taken up by Marx in his early writings, in which the notion of the *proletariat* made its appearance.

Once we put behind us the dream of effecting a totalization of thought in terms of this 'three parts of the world' archetype (a world bounded, significantly, by Europe), the question of the 'sources' of Marx's philosophical thinking, i.e. of its privileged relations with the work of past theorists, becomes an *open* one. In an impressive recent work (*Il filo di Arianna, Quindici lezioni di filosofia marxista*, Vangelista, Milan, 1990), Constanzo Preve has given a lead here, assigning to Marx 'four masters': *Epicurus* (on whom he had written his thesis, 'On the Difference between the Democritean and Epicurean Philosophy of Nature', 1841) for the materialism of freedom, given metaphorical expression in the doctrine of the *clinamen* or random 'swerving' of atoms; *Rousseau*, who supplies the idea of egalitarian democracy or association based on the direct participation of citizens in the formation of the general will; *Adam Smith*, from whom the idea that the basis of property is labour is taken; and, lastly, *Hegel*, the most important and the most ambivalent, a constant inspiration and adversary to Marx in his work on 'dialectical contradiction' and historicity. The advantage of this schema is that it directs attention towards the internal complexity of Marx's work and the successive shifts which mark his critical relation to the philosophical tradition.

were at least two other equally important ruptures in Marx's life, determined by events potentially ruinous for the theory which, at the time, he believed he could safely uphold. The result was that that theory could only be 'rescued' on each occasion by

a re-foundation, carried out either by Marx himself or by another (Engels). Let us recall briefly what were the 'crises of Marxism' before Marxism as such existed. This will also provide us with a general framework for the readings and discussions which follow.

After 1848

The first crisis coincides with an epochal change for the whole of nineteenth-century thought: this was the failure of the revolutions of 1848. It is sufficient simply to read the *Communist Manifesto* (written in 1847) to understand that Marx had entirely shared the conviction that a general crisis of capitalism was imminent.³ This was to create a situation in which the proletariat, taking the lead for all the dominated classes in all (the) countries (of Europe), would establish a radical democracy which would itself lead, in short order, to the abolition of classes and to communism. The intensity and enthusiasm of the insurrections of the 'springtime of peoples' and the 'social republic' could not but seem to him to be the execution of that programme.

The disappointment, when it came, was therefore all the greater. The defection of a section of the French socialists to Bonapartism and the 'passivity of the workers' in the face of the coup d'état, coming as they did in the wake of the June massacres, were particularly demoralizing in their implications. I shall return below to the way this experience caused the Marxian idea of the *proletariat* and its revolutionary mission to waver. The extent of the theoretical upheavals this produced in Marx's thinking cannot be underestimated. It meant abandoning the notion of 'permanent revolution', which precisely expressed the idea of an imminent transition from class to classless society and also the corresponding political programme of the 'dictatorship of the proletariat' (as opposed to the 'dictatorship of the bourgeoisie').⁴ It meant the enduring eclipse – for which I shall attempt to outline the theoretical reasons below – of the concept of *ideology*, which had only just been defined and scarcely been utilized. But it also led to the definition of a research programme bearing on the economic determination

of political conjunctures and the long-term trends of social evolution. And it is at this point that Marx returns to the project of a critique of political economy, to recast its theoretical bases and carry it through to completion – at least up to the appearance of Volume 1 of *Capital* in 1867. This involved him in unremitting labour which we may legitimately interpret as reflecting a strong desire to gain revenge upon victorious capitalism – and the anticipated conviction that he would do so – both by laying bare its secret mechanisms (mechanisms it did not itself understand) and demonstrating its inevitable collapse.

After 1871

Then, however, came the second crisis, in the form of the Franco-Prussian war of 1870, followed by the Paris Commune. These events plunged Marx into depression, providing a stark reminder of the 'bad side of history' (to which we shall return), i.e. its unpredictable course, its regressive effects and its appalling human costs (tens of thousands dead in the war, tens of thousands of others killed in the *semaine sanglante* – not to mention the numbers deported – which, for the second time in twenty-five years, decapitated the revolutionary proletariat of France and struck terror into those of other countries). I cite this emotive catalogue of events only because we have to take the full measure of the break they represented. The European war ran counter to the idea Marx had formed of the directing forces and fundamental conflicts of politics. It reduced, at least in appearance, the importance of the class struggle by comparison with other interests and passions. The fact that the proletarian revolution broke out in France (and not in Britain) ran counter to the 'logical' schema of a crisis arising from capitalist accumulation itself. The crushing of the Commune revealed the disparity between bourgeoisie and proletariat in terms of forces and capacity for manoeuvre. Once again, there sounded the 'solo . . . requiem' of the workers of which *The Eighteenth Brumaire* had spoken.

Without doubt, Marx faced up to all this. He was able to read in the spirit of the defeated proletarians, short as their experiment had been, the invention of the first 'working-class government',

which he regarded as having lacked only the force of organization. To the socialist parties that were then forming, he proposed a *new* doctrine of the dictatorship of the proletariat as the dismantling of the State apparatus in a 'transitional phase' in which the principle of communism would be ranged against the principle of bourgeois right. But he dissolved the International (which was riven by insurmountable contradictions). And he interrupted the writing of *Capital*, the draft manuscript remaining suspended in the middle of the chapter on 'Classes', to learn Russian and mathematics, and to embark, via an enormous amount of reading, on the rectification of his theory of social evolution. This task, interspersed with the settling of accounts with various individuals, was to occupy the last ten years of his life. It was to Engels, his constant partner in dialogue and, at times, his inspiration, that it would fall to systematize historical materialism, the dialectic and socialist strategy.

But let us not run ahead of ourselves. For the moment we are in 1845. Marx is twenty-seven. He has a doctorate in philosophy from the University of Jena, is the former editor of the *Rheinische Zeitung* in Cologne and the *Franco-German Yearbooks* in Paris, and has been expelled from France, at the request of Prussia, as a political agitator. Though penniless, he has just married the young baroness von Westphalen and they have a little daughter. Like all those of his generation, the 'class of forty-eight', he saw himself as an up-and-coming young man.

Chronological table

- 1818 Marx born at Trier (Rhineland Prussia).
 1820 Birth of Engels.
 1831 Death of Hegel. Pierre Leroux in France and Robert Owen in Britain invent the word 'socialism'. Revolt of the *Canuts* in Lyon.
 1835 Fourier, *La Fausse Industrie morcelée*.
 1838 Feargus O'Connor draws up the *People's Charter* (the manifesto of British Chartism). Blanqui advocates the 'dictatorship of the proletariat'.
 1839 Marx studies law and philosophy at the universities of Bonn and Berlin.

- 1841 Feuerbach, *The Essence of Christianity*; Proudhon, *What is Property?*; Hess, *Die europäische Triarchie*; Marx's doctoral thesis ('On the Difference between the Democritean and Epicurean Philosophy of Nature').
 1842 Marx becomes editor of *Rheinische Zeitung*. Cabet, *Voyage en Icarie*.
 1843 Carlyle, *Past and Present*; Feuerbach, 'Principles of the Philosophy of the Future'. Marx in Paris: editor of *Franco-German Yearbooks* (containing 'On the Jewish Question' and 'A Contribution to the Critique of Hegel's Philosophy of Right. Introduction').
 1844 Comte, *Discours sur l'esprit positif*; Heine, *Deutschland, ein Wintermärchen*. Marx writes the *Economic and Philosophical Manuscripts* and, with Engels, publishes *The Holy Family*; Engels publishes *The Condition of the English Working Class*.
 1845 Stirner, *The Ego and its Own*; Hess, 'On the Essence of Money'. Marx expelled to Belgium; draws up the *Theses on Feuerbach* and, with Engels, writes *The German Ideology*.
 1846 *The Poverty of Philosophy* (a response to Proudhon's *Philosophy of Poverty*). Marx joins the League of the Just, which becomes the Communist League, for which, with Engels, he writes the *Communist Manifesto* in 1847.
 1847 Ten-hour bill in Britain (limiting working day). Michelet, *Le Peuple*.
 1848 European revolutions (February). Back in Germany, Marx becomes editor of the *Neue Rheinische Zeitung*, a revolutionary, democratic journal. 'June Days' massacre of French workers. Californian gold rush. Renan, *The Future of Science* (published in 1890); John Stuart Mill, *Principles of Political Economy*; Thiers, *De la propriété*; Leroux, *De l'égalité*.
 1849 Failure of the Frankfurt National Assembly and reconquest of Germany by the royal armies. Marx emigrates to London.
 1850 Marx, *Class Struggles in France*; Richard Wagner, *Judaism in Music*.
 1851 Louis Napoléon Bonaparte's coup d'état.
 1852 Marx, *The Eighteenth Brumaire of Louis Bonaparte*. Communist League dissolved.
 1853 Hugo, *Les Châtiments*; Gobineau, *The Inequality of Human Races*.
 1854–6 Crimean War.
 1857 Ruskin, *The Political Economy of Art*; Baudelaire, *Les Fleurs du Mal*.
 1858 Proudhon, *De la justice dans la Révolution et dans l'Église*; Mill, *On Liberty*; Lassalle, *Die Philosophie Herakleitos des Dunklen von Ephesos*.
 1859 Marx, *A Contribution to the Critique of Political Economy*. Work begins on the Suez Canal. Darwin, *The Origin of Species*. *Englishwoman's Journal* (the first feminist periodical) founded.

- 1861 American Civil War. Abolition of slavery in Russia. Lassalle, *System der erworbenen Rechte*.
- 1863 Polish insurrection. Hugo, *Les Misérables*; Renan, *Life of Jesus*; Dostoyevsky, *The Insulted and Injured*.
- 1864 Recognition of the right to strike in France. International Working Men's Association founded in London: Marx elected as the General Council's corresponding secretary for Germany.
- 1867 Disraeli extends male suffrage in Britain; customs union in Germany. Marx, *Capital. A Critique of Political Economy*, Volume 1. French conquest of Cochinchina.
- 1868 First Trades Union Congress in Britain. Haeckel, *Natural History of Creation*; William Morris, *The Earthly Paradise*.
- 1869 German Social-Democratic Workers' Party founded (Bebel, Liebknecht). Suez canal opened. Mill, *The Subjection of Women*; Tolstoy, *War and Peace*; Matthew Arnold, *Culture and Anarchy*.
- 1870-1 Franco-Prussian War. Proclamation of German Reich at Versailles. Siege of Paris and insurrection of Communards. Marx, *The Civil War in France: Address of the General Council*; Bakunin, *God and the State*.
- 1872 Hague Congress (break-up of the First International and transfer of the seat of the General Council to New York). Russian translation of the first volume of *Capital*. Darwin, *The Descent of Man*; Nietzsche, *The Birth of Tragedy*.
- 1873 Bakunin, *Statism and Anarchy*.
- 1874 Walras, *Elements of Pure Economics, or The Theory of Social Wealth*.
- 1875 Gotha Congress at which German socialist parties (Lassalleans and Marxists) are unified. French translation of Volume 1 of *Capital*.
- 1876 Victoria crowned empress of India. Spencer, *Principles of Sociology*. International officially dissolved. Dostoyevsky, *The Possessed. Festspielhaus* at Bayreuth inaugurated.
- 1877 Marx, Letter to Mikhailovsky; Morgan, *Ancient Society*.
- 1878 Anti-socialist (or 'Exceptional') Law in Germany. Engels, *Anti-Dühring*, with a chapter by Marx.
- 1879 French Workers Party founded by Guesde and Lafargue. Irish Land League founded. Henry George, *Progress and Poverty*.
- 1880 Communards amnestied.
- 1881 Free, compulsory, secular primary education in France. Alexander II assassinated by the 'Society for the Liberation of the People'. Dühring, *Die Judenfrage als Frage der Rassenschädlichkeit für Existenz, Sitte und Cultur der Völker . . .*; Marx, Letter to Vera Zasulich.
- 1882 Engels, 'Bruno Bauer and Early Christianity'.
- 1883 Death of Marx. Plekhanov sets up the 'Emancipation of Labour' group. Bebel, *Woman and Socialism*. Nietzsche, *Thus Spoke Zarathustra*.

Changing the World: From *Praxis* to *Production*

In the eleventh and last of the *Theses on Feuerbach*, we read: 'The philosophers have only *interpreted* the world, in various ways; the point is to *change* it.' The aim of this chapter is to begin to understand why Marx *did not stop there*, even though, in one sense, nothing that he wrote afterwards ever went beyond the horizon of the problems posed by this formulation.

The *Theses on Feuerbach*

What are the *Theses*? A series of aphorisms that here outline a critical argument, there advance a lapidary proposition and what is, at times, almost a slogan. Their style combines the terminology of German philosophy (which sometimes makes them difficult to read today) with a direct interpellation, a resolute impulse which, in a way, mimics a liberation: a repeated exit from theory in the direction of *revolutionary activity (or practice)*. They were written some time around March 1845, when the young scholar and political journalist from the Rhineland was living in Brussels, under a degree of police surveillance. It would not be long before he was joined by his friend Engels, with whom he was to begin a collaboration that would last a lifetime. It does not seem he ever intended these lines for publication: they are of the order of 'memoranda', formulas set down on paper to be remembered and provide constant inspiration.

At this point, Marx was engaged in a project we can picture

fairly clearly, thanks to the rough drafts published in 1932 which have since been known as the *Economic and Philosophical* (or 1844) *Manuscripts*.¹ This is a phenomenological analysis (aiming to establish the *meaning* or non-meaning) of the alienation of human labour in the form of wage labour. The influences of Rousseau, Feuerbach, Proudhon and Hegel are closely combined in these writings with his first reading of the economists (Adam Smith, Jean-Baptiste Say, Ricardo, Sismondi) to produce a humanist, naturalistic conception of communism, conceived as the reconciliation of man with his own labour and with nature, and hence with his 'species-being' which private property had abolished, leaving him, as a result, 'estranged from himself'.

Now, Marx was to interrupt this work (which he would resume much later on quite other foundations) and undertake with Engels the writing of *The German Ideology*, which mainly takes the form of a polemic against the various strands of 'Young Hegelian' philosophy inside and outside the university (Ludwig Feuerbach, Bruno Bauer and Max Stirner, all of whom were linked to some degree to the movement opposed to the Restoration which drew its inspiration from a 'left' reading of the author of the *Phenomenology* and *Philosophy of Right*). The composition of the *Theses* coincides with this interruption.² And it is probable that some of the theoretical reasons for it are to be found in the text. But it is also crucial to identify the exact relationship between the *Theses* and the arguments of *The German Ideology*.³ I shall return to this point below.

Louis Althusser, one of many well-known philosophers to have offered readings of the text, presented the *Theses* as the '*bord antérieur*' – i.e. the front or anterior edge* – of a *break*, thus launching one of the great debates in contemporary Marxism. In his view, the 1844 *Manuscripts*, with their characteristic humanism, could be said to be works predating the break, while *The German Ideology*, or rather its first part, with its deduction of the successive forms of property and State, in which the development of the division of labour provides the guiding thread, could be said to represent the real emergence of the 'science of history'.

* Althusser's English translator renders the full expression employed – '*le bord antérieur extrême*' (*Pour Marx*, Maspero, Paris, 1972, p. 25) – as 'earlier limit' (*For Marx*, p. 33). [Trans.]

I do not intend to enter into an exhaustive explication of this text here. The reader may consult the work by Georges Labica which studies each formulation in detail, taking the later commentaries with all their divergences as indicative of the internal problems these formulations pose.⁴ Labica demonstrates with perfect clarity how the *Theses* are structured. From beginning to end, the aim is, by invoking a 'new' or practical materialism, to move beyond the traditional opposition between philosophy's 'two camps': *idealism* (i.e., chiefly, Hegel), which projects all reality into the world of spirit or mind, and the *old* or 'contemplative' materialism, which reduces all intellectual abstractions to sensuousness, i.e. to life, sensation and affectivity in the style of the Epicureans and their modern disciples (Hobbes, Diderot, Helvétius etc.).

The critique of alienation

If we refer to the debates of the period, the thread of the argument is relatively clear. Feuerbach sought to explain 'religious alienation', i.e. the fact that real, sensuous men represent salvation and perfection to themselves in another *supra-sensuous* world (as a projection of their own 'essential qualities' into imaginary beings and situations – in particular, the bond of community or love which unites 'humankind').⁵ By becoming conscious of this mistake, human beings will become capable of 'reappropriating' their essence which has been alienated in God and, hence, of really living out fraternity on earth. Following Feuerbach, critical philosophers (including Marx himself) attempted to extend the same schema to other phenomena of the abstraction and 'dispossession' of human existence. They sought, in particular, to extend it to the constitution of the *political* sphere, isolated from society, as an ideal community in which human beings were said to be free and equal. However, says Marx in the *Theses*, the real reason for this projection is not an illusion of consciousness or an effect of the individual imagination: it is the *split* or division which reigns in society, it is the practical conflicts which set men against each other, to which the heaven of religion – or of politics – offers a miraculous solution. They cannot really leave these divisions behind

Karl Marx: *Theses on Feuerbach* (1845)

I. The chief defect of all hitherto existing materialism . . . is that the thing, reality, sensuousness, is conceived only in the form of the *object* or of *contemplation*, but not as *sensuous human activity, practice*, not subjectively. Hence, in contradistinction to materialism, the *active* side was developed abstractly by idealism – which, of course, does not know real, sensuous activity as such. Feuerbach wants sensuous objects, really distinct from the thought objects, but he does not conceive human activity itself as *objective* activity . . .

III. The materialist doctrine concerning the changing of circumstances and upbringing forgets that circumstances are changed by men and that it is essential to educate the educator himself. This doctrine must, therefore, divide society into two parts, one of which is superior to society.

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

IV. Feuerbach starts out from the fact of religious self-alienation, of the duplication of the world into a religious world and a secular one. But that the secular basis detaches itself from itself and establishes itself as an independent realm in the clouds can only be explained by the cleavages and self-contradictions within this secular basis. The latter must, therefore, in itself be both understood in its contradiction and revolutionized in practice. Thus, for instance, after the earthly family is discovered to be the secret of the holy family, the former must then itself be destroyed in theory and in practice . . .

VI. Feuerbach resolves the religious essence into the *human* essence. But the human essence is no abstraction inherent in each single individual. In its reality it is the ensemble of the social relations.

Feuerbach, who does not enter upon a criticism of this real essence, is consequently compelled:

1. To abstract from the historical process and to fix the religious sentiment as something by itself and to presuppose an abstract – isolated – human individual.

2. Essence, therefore, can be comprehended only as ‘genus’, as an internal, dumb generality which *naturally* unites the many individuals . . .

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

(Karl Marx, *Early Writings*, trans. Rodney Livingstone and Gregor Benton, Penguin/*New Left Review*, Harmondsworth, 1975, pp. 421–23).

without a – practical – transformation which abolishes the dependence of certain human beings upon others. It is not, therefore, for philosophy to bring an end to alienation (since philosophy has never been anything but a commentary on – or translation of – the ideals of reconciliation in religion or politics); that is a task for revolution, the conditions for which lie in the material existence of individuals and their social relations. The *Theses on Feuerbach* hence demand a definitive *exit* (*Ausgang*) from philosophy, as the only means of realizing what has always been its loftiest ambition: emancipation, liberation.

Revolution against philosophy

The difficulties begin precisely at this point. There can be no doubt that Marx never ventured to publish a call for such an exit, or did not find an opportunity to do so. And yet he wrote it and, like a ‘purloined letter’, it has come down to us. Now, the statement in question is rather paradoxical. In a sense, it is absolutely consistent with itself. What it requires, it immediately *does* (employing a later terminology, one might be tempted to say that there is something ‘performative’ about it). To write: ‘The philosophers have only *interpreted* the world, in various ways; the point is to *change* it’, is to posit a point of no return for all thinking that wishes to be effective, down-to-earth or ‘worldly’. It is also to forbid oneself to regress, revert to philosophy. Or, if one prefers, it is to condemn oneself, if one were by any chance to begin interpreting the world again – particularly the social world – to lapse back into the ambit of philosophy, since there is no third way between philosophy and revolution. At the outside, it may therefore mean condemning oneself to silence.

But the harshness of this alternative reveals its other side: if ‘saying is doing’,⁶ then, on the other hand, ‘doing is saying’ and words are never innocent. For example, it is not innocent to posit that the interpretations of the world are *various*, whereas the revolutionary transformation is, implicitly, *one* or *univocal*. For that means there is only one single way of changing the world: the one which abolishes the existing order – the revolution – which cannot be reactionary or anti-popular. Let us note, in passing, that Marx was very soon to retract this thesis:

The critique of political economy

The expression 'critique of political economy' figures repeatedly in the title or programme of Marx's main works, though its content constantly changes. The *Economic and Philosophical Manuscripts* of 1844 are themselves a draft of a work which was to have been entitled *Zur Kritik der politischen Oekonomie*, a title later given to the work published in 1859 as the 'first part' of a general treatise and used as the subtitle of *Capital* (of which Volume 1, the only volume published by Marx himself, appeared in 1867). To these we may add a great many unpublished pieces, articles and sections in polemical works.

It seems, then, that this phrase expresses the permanent modality of Marx's intellectual relation to his *scientific* object. The initial objective was the critique of political alienation in civil/bourgeois society, as well as the 'speculative subjects' the organic unity of which philosophy claimed to express. But a fundamental shift occurred at a very early stage: 'criticizing' law, morality and politics meant confronting them with their 'materialist basis', with the process by which social relations are constituted in labour and production.

In his own way, Marx thus discovered the *dual meaning* of the term *critique*: on the one hand, the eradication of error; on the other, knowledge of the limits of a faculty or practice. But what conducted this critique, for Marx, was no longer merely analysis, but history. This is what enabled him to combine 'dialectically' the critique of the necessary illusions of theory ('commodity fetishism'), the development of the internal, irreconcilable contradictions in economic reality (crises, the antagonism between labour and capital, based on the exploitation of 'labour-power' as a commodity) and, finally, the outline of a 'political economy of labour', opposed to that of the bourgeoisie ('Inaugural Address of the International Working Men's Association', 1864). The fate of Marx's critique is dependent on the 'two discoveries' he claimed: the deduction of the money form from the necessities of commodity circulation and the reduction of the laws of accumulation to the capitalization of surplus value (*Mehrwert*). Both are related to the definition of value as an expression of socially necessary labour, in which is rooted rejection of the viewpoint of the abstract *homo oeconomicus*, defined solely by the calculation of his individual 'utility'.

For an account of the technical aspects of the critique of political economy in Marx, see Pierre Salama and Tran Hai Hac, *Introduction à l'économie de Marx* (La Découverte, Paris, 1992).

as early as the *Manifesto* and, *a fortiori*, in *Capital*, he was to note the power with which capitalism 'changes the world'. And the question of whether the world cannot be changed in several different ways and of how one change can fit into another – or even divert it from its course – would become crucial. Moreover, this thesis would mean that this single transformation also

provides the 'solution' to the internal conflicts of philosophy – and 'revolutionary practice' would thus realize an old ambition of philosophers (Aristotle, Kant, Hegel . . .) *better than they could!*

But there is more to it than this: it was not by chance that this formula coined by Marx, this injunction which is already, in itself, an act of 'departure', acquired its *philosophical* renown. If we search our memories a little, we can very soon find a profound kinship not only with other watchwords (such as Rimbaud's '*changer la vie*': we know that André Breton, among others, made this connection),⁷ but with some equally lapidary, philosophical propositions, which are traditionally considered 'fundamental' and which take the form, at times, of *tautologies* and, at others, of *antitheses*. All these formulations, different in content or opposed in intent as they may be, share a common concern with the question of the relation between theory and practice, consciousness and life. This is true from Parmenides's 'Thinking and being are one' to Wittgenstein's 'Whereof one cannot speak, thereof one must be silent', via Spinoza ('God is nature'), Kant ('I have therefore found it necessary to deny knowledge, in order to make room for faith'), and Hegel ('The rational is real and the real is rational'). And here is Marx ensconced not just at the heart of philosophy, but at the heart of its most speculative turn, in which it strives to *think its own limits*, whether to abolish them or to establish itself on the basis of a recognition of those limits.

Let us keep in mind this profound ambiguity (which we must be careful not to turn into an insurmountable contradiction, but which we must not make into a sign of unfathomable profundity either, since this would soon lead us back to that 'mysticism' the roots of which Marx is, in fact, seeking out here . . .) and let us examine more closely two key questions implied in the *Theses*: that of the relation between 'practice' (or *praxis*) and 'class struggle'; and that of anthropology or the 'human essence'.

Praxis and class struggle

The *Theses* speak of revolution, but they do not use the expression 'class struggle'. It would not, however, be arbitrary to

register its presence here between the lines, on condition that we clearly specify what is meant by the term in this case. Thanks to the work of scholars in the field of German studies, we have for some years now been better acquainted with the intellectual environment that gave rise to these formulations, which Marx articulated in terms that are particularly striking, but which were not absolutely his own as regards their content.⁸

The revolution Marx has in mind clearly refers to French traditions. What the young radical democrats wish to see is the *revival* of the movement which had been interrupted, then reversed, by the 'bourgeois' establishment of the republic after Thermidor, by Napoleon's dictatorship and, finally, by the Restoration and the Counter-revolution (in any case, by the *State*). To be even more precise, the aim was to bring the revolutionary movement to fruition on a European scale, and to render it universal by recovering the inspiration and energy of its 'left wing', that *egalitarian* component of the Revolution (represented principally by Babeuf) from which, at the beginning of the nineteenth century, the idea of communism emerged.⁹ Marx would be very emphatic that this was not a speculative conception, implying an ideal or experimental community (like Cabet's 'Icarie'), but a social movement with demands that were merely a coherent application of the principle of Revolution – gauging how much liberty had been achieved by the degree of equality and vice versa, with fraternity as the end result. All in all, what Marx and others come to recognize is that there is no middle way: if the revolution is *halted* in its course, it can only regress and reconstitute an aristocracy of owners who use the – reactionary or liberal – State to defend the established order. Conversely, the only possibility of completing the revolution and rendering it irreversible is to give it greater depth, to make it a social revolution.

But who will bring about this social revolution? Who are the heirs of Babeuf and the *Montagnards*? One has simply to open one's eyes to what is currently going on in Europe, to listen to the cries of alarm of the possessing classes. They are the English 'Chartist' workers (whom Engels has just described in his *Condition of the Working Class in England* of 1844, a book which can still be read with admiration today and which had an absolutely crucial effect on Marx); they are the *Canuts* of Lyon,

the artisans of the Parisian faubourgs and of the *caves* of Lille which Victor Hugo described, the Silesian weavers to whom Marx devoted long columns in his Cologne-based *Rheinische Zeitung*. In short, they are all those now called (from an old Roman word) *proletarians*, which the Industrial Revolution created in huge numbers, crowding them into its cities and plunging them into poverty, and who have now begun to shake the bourgeois order by their strikes, their 'combinations', their insurrections. They are, so to speak, *the people of the people* (*le peuple du peuple*), its most authentic fraction and the pre-figuration of its future. At the point when critical intellectuals, full of goodwill and illusions, are still pondering ways of democratizing the State and, to that end, of enlightening what they call 'the masses', those masses themselves have already gone into action; they have in fact already recommenced the revolution.

In a decisive formula which recurs in all the texts of this period, from *The Holy Family* (1844) to the *Communist Manifesto* (1847), Marx will say that this proletariat 'represents the dissolution in action of bourgeois/civil society [*bürgerliche Gesellschaft*]', meaning by this: (1) that the conditions of existence of the proletarians (what we would today term social exclusion) are in contradiction with all the principles of that society; (2) that they themselves live by other values than those of private property, profit, patriotism and bourgeois individualism; and (3) that their growing opposition to the State and the dominant class is a necessary effect of the modern social structure, but one which will soon prove lethal for that structure.

Action in the present

The words '*in der Tat*' (in action) are particularly important. On the one hand, they evoke the present, effective reality, the 'facts' (*die Tatsachen*): they therefore express Marx's profoundly *anti-utopian* orientation and allow us to understand why the reference to the first forms of proletarian class struggle, as it was beginning to become organized, is so decisive for him. The revolutionary practice of which the *Theses* speak does not have to implement a programme or a plan for the reorganization of

society. Still less does it need to depend upon a vision of the future offered by philosophical and sociological theories (like those of the philanthropists of the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries). But it must coincide with 'the *real* movement which abolishes the present state of things', as Marx was soon to write in *The German Ideology*, explaining that this was the only materialist definition of communism.

But here we touch on the second aspect: 'in action' also means that we are speaking of an *activity* (*Tätigkeit*), an enterprise unfolding in the present to which individuals are committed with all their physical and intellectual powers. This represents a significant reversal. As opponents of the philosophies of history which were always ruminating on the meaning of the past, and the philosophies of right which simply provided a commentary on the established order, Moses Hess and other 'Young Hegelians' had proposed a *philosophy of action* (and Feuerbach had published a manifesto for a *philosophy of the future*). But, deep down, what Marx means is this: action must be 'acted out' in the present, not commented upon or announced. But then philosophy must give up its place. It is not a 'philosophy of action', but action itself, action '*sans phrases*', which corresponds to revolutionary demands and the revolutionary movement.

And yet this injunction to give up its place cannot be ignored by philosophy: if it is consistent, philosophy must paradoxically see in that injunction *its own realization*. Naturally, Marx is thinking here, first and foremost, of that German idealist tradition with which his own thinking is imbued, a tradition which has such close affinities with the French revolutionary idea. He is thinking of the Kantian injunction to 'do one's duty', to act *in the world* in conformity with the categorical imperative (the content of which is human fraternity). And also of Hegel's phrase in the *Phenomenology*: 'What must be is also in fact [*in der Tat*], and what only *must* be, without *being*, has no truth.' More politically, he is thinking of the fact that modern philosophy has identified the universal with the principles of the *Declaration of the Rights of Man and the Citizen*. But these principles, sacrosanct in theory, are either ignored and contradicted at every turn by bourgeois society, where neither equality nor even liberty reigns, to say nothing of fraternity; or else they are beginning to pass into reality, but in a revolutionary, 'insurrectionary' practice

(the practice of those who are *rising up* together, where necessary substituting the 'criticism of weapons' for the 'weapons of criticism'). It is, first and foremost, this consequence, which is somewhat hard for philosophy to take but arises out of its own principles, that Marx has in mind when he writes here of inverting idealism to produce materialism.

The two sides of idealism

Let us halt here, once again, and examine this point. If these remarks are accurate, it means that Marx's materialism has nothing to do with a reference to *matter* – and this will remain the case for a very long time, until Engels undertakes to reunite Marxism with the natural sciences of the second half of the nineteenth century. For the moment, however, we are dealing with a strange 'materialism without matter'. Why, then, is this term used?

Here historians of philosophy come back into their own, in spite of the knocks they have just taken from Marx. They must explain this paradox, which also leads them to point up the imbroglio that arises from it (though, let us repeat, that imbroglio is anything but arbitrary). If Marx declared that it was a principle of materialism to change the world, seeking *at the same time* to differentiate his position from all existing materialism (which he terms 'old' materialism and which depends precisely on the idea that everything has ultimately to be explained in terms of matter – which is *also* an 'interpretation of the world' and contestable as such), this was clearly in order to *take the contrary stance to that of idealism*. The key to Marx's formulations resides not in the word 'materialism', but in the term 'idealism'. Once again, we must ask why this should be.

The first reason is that the idealist interpretations of nature and history proposed by philosophers invoke principles like spirit, reason, consciousness, the idea etc . . . And, in practice, such principles always lead not to revolution, but to the education (if not, indeed, the edification) of the masses, which the philosophers themselves generously offer to take in hand. In Plato's time they sought to counsel princes in the name of the ideal state. In our democratic era, they seek to educate the citizens (or 'educate the educators' of the citizens: the judges,

doctors and teachers, by assuming their position, at least morally, at the very top of the academic edifice) in the name of reason and ethics.

This is not wrong, but behind this function of idealism there is a more formidable difficulty. In *modern* philosophy (the philosophy which finds its true language with Kant), whether one speaks of consciousness, spirit or reason, these categories which express the universal always have two sides to them, and Marx's formulations in the *Theses* constantly allude to this. They intimately combine two ideas: *representation* and *subjectivity*. It is precisely the originality and strength of the great (German) idealist tradition that it thought this combination through systematically.

Clearly, the notion of 'interpretation' to which Marx refers is a variant of the idea of representation. For the idealism criticized here, the world is the object of a contemplation which seeks to perceive its coherence and its 'meaning' and thereby, willy-nilly, to impose an *order* on it. Marx very clearly discerned the interdependence between the fact of thinking an 'order of the world' (especially in the social and political register) and the fact of *valorizing order* in the world: both against 'anarchy' and also against 'movement' ('*Je hais le mouvement qui déplace les lignes*', as Baudelaire was to write)* . . . He also saw very clearly that, from this point of view, the 'old materialisms' or philosophies of nature, which substitute matter for mind as the organizing principle, contain a strong element of idealism and are, in the end, merely disguised idealisms (whatever their very different political consequences). This enables us to understand why it is so easy for idealism to 'comprehend' materialism and therefore to refute it or integrate it (as we see in Hegel, who has no problem with materialisms, except perhaps with that of Spinoza, but Spinoza is a rather atypical materialist . . .). Lastly, he saw that the heart of modern, post-revolutionary idealism consists in referring the order of the world and of 'representation' back to *the activity of a subject* who creates or, as Kantian language has it, 'constitutes' them.

We then come to the other side of idealism, where it is not a philosophy of representation (or, if one prefers, a mere philosophy

* From 'La Beauté', *Les Fleurs du Mal*. Francis Scarfe translates: 'movement I hate, that disturbs the ideal line' (p. 27). [*Trans.*]

of the primacy of 'ideas'), but a philosophy of subjectivity (which is clearly expressed in the decisive importance assumed by the notion of *consciousness*). Marx thought that the subjective activity of which idealism speaks is, at bottom, the trace, the denegation (the simultaneous recognition and misrecognition) of a more real activity, an activity that is more 'effective', if we may venture the expression: an activity which would be at one and the same time the constitution of the external world and the formation (*Bildung*) or transformation of self. Witness the insistent way in which the vocabulary of the act, of action and activity (*Tat, Tätigkeit, Handlung*) recurs in the writings of Kant and, even more markedly, of Fichte (this is, in reality, where the 'philosophy of action' extolled by the Young Hegelians comes from). Witness also the way Hegel describes the mode of being of consciousness as an active *experience* and the function of the concept as a labour (the 'labour of the negative'). All in all, then, it is not difficult to derive the following hypothesis from Marx's aphorisms: just as traditional materialism in reality conceals an idealist foundation (representation, contemplation), so modern idealism in reality conceals a materialist orientation in the function it attributes to the acting subject, at least if one accepts that there is a latent conflict between the idea of representation (interpretation, contemplation) and that of activity (labour, practice, transformation, change). And what he proposes is quite simply to explode the contradiction, to dissociate representation and subjectivity and allow the category of practical activity to emerge in its own right.

The subject is practice

Did he succeed in this undertaking? In a sense, completely, since it is perfectly possible to argue that the only true subject is the practical subject or the subject of practice or, better still, that *the subject is nothing other than practice* which has always already begun and continues indefinitely. But does this get us out of idealism? Nothing could be less certain, precisely because, historically speaking, 'idealism' covers *both* the point of view of representation and that of subjectivity. In reality, what we have here is a circle or a theoretical interchange which functions

in both directions. It is possible to say that, by identifying the essence of subjectivity with practice, and the reality of practice with the revolutionary activity of the proletariat (which is one with its very existence), Marx transferred the category of subject from idealism to materialism. But it is equally possible to assert that, precisely by so doing, he set up the permanent possibility of *representing the proletariat to itself as a 'subject'* in the idealist sense of the term (and hence, ultimately, as a representation or an abstraction by means of which the world, or the transformation of the world, is once again 'interpreted': is this not exactly what happened when, later, Marxist theorists, armed with the idea of class struggle, were to deduce from it *a priori* the 'meaning of history'?).

There is nothing gratuitous about these dialectical games. They are closely linked to the history of the notion of revolution and, consequently, have a political aspect as well as a philosophical one. From the beginning of the modern period – that of the revolutions which are termed bourgeois, the Anglo-American and the French – *the invention of the subject* as the central category of philosophy, which relates to all fields of concrete experience (science, morality, law, religion, aesthetics) and makes possible their unification, is linked to the idea that humanity moulds or educates itself, to the idea that it gives itself laws and, therefore, finally to the idea that it *liberates itself* from the various forms of oppression, ignorance or superstition, poverty etc.¹⁰ And the generic subject of this activity always has two sides to it: the one theoretical, the other concrete and practical. In Kant, that subject was *humanity*; in Fichte it became at a certain point the *people*, the *nation*; and in Hegel, lastly, it was the *historical peoples* as successive embodiments of the 'world-spirit', i.e. the progress of civilization.

The fact that Marx, in his turn, recognized the *proletariat* as the true practical subject (we have seen above that it is the 'people of the people', authentically human and communal) – the subject which 'dissolves the existing order' and thus changes itself (*Selbsttätigkeit, Selbstveränderung*), while at the same time changing the world – and that he used this recognition (in which the lesson of immediate experience and the most ancient speculative tradition are superimposed in a remarkable way) to assert, in his turn, that *the subject is practice*, does not, however,

genuinely remove him from the history of idealism. Fichte had said precisely the same thing. Without playing with words, one might even go so far as to suggest that this is what makes of Marx and his 'materialism of practice' the most accomplished form of the idealist tradition, the form which enables us to understand more than any other the lasting vitality of idealism right up to the present, precisely because that transposition is closely linked to the attempt to prolong the revolutionary experience and embody it in modern society, with its classes and social conflicts.

To do so would be to prepare to understand that adopting the standpoint of the proletarians in a state of 'permanent' insurrection resulted not so much in putting an end to idealism, but in installing the materialism/idealism dilemma – the perennial question of their difference – at the very heart of the theory of the proletariat and its privileged historical role. But, with this dilemma, we may confidently expect that philosophy, having been chased out of the door, will come back in by the window . . .

The reality of the 'human essence'

Let us return to the letter of the *Theses* to evoke the other great question they pose: that of the human essence. The two are clearly linked. 'Feuerbach resolves the religious essence into the *human essence*', i.e. he shows, particularly in *The Essence of Christianity* of 1841, that the idea of God is merely a synthesis of human perfections, personified and projected out of the world. 'But the human essence is no abstraction inherent in each single individual. In its reality it is the ensemble of social relations' (in a sort of mixture of French and German, Marx writes *das Ensemble der gesellschaftlichen Verhältnisse*): this thesis has been the cause of as much debate as the eleventh. There are many things worthy of comment here, if we take care to follow the letter of the text.

Marx poses the question of the essence of man, or, at least, answers that question. What could be more natural? Yet that question, which we might regard as being constitutive of *anthropology*, is not at all straightforward. In a sense, it is as old as

philosophy. But when, in our own day, Claude Lévi-Strauss explains that the essence of man is the conflict between nature and culture; or when Lacan coins the word *parlêtre* to say that the essence of man is constituted through and through by language, they place themselves in the same tradition as Aristotle defining man by the fact of his having the power of speech and being a member of the *polis*, or St. Augustine defining man as the 'image and resemblance of God on earth'. Moreover, if we take things at a sufficient level of generality, they are all dealing with the same question. From Antiquity to our own times, there is a long succession of definitions of human nature or the human essence. Marx himself will advance several, each of them revolving around the relation between *labour* and *consciousness*. In Volume 1 of *Capital* he will cite a very characteristic definition by Benjamin Franklin (man is 'a toolmaking animal'), not to reject it, but to complement it by specifying that technology has a history which is dependent on the 'mode of production', and going on to recall that neither technology nor technical progress can exist without consciousness, reflection, experimentation and knowledge.¹¹ And in *The German Ideology*, not long after the formulation we are examining here, he wrote:

Men can be distinguished from animals by consciousness, by religion or anything else you like. They themselves begin to distinguish themselves from animals as soon as they begin to *produce* their means of subsistence, a step which is conditioned by their physical organisation. By producing their means of subsistence men are indirectly producing their actual material life.¹²

This is a way of seeking the answer to the question of the essence of man in things themselves – which has, indeed, provided a starting-point for a whole biological and technological anthropology, both Marxist and non-Marxist alike.

Theoretical humanism

Yet a nuance crucial to understanding the import of our text here separates the mere fact of defining man or human nature from the fact of *explicitly posing* the question 'What is man?' (or 'What is the human essence?') and, *a fortiori*, making this *the*

fundamental philosophical question. If we, in fact, make it such, we enter upon a new problematic which we might, with Althusser, call a theoretical humanism. Astonishing as it may seem, such a problematic is relatively recent and at the point when Marx was writing, it was not very old at all, since it only dates from the end of the eighteenth century. In Germany the most important names are those of Kant (*Anthropologie in pragmatischer Hinsicht*, 1798), Wilhelm von Humboldt¹³ and Feuerbach, which indicates that the trajectory of theoretical humanism connects with that of idealism and its refutation. The parallel is an illuminating one. We see in effect that, where the rival (spiritualist, materialist) theories of human nature are concerned, Marx will proceed to a critique of the same order as the one he carried out on the theories of the subject, of activity and sensuous intuition. To say that, 'in its effective reality' (*in seiner Wirklichkeit*), the human essence is the ensemble of social relations is clearly not to *reject* the question. But it is to attempt radically to *displace* the way in which it has until now been understood, not only where 'man' is concerned, but also as regards 'essence'.

Philosophers have formed a false idea of what an essence is (and this error is so . . . essential to them that one can hardly imagine a philosophy without it). They have thought, firstly, that the essence is an *idea* or an abstraction (one would say today, in a different terminology, a *universal concept*), under which may be ranged, in a declining order of generality, specific differences and, finally, individual differences; and, secondly, that this generic abstraction is somehow 'inherent' (*innewohnend*) in individuals of the same genus, either as a quality they possess, by which they may be classified, or even as a form or a force which causes them to exist as so many copies of the same model.

We can see, then, the meaning of the strange equation made by Marx. At bottom, the words 'ensemble', 'social' and 'relations' all say the same thing. The point is to reject both of the positions (the *realist* and the *nominalist*) between which philosophers have generally been divided: the one arguing that the genus or essence precedes the existence of individuals; the other that individuals are the primary reality, from which universals are 'abstracted'. For, amazingly, neither of these two

positions is capable of thinking precisely what is essential in human existence: the multiple and active *relations* which individuals establish with each other (whether of language, labour, love, reproduction, domination, conflict etc.), and the fact that it is these relations which define what they have in common, the 'genus'. They define this because they constitute it at each moment in multiple forms. They thus provide the only 'effective' content of the notion of essence applied to the human being (i.e. to human beings).

The transindividual

Let us not go into the question of whether this point of view is absolutely original and specific to Marx here. What is certain is that it has consequences both in the field of philosophical discussion (at the level of what is called 'ontology'),¹⁴ and in that of politics. The words Marx uses reject *both* the individualist point of view (primacy of the individual and, especially, the fiction of an individuality which could be defined *in itself*, in isolation, whether in terms of biology, psychology, economic behaviour or whatever), *and* the organicist point of view (which, today, following Anglo-American usage, is also called the *holistic* point of view: the primacy of the *whole*, and particularly of society considered as an indivisible unity of which individuals are merely the functional members).¹⁵ Marx will embrace *neither* the 'monad' of Hobbes and Bentham, *nor* the '*grand être*' of Auguste Comte. It is significant that Marx (who spoke French almost as fluently as he did German) should have resorted to the foreign word 'ensemble' here, clearly in order to avoid using the German '*das Ganze*', the 'whole' or totality.

Perhaps things would be clearer formally (though not in their content) if we, in our turn, added a word to the text – if need be by inventing that word – to characterize the *constitutive relation* which displaces the question of the human essence while, at the same time, providing a formal answer to it (and one which thus contains in embryo another problematic than that of theoretical humanism). The word does in fact exist, but is to be found in twentieth-century thinkers (Kojève, Simondon, Lacan . . .): we have, in fact, to think humanity as a *transindividual* reality

Althusser

Louis Althusser (born, Birmandreis, Algeria, 1918; died, Paris, 1990) is better known today by the general public for the tragedies which marked the end of his life (the murder of his wife, his internment in a psychiatric institution; see his autobiography, *The Future Lasts a Long Time*, trans. Richard Veasey, Chatto and Windus, London, 1993) than for his theoretical works. Those works did, however, occupy a central place in the philosophical debates of the sixties and seventies after the publication in 1965 of *For Marx* and (with Étienne Balibar) *Reading Capital* (trans. Ben Brewster, New Left Books, London, 1970). At that point he was one of the leading figures of 'structuralism', alongside Lévi-Strauss, Lacan, Foucault and Barthes. Acknowledging that Marxism was in crisis, but refusing to attribute the cause of that crisis to mere dogmatization, he undertook a re-reading of Marx. Borrowing the notion of 'epistemological break' from historical epistemology (Bachelard), he interpreted the Marxian critique of political economy as a rupture with the *theoretical humanism* and *historicism* of idealist philosophies (including Hegel), and as the foundation of a science of history whose central categories are the 'overdetermined contradiction' of the mode of production and the 'structure in dominance' of social formations. Such a science stands opposed to bourgeois ideology, but at the same time demonstrates the materiality and historical efficacy of ideologies, defined as 'the imaginary relation of individuals and classes to their conditions of existence'. Just as there is no end of history, so there cannot be any end of ideology. Althusser simultaneously proposed a reevaluation of the Leninist theses on philosophy, which he defined as 'class struggle in theory' (*Lenin and Philosophy and Other Essays*, trans. Ben Brewster, New Left Books, London, 1971), and he used this to analyse the contradictions between 'materialist tendencies' and 'idealist tendencies' within scientific practice (*Philosophy and the Spontaneous Philosophy of the Scientists* (1974), trans. Warren Montag, Verso, London, 1990). In a later phase, under the influence of the Chinese Cultural Revolution and the May 1968 movements, Althusser criticized what he now considered to be the 'theoreticist deviation' of his earliest essays, a deviation he attributed to the influence of Spinoza at the expense of dialectics ('Elements of Self-Criticism', in *Essays in Self-Criticism*, trans. Grahame Lock, New Left Books, London, 1976). Reaffirming the difference between Marxism and humanism, he outlined a general theory of ideology as the 'interpellation of individuals as subjects' and as a system of both public and private institutions ensuring the reproduction of social relations ('Ideology and Ideological State Apparatuses' (1970), in *Essays on Ideology*, trans. Ben Brewster, Verso, London, 1984).

and, ultimately, to think transindividuality as such.¹⁶ Not what is ideally 'in' each individual (as a form or a substance), or what would serve, from outside, to classify that individual, but what exists *between individuals* by dint of their multiple interactions.

An ontology of relations

Here, we must admit, an 'ontology' is taking shape. However, for the discussion of the relations between the individual and the genus, it substitutes a programme of enquiry into this multiplicity of relations, which are so many transitions, transferences or passages in which the bond of individuals to the community is formed and dissolved, and which, in its turn, constitutes them. What is most striking in such a perspective is that it establishes a complete reciprocity between these two poles, which cannot exist without one another and are therefore in and of themselves mere abstractions, albeit necessary abstractions for thinking the relation or relationship (*Verhältnis*).

At this point, speculative as it may seem, we are in fact closer than ever, by a characteristic short-circuit, to the question of politics. Not only are the relations of which we are speaking in fact nothing other than differentiated practices, singular actions of individuals on one another; but this transindividual ontology has at least a resonance with statements like the *Declaration of the Rights of Man and the Citizen* (often quite wrongly considered an 'individualist' text) and, even more, with the practice of revolutionary movements – a practice which never *opposes* the individual's self-realization to the interests of the community, and indeed does not even *separate* these, but always seeks to accomplish the one by accomplishing the other. For, though it is true that only individuals can, in the last analysis, possess rights and formulate demands, the winning of those rights or liberation (even insurrection) is no less necessarily collective.

It will doubtless be objected that this formulation does not describe an existing state of affairs or, even less, a system of institutions, but rather a process (at least as experienced by those taking part in it). But this is exactly what Marx intends. And in these circumstances one can see that the sixth thesis, which identifies the human essence with 'the ensemble of social

relations', and the third, eighth and eleventh theses, which link all thought to revolutionary practice and change, are, in reality, saying basically the same thing. Let us risk the expression, then, and say that social relations as designated here are nothing but an endless transformation, a 'permanent revolution' (the term was doubtless not invented by Marx, but it would play a decisive role in his thinking up to around 1850). For the Marx of March 1845, it is not enough to say with Hegel that 'the real is rational' and that the rational, of necessity, becomes reality: one has to say that the only thing which is real or rational is revolution.

Stirner's objection

What more could one ask? I have said above, however, that Marx could not leave matters there: we now have to understand why this is the case. We should not arrive at such an understanding if we were content merely to show that by substituting practice for the subject, a circle or logical difficulty is generated, or that there is a danger that the notion of essence will be left in a state of disequilibrium, caught between the internal critique of traditional ontology and its dissolution into the multiplicity of concrete investigations of social relations. Without doubt, *The German Ideology* is a text very close in inspiration to the *Theses on Feuerbach* and yet it already speaks another language. The formal reasons we have just mentioned are not sufficient to explain this.

I believe there is a very precise conjunctural reason for it, but one which served to bring out a deep-seated problem. Some historians of Marx's philosophy (particularly Auguste Cornu) have clearly seen this, though many have under-estimated or not been aware of it, mainly because it is usually only *the first part* of the text that is read. A long tradition has accustomed us to regarding this section ('A. Concerning Feuerbach') as a free-standing exposition of 'historical materialism', whereas it is essentially a response, and often a difficult one (as readers will have learnt to their cost), to the challenge posed by another theorist. That theorist, the force of whose argument it is now time to gauge, is Max Stirner (the pseudonym of Caspar Schmidt), the author of *The Ego and its Own*, published at the

end of 1844.¹⁷ But it was some months later, just after the *Theses* were written, and on Engels's insistence, that Marx began to wrestle with that book.

From a theoretical perspective who is Stirner? First of all, he is an anarchist, a defender of the autonomy of society – composed of individuals, all of whom are singular and the ‘owners’ of their bodies, needs and ideas – against the modern State, in which, as he sees it, all domination is concentrated and which has taken over the *sacred* attributes of power elaborated by the political theology of the Middle Ages. But, above all, Stirner is a radical *nominalist*: by this we mean that in his view, every ‘generality’, every ‘universal concept’ is a *fiction* concocted by institutions to dominate (by organizing, classifying, simplifying, if not indeed merely by naming) the only natural reality, i.e. the multiplicity of individuals of whom each is ‘unique of his kind’ (hence Stirner’s essential play on words here, which has in fact a long history: what is *proper* to each individual is *his/her property*).

We saw a moment ago that Marx was developing a notion of social relation which, at least in principle, rejected both nominalism and essentialism. But Stirner’s critique poses a formidable challenge to Marx because it is not content merely to target traditional metaphysical ‘non-particulars’ (all of them more or less theological: Being, Substance, the Idea, Reason, Good), but encompasses *all* universal notions without exception, thereby anticipating certain of Nietzsche’s arguments and what is today known as postmodernism. Stirner wants none of these beliefs, Ideas or ‘meta-narratives’, whether they concern God or Man, Church or State, or Revolution either. And there is, indeed, no logical difference between *Christianity, humanity, the people, society, the nation or the proletariat*, any more than there is between *the rights of man or communism*: all these universal notions are indeed abstractions which, from Stirner’s viewpoint, means that they are fictions. And these fictions are used to substitute for individuals and the thought of individuals, which is why Stirner’s book was to continue to fuel critiques from both left and right, which argued that nothing is to be gained by exchanging the cult of abstract humanity for an equally abstract cult of revolution or revolutionary practice, and that by doing so one may indeed be running the risk of an even more perverse domination.

It is certain that Marx and Engels could not sidestep this objection, for they aspired to be critics *both* of the idealism and essentialism of the philosophers *and* of the communists (more precisely the *humanist* communists). We have seen that this dual perspective was at the heart of the category which had just emerged for Marx as the ‘solution’ to the enigmas of philosophy: revolutionary practice. How, then, did he respond to this challenge? By transforming his symbolic notion of ‘*praxis*’ into a historical and sociological concept of *production* and by posing a question unprecedented in philosophy (even if the term was not absolutely new) – the question of ideology.

(The) German Ideology

These two moves are, of course, closely interlinked. The one constantly presupposes the other and this is what gives *The German Ideology* its coherence, despite its unfinished and unbalanced composition (Chapter 3 on Stirner, ‘Saint Max’, alone occupies almost two-thirds of the work and largely consists in verbal jousting with the typically ‘ironic’ argumentation of *The Ego and its Own*, the outcome of which, from the strictly rhetorical point of view, is rather inconclusive). The work is entirely organized around the notion of production, taken here in a general sense to refer to any human activity of formation and transformation of nature. It is no exaggeration to say that, after the ‘ontology of *praxis*’ heralded in the *Theses on Feuerbach*, *The German Ideology* sets out an ‘ontology of production’ since, as Marx himself tells us, it is production which shapes *man’s being* (his *Sein*, to which he will oppose his consciousness: *Bewusst-sein*, literally, his ‘being conscious’). It is, more exactly, the production of his own means of existence, an activity at once personal and collective (transindividual) which transforms him at the same time as it irreversibly transforms nature and which, in this way, constitutes ‘history’.

Conversely, however, Marx will show that ideology is itself produced, before constituting itself as an autonomous structure of production (the ‘products’ of which are ideas, collective consciousness: this is the object of the theory of intellectual labour). The critique of ideology is the necessary precondition

for a knowledge of social being as development of production: from its immediate forms, linked to the subsistence of individuals, to its most mediated forms, which play only an indirect role in the reproduction of human life. To gain access to this guiding thread of the whole of history, it is not enough to contemplate the facts; one can only get to it through the critique of the dominant ideology, because this latter is both an inversion of reality and an autonomization of the 'intellectual products' in which the trace of the real origin of ideas has been lost and which denies the very existence of that origin.

This is why I spoke above of a reciprocal presupposition. At the same time, however, Stirner's objection can be rejected, because the point is no longer to *denounce* the abstraction of 'universals', of 'generalities', of 'idealities', by showing that that abstraction substitutes itself for real individuals; it now becomes possible to *study* the genesis of those abstractions, their production by individuals, as a function of the collective or social conditions in which they think and relate to one another. And, as a result, instead of being endlessly faced with an all-or-nothing choice (either accepting or rejecting all abstractions *en bloc*), one has a criterion by which it is possible to discriminate between those abstractions which represent real knowledge and those which merely have a function of misrecognition or mystification; and, even better, to discriminate between circumstances in which the use of abstractions is mystificatory and those in which it is not. The nihilism inherent in Stirner's position is thus averted at a fundamental level, without the need for a radical critique of the dominant ideas being contested. Indeed, that need is clearly recognized.

The revolutionary overturning of history

The German Ideology takes the form, then, of an account of the genesis, both logical and historical, of social forms, the guiding thread of which is the development of the division of labour. Each new stage in the division of labour characterizes a certain *mode* of production and exchange – hence a periodization which is, inevitably, very reminiscent of the Hegelian philosophy of history. Rather than a mere narrative of the stages of universal

history, what we have here in fact (as in Hegel) are the typical moments of the process by which *history became universalized*, became the history of humanity. However, the content of the exposition is as far removed as can be from the Hegelian *objective spirit*. For that universalization does not consist in the formation of a *Rechtstaat* rationally extending its powers over the whole of society and 'totalizing' the activities of that society. On the contrary, such a juridico-statist universality seemed to Marx the *ideological inversion* par excellence of social relations. The point is, rather, that history has become the interaction, the interdependence of *all* the individuals and all the groups belonging to humanity.

Marx's erudition, already great, was mobilized to demonstrate that the counterpart to the division of labour was the development of forms of ownership (from communal or State ownership to private ownership formally open to all). Each mode of production implies a historical form of appropriation and ownership, which is merely another way of looking at the question. Consequently, it is precisely the division of labour which governs the constitution and dissolution of the larger and larger, less and less 'natural' social groups, from primitive communities to classes, by way of the various guilds, orders or estates (*Stände*) . . . Each of these groups, 'dominant' or 'dominated', must be understood, all in all, as a two-sided, contradictory reality: both as a form of relative universalization and as a form of limitation or particularization of human relations. Their series is therefore merely the great process of negation of particularity and particularism, but a negation through the experience and complete realization of their forms.

The starting-point of this development was the productive activity of human beings contending with nature: what Marx calls the real premiss (*wirkliche Voraussetzung*), which he stresses at length, against the illusions of a philosophy 'devoid of premises'.¹⁸ As for its end point, that is 'bourgeois/civil' society (*bürgerliche Gesellschaft*), which is founded on the different forms of 'intercourse' (*Verkehr*: which might also be translated as communication) between competing private owners. Or rather, the end point is the contradiction such a society harbours within it. For individuality, considered as an absolute, amounts in practice for the *masses* to an absolute precariousness or 'contingency'

of the conditions of existence, just as ownership (of oneself, of objects) amounts to a generalized dispossession.

One of the great theses of *The German Ideology*, taken directly from the liberal tradition but turned against it, is that 'bourgeois' society is irreversibly established once class differences prevail over all others and in practice sweep them away. The State itself, no matter how overgrown it may seem, is now merely a function of those differences. It is at this point that the contradiction between particularism and universality, cultivation and brutishness, openness and exclusion is at its most acute, and that between wealth and poverty, the universal circulation of goods and the restriction of access to them, the apparently unlimited productivity of labour and the worker's confinement in a narrow specialism becomes explosive. Each individual, wretched as he or she may be, has become potentially a representative of humankind, and the function of each group is defined on a world scale. History is then on the point of emerging from its own 'prehistory'.

The whole argument of *The German Ideology* tends in fact to demonstrate that this situation is as such intolerable but that, by the development of its own logic, it contains the premisses of a revolutionary overturning (*Umwälzung*) which would amount, quite simply, to the substitution of communism for bourgeois/civil society. The transition to communism is therefore *imminent* once the forms and contradictions of bourgeois/civil society are completely developed. In fact, the society in which exchange has become universal is also a society in which 'universal development of [the] productive forces' has occurred. Throughout the whole of history, the social 'productive forces', expressing themselves in all fields, from technology to science and art, are only ever the forces of many individuals. But they are henceforth inoperative as the forces of *isolated* individuals; they can only take shape and exert their effects in a virtually infinite network of interactions between human beings. The 'resolution' of the contradiction cannot consist in a *return* to narrower forms of human activity and life, but only in a collective mastery of the 'totality of the productive forces'.

The proletariat, universal class

This can be put another way: *the proletariat constitutes the universal class* of history, an idea which is nowhere given more articulate and complete expression in Marx's work than in this text. The imminence of revolutionary transformation and of communism is, in fact, based on this perfect coincidence in the same present time of the universalization of exchange and – ranged against a bourgeois class which has raised particular interest as such to universality – a 'class' which has, by contrast, *no* particular interest to defend. Deprived of all status and all property, and therefore of any 'particular quality' (*Eigenschaft*), the proletarian potentially possesses them all. Practically no longer existing at all through himself, he exists potentially through all other human beings. Let us note here that the German for 'propertyless' is *eigentumslos*. In spite of the sarcastic remarks Marx directed at Stirner, it is impossible here not to hear the same play on words as the latter had used – and abused. But it is turned round in the opposite direction now – *against* 'private property':

Only the proletarians of the present day, who are completely shut off from all self-activity, are in a position to achieve a complete and no longer restricted self-activity, which consists in the appropriation of a totality of productive forces and in the thus postulated development of a totality of capacities.¹⁹

Negative universality is converted into positive universality, deprivation into appropriation, loss of individuality into the 'many-sided' development of individuals, each of whom is a unique manifold of human relations.

Such a reappropriation can only occur *for each person* if it simultaneously occurs *for all*. 'Modern universal intercourse can be controlled by individuals, therefore, only when controlled by all.'²⁰ This explains why the revolution is not just communist in its outcome, but also in its form. Will it be said that it must inevitably represent a decrease of freedom for individuals? On the contrary, it is the true liberation. For bourgeois/civil society destroys freedom at the very moment it proclaims it as its principle; whereas in communism, which is the revolutionary overthrow of that society, freedom becomes effective liberty

because it responds to an intrinsic need for which that same society has created the conditions. 'In place of the old bourgeois society, with its classes and class antagonisms, we shall have an association, in which the free development of each is the condition for the free development of all.'²¹

The thesis of the proletariat as 'universal class' thus condenses the arguments which allow Marx to present the condition of the worker, or rather the condition of the wage-labourer, as the final stage in the whole process of the division of labour – the 'decomposition' of civil society.²² It also allows Marx to read off from the present the imminence of the communist revolution. The 'party' of the same name, for which, with Engels, he went on to draft the *Manifesto*, will not be a 'separate' party; it will not have 'interests separate and apart from those of the proletariat as a whole';²³ it will not establish 'sectarian principles', but it will quite simply be this real movement come to maturity, become *manifest* for itself and for society as a whole.

The unity of practice

At the same time, a theory is also outlined here which – though it vigorously rejects the label of philosophy – nonetheless represents a new departure in philosophy. *Marx has exited from the exit from philosophy*. But he has not simply come back inside . . . We can demonstrate this by raising here a very old issue in dialectical thought. As I have said above, though the notion of *praxis* or revolutionary practice declared with unrivalled clarity that the aim of 'changing the world' had put paid to all essentialist philosophy, it was still, paradoxically, liable to present itself as another name for the human essence. This tension increased with the notion of *production*, as now analysed by Marx. Not only because there is a whole empirical history of production (which will oblige the philosopher to become an economist, historian, technologist, ethnologist etc.), but, above all, because Marx removed one of philosophy's most ancient taboos: the radical distinction between *praxis* and *poiësis*.

Since the Greeks (who made it the privilege of 'citizens', i.e. of the masters), *praxis* had been that 'free' action in which man realizes and transforms only himself, seeking to attain his own

perfection. As for *poiësis* (from the verb *poiein*: to make), which the Greeks considered fundamentally servile, this was 'necessary' action, subject to all the constraints of the relationship with nature, with material conditions. The perfection it sought was not that of man, but of things, of products for use.

Here, then, is the basis of Marx's materialism in *The German Ideology* (which is, effectively, a *new* materialism): not a mere inversion of the hierarchy – a 'theoretical workerism', if I can put it thus (as has been the charge of Hannah Arendt and others²⁴), i.e. a primacy accorded to *poiësis* over *praxis* by virtue of its direct relationship with matter – but the identification of the two, the revolutionary thesis that *praxis* constantly passes over into *poiësis* and vice versa. There is never any effective freedom which is not also a material transformation, which is not registered historically in *exteriority*. But nor is there any work which is not a transformation of self, as though human beings could change their conditions of existence while maintaining an invariant 'essence'.

Now, such a thesis cannot but affect the third term of the classical triptych: *theôria* or 'theory' (which the whole philosophical tradition still understood in the etymological sense of contemplation). The *Theses on Feuerbach* had rejected all contemplation and identified the criterion of truth with practice (second thesis). As a counterpart to the 'practice = production' equation established there, *The German Ideology* makes a decisive sideways move: it identifies *theôria* with a 'production of consciousness'; or, more precisely, with *one of the terms* of the historical contradiction to which the production of consciousness gives rise. That term is, in fact, ideology, Marx's *second* innovation of 1845, by way of which he was, as it were, proposing to philosophy that it view itself in the mirror of practice. But could it recognize itself in that mirror?

Ideology or Fetishism: Power and Subjection

In this chapter, we once again have several things to do. On the one hand, we have to resume the discussion of the theses advanced by Marx in *The German Ideology*, in such a way as to clarify the link established between a conception of history based on *production* and an analysis of the effect of ideological *domination* in the element of consciousness.

But, on the other hand – for things are never simple – we have to understand what is at stake in a strange vacillation within the concept of ideology. Contrary to what might be imagined by a reader today, for whom this has come to be a familiar notion (at the same time as its usage has been dispersed in all directions), and who would probably expect that, once invented, it would have developed in a continuous fashion, this is not what actually happened at all. Although he was constantly describing and criticizing particular ‘ideologies’, after 1846 and certainly after 1852, Marx never again used this term (it was to be exhumed by Engels twenty-five years later in *Anti-Dühring* (1878) and in *Ludwig Feuerbach and the End of Classical German Philosophy* (1888), the works which mark his own appearance on the scene of the history of Marxism). This is not to say, however, that the problems identified by the term ideology purely and simply disappeared: they would be taken up again under the heading of *fetishism*, which gained wide currency due to a famous account in *Capital*. Now, this does not represent a mere terminological variant, but a genuine theoretical alternative, which has undeniable philosophical

implications. At the same time, then, as we explore the problematic of ideology, we shall have to attempt to understand the reasons which induced Marx to supplant it, at least partially, with a different problematic.

Theory and practice

Philosophy quite evidently has not forgiven Marx for *ideology*. It is constantly at pains to show that this is a badly constructed concept, which has no unambiguous meaning and which puts Marx in contradiction with himself (this is not difficult: one has only to place his irrevocable condemnation of the illusions and speculations of bourgeois consciousness, delivered in the name of the science of history, alongside the monstrous layer of ideology that has been built up on the names of the proletariat, communism and Marxism!). Yet philosophy comes back endlessly to this same point: as though, by the very fact of introducing this term, Marx had set it the problem it must master if it is to remain philosophy.¹

I shall return to this later. For the moment, let us attempt to demonstrate how the problematic of ideology developed in Marx's work. Now, as I have shown, the exposition of *The German Ideology* is not only quite confused, but misleading on this matter. It reverses the order in which the text was written, relegating the polemical part to a later section and opening with the argument on the genesis of ideology which takes the history of the division of labour as its main theme. It then seems that the concept of ideology in fact arises out of a derivation of the ‘superstructure’ (the expression is employed on at least one occasion) from the ‘base’ constituted by ‘real life’, by production. It could essentially be said to be a theory of social consciousness (*Bewusstsein*) and the point would be to understand how that consciousness could both remain dependent on social being (*Sein*), while gaining increasing autonomy from it, to the point where it caused an unreal, *fantastic* ‘world’ to emerge – i.e. one endowed with apparent autonomy – which substituted itself for real history. Hence a constitutive gap between consciousness and reality, which a new historical development, overturning the previous stage, would in the end close by reintegrating consciousness

into life. It would, then, in the main, be a theory of misrecognition or illusion, the converse of a theory of knowledge.

But if one can, with Marx, attempt to describe the 'being' of ideological consciousness in this way (and it would not be very difficult to find many philosophical precedents for such a description – which explains the temptation to use these to flesh out that description and eliminate its difficulties), one cannot understand the objectives Marx was pursuing by this approach. And it is not possible, either, to explain the particularities of his deductions or the supplementary (epistemological, political) functions he incorporates into it along the way.

We thus have to go back a little way beyond the version that is offered to us. It then becomes clear that the problematic of ideology emerges at the point where two distinct questions meet, each of which was insistent in the preceding years. On the one hand, that of the *power of ideas*: a real power, but a paradoxical one, since it derives not from the ideas themselves, but solely from the forces and circumstances which they are able to *seize on*.² On the other hand, that of *abstraction*, i.e., as we have seen, of philosophy (but this has to be understood in a broad sense, including all liberal discourse, 'rationalism' or 'critical thought' which now develop in the new space of political opinion, and contribute to excluding the real force of the people and democracy from that space, while claiming to represent them).

The combination of these two themes was prompted by Stirner, as a result of his stress on the function of domination performed by general ideas. Stirner took idealism's thesis – of the omnipotence of ideas which 'rule the world' – to extremes. But he reversed the value-judgement implied in that thesis. As representations of the *sacred*, ideas do not liberate, but oppress individuals. Thus Stirner takes the denial of real (political and social) power to the furthest extreme, but demands that the nexus of ideas and power be analysed on its own account. To this question, Marx was, for the first time in the history of philosophy, to provide an answer in terms of *class*: not in terms of 'class consciousness' (an expression which never appears), but by according existence to classes on the dual plane of the division of labour and consciousness, and therefore *also* making of the division of society into classes a condition or a structure of thought.

The dominant ideology

The theme of domination must thus be at the centre of the discussion. Marx does not produce a theory of the constitution of ideologies as discourses, as particular or general systems of representation and then merely *retrospectively* raise the question of domination: that question is always already included in the elaboration of the concept. On the other hand, he does posit as a point wholly beyond discussion that,

The ideas of the ruling class are in every epoch the ruling ideas, i.e. the class which is the ruling *material* force of society is at the same time its ruling *intellectual* force. The class which has the means of material production at its disposal, has control at the same time over the means of mental production, so that thereby, generally speaking, the ideas of those who lack the means of mental production are subject to it. The ruling ideas are nothing more than the ideal expression of the dominant material relationships, the dominant material relationships grasped as ideas; hence of the relationships which make the one class the ruling one, therefore, the ideas of its dominance. The individuals composing the ruling class possess, among other things, consciousness, and therefore think.³

We shall see that what they 'think' is, essentially, the form of universality. Mingled in the same proposition are, then, a phenomenological argument ('the ideal expression', 'the ideas of its dominance') and a purely sociological argument (the material and intellectual 'means of production' are in the same hands). This is, to be precise, not Marx's solution to the problem of domination, but his reformulation of the problem itself.

It would be instructive to confront this problematic (which plays systematically on the double meaning of the word 'dominate': to exercise power and to 'prevail' or to extend universally, a meaning even more clearly perceptible in the German *herrschen*), with the current usage of the term ideology, Marxist and non-Marxist alike. We should see that uses of the term tend to fall to one side or other of a classic demarcation line, between the *theoretical* (the problematic of error or illusion or, alternatively, of what remains 'unthought' in a scientific theory), and the *practical* (the problematic of consensus, of the style of thinking or value system which 'cements' the cohesion of a group or social movement, or which 'legitimizes' an established power),

whereas Marx had attempted to get back beyond this meta-physical distinction. This explains why it is always difficult to speak of ideology without implying either a positivist dogmatism (ideology is *the other of science*), or a historicist relativism (all thought is 'ideological' in that it expresses the identity of a group). Marx, for his part, was seeking rather to effect a critical distinction within the very use of the concept of 'truth' by relating every statement and every category to the conditions of its elaboration and the historico-political stakes involved. But this also demonstrates the extreme difficulty of actually holding to such a position, especially by employing such categories as 'being', 'real life' or 'abstraction'.

The autonomy and limits of consciousness

We can turn once again, then, to the Marxian genesis or constitution of consciousness. We are indeed dealing with a mechanism of illusion here: Marx takes over a system of metaphors which have their distant origins in Plato (the 'inversion of reality' in the cave or in the optical chamber, the *camera obscura*).⁴ But he does so in such a way as to avoid two insistent ideas in the political field: that of the *ignorance* of the masses, or the weakness inherent in human nature (which might make it incapable of achieving truth); and that of *inculcation* (which would indicate deliberate manipulation and hence the 'omnipotence' of the powerful), each of which was widely deployed by Enlightenment philosophy in respect of religious ideas and their function of legitimating despotic regimes.

Marx found (or proposed) another path by extending the scheme of the division of labour to its fullest extent, in such a way as to make it account, successively, for the *gap* between 'life' and 'consciousness', the *contradiction* between 'particular' and 'general interests' and, lastly, the *intensification* of that contradiction in the establishment of an autonomous, though indirect, mechanism of power (the division between manual and mental labour, the importance of which I shall discuss in a moment). When this construction is completed, the 'ideological' mechanism, which can equally be read as a social process, will come to be seen as an astonishing conversion of impotence into

domination: the abstraction of consciousness, which is an expression of consciousness's incapacity to act in reality (the loss of its 'immanence'), becomes the source of a power precisely because it is 'autonomized'. This is also what, ultimately, will make it possible to identify the revolutionary overturning of the division of labour with the *end of ideology*.

However, for this, ideas deriving from different sources have to be combined in a theoretically unstable equilibrium. Marx had recourse, first, to the old idea of alienation in the form assigned it by Feuerbach (and with which, in actual fact, he was to go on constantly 'settling his accounts'), i.e. the splitting of real existence, followed by the projection and autonomization of a 'fantastic reflection' compared, at times, with the imaginary creatures of theology and, at others, with the spectres of black magic. He also had recourse to this new idea of individuality as relation or as a function of social relations which is continually being transformed throughout history, an idea we have just watched being born (or reborn) between the *Theses on Feuerbach* and *The German Ideology*. If we combine the two, we get this formal definition of the ideological process: it is *the alienated existence of the relation* between individuals (which, as we have seen, Marx refers to, in general, by the term 'intercourse' – German *Verkehr*, French *commerce* – in order to grasp both its 'productive' and its 'communicative' aspects).⁵ In a sense, everything is said here, yet one can go into detail, i.e. 'relate' how this must have occurred in history; and this is what Marx does by providing an account (at least in principle) of the succession of the forms of consciousness corresponding to the different developmental stages of property and the State.

Fictive universality

From the beginning of history, then, there is a duality or tension between thought and the division of labour (in philosophical language the poles of 'interiority' and 'exteriority'). The one is merely the reverse side of the other, its reflection by individuals. This is why *the limits of communication between individuals* (what might be called their practical universe) *are also the limits*

of their intellectual universe. Before being a question of interests, this is a question of situation or existential horizon. Let us reiterate that Marx did not produce a theory of 'class consciousness' here, in the sense of a system of ideas which might be said, consciously or otherwise, to express the 'aims' of a particular class. He produced, rather, a theory of the class character of consciousness, i.e. of the limits of its intellectual horizon which reflect or reproduce the limits to communication imposed by the division of society into classes (or nations, etc.). The basis of the explanation is the obstacle to universality inscribed in the conditions of material life, beyond which it is only possible to think in imagination. We can see clearly, then, that the more these conditions expand, the more the horizon of men's activity (or of their 'intercourse') will coincide with the totality of the world and the greater will be the contradiction between the imaginary and the real. Ideological consciousness is, first, the dream of an impossible universality. And we can see that the proletariat will itself occupy a limit position, not so much standing over against ideology as on its edge, at the point where, no longer having any outside, it turns around into real historical consciousness. In the face of effective universality, fictive or abstract universality has no alternative but to disappear.

Why then should we identify ideology with the generalities and abstractions of consciousness? Why not, rather, see it as an irretrievably *particular* consciousness? Marx gives two reasons, essentially, to explain how an occupational, national or social particularity is idealized in the form of universality (and, reciprocally, why every 'abstract' universal and every ideal is the sublimation of a particular interest). In fact, these reasons are connected, but the second is more original than the first.

The first reason, which derives from Rousseau, is that there is no historical division of labour without institutions and, in particular, without a State (we shall come to say without an *apparatus*). The State is a manufacturer of abstractions precisely by virtue of the unitary fiction (or *consensus*) which it has to impose on society. The universalization of particularity is the compensation for the constitution of the State, a fictive community whose power of abstraction compensates for the real lack of community in relations between individuals:

Since the State is the form in which the individuals of a ruling class assert their common interests, and in which the whole civil society of an epoch is epitomised, it follows that the State mediates in the formation of all common institutions and that the institutions receive a political form. Hence the illusion that law is based on the will, and indeed on the will divorced from its real basis – on *free will*.⁶

But the great supplementary idea which Marx adds to his exposition is the *division between manual and mental labour*. In a sense this is imported into the description of alienated communication, transforming what was merely a potentiality for domination into effective domination. And, as a consequence, it changes the theory of consciousness, wresting it away from any kind of psychology (even a social psychology) and making it a question of political anthropology.

Intellectual difference

Rather than 'division of manual and mental labour', I would prefer to refer to *intellectual difference* in general, for we are dealing here both with the opposition between several types of labour – Marx mentions commerce, accounting, management and actual production – and the opposition between labour and non-labour, 'free' or unpaid activities in general, which have become the privilege and specialism of some and not others. (In communism, these activities will be accessible to all; and, more generally, communism is unthinkable without doing away with this division. This theme will become central once again in 1875, in the *Critique of the Gotha Programme*; it is one of the rare, strictly utopian elements, along with considerations on future education, to play an explicit role in Marx.⁷ Later, as we shall see, the question of education and its relation of dependency on the capitalist labour process will become – or once again become – crucial.)

The analysis of intellectual difference takes us beyond instrumentalist conceptions of an illusion or mystification functioning to serve the material power of a class. It lays down the principle of a domination which is constituted within the field of consciousness and divides it from itself, producing effects which are themselves material. Intellectual difference is both a schema for

explaining the world (whence comes the notion of a mind or reason), and a process co-extensive with the whole history of the division of labour. Marx says this explicitly:

Division of labour only becomes truly such from the moment when a division of material and mental labour appears . . . From this moment onwards consciousness *can* really flatter itself that it is something other than consciousness of existing practice, that it *really* represents something without representing something real.⁸

There are, then, as many historical stages to it as there are to the division of labour itself. But clearly what most interests Marx is the link connecting the distant beginnings of civilization with *current* phenomena, when a bourgeois public sphere comes into being: the role of ideas and ideologue in politics, and the role played by their relative autonomy in the creation of a general domination which is not that of a particular group of property-owners, but really that of an entire class. The illusion or 'semblance, that the rule of a certain class is only the rule of certain ideas' (and therefore also the sublimation of particular interests in the general interest), is the result of the activity of *ideologists* (Marx speaks of the 'active conceptive ideologists' of the dominant class). For this to happen, however, those ideologists first have to *mystify themselves*, 'in their questions', i.e. in their mode of thinking, and they can only do this because their way of life, their specific *particularity* (or 'independence') engendered by history, provides them with the conditions to do so. Ideologists are *beside* their own class, just as the ideas they produce (Reason, Freedom, Humanity) are *beyond* social practices.

Shall we say, then, that Marx's analysis amounts, in the end, to an outline of the political sociology of modern intellectuals (or an outline of the sociology of knowledge – *die Wissenssoziologie*⁹), combined with a history of their formation and function? That reading would not be wrong, but it would, perhaps, be too restrictive. In reality, Marx has his sights set on a difference which runs through the whole of history and which, as such, affects both professional intellectuals and non-intellectuals. No individual stands *outside* that division (any more than he or she stands outside sexual difference). In overdetermining class difference in its successive forms, it reveals by that very token the dimension of domination which

accompanies it from the outset and shows itself to be indissociable from the instituting of culture and the State. This difference is therefore constantly cultivated by the 'ideologists' themselves, but it is more a historical condition of their existence than their personal creation. To understand the importance of this idea, we have to make a detour through the philosophy of Hegel.

Intellectuals and the State

Marx described the proletariat as a 'universal class', a *mass* situated virtually *beyond* the condition of *class*, the particularity of that mass being denied in its very conditions of existence. But he could not have formulated that idea if Hegel had not, in his *Philosophy of Right* of 1821, developed a theory of the 'universal *Stand*'.¹⁰ What are we to understand by this term? It refers to the group of State functionaries and the new function they were acquiring with the modernization of the State in the wake of the Revolution. However, we must be careful here. From Hegel's viewpoint, the role of functionaries in general is not purely administrative, but essentially intellectual. And it is, correlatively, by their incorporation into the State (i.e. into the 'public service') that the intellectuals (*die Gelehrten*: the educated) can discover their true destiny. For it is the State, in which the different particular interests of civil society have to be made compatible and raised to the higher level of the general interest, which offers them the conditions for, and substance of, their reflective activity. *The State which is universal for Hegel 'in itself' 'frees' the intellectuals* (from belief and the various forms of personal dependence), *so that they may in its service, within the whole of society, perform an activity of mediation*, or representation, and thus carry a universality which is as yet abstract to the level of 'self-consciousness'.

It must be acknowledged that this theorization expresses powerfully, and with remarkable anticipation, the sense of the administrative and educational framework and the structure of scientific research and public opinion which would gradually give contemporary states their capacity for social 'regulation', in a manner as far removed from pure liberalism as it is from authoritarianism. If we did not bear this in mind, we should not

understand the exactly converse power of the theorization of ideology in Marx, as regards either its aims or the problems it poses.

More than anything, perhaps, the analysis of intellectual difference, provided that it is conducted both in the register of knowledge and in that of organization and power, profoundly illuminates the nature of processes of domination. It is not surprising that, one way or another, most authentically philosophical Marxists (let us mention here such diverse figures as Gramsci, Althusser and Sohn-Rethel) have always seen the historical 'resolution' of that difference as a fundamental characteristic of communism. For Marx was not content merely to stand the Hegelian theses on their head and attribute a function of subjugation and division to intellectuals ('ideological inculcation', as the May '68 movement had it), but went right back to the description of the anthropological difference which underlay their activity and the autonomization of their function.

That difference is not a natural one (though it incontestably expresses itself in the distinct functions of the organism), since it is formed and transformed in history. Nor, however, is it a difference that is 'instituted', in the sense of being the product of mere political decisions (though it is amplified, utilized and reproduced by institutions). It is inherent in the culture of successive civilizations, between which it provides a thread of continuity. Marx here places this difference more or less at the same level of generality as the difference of the sexes or the difference between town and country life. Being incorporated into the whole social organization of labour, it divides all practices and all individuals from themselves (for a practice in the complete sense – *praxis* and *poiësis* – can be *neither* purely physical *nor* purely intellectual, but must be a complementarity, a reciprocity of the two aspects). If this were not the case, the specialist 'intellectuals' could not become the instruments of a permanent inequality, of an institutional hierarchy of the 'dominant' and the 'dominated' (or the 'governing' and the 'governed', as Gramsci later put it). That is to say they could not, for the greater part of history, make that inequality a material condition of labour, exchange, communication and association.

Gramsci

The work of Antonio Gramsci (1891–1937), the greatest of the intellectual leaders of the European Communist movement after Lenin, consists of three groups of texts which are of very different status: the *Political Writings* (selections published by Lawrence and Wishart in a translation by Quintin Hoare, Volume 1, 1977, covering the period 1910–1920 and Volume 2 1921–26); the *Prison Notebooks* written after Gramsci's arrest by the Italian fascist government and published at the Liberation (selections published in English by Lawrence and Wishart in 1971, ed. and trans. Quintin Hoare and Geoffrey Nowell Smith); and the correspondence (including Gramsci's *Letters from Prison*, 2 volumes, ed. Frank Rosengarten and trans. Raymond Rosenthal, Columbia University Press, New York, 1994).

Far from Mussolini having succeeded in 'preventing this brain from functioning', the physical and moral ordeal which Gramsci underwent ultimately yielded an intellectual monument, the suggestive potential of which is still not exhausted (see the works by Christine Buci-Glucksmann, *Gramsci and the State*, trans. David Fernbach, Lawrence and Wishart, London, 1980; André Tosel, *Marx en italiqnes. Aux origines de la philosophie italienne contemporaine*, Trans-Europ-Repress, Mauvezin, 1991; and André Tosel, ed., *Modernité de Gramsci*, Diffusion les Belles Lettres, Paris, 1992).

Gramsci's thought cannot be summed up in a few lines. Let us note four closely interrelated themes here: (1) in a manner quite alien to the tradition of 'dialectical materialism', Gramsci saw Marxism as a 'philosophy of *praxis*' which he initially interpreted, in the days of the Russian Revolution in 1917 and the Turin 'factory councils' movement, as an affirmation of the will against the fatalism of the socialist organizations and, later, as a 'science of politics', Machiavellian in inspiration, the aim of which was to construct the elements of a *hegemony*, of the producers; (2) this theme is linked to a 'broadening' of the 'Marxist theory of the State', which does not dispense with class determination, but stresses the complementary nature of the 'balance of forces' and the 'consensus' obtained through cultural institutions; (3) this explains why Gramsci devoted a considerable part of his unfinished research to a history and analysis of the function of the different types of *intellectual*, with a view to reforming the organic 'bond' which unites them to the masses when a new social class is in the ascendant; (4) there is also an ethical dimension to this critical thinking, not only in its quest for a morality or a 'common sense' for the workers which could free them from bourgeois hegemony, but in its effort to formulate and implement a regulative principle for political action which would be fundamentally secular and directed against all forms of messianic ideology ('pessimism of the intelligence, optimism of the will').

The aporia of ideology

It remains to ask, then, why Marx did not continue directly along this path. As I suggested above, *internal* reasons combined here closely with *conjunctural* ones, which themselves indicated what was still abstract or even speculative in Marx's construction, despite his effort to get back to the materiality of history.

Given Marx's conception of the proletariat, the idea of an *ideology of the proletariat* (or of a 'proletarian ideology', later, as we know, to meet with much success) is obviously devoid of meaning. In reality, the concept of the proletariat is not so much that of a particular 'class', isolated from the whole of society, as of a *non-class*, the formation of which immediately precedes the dissolution of all classes and primes the revolutionary process. For this reason, when speaking of it, Marx employs, for preference, the term '*Masse*' ('mass' or 'masses'), which he turns round against the contemptuous use made of it by bourgeois intellectuals in his day. Just as the proletarian masses are fundamentally propertyless (*eigentumslos*), they are fundamentally 'without illusions' (*illusionslos*) about reality, fundamentally *external* to the world of ideology, whose abstractions and ideal representations of the social relation 'do not exist' for them. The *Manifesto* will say the same thing, illustrating the idea with phrases which have since become famous, but which today seem derisory, such as 'the working men have no country.'¹¹ Similarly, they are free of the beliefs, hopes or hypocrisies of religion, morality and bourgeois law. For the same reason, they could not have 'ideologues' proposing to instruct or guide them – 'organic intellectuals', as Gramsci would later term them. (Marx certainly did not see himself as anything of the kind and this produced increasing difficulties when it came to conceptualizing the function of his own *theory* within revolutionary *practice*. Here again, Engels was to make the decisive step by bringing the expression 'scientific socialism' into general use.)

The events of 1848–50 were cruelly to emphasize how far removed this vision was from reality. Indeed, these events might have been sufficient to prompt the abandonment, if not of the idea of a *universal role* of the proletariat (at the level of world history and the revolutionary transformation of society in its

entirety), without which there is no Marxism, then certainly of the proletariat as a 'universal class'. The most fascinating text in this regard is *The Eighteenth Brumaire of Louis Bonaparte*, to which we have already referred. We would really need more space to examine this text in detail here. In it, the search for a strategy with which the working class can confront the counter-revolution is combined with a new analysis of the historical gap between what Marx calls the 'class in itself' and the 'class for itself', between the mere fact of similar conditions of life and an organized political movement – conceived not in terms of consciousness merely lagging behind life, but as an effect of contradictory economic tendencies, which he now began to see as promoting *both* the unity of the workers *and* competition between them.¹² Immediate experience in France, as in Germany or Britain, was, in actual fact, to reveal the power nationalism and historical (republican or imperial) myths and even religious forms exerted over the proletariat, and the power of the political and military machines of the established order. How was the theoretical thesis that the conditions of production of ideology were radically external to the proletarian condition to be reconciled with the observation of the daily interpenetration of the two? It is very remarkable that Marx never invoked an implicitly moral notion, such as that of false consciousness (as later employed by Lukács and others), just as he never spoke of proletarian ideology or class consciousness. But the difficulty remained a glaring one in his writings and led to the suppression of the very concept of ideology.

Another factor conspired towards this same end: the difficulty Marx experienced in defining *bourgeois political economy* – particularly that of the classics: Quesnay, Smith and Ricardo – as 'ideology', since this theoretical discourse, which was 'scientific' in form and clearly intended to provide the foundations for the liberal politics of the owners of capital, did not fall directly into the category of ideology (characterized by the abstraction and inversion of the real), or of a materialist history of civil society, given that it was based on the postulate that bourgeois conditions of production were eternal (or that the relation between wage-labourers and capital was invariant). But it was precisely the need to extricate himself from this dilemma which was to lead Marx to immerse himself for years in the

'critique of political economy', a critique fuelled by intensive reading of Smith, Ricardo, Hegel, Malthus, historians and statisticians . . . And that critique, in its turn, was to throw up a new concept, that of *commodity fetishism*.

'Commodity fetishism'

The theory of fetishism is mainly expounded in Part One of Volume I of *Capital*.¹³ It is not merely a high point of Marx's philosophical work, entirely integrated into his 'critical' and 'scientific' work, but one of the great theoretical constructions of modern philosophy. It is notoriously difficult, even though the general idea is relatively simple.

I shall not linger here over the origins of the term 'fetishism', its relationship with theories of religion in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, or the place which, by taking up this term again, Marx occupies within the history of the question of fetishism *in general*.¹⁴ Nor, for want of space, shall I discuss the function this argument performs in the overall architecture of *Capital*, a function it fulfils particularly by its explanation of the 'inverted' form in which, as Marx tells us, the structural phenomena of the capitalist mode of production (which all relate back to the way expansion in the value of capital feeds on 'living labour') are perceived at the 'surface' of economic relations (in the world of competition between the different forms of capital, profit, rent, interest and their respective rates).¹⁵ I shall, however, attempt to explain the connection with Marx's text of the dual legacy we can recognize as his today: on the one hand, the idea of the *reification* of the bourgeois world in the forms of the generalized 'commodification' of social activities; on the other, the programme of an analysis of the *mode of subjection* implied in the process of exchange, which finds its ultimate expression in structural Marxism.

'The fetishism of the commodity,' Marx tells us, is the fact that a 'definite social relation between men themselves . . . assumes here, for them, the fantastic form of a relation between things.' Or, alternatively, 'to the producers . . . the social relations between their private labours appear . . . as material [*dinglich*] relations between persons and social relations between things.'¹⁶

Karl Marx, The fetishism of the commodity and its secret

(*Capital*, Volume 1, Part 1, chapter 1, section 4)

Whence, then, arises the enigmatic character of the product of labour, as soon as it assumes the form of a commodity? Clearly, it arises from this form itself. The equality of the kinds of human labour takes on a physical form in the equal objectivity of the products of labour as values; the measure of the expenditure of human labour-power by its duration takes on the form of the magnitude of the value of the products of labour; and finally the relationships between the producers, within which the social characteristics of their labours are manifested, take on the form of a social relation between the products of labour.

The mysterious character of the commodity-form consists therefore simply in the fact that the commodity reflects the social characteristics of men's own labour as objective characteristics of the products of labour themselves, as the socio-natural properties of these things. Hence it also reflects the social relation of the producers to the sum total of labour as a social relation between objects, a relation which exists apart from and outside the producers. Through this substitution, the products of labour become commodities, sensuous things which are at the same time supra-sensible or social. In the same way the impression made by a thing on the optic nerve is perceived not as a subjective excitation of that nerve but as the objective form of a thing outside the eye. In the act of seeing, of course, light is really transmitted from one thing, the external object, to another thing, the eye. It is a physical relation between physical things. As against this, the commodity-form, and the value-relation of the products of labour within which it appears, have absolutely no connection with the physical nature of the commodity and the material (*dinglich*) relations arising out of this. It is nothing but the definite social relation between men themselves which assumes here, for them, the fantastic form of a relation between things. In order, therefore, to find an analogy we must take flight into the misty realm of religion. There the products of the human brain appear as autonomous figures endowed with a life of their own, which enter into relations both with each other and with the human race. So it is in the world of commodities with the products of men's hands. I call this the fetishism which attaches itself to the products of labour as soon as they are produced as commodities, and is therefore inseparable from the production of commodities.

(*Capital*, Volume 1, trans. Ben Fowkes, Penguin/*New Left Review*, Harmondsworth, 1976, pp. 164-5.)

Commodities, produced and exchanged, which are useful material objects and which, as such, correspond to individual or collective needs, also possess another quality, which is immaterial but no less objective: their exchange-value (generally expressed in the form of a price, i.e. as a certain sum of money). That quality, which is attached to them individually, is therefore immediately quantifiable: just as a car *weighs* 500 kg., so it is *worth* £10,000. Naturally, for a given commodity, this quantity varies according to time and place, as a function of competition and other more or less long-term fluctuations. However, far from such variations dissipating the appearance of an intrinsic relation between the commodity and *its* value, they in fact confer on it an added objectivity: individuals go to the marketplace of their own free will, but it is not as a result of their decisions that the values (or prices) of commodities on the market fluctuate. It is, rather, the fluctuation of values which determines the conditions in which individuals have access to commodities. It is, therefore, in the 'objective laws' of the circulation of commodities, governed by changes in value, that human beings must seek the means of satisfying their needs and regulating the relations of mutual service and the community or working relations which are mediated by economic relationships or dependent on them. Marx presents this elementary objectivity, which appears as soon as a simple relationship with commodities on the market exists, as the starting-point and model of objectivity of economic phenomena in general and their laws; it is these laws which are studied by political economy, which ceaselessly compares them – either explicitly, by the use of mechanical or dynamic concepts, or implicitly, by the mathematical methods it employs – with the objectivity of the laws of nature.

There is obviously an immediate relation between this phenomenon (in the sense that things 'present themselves' in this way) and the function of *money*. It is as a price, and therefore as an at least potential relation of exchange with a quantity of money, that exchange-value presents itself. At bottom, that relationship is not dependent on money actually being spent or received or even merely being represented by a sign (credit money, bank notes 'given forced currency' etc.): in the last analysis, especially on the world (or universal) market which Marx tells us is the true space in which the commodity relation is realized, the monetary

reference must exist and must be 'verifiable'. The presence of money over against commodities, as a precondition for their circulation, adds an element to the fetishism and allows us to understand why this term is used. If commodities (food, clothing, machines, raw materials, luxury objects, cultural goods, and even the bodies of prostitutes – in short, the whole world of human objects produced or consumed) seem to *have* an exchange-value, money, for its part, seems to *be* exchange-value itself, and by the same token intrinsically to possess the power to communicate to commodities which 'enter into relation with it' that virtue or power which characterizes it. That is why it is sought for its own sake, hoarded, regarded as the object of a universal need attended by fear and respect, desire and disgust (*auri sacra fames*: 'the accursed thirst for gold', wrote the Latin poet Virgil in a famous line quoted by Marx, and in Revelation money is clearly identified with the Beast, i.e. with the devil).¹⁷

This relation of money to commodities, which 'gives material form to' their value on the market, is, of course, supported by individual acts of sale and purchase, but the personalities of the individuals who carry out those acts are quite irrelevant to it; in this connection, they are entirely interchangeable. One may therefore construe this relation either as the effect of a 'supernatural' power of money, which creates and animates the movement of commodities, embodying its own imperishable value in the perishable bodies of commodities; or, on the other hand, as a 'natural' effect of the relation between commodities, which establishes an expression of their values and the proportions in which they can be exchanged by way of social institutions.

In reality, these two conceptions are symmetrical and interdependent: they develop together and represent two moments of the experience which individuals, as 'producer-exchangers', have of the phenomena of circulation and the market which constitute the general form of the whole of economic life. This is what Marx has in mind when he describes the perception of the world of commodities as a perception of 'sensuous things which are at the same time suprasensible', in which aspects of the natural and the supernatural coexist uncannily, and when he declares the commodity a 'mystical' object, full of 'theological niceties' (directly suggesting the comparison of economic

language with religious discourse). Contrary to what Max Weber would later assert, the modern world is not 'disenchanted', but *enchanted*, precisely insofar as it is the world of objects of value and objectified values.

The necessity of appearances

What, then, is Marx's objective in describing the phenomenon in this way? It is twofold. On the one hand, by a movement akin to a demystification or demythification, he is concerned to *dissolve* that phenomenon, to show that it is an appearance based, in the last instance, on a 'misunderstanding'. The phenomena just mentioned (exchange-value considered as a property of objects, the autonomous movement of commodities and prices) will have to be traced back to a *real* cause which has been masked and the effect of which has been inverted (as in a *camera obscura*). This analysis really clears the way for a critique of political economy. For at the very point when that discipline, driven by a desire to provide scientific explanation (Marx is of course thinking here of the representatives of classical political economy: Smith and particularly Ricardo, whom he is always careful to distinguish from the 'apologists' of capital), is setting out to solve the enigma of the fluctuations of value by pinning value down to an 'invariant measure' – the labour-time necessary to produce each commodity – it actually deepens the mystery by regarding this relation as a natural (and, consequently, eternal) phenomenon. This is explained by the fact that economic science – which, in accord with the research programme of the Enlightenment, seeks the *objectivity* of phenomena – conceives the appearance as an error or illusion, a representational defect which could be eliminated by observation (chiefly, in this case, by statistics) and deduction. By explaining economic phenomena in terms of *laws*, the power of fascination they exert should be dissipated. In the same way, half a century later, Durkheim was to speak of 'treating social facts as things'.

Now fetishism is not a subjective phenomenon or a false perception of reality, as an optical illusion or a superstitious belief would be. It constitutes, rather, the way in which reality (a certain form or social structure) cannot but appear. And that

active 'appearing' (both *Schein* and *Erscheinung*, i.e. both illusion and phenomenon) constitutes a mediation or necessary function without which, in given historical conditions, the life of society would be quite simply impossible. To suppress the appearance would be to abolish social relations. This is why Marx attaches particular importance to refuting the utopian notion, widespread among French and British socialists in the early nineteenth century (and which would often be seen again elsewhere), that money could be abolished, giving way to work credits or other forms of social redistribution, without any attendant transformation of the principle of exchange between private production units. The structure of production and circulation which confers an exchange-value on the products of labour forms a single whole, and the existence of money, a 'developed' form of the general equivalent of commodities, is one of the necessary functions of that structure.

To the first stage of the critique, which consists in dissolving the *appearance of objectivity*, there must be added, then, another which is, in actuality, the precondition for it, and demonstrates the constitution of *the appearance in objectivity*. What presents itself as a given quantitative relation is, in reality, the expression of a social relation: units which are independent of one another can only determine the degree of necessity of their labour, the proportion of social labour which has to be devoted to each type of useful object *a posteriori*, by adjusting their production to 'demand'. It is the practice of exchange which determines the proportions, but it is the exchange-values of the commodities which, in the view of each producer, represent in inverted fashion – as though it were a property of 'things' – the relationship between their own labour and that of all the other producers. Given this state of affairs, it is inevitable that, to the individuals, their labour appears to be 'socialized' by the 'value form', instead of this latter showing up as the expression of a social division of labour. Hence the formula I quoted above: 'To the producers . . . the social relations between their private labours appear . . . as material [*dinglich*] relations between persons and social relations between things.'

Marx refutes this by undertaking a thought-experiment which consists in comparing the way socially necessary labour time is apportioned in various different 'modes of production', some of

them historical (primitive societies based on subsistence economies, for example, or medieval society based on serfdom), others imaginary (the domestic 'economy' of Robinson Crusoe on his island), or hypothetical (a future communist society where the apportioning of labour is consciously planned). It then appears that these relations of production are either free and egalitarian, or oppressive and based on force, but 'the social relations between individuals in the performance of their labour appear at all events as their own personal relations, and are not disguised as social relations between things, between the products of labour.'¹⁸ In other words, these societies are, first and foremost, societies of human beings, whether equal or unequal, and not commodity (or 'market') societies where human beings serve only as intermediaries.

Genesis of ideality

Obviously, such a thought-experiment is no substitute for demonstration, but merely indicates the need for it. That demonstration is one of the two results (together with the elucidation of the process of exploitation of wage-labour as a source of the expansion of capital) on which Marx wished to stake his scientific reputation, though apparently without ever having found an absolutely definitive exposition of it. It coincides in fact with the whole of the first part of *Capital* (chapters 1 to 3). I shall merely present the broad outlines of the argument here.

Firstly, starting out from the 'twofold character' of labour (as specialized technical activity transforming nature with the aim of producing certain useful objects and as expenditure of human physical and mental force in general: what Marx terms *concrete labour* and *abstract labour*, which are obviously just two different aspects of the same reality, the one individual, the other transindividual or collective), the point is to show how the commodities which are produced become objects of a twofold or 'dual character' themselves, being endowed with *utility* (corresponding to certain needs) and *value* (the 'substance' of which is constituted by the socially necessary labour time required for their production).

Secondly, the aim is to show how the magnitude of the value of a commodity can be *expressed* in the quantity of another, which is properly the 'exchange-value'. This is the point which seemed most difficult and most important to Marx, since this made it possible to deduce the constitution of a 'general equivalent', i.e. a 'universal' commodity, *extracted* from circulation, in such a way that *all* other commodities express their own value in it and it, conversely, substitutes automatically for all commodities or 'purchases' them all.

Thirdly and lastly (the need for this third point is too often forgotten or, in other words, it is often thought that, from Marx's point of view, formally deducing the necessity of a 'general equivalent' is in itself sufficient to explain money), the point is to show how this function is *materialized* in a particular kind of object (precious metals). Money is then constantly reproduced or preserved by its different economic uses (unit of account, means of payment, being hoarded or held in 'reserve' etc.). The other side of this materialization is, then, a process of constant *idealization* of the monetary material, since it serves immediately to express a universal form or an 'idea'.

In spite of its technicality and difficulties, Marx's argument here is one of the great philosophical expositions of the formation of 'idealities' or 'universals' and the relationship between these abstract entities and human practices. It is comparable with what Plato, Locke or Hegel had proposed on the subject (and Hegel had written that 'logic is the coin of the spirit'), or with what Husserl or Frege would later advance. From Marx's point of view, however, there were two things more important than this.

The first of these – which makes Marx's work the culminating point of the whole of classical economy, in its constant opposition to *monetarism* – was to demonstrate that 'the riddle of the money fetish is therefore the riddle of the commodity fetish',¹⁹ or, in other words, that the abstract form contained in the relation of commodities to labour is *sufficient* to explain the logic of monetary phenomena (and, naturally, beyond this, capitalist or financial phenomena etc.). We may take it that it is this attitude – common, deep down, to Marx and the classical economists – which, in his eyes, guarantees the 'scientific' character of their theory. Conversely, it explains to a large extent

the common discredit into which they have fallen since the notion of *labour as measure of value* has been rejected by official economics.

The second point of importance to Marx lays the ground for the *critique* of political economy. This is the idea that the conditions which make the 'fetishistic' objectification of social relations necessary are entirely *historical*. They arise with the development of production 'for the market', the products of which only arrive at their final destination (consumption in all its forms) through sale and purchase. This is a process spread over thousands of years which only slowly overtakes one branch of production after another, one society after another. However, with capitalism (and, for Marx, the decisive element here is the transformation of human labour-power itself into a commodity and, thus, wage-labour), that process rapidly and irreversibly becomes universal. A point of no return has been reached, though this does not mean a point beyond which there can be no further advance: the only progress which now remains possible consists in the planning of production, i.e. in society (or the associated producers) taking back into 'social control' the expenditure of labour, the technical conditions for this being created, in fact, by the universal quantification of the economy. The *transparency* of social relations will then no longer be a spontaneous condition, as in primitive societies (where, Marx explains, it has as its counterpart the mythical representation of the forces of nature – more or less what, *in his system*, Auguste Comte termed 'fetishism'), but a collective construct. The fetishism of commodities will then appear as a long transition between nature's domination of man and man's domination of nature.

Marx and idealism (reprise)

From the strict perspective of the critique of political economy, we could leave matters there. But this would, as I have said, be to miss what constitutes the philosophical importance of Marx's text and explains its astonishing legacy. That legacy has divided into various different orientations, but all of these have been based on a recognition that there is no theory of objectivity

without a theory of subjectivity. *By rethinking the constitution of social objectivity, Marx at the same time virtually revolutionized the concept of 'subject'*. He thus introduced a new element into the discussion of the relations between 'subjectification', 'subjection' and 'subjectivity'.

We must remember here that, in the tradition of German idealism since Kant, the subject had been conceived first and foremost as a universal consciousness, both set *above* all particular individuals (hence the possibility of identifying it with the Reason of Humanity) and present *in each of them*: what Foucault was later to term the 'empirico-transcendental doublet',²⁰ which we have seen Marx denounce as a mere variant of essentialism. Such a consciousness 'constitutes the world', i.e. makes it intelligible by means of its own categories or forms of representation – space, time, causality (*Critique of Pure Reason*, 1781). *This side of* that constitution of the world, Kant had to set aside the domain of the 'necessary illusions' of metaphysics or pure thought, which did not refer to anything in experience. These were something like the inevitable price to be paid for the capacity of reason to forge abstractions. *Beyond this*, escaping the constraints of nature and experience, he situated a 'pure practical reason', i.e. an unconditioned moral freedom, which aspired to constitute a 'kingdom of ends' based on mutual respect between persons (but all the more implacably subject for that to the inner law of duty, the famous 'categorical imperative'). And even when Hegel, rejecting the separation of the natural from the moral world, demonstrated that the experience of consciousness was properly located in historical experience, this schema of the constitution of the world remained determinant. It made it possible to understand why it was, in the end, that spirit or reason which has been lost or alienated in the forms of nature and culture merely, in its various experiences, *returns to itself*, to the contemplation of its own structure, its own 'logic'.

We can now see that with Marx's argument, by way of an apparently contingent detour through the analysis of the social forms of commodity circulation and the critique of their economic representation, the question of objectivity was entirely recast. The mechanism of fetishism is indeed, in one sense, a constituting of the world: the social world, structured by relations of exchange, which clearly represents the greater part of the

'nature' in which human individuals live, think and act today. This is why Marx writes that 'the categories of bourgeois economics' are 'forms of thought which are socially valid and therefore objective'.²¹ Before it comes to formulating rules or imperatives, they express a perception of phenomena, of the way things 'are there', without it being possible to change them at will.

But in that perception, the real and the imaginary (what Marx terms the 'suprasensible', the 'fantastic form' of autonomous commodities which dominate their producers) are immediately combined or, alternatively, the *givenness* of the objects of experience is immediately combined with the *norm* of behaviour they call forth. Economic calculation, itself based on the immense substructure of measurements, accountings and evaluations which individuals immersed in the world of commodities make each day, provides a fine illustration of this duality. It is based both on the fact that economic objects are *always already quantifiable* ('that is how things are', it is their nature) and on the social imperative to *submit* them (and the human activities which produce them) to an endless quantification and rationalization, transcending any pre-ordained limit, be it 'natural' or 'moral'.

Genesis of subjectivity

From the standpoint of classical idealism, it might seem that Marx thus merely combined (or, as it might be, *confused*) the three viewpoints which were, respectively, those of science (intelligibility of phenomena), metaphysics (necessary illusions of pure thought), and morality or 'practical reason' (behavioural imperative). But the comparison immediately brings out the originality of this theory of the constitution of the world when set alongside those which preceded it in the history of philosophy (and which, of course, Marx knew intimately): the fact is that it does not arise out of the activity of any subject, or at least not of any subject which can be conceived in terms of a model of consciousness. On the other hand, it does constitute subjects or forms of subjectivity and consciousness *in* the very field of objectivity. From its 'transcendant' or 'transcendental' position, subjectivity has shifted into a position of effect or result of the social process.

The only 'subject' Marx speaks of is one that is practical, multiple, anonymous and by definition not conscious of itself. A *non-subject* in fact, namely 'society', i.e. the whole set of activities of production, exchange and consumption the combined effect of which is perceptible to each person outside himself, as a 'natural' property of things. And it is this non-subject or complex of activities which produces social *representations* of objects at the same time as it produces representable *objects*. The commodity, like money, to say nothing of capital and its various forms, is preeminently both a representation and, at the same time, an object; it is an object always already given in the form of a representation.

But, let us repeat, if the constitution of objectivity in fetishism does not depend on the prior givenness of a subject, a consciousness or a reason, it does, by contrast, constitute subjects which are a part of objectivity itself or which are, in other words, given in experience *alongside 'things'*, alongside commodities, and *in a relation to them*. These subjects are not constituent, but constituted; they are quite simply 'economic subjects' or, more exactly, they are all individuals who, in bourgeois society, are first of all economic subjects (sellers and buyers and therefore owners, if only of their own labour-power, i.e. *owners and sellers of themselves* as labour-power – a stupefying 'phantasmagoria', we may remark in passing, but one which has itself become absolutely 'natural'). The reversal effected by Marx is, then, complete: the constitution of the world is not, for him, the work of a subject, but a genesis of subjectivity (*a* form of determinate historical subjectivity) as part (and counterpart) of the social world of objectivity.

From this starting-point, two lines of development were possible and interpretations tending in each of these directions have been proposed.

'Reification'

The first of these lines of development is illustrated by Lukács's work *History and Class Consciousness*, written between 1919 and 1922, in which the great antithesis between 'reification' and 'proletarian consciousness' is expounded.²² This is both

Lukács

The long and dramatic career of György Lukács, who was born into the Jewish aristocracy of Budapest in 1885, used the name Georg [von] Lukacs, and wrote the whole of his work in German, divides into four broad periods. In his youth, he studied philosophy and sociology in Germany with the Neo-Kantians and Max Weber and developed an aesthetics inspired by 'anti-capitalist Romanticism' (*Soul and Form* (1910), trans. Anna Bostock, Merlin, London, 1974), together with a sustained interest in Jewish mysticism (cf. Michael Löwy, *Redemption and Utopia: Jewish Libertarian Thought in Central Europe*, Athlone, London, 1992). He became a Marxist during the First World War, being especially influenced by Rosa Luxemburg and the Spartakusbund, which led him to take part in the Hungarian Revolution, becoming People's Commissar for Education (1919). His collection of essays, *History and Class Consciousness*, published in 1923 (trans. Rodney Livingstone, Merlin, London, 1971), is the most striking attempt to revive the Hegelian idea of a dialectical synthesis of objectivity and subjectivity, entirely transposed into the element of 'class consciousness' and the revolutionary practice of the proletariat, which is presented as the culmination of history. Condemned by official Marxism (at the same time as the exactly contemporary and in many respects comparable book by Karl Korsch, *Marxism and Philosophy*, trans. Fred Halliday, New Left Books, London, 1970), this work, despite being disavowed by its author, was to become the overt or covert source of much of Western 'critical Marxism'. After settling in Moscow in the early thirties, then returning to socialist Hungary in 1945, Lukács developed a more 'orthodox', erudite and systematic body of work, which ranged over the theory of 'critical realism' (*The Historical Novel*, trans. Hannah and Stanley Mitchell, Merlin, London, 1962), the history of philosophy (*The Young Hegel. Studies in the Relations between Dialectics and Economics*, trans. Rodney Livingstone, Merlin, London, 1975), and politico-philosophical polemic (*The Destruction of Reason*, trans. Peter Palmer, Merlin, London, 1980: a study of irrationalism in German philosophy and its role in preparing the intellectual ground for National Socialism). He supported the national revolution led by Nagy and, from that point on, came under strict police surveillance. The two great works of his late period are his *Aesthetics* (1963) and, above all, the *Ontology of Social Being* (published posthumously in 1971; English translation in 3 volumes by David Fernbach, Merlin, London, 1978–9), in which the 'self-consciousness of the human race' is studied as 'resolution of the relation between teleology and causality' on the basis of the alienation and de-alienation of labour (cf. Nicolas Tertulian's article, 'Ontologie de l'être social', in *Dictionnaire critique du marxisme*, Presses Universitaires de France, Paris, second edition, 1985).

an interpretation of genius and an extrapolation from Marx's text, which brings out its Romantic side (doubtless on account of the influences to which Lukács was subject – particularly Georg Simmel, author of *The Philosophy of Money* (1900) and Max Weber – and his own youthful orientations). Into the idea of fetishism Lukács read a *total* philosophy (at once a conception of knowledge, politics and history: moreover, the category of totality is presented by Lukács as the *typical* category of the dialectical mode of thought, in opposition to the 'analytic' thought of abstract understanding, the genesis of which we are precisely able to understand by virtue of the theory of reification).

Though disavowed by its author after the revolutionary movements of the 1920s had ebbed and he was won over to the orthodox Marxism of the Third International, the Lukácsian theory of reification was still to have a considerable influence on twentieth-century philosophy. On the one hand, it lay at the origin of a good many of the *critical Marxisms* of the twentieth century (particularly of many of the favourite themes of the Frankfurt School, from Horkheimer and Adorno through to Habermas – themes relating to the critique of 'modern' or 'bourgeois' rationality and also to the critique of technology and science as projects of naturalization of history and the 'lifeworld'). On the other hand, in a series of posthumously published lectures, Lucien Goldmann was able to argue convincingly that direct references to *History and Class Consciousness* are to be found in the last paragraphs of Heidegger's (unfinished) *Being and Time* (1927) which deal with the question of historicity.²³ We ought therefore to regard this work in part as a response to the 'revolutionary historicism' expressed in the theory of reification and also, perhaps, as the beginnings of a reprise or recuperation by Heidegger of certain of Lukács's themes: in particular, in his theory of social anonymity (*das 'Man'*), which he sees as characteristic of 'inauthentic' life, and later in his theory of the 'enframing' of the world by utilitarian technology.

Lukács's theory is based on the idea that, in the world of commodity values, *subjects are themselves evaluated* and, as a result, *transformed into 'things'*, a point expressed by the term *Verdinglichung* (reification), which did not play this role in Marx. Marx had said that relations between commodities

(equivalence, price, exchange) were endowed with autonomy and that, as a result, they not only came to substitute for personal relations, but to represent those relations. Lukács, for his part, combines two different ideas. The first of these is the idea that market-based objectivity – that of economic categories and the operations to which they give rise – is *the model of all objectivity*, particularly of ‘scientific’ objectivity in the bourgeois world, which would enable us to understand why the quantitative sciences of nature (mechanics, physics) develop in the modern era as commodity relations become generalized. Those sciences project onto nature a distinction between the subjective and objective which has its origin in practices of exchange. The second is the idea that objectification – or rationalization as calculation and assessment of value – extends to *all human activities*, i.e. that the commodity becomes the model and the form of every social object.

Thus Lukács describes a paradox: market-based rationality extended to science is based on a separation of the objective and subjective sides of experience (which makes it possible to *subtract* the subjective factor – needs, desires, consciousness – from the world of natural objects and their mathematical laws); but this is merely a prelude to the incorporation of all subjectivity into objectivity (or to its *reduction* to the status of object, as is revealed by the notion of the ‘human sciences’ or by the techniques of management of the ‘human factor’ which have progressively been extended to the whole of society). In reality, this paradox expresses the extreme state of alienation humanity has reached in capitalism and this allows Lukács to argue, in a manner similar to Marx in *The German Ideology* (which he could not have read at this stage, since the text was not published until 1932), that revolutionary transformation is imminent. However, he formulates these arguments in a much more speculative (Hegelian and Schellingian) language and adds an element of political messianism: the proletariat, whose transformation into an *object* is total, is thus destined to become the *subject* of the revolutionary change, i.e. the ‘subject of history’ (a formula coined by Lukács). By abolishing its own alienation, it brings history to an end (or begins it afresh as a history of freedom), realizing the philosophical idea of human community *in practice*. Thus philosophy might be said to be realized in its

annihilation, a conception which repeats a very old pattern of mystical thinking, where the end of time is presented as a return to the creative void of the origins.

Exchange and obligation: the symbolic in Marx

Lukács’s extrapolation is both brilliant and important in its own right, but it has the drawback of totally *isolating* the description of fetishism from its theoretical context in *Capital*. Now, that context suggests a quite different type of interpretation, centred on questions of *law* and *money* and thus leading on to what we would today call the analysis of symbolic structures (a terminology Marx could not have used, but in which it is possible to make explicit what is at stake in his description of the double language ‘spoken’ by the world of commodities: the language of equivalence and measurement, given formal expression in the monetary sign, and the language of obligation and contract, formally expressed in law). This is the second philosophical legacy to which I have referred.

As part of that legacy, I shall mention two works here which are very different, both in their intentions and the conditions in which they were written. The first of these is the book *Law and Marxism: A General Theory* by the Soviet legal theorist, E. B. Pashukanis (who advocated the ‘withering away of the State’ and was executed during the Stalinist terror). This was published in 1924 and hence almost at the same time as Lukács’s work.²⁴ It is an extraordinarily interesting study because Pashukanis starts out from the Marxian analysis of the value-form and uses this to conduct an exactly symmetrical analysis of the constitution of the ‘legal subject’ in bourgeois-civil society. (For Pashukanis, who subscribes here to some extent to the tradition of natural right against juridical positivism, for which every legal norm is laid down by the State, the foundation of the juridical edifice is private law, which can precisely be regarded as having parallels with commodity circulation.) Just as individual commodities seem by nature to be bearers of value, so individuals engaged in exchange seem by nature to be bearers of will and subjectivity. Just as there is an economic fetishism of *things*, so there is a juridical fetishism of *persons*, and in reality

these are one and the same thing because the contract is the other side of the exchange and each is presupposed by the other. The world lived and perceived on the basis of the expression of value is, in reality, an economico-juridical world (Marx had pointed this out and it was, indeed, what was at stake in his critical re-reading of Hegel's *Philosophy of Right*, the effects of which are present throughout the text of *Capital*).

More recent analyses, particularly those of Jean-Joseph Goux, allow us to make this point more clearly.²⁵ The structure common to economic and to juridical (and moral) fetishism is *generalized equivalence*, which abstractly and equally subjects individuals to the form of a circulation (circulation of values, circulation of obligations). It supposes a *code* or a *measure* – both materialized and idealized – before which ‘particularity’, individual need, must yield. It is simply that, in the one case, individuality is exteriorized, becoming an object or value, whereas in the other it is interiorized, becoming a subject or will, and it is indeed this which enables the one to complement the other. This path does not lead to a theory of the subject of history, or of the transition from the economy (the world of private individuals) to the community of the future, as in Lukács and his successors. But one can find in Marx the bases for an analysis of the *modes of subjection* – economico-juridical fetishism being one of them – which is concerned with the relation between practices and a symbolic order constituted within history. Let us note here that such a structuralist-inspired reading (which is, of course, itself also an extrapolation) is in fact much closer than Lukács to the critique of the human essence as a generic quality ‘inherent’ in individuals, as formulated in the *Theses on Feuerbach*. On the other hand, it forces us to confront Marx at each step in his arguments with the findings of cultural anthropology, legal history and psychoanalysis.

The question of ‘human rights’

How is it that such different interpretations are possible starting out from the same text? The reply to this question involves our whole conception of the ‘critique of political economy’ in Marx and it would require, in particular, that we closely examine the

dual and, as philosophers would say, profoundly amphibological use Marx makes here of the term ‘*person*’. On the one hand, in their opposition to ‘things’ (commodities and money), persons are *real individuals* who are pre-existent and already engaged with others in a social activity of production; on the other, *with* these same things, they are functions of the exchange relation or, alternatively, as Marx has it, *juridical ‘masks’ which individuals have to assume* to be able themselves to be ‘bearers’ of commodity relations. This might be a rather technical and perhaps also wearisome discussion. But we can point right away to a major political issue which is at stake here – the question of the interpretation of human rights.

Marx’s position on this question clearly changed over time. As Bertrand Binoche has shown,²⁶ Marx’s ‘early’ writings (especially the *Critique of Hegel’s Doctrine of the State* and *On the Jewish Question* of 1843, which contains the famous exegesis of the French *Declaration of the Rights of Man and the Citizen*) combined the influence of Hegel (critique of the metaphysical abstraction of the ‘rights of man’, which were supposed to exist for all eternity and to be valid for every society), and that of Babeuf and the egalitarian communists (critique of the bourgeois character of the universal ‘Man’ referred to by the Declaration, all of whose rights came down to the inalienable character of property and excluded the duty of social solidarity). Hence, the rights of man, separated from those of the citizen, appear there as the speculative sundering of the human essence into the reality of inequalities and the fiction of community.

This analysis will undergo profound change, particularly as a result of Marx’s polemic with Proudhon and his critique of economic liberalism. There is an important development in the *Grundrisse*, in a passage where Marx identifies the equation of equality and freedom – the very heart of the ideology of the rights of man or ‘bourgeois democracy’ – with an idealized representation of the circulation of commodities and money, which constitutes its ‘real basis’.²⁷ The strict reciprocity of equality and freedom – unknown to ancient societies and denied by medieval ones, whilst moderns by contrast see in it the restoration of human nature – may be deduced from the conditions in which, in the market, each individual presents himself to the other as the bearer of the universal – i.e. of purchasing

power as such. He is a man 'without any particular quality', whatever his social status (king or ploughman) and personal wealth (banker or wage-earner).

Liberty, equality, property

This privileged link between the form of circulation and the 'system of freedom and equality' is indeed preserved in *Capital*. It is precisely the 'properties' (*Eigenschaften*) attributed to individuals by the law (beginning with the property of being a proprietor or *Eigentümer* – this founding play on words once again, that we have already seen in Stirner) which are required for the circulation of commodities as an infinite series of exchanges 'between equivalents' and universalized by bourgeois political discourse as expressions of man's essence. We may, therefore, suggest that the general recognition of these rights in a 'civil society' which is gradually absorbing the State, and is 'a very Eden of the innate rights of man' and 'the exclusive realm of Freedom, Equality, Property and Bentham'²⁸ (i.e. the principle of individual utility), corresponds to the universal extension of commodity exchanges (what the classics called 'the great republic of commerce').

What now concern Marx, however, are the contradictions to which the universality of this form gives rise. In the sphere of *production*, into which waged workers enter by contract, as free sellers of their labour-power, it immediately becomes an expression of a power relation: not just by the indeterminate series of acts of violence it masks, but by its constituting a means of *breaking down the collective* of producers, which is technically necessary to large-scale industry, into a forced juxtaposition of individualities separated one from another. As we might say, plagiarizing Rousseau, it is a matter of 'forcing individuals to be free'. At the same time, Marx describes the movement of capital as that of a 'vast automaton' independent of individuals, perpetually 'soaking up' surplus-labour for its own self-valorization, an automaton of which the capitalists are merely the 'conscious' organs. The basic reference of the rights of man to the free will of individuals is, then, cancelled out, exactly as the social usefulness of each particular labour was

annulled in the automaton. Just as value 'in itself' was projected into the body of money, so activity, productivity, physical and mental powers are projected into this new Leviathan that is social capital to which, in quasi-'theological' fashion, they seem to belong 'by nature', since individuals only seem to possess these things *by virtue of that social capital*.²⁹

However, the emphasis put on these contradictions necessarily has its impact on the meaning of 'human rights', since these latter can now be seen *both* as the language by which exploitation is masked, *and* that in which the class struggle of the exploited finds expression: rather than a truth or an illusion, then, we are dealing here with the *object of a struggle*. And indeed, in the chapter on 'The Working Day', where the first episodes in 'the civil war between the capitalist class and the working class' are related, *Capital* ironizes on the uselessness of the 'pompous catalogue of the "inalienable rights of man"', finding preferable 'the modest Magna Carta of the legally limited working day' which allows the workers 'as a class' to 'compel the passing of a law, an all-powerful social barrier by which they can be prevented from selling themselves' to capital.³⁰ But in developing its revolutionary perspectives for superseding capitalism, *Capital* does not end on the negation of individual freedom and equality (what people were beginning to refer to at the time as collectivism), but on the 'negation of the negation' or, in other words, on 'individual property on the basis of the achievements of the capitalist era' (i.e. the socialization of the means of production).³¹

From the idol to the fetish

Can we now arrive at an overall assessment of this development in which, following Marx's own oscillations, we have been borne along from ideology to fetishism and the various possible ways of interpreting it? Naturally, any comparison must take into account both the elements common to the two arguments and the distance separating them: on the one hand, a provisional text which was never published (even if we find echoes of its formulations throughout Marx's work); on the other, an argument which Marx worked over at length and placed at a strategic

point in his 'critique of political economy'. Between the two, he completely recast his 'scientific' project, changing its terrain, if not its objective, and rectified his view of the prospects for social revolution, moving from the idea of its imminence to more long-term conceptions.

What the theory of ideology and that of fetishism clearly have in common is the fact that they attempt to make a connection between, on the one hand, the condition of *individuals* isolated from one another by the universal extension of the division of labour and by competition, and, on the other, the constitution and content of the *abstractions* (or *generalities* or *universals*) which are 'dominant' in the bourgeois era. And also the fact that they seek to analyse the internal contradiction which develops with capitalism between the practical individuality of individuals (the wide range of their social relations, the scope which modern technology gives them to engage in activities and deploy their specific 'capacities') and the theoretical universality of the notions of labour, value, property and person (which tends to reduce all individuals to the condition of interchangeable representatives of one and the same species or 'essence'). Lastly, there is in each case the use of a great logical schema, which Marx takes from Hegel and Feuerbach and constantly reworks, but never actually abandons: the schema of *alienation*.

Alienation means the forgetting of the real origin of ideas or generalities, but it also means inversion of the 'real' relationship between individuality and community. The *splitting up* of the real community of individuals is followed by a *projection* or transposition of the social relation onto an external 'thing', a third term. Only, in the one case, that thing is an 'idol', an abstract representation which seems to exist all on its own in the ethereal realm of ideas (Freedom, Justice, Humanity, Law), whereas in the other it is a 'fetish', a material thing which seems to belong to the earth, to nature, while exerting an irresistible power over individuals (the commodity and, above all, money).

But this difference entails some remarkable consequences, which develop both within Marx's writings and in those of his successors (Marxist and non-Marxist alike). Let us summarize them schematically by saying that what is sketched out in *The German Ideology* is a theory of the constitution of *power*, whereas what is described in *Capital*, by way of its definition of

fetishism, is a mechanism of *subjection*. Obviously, these two problems cannot be treated as totally independent, but they attract our attention to distinct social processes and give a different slant to our reflection on liberation.

The alternative they represent may be expounded with regard to a whole series of different themes. Let us take the reference to labour and production, for example. In treating this, the ideology theory puts the emphasis on the denegation or forgetting of the material conditions of production and the constraints imposed by them. In the ideological domain, all production is denied or is sublimated and becomes free 'creation'. This is why thinking on the division between manual and mental labour – or intellectual difference – is central here. We have seen that it allowed Marx to explain the mechanism by which class ideological domination is reproduced and legitimated. For the theory of fetishism, by contrast, the accent is on the way all production is subordinated to the reproduction of exchange-value. What becomes central is the form of commodity circulation and the direct correspondence established there between economic and juridical notions, the egalitarian form of exchange and that of the contract, the 'freedom' to buy and sell and the personal 'freedom' of individuals.

Or, again, we might show that the phenomena of alienation with which we have dealt here are developed in opposing ways: on the one side, they are of the order of belief and have to do with the 'idealism' of individuals (with the transcendent values to which they subscribe: God, the Nation, the People, or even the Revolution); on the other, they are of the order of perception and have to do with the realism or 'utilitarianism' of individuals (with the manifest realities of daily life: utility, the price of things, the rules of 'normal' behaviour). This in itself would not be without its political consequences, as we know that politics (including revolutionary politics) is both a question of ideals and a question of habits.

The state or the market

This difference brings us, finally, to the major opposition which encapsulates all the preceding ones. The theory of ideology is

fundamentally a *theory of the State* (by which we mean the mode of domination inherent in the State), whereas that of fetishism is fundamentally a *theory of the market* (the mode of subjection or constitution of the 'world' of subjects and objects inherent in the organization of society as market and its domination by market forces). This difference can no doubt be explained by the moments at which Marx developed the two theories, not to mention the different places where he did so (Paris and London, the capital of politics and the capital of business), and the different idea he had at each point of the conditions and objectives of the revolutionary struggle. From the idea of overthrowing a bourgeois domination which has entered into contradiction with the development of civil society, we have moved to the idea of the resolution of a contradiction inherent in the mode of *socialization* produced by capitalism.

The difference is also to be explained – though the two things are obviously linked – by the main sources of his thinking, which are also the objects of his criticism. The theory of fetishism was developed in counterpoint to the critique of political economy, because Marx found in Smith and, more particularly, in Ricardo an 'anatomy' of value based entirely on the quantification of labour and the 'liberal' notion of an automatic regulation of the market by the play of individual exchanges. On the other hand, if he theorized ideology as a function of the problem of the State, this was because Hegel, as we have seen, had provided a striking definition of the *Rechtstaat* as a hegemony exercised over society.

So we can now understand the striking fact that the contemporary theorists who all owe something essential to the Marxian notion of ideology – particularly to its conception of the *conditions of production* of ideology or ideas – inevitably run up against questions that are Hegelian in origin: the 'organic intellectuals' (Gramsci), the 'ideological state apparatuses' (Althusser), the '*noblesse d'État*'* and 'symbolic violence' (Bourdieu). But even Engels, when he rediscovered the concept of ideology in 1888 (in *Ludwig Feuerbach and the End of Classical German Philosophy*), already proposed to demonstrate what makes the

* A reference to those 'aristocrats' of the French system educated in its '*grandes écoles*'. See Bourdieu, *La noblesse d'état: grandes écoles et esprit de corps*, Minuit, Paris, 1989. [Trans.]

State the 'first ideological power' and to uncover the law of historical succession of the 'world-views' or forms of the dominant ideology which confer their (religious or juridical) legitimacy on class-based states. By contrast, it is within the legacy of the analysis of fetishism that one must look both for the phenomenologies of 'everyday life' governed by the logic of the commodity or by the symbolics of value (the Frankfurt School, Henri Lefebvre, Guy Debord, Agnes Heller), and for analyses of the social imaginary structured by the 'language' of money and the law (Maurice Godelier, Jean-Joseph Goux, or Castoriadis, who substitutes institutions for structures, or even Baudrillard, who, as it were, *stands Marx on his head*, by studying a 'fetishism of use value' rather than a 'fetishism of exchange value').

Time and Progress: Another Philosophy of History?

There is a danger that the preceding discussions will have given the impression that, ultimately, philosophy in Marx could never be said to be of anything but *preliminary* significance. Apart from the proclamation of an immediate exit from philosophy, what, in fact, could we be said to find there? The critique of ideology and the analysis of fetishism. Now, the first of these is the assumption of a return to the things themselves, a move back beyond the abstract consciousness which has been built upon the origins of that consciousness in the division of labour being forgotten; whilst the second is the other side of the critique of political economy, suspending the appearance of objectivity of commodity forms to get back to their social constitution and draw out the 'substance' of value: 'living labour'.

Does this mean that, from Marx's point of view, all there is to philosophy is the critique of sociological, economic and political reason (or unreason)? This is clearly not his project. The critique of ideology or of fetishism are already a part of knowledge. They are a moment in the recognition of the *historicity of social relations* (and, consequently – if we remember the programmatic equation set out in the sixth of the *Theses on Feuerbach* – of the historicity of the 'human essence'). It is the import of those critiques that the division of labour, the development of the productive forces, and the class struggle manifest themselves as their own opposites. The theoretical consciousness autonomized in ideology, and the spontaneous representation of subjects and objects induced by the circulation of commodities,

have the same general form: each constructs the fiction of a 'nature', denies historical time, its own dependence on transitory conditions, or at least *extracts itself from historical time* – by confining that time to the past, for example. As Marx writes in *The Poverty of Philosophy* (1847)

Economists have a singular method of procedure. There are only two kinds of institutions for them, the artificial and the natural. The institutions of feudalism are artificial institutions, those of the bourgeoisie natural. In this they resemble the theologians, who likewise establish two kinds of religion. Every religion which is not theirs is an invention of men, while their own is an emanation from God. When the economists say that present-day relations – the relations of bourgeois production – are natural, they imply that these are the relations in which wealth is created and productive forces developed in conformity with the laws of nature. These relations therefore are themselves natural laws independent of the influence of time. They are eternal laws which must always govern society. Thus there has been history, but there is no longer any.¹

The critical moment in Marx's work relates, then, to an opposition between nature – or the 'metaphysical' point of view – and history (Gramsci would later speak of 'absolute historicism'). And Marx's philosophy, whether or not it is in a finished form, sets itself the task of thinking the materiality of time. But this question, as we have also seen, cannot be dissociated from something which Marx sets out again and again to demonstrate: capitalism and 'bourgeois/civil society' bear within them the necessity of communism. They are, as Leibniz would have said, 'heavy with futurity'. And that futurity is *tomorrow*. To all appearances, time is just another name for progress, unless it is its formal condition of possibility. It is this question which, in conclusion, we have to examine.

The negation of the negation

The reader will recall the passage from the Preface to *A Contribution to the Critique of Political Economy* (1859):

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 . . . At a certain stage of development, the material productive forces of society come into conflict . . . 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 an era of social revolution. The changes in the economic foundation lead sooner or later to the transformation of the whole immense superstructure . . . No social order is ever destroyed before all the productive forces for which it is sufficient have been developed, and new superior relations of production never replace older ones before the material conditions for their existence have matured within the framework of the old society. Mankind thus inevitably sets itself only such tasks as it is able to solve, since closer examination will always show that the problem itself arises only when the material conditions for its solution are already present or at least in the course of formation. In broad outline, the Asiatic, ancient, feudal and modern bourgeois modes of production may be designated as epochs marking progress in the economic development of society . . .²

Let us look again at some striking formulations in *Capital* (1867):

the germ of the education of the future is present in the factory system; this education will, in the case of every child over a given age, combine productive labour with instruction and gymnastics, not only as one of the methods of adding to the efficiency of production, but as the only method of producing fully developed human beings . . . Modern industry never views or treats the existing form of a production process as the definitive one. Its technical basis is therefore revolutionary, whereas all earlier modes of production were essentially conservative . . . [O]n the other hand, in its capitalist form it reproduces the old division of labour with its ossified particularities. We have seen how this absolute contradiction . . . bursts forth without restraint in the ceaseless human sacrifices required from the working class, in the reckless squandering of labour-powers, and in the devastating effects of social anarchy. This is the negative side. But if, at present, variation of labour imposes itself . . . with the blindly destructive action of a natural law that meets with obstacles everywhere, large-scale industry . . . makes the [replacement of this monstrosity] . . . [by the absolute availability of] the worker for the maximum number of different kinds of labour into a question of life and death . . . [T]he partially developed individual, who is merely the bearer of one specialized social function, must be replaced by the totally developed individual, for whom the different social functions are different modes of activity he takes up in turn . . . [T]here can be no doubt that, with the inevitable conquest of

political power by the working class, technological education, both theoretical and practical, will take its proper place in the schools of the workers. There is also no doubt that those revolutionary ferments whose goal is the abolition of the old division of labour stand in diametrical contradiction with the capitalist form of production, and the economic situation of the workers which corresponds to that form. However, the development of the contradictions of a given historical form of production is the only historical way in which it can be dissolved and then reconstructed on a new basis.³

In conclusion, let us quote the following passages, to which we have already referred above, which come towards the end of Volume 1:

As soon as this metamorphosis has sufficiently decomposed the old society throughout its depth and breadth, as soon as the workers have been turned into proletarians, and their means of labour into capital, as soon as the capitalist mode of production stands on its own feet, the further socialization of labour and the further transformation of the soil and other means of production into socially exploited and therefore communal means of production takes on a new form. What is now to be expropriated is not the self-employed worker, but the capitalist who exploits a large number of workers. This expropriation is accomplished through the action of immanent laws of capitalist production itself, through the centralization of capitals . . . Along with the constant decrease in the number of capitalist magnates, who usurp and monopolize all the advantages of this process of transformation, the mass of misery, oppression, slavery, degradation and exploitation grows; but with this there also grows the revolt of the working class, a class constantly increasing in numbers, and trained, united and organized by the very mechanism of the capitalist process of production. The monopoly of capital becomes a fetter upon the mode of production which has flourished alongside and under it. The centralization of the means of production and the socialization of labour reach a point at which they become incompatible with their capitalist integument. This integument is burst asunder. The knell of capitalist private property sounds. The expropriators are expropriated . . . capitalist production begets, with the inexorability of a natural process, its own negation. This is the negation of the negation.⁴

The ambiguity of the dialectic

How, can we doubt, then, that Marx was, in the nineteenth century, between the time of Saint-Simon and the age of Jules

Ferry, a typical representative of the idea (or ideology) of *progress*? 'There are few if any intellectual oddities in our time more pronounced than that among Western Marxist scholars who seek to disengage Marx from the evolutionary-progressivist tradition in the nineteenth century,' writes Robert Nisbet in his *History of the Idea of Progress*.⁵ Only, for Marx, progress is neither modernity nor liberalism nor, even less, is it capitalism. Or, rather, 'dialectically', it is capitalism insofar as capitalism makes socialism inevitable and, conversely, socialism insofar as socialism resolves the contradictions of capitalism.

No doubt this is one of the causes of the philosophical discredit into which the 'materialist conception of history', to which the name of Marx is attached, has fallen today. For we are currently experiencing the decay or '*decadence*' of the *idea of progress*, to use an expression of Georges Canguilhem's.⁶ In this connection, the notion of dialectic, in its Hegelian, Marxian or post-Engelsian versions (as, respectively, the dialectic of 'spirit', the dialectic of 'modes of production' and 'social formations', and the 'dialectics of nature') occupies a fundamentally ambivalent position. It is regarded by some as an alternative to the positivism of progress. Against the schema of a continuous, uniformly ascending progression ('progress is the development of order', said Auguste Comte, who acknowledged his own debt to the Enlightenment, and particularly to Condorcet), it ranges the representation of crises, of 'irreconcilable' conflicts, and of the 'role of violence in history'. From another angle, however, it may be described as the achieved realization of the ideology of progress (of its irresistible *potency*), since it might be seen as aiming to bring all this 'negativity' into a higher synthesis, to endow it with meaning and place it, 'in the last instance', in the service of what it seemed to contradict.

The aim of this chapter is to show that things are not, however, so simple as a mere reversal of value judgements might lead us to suppose. This is the case with regard to Marx's own writings (and it is not his opinions, but his arguments and research which are important here). Things are also not so simple because of the multiplicity of questions covered by the much too cursory notion of a 'paradigm' of progress. Rather than reading in Marx the *illustration* (one illustration among others) of a general idea, the interesting thing is to use him to

reveal, to demonstrate experimentally, the problems inherent in such an idea.

The Marxist ideologies of progress

But, first, we must fully assess the place occupied by Marxism as theory and as mass movement or 'faith' in the social history of the idea of progress. If, until very recently, we have witnessed not only more or less influential doctrines – and who is to say they do not still exist? – but something like a collective 'myth' of progress, we owe this fact in very large part to Marxism. It is, above all, Marxism which has perpetuated the idea that 'those at the bottom' play an *active* role in history, by propelling themselves forward and propelling it onwards and 'upwards'. To the extent that the idea of progress includes not just a hope but a prior certainty, this conception is quite indispensable to it, and the history of the twentieth century would be entirely incomprehensible if it were left out of account. At least since the ordeal of the Great War, civilizations 'have known that they are mortal', as Valéry put it, and the idea of spontaneous progress has come to seem thoroughly improbable... Thus, only the idea that it is achieved by the masses aspiring to their own liberation, whether by revolution or reform, can lend credence to the notion of progress. This has been the role played by Marxism, and we should not be surprised that, at the same time, this preeminence of the conception of progress has also constantly been reinforced within it.

It is right to speak here of Marxism and not simply socialism. The thesis of social progress (of its inevitability, its positive import) is, admittedly, a component of the socialist tradition as a whole, both in its 'utopian' and 'scientific' strains, as can be seen in the writings of Saint-Simon, Proudhon and Henry George (*Progress and Poverty* was published in 1879). But it was Marxism which, *de facto*, proposed a dialectical version of progress (in some ways *augmenting* the content of the idea) and assured it of wide circulation among the great social and political movements of the different European and extra-European 'worlds'.

Benjamin

Walter Benjamin, who was born in Berlin in 1892 and died at Port-Bou in 1940 (where he committed suicide rather than be handed over to the Gestapo by Franco's police), is often mistakenly viewed as a representative of the Frankfurt School (Adorno, Horkheimer, the early Marcuse and, in more recent times, Habermas), of which he was merely a reticent, little understood 'fellow traveller'. In his youth, he was strongly influenced by Georges Sorel, the author of *Reflections on Violence* (1906), and by Kafka. He was also a close friend of the theorist and historian of Jewish mysticism, Gershom Scholem. He was later converted to Communism by his companion Asja Lacin, a Lithuanian revolutionary, and was for some years a close friend of Bertolt Brecht, with whom he shared projects for a politically militant literature. His doctoral thesis on *The Concept of Art Criticism in German Romanticism* (1919) and his later work on *The Origin of German Tragic Drama* (1928; trans. John Osborne, New Left Books, London, 1977) failed to win him a university teaching post and he was condemned to a life of insecurity made even worse by the Nazi seizure of power. The bulk of his writings, which are made up of fragments and essays (several of them devoted to the writer who inspired his mature work: see *Charles Baudelaire: A Lyric Poet in the Era of High Capitalism*, trans. Harry Zohn, New Left Books, London, 1973), were intended to form part of a work of history, philosophy and aesthetics on the 'Parisian arcades' within the architecture of the Second Empire, in which he was to analyse the combination of rationality and the fantastic which made up modern 'everyday life' (the so-called *Passagenarbeit*, the general plan of which is sketched in 'Paris – the Capital of the Nineteenth Century', *Charles Baudelaire...*, pp. 155–76; cf. Christine Buci-Glucksmann, *Baroque Reason: The Aesthetics of Modernity*, Sage, London, 1994). After his distancing from the Soviet Union, and in the tragic context of Nazism, his critique of ideologies of progress became oriented – particularly in his 'Theses on the Philosophy of History' of 1940 (published in *Illuminations*, trans. Harry Zohn, Fontana, London, 1973) – towards a reflection, both political and religious in character, on the *Jetztzeit*, the moment of rupture within history in which destruction and redemption confront one another (cf. Michael Löwy, *Redemption and Utopia*, chapter 6 and Conclusion).

Though some years separated them, in their different ways both Gramsci and Walter Benjamin criticized Marxism unmercifully from within for having done just this. In his *Prison Notebooks*, Gramsci described the 'economism' of the Second and Third Internationals as a fatalism by which the workers and their organizations had forged a 'subaltern' vision of the world for themselves, a vision in which emancipation was the inevitable consequence of technical development. And Benjamin, in his last text, the *Theses on the Philosophy of*

History of 1940, speaks of a Marxist 'historicism' which might be described as the (by definition, vain) attempt to adopt for the oppressed the continuous, cumulative vision characteristic of the dominant or the 'victors', who are sure they are 'moving with the current'.⁷ This description (reminiscent, to some extent, of Nietzschean formulations) indisputably hits the mark.

Let us recall the three great instantiations of Marxist 'progressivism'. The first is the ideology of German Social Democracy and, more generally, of the Second International. The internal divergences within that ideology – on the one hand, epistemological (it was split from the outset between a naturalistic conception, in which Marx's teachings were combined with those of Darwin, and an ethical conception, in which Marx was re-read through Kantian spectacles); on the other, political (the opposition between revisionism – Bernstein and Jaurès – and orthodoxy – Kautsky, Plekhanov and Labriola) – only bring out the more strongly the consensus on the essential point: certainty as to the direction in which history is moving.

The second is the ideology of Soviet Communism and 'real socialism'. Dubbed by Althusser a 'posthumous revenge of the Second International',⁸ this also involves its own debates: Stalinist economic determinism; post-Stalinist Marxism gradually shifting towards the management of the status quo and torn between what were at times the two antagonistic spheres of interest of the 'socialist camp' and the 'international Communist movement'. The most interesting thing here would be to analyse the extreme tension running through this ideology (which to a large degree doubtless explains its attraction), between a project of resistance to capitalist modernization (if not indeed of a *return* to the communal modes of life that modernization destroys), and a project of *ultra-modernity*, or of the supersession of modernity by a 'leap forward' into the future of humanity (not just 'electrification plus soviets', as Lenin's slogan of 1920 had it, but the utopia of the 'new man' and the exploration of the cosmos).

Finally, there is the ideology of *socialist development*, both as elaborated in the Third World and as projected onto it from outside after decolonization. The important point here is that there is a Marxist and a non-Marxist variant of the idea of development. But the boundaries between the two are not fixed

and there is rather a constant process of intellectual and political emulation between them. It was by becoming, in the twentieth century, a developmental project for the 'periphery' of the capitalist world economy (from China to Cuba by way of Algeria or Mozambique), once again with its reformist and revolutionary variants, its hopes and its catastrophes, that Marxism best revealed the depth of the tie which binds it to the common core of the progressivist economism developed in the thinking of the Enlightenment, from Turgot and Adam Smith to Saint-Simon. But it is equally indisputable that, without the semi-real, semi-imaginary challenge represented by the 'Marxist solution', the theories of planning and the State applied to the Third World, would not be presented as alternative theories of *social* development. We can see this very well now that monetarist liberalism and its counterpart, 'humanitarian interference', have taken complete command.

It was important to recall this history, albeit very allusively, because it leads us to temper how we view the critique of progress, or at least not to accept all the apparently self-evident aspects of that critique without some caution. The fact that the most recent of all the great versions of Marxist progressivism was an ideology of escape from underdevelopment which was statist, rationalist and populist, should deter us from flippantly declaring 'the end of the illusions of progress' *from Europe*, or, more generally, from the 'metropolitan heartland' (or the 'North'). As though it were once again up to us to determine where, when and by whom rationality, productivity and prosperity are to be sought. The functions performed in the history of the labour movement by the image of the forward march of humanity, and by the hope of one day seeing individual fulfilment and collective salvation coincide, are also topics still awaiting a detailed analysis.⁹

The wholeness of history

The critique of progress, which is currently being rendered a commonplace by the 'postmodern' philosophies,¹⁰ harbours yet other potential pitfalls. Most often, it presents itself in a language which is itself historicist: as critique of a dominant

representation, the replacement of one 'paradigm' by another. Now, these undifferentiated notions are extremely dubious. Can there really be said to have been *a notion* or *a paradigm* of progress which held sway from the philosophy of the Enlightenment through to socialism and Marxism? Nothing is less certain. No discussion on this point could afford to ignore an analysis of the components of the idea of progress, components which do not combine automatically.

The representations of progress which form at the end of the eighteenth century present themselves primarily as theories (or, rather, ideas) of the wholeness of history, which is conceived on the lines of a spatio-temporal curve. This gives rise to various different possibilities. The wholeness of history can be grasped in the distinctions drawn between its 'stages' and the 'logic' of their succession. Or, alternatively, it can be comprehended in terms of the decisive character of a privileged moment (crisis, revolution, the overthrow of a regime) affecting the totality of social relations or the fate of humanity. Similarly, it can be conceived as an indefinite process, with only its general orientation being laid down (in a famous phrase, Bernstein, the father of revisionism, said: 'the ultimate aim of socialism is nothing, but the movement is everything').¹¹ Or it can, on the other hand, be defined as the process which leads to an end point: a 'stationary state' of homogeneity or equilibrium (as in Cournot or John Stuart Mill), or even the 'ultra-imperialism' of Kautsky – who goes much further in this than Hegel, though all these conservatives, liberals and socialists share the same image of the final resolution of tensions and inequalities.

Above all, however, these various ways of representing history as a teleology presuppose the combination of two theses which are independent of one another. The one posits the *irreversibility* and linearity of time. Hence the rejection (and the presentation as mythical or metaphorical) of any idea of a cyclical or random cosmic time or political history. Let us note immediately that the direction of this irreversibility is not necessarily upward: whether or not they draw on physical models of the 'dissipation of energy', a large number of late-nineteenth-century theorists of history counterpose the idea of decadence to that of progress, while persisting with this same presupposition of irreversibility (Gobineau's *Essay on the Inequality of Human Races* springs

to mind here, the first part of which was published in 1853 and which was later invoked to support a schema of history based on 'racial struggle' in opposition to a model based on 'class struggle'). To the idea of irreversibility we must also add another: that of technical or moral *improvement* (or an improvement combining the two). This does not necessarily mean movement from less to more, or from worse to better, but implies a positive overall balance of advantages and disadvantages – what we should today describe as an *optimum* (think of the way the Leibnizian scheme of the 'best of all possible worlds' re-emerges in the 'progressive' tradition of liberalism: from Bentham, with his definition of utility as the greatest happiness of the greatest number of individuals, to Rawls today with his 'difference principle', which states that only those inequalities which improve the situation of the most deprived are just).¹²

Finally, a representation of history as progress may reinforce the idea of change with that of a *constantly increasing capacity* to change and it is here, particularly, that the emphasis placed on education may come to be linked internally with the idea of progress. We then come to a fourth component of classical theories of progress which is, in a sense, the most important politically, but which is also philosophically the most problematic: the idea that the transformation is a transformation of *one-self*, a *self-transformation* or, more precisely, a *self-engendering* in which the autonomy of subjects is realized.¹³ Even the mastery of natural forces and the conquest of the planet's resources must be conceived, in the last analysis, in this perspective. As Marx said in the *1844 Manuscripts*, industry and the sciences of nature are 'the *open* book of the essential powers of man'.¹⁴ As a result, we see re-emerging here the problem of *praxis*, but in this case what is being conceptualized is not an individual, but a collective transformation. This is, by definition, a secular idea, or at least one contrary to any representation of the course of history as the product of a divine will. But it is not necessarily incompatible with various transformations of the theological schemas of the 'plan' or 'economy' of nature. The difficulty is to think this in an immanent way, i.e. without bringing in any force or principle external to the process itself.

A theory of evolution?

The theorists of the nineteenth century were in search of 'laws' of historical change or transition, so as to situate modern society between the *past*, which the (industrial, political and even religious) 'revolutions' had relegated to a prehistory of modernity, and the more or less immediate *future*, which could be divined from the instability and tensions of the present. The immense majority of them resolved this problem by adopting evolutionist schemas. To put matters once again in Canguilhem's terminology, evolutionism was the 'scientific ideology' par excellence of the nineteenth century, i.e. a *site of exchange* between scientific research programmes and the theoretical and social imaginary (the 'unconscious need for direct access to the totality').¹⁵ In this sense, it is practically impossible not to be an evolutionist in the nineteenth century, unless one were, once again, to propose a theological alternative to science. Even Nietzsche, who wrote (in *The Anti-Christ*, 1888) that "Progress" is merely a modern idea, that is to say a false idea,¹⁶ by no means wholly avoids it!

But this also means that evolutionism is the intellectual element in which the clash between conformisms and attacks on the established order occurs. To regard all evolutionisms as being of the same kind is to condemn oneself to see the history of ideas merely as a vast 'night in which all cows are black', as Hegel put it. The important thing is what distinguishes them one from another, the points of heresy around which their oppositions are organized. The *class struggle* is not the *race struggle*, just as the dialectics of Hegel, Fourier or Marx are not the Spencerian law of increasing 'differentiation' (evolution from the simple to the complex), or the law of the 'recapitulation' of evolution in the development of individuals imposed by Haeckel on all the anthropological disciplines inspired by biological evolutionism.

We can now return to Marx. The specific object to which he applied evolutionary schemas was the history of 'social formations', which he regarded as determined by their 'modes of production'. As we have seen above, there is in his writings a progressive *line of evolution* of modes of production. This classifies all societies in terms of an intrinsic criterion: *socialization*,

i.e. the capacity for individuals collectively to control their own conditions of existence. And that line is a single one, which means not only that it allows us to determine advances and lags (either *between* societies, or in the course of their political history), but it establishes a necessary relation between the 'beginnings' and the 'end' of history (even if that end, communism, is conceived as the beginning of another history).

These conceptions have become familiar the world over, and Marx himself found some striking formulations to express them. It might even be said that the Marxist tradition has never done anything more than provide a gloss on these formulations, some of which I have mentioned above. Comparing them, we can clearly see that the idea of progressive evolution in Marx is inseparable from a thesis on the rationality of history or, if one prefers, the intelligibility of its forms, tendencies and conjunctures.

A schema of causality (dialectic I)

This thesis is initially expressed, as the text of the Preface to the *Contribution to the Critique of Political Economy* indicates, in the form of a schema of historical causality. Being itself not an item of knowledge, but a programme of investigation and explanation, it is stated in qualitative, if not indeed metaphorical, terms: 'base' and 'superstructure', 'productive forces' and 'relations of production', 'material life' and 'consciousness' are not realities in themselves, but categories *awaiting* concrete application. Some arise directly out of history and political economy, whereas others are imported from the philosophical tradition. This schema of causality is of comparable importance to other theoretical innovations in the explanation of reality: for example, the Aristotelian schema of the 'four causes'; or the Newtonian schema of force of attraction, matter ('force of inertia') and void; or the Darwinian schema of individual variation and 'natural selection'; or the Freudian schema of the agencies of the 'psychical apparatus'.

In the form in which we encounter it here, we have to admit that there is within this schema an almost unbearable tension, since it both entirely *subordinates* the historical process to a pre-

existent teleology and yet *asserts* that the motor of transformation is nothing other than the 'scientifically observable' contradictions of material life.¹⁷ It is thus no wonder that it has constantly been subjected to divergent interpretations and been made the object of perennial recastings in the history of 'historical materialism'.

Determination in the last instance

The text of the Preface to *A Contribution to the Critique of Political Economy* of 1859 has long been seen as the canonical exposition of the 'materialist conception of history', even though it is, quite explicitly, only a programme. For better or worse, Marxists have devoted thousands of pages to it. The expression, 'determination in the last instance', which it has become customary to seek to clarify on the basis of these pages, is not employed there as such. It was coined later by Engels: 'the determining element in history is, *in the last instance*, the production and reproduction of real life . . . Hence if somebody twists this into saying that the economic element is the *only* determining one, he transforms that proposition into a meaningless, abstract, absurd phrase' (letter to Bloch, 21 September 1890, in Marx and Engels, *Selected Correspondence*, Progress Publishers, Moscow, 1975; translation modified). Comparison of these two texts and the commentaries to which they have given rise does, however, suggest that Engels's formulation still *lacks* an element of clear demarcation from economism, even technologism, since these 'deviations' have recurred continually in the application of the Marxian schema of the determination of the different levels or instances of social practice. This clearly has to do with the fact that, no matter how subtle the dialecticization or reciprocal action which it licenses between the whole society ('social formation') and the mode of production, or the 'economic base' and the 'politico-ideological superstructure', or the productive forces and forms of property, 'determination in the last instance' ultimately only brings out the more absolutely the teleology of historical development. It is, then, easy to understand why, at the same time as he wrote 'the lonely hour of the "last instance" never comes' ('Contradiction and Overdetermination', in *For Marx*, p. 113), Althusser proposed to substitute for the notions of reciprocal action and retroaction of the superstructures on the base, that of 'overdetermination', which expresses the irreducible complexity of the 'social whole' posited by the materialist dialectic.

We shall see that the arguments of *Capital* add, if not correctives, then at least a greater degree of complexity to this general schema. In fact, those arguments set out the 'process' or 'development' of social relations at *three levels* of diminishing generality.

First of all, as in the previous text, we find here the line of progress of the successive modes of production (Asiatic, slave, feudal, capitalist and communist), which provides a principle of intelligibility for the succession of concrete social formations. This level is the most openly *finalistic*: it derives, modified only by a 'materialist inversion', from the way Hegel and other philosophers of history organized the epochs of universal history ('oriental despotism' becomes the 'Asiatic mode of production', the 'ancient world' becomes the 'slave mode . . .' etc.). But it is also the most *deterministic*: not only in its linearity, but in the way it grounds the irreversible time of history in a law of the uninterrupted development of the productivity of human labour. Let us note, however, that this is an overall determination and, in its detailed working-out, obstacles to that development, stagnation and even reversion to an earlier stage are not excluded.

At this level, the class struggle figures not so much as the principle of explanation, but more as the overall outcome. Each mode of production has its corresponding forms of property, its mode of development of the productive forces, and its relations between State and economy, and *therefore* a certain form of the class struggle. That struggle is not of the same order when it is between lords and their serfs or *métayers* as when it is between capitalists and their workers.¹⁸ The end or supersession of the class struggle in a communist society might ultimately be seen as just one consequence of this evolution. We come back here to the comparative table evoked in the analysis of commodity fetishism, but this time it is simply ordered in time.

The instance of the class struggle

Now, in *Capital*, Marx sought to focus on a much more specific object. And not without reason, since that object brought the necessity of revolution into play. We are speaking, of course, of the 'contradiction' between the relations of production and the development of the productive forces and the form that contradiction assumes in capitalism. It is important to read the texts very carefully here. The formulations which have been sanctioned by Marxist orthodoxy, following the lead of Engels in *Anti-Dühring* (but also of Marx himself in *The Poverty of Philosophy* and the *Communist Manifesto*), which

were greatly influenced by the Saint-Simonian tradition, must be abandoned. The point is clearly not to counterpose the inherently progressive mobility of the productive forces to the fixity of bourgeois property (in the way that Keynes or Schumpeter were later to counterpose the entrepreneur or industrialist to the financial speculator). What we have here is a growing contradiction between *two tendencies*: the socialization of production (concentration, rationalization, universalization of technology) and the trend towards the fragmentation of labour-power, towards super-exploitation, and insecurity for the working class. The class struggle intervenes crucially, then, as the agency which effects the necessary process of resolution of the contradiction. Only a struggle organized on the basis of the 'poverty', 'oppression' and 'anger' of the proletarians can 'expropriate the expropriators' and lead to the 'negation of the negation', i.e. the reappropriation of their own forces absorbed in the constant movement of the valorization of capital.

This point is all the more important as Marx speaks here of *necessity* and even of ineluctable necessity. It is quite evident that this is not the sort of necessity which might be imposed from outside on the working class, but a necessity constituted in its own activity or practice of liberation. The political character of the process is underlined by the implicit use of the model of the French Revolution – with the minor difference that the domination to be 'swept away' here is not that of monarchic power, but the domination of capital in the organization of social production. Although it oppresses it, capital is not an 'outsider' to its people. Indeed, capital produces 'its own gravediggers': an illuminating, but problematic, analogy.

Finally, Marx devotes numerous analyses to a *third* level of development, which is even more specific: the transformation of the mode of production itself or, to put it in other terms, the process of accumulation. In the central chapters of *Capital* devoted to the 'production of absolute and relative surplus-value', to the struggle over the working day and to the various stages of the industrial revolution (manufacture, machinofacture, large-scale industry), it is not the mere quantitative result which interests him – the increasing capitalization of money and means of production – but the development of the workers' skills, factory legislation, the antagonism between

wage-earners and capitalist management, the ratio of employed workers to unemployed (and hence the competition between potential workers). The class struggle intervenes here in an even more specific way *on both sides at once*: on the side of the capitalists, all of whose 'methods for producing surplus-value' are methods of exerting pressure on 'necessary labour' and the degree of autonomy enjoyed by the workers; and on the side of the proletarians whose resistance to exploitation leads capital endlessly to seek new methods. With the precise result that the class struggle itself becomes a factor of accumulation, as can be seen from the way in which the limitation of the working day indirectly leads to 'scientific' methods of labour organization and technological innovation, or to what Marx terms the transition from 'absolute' to 'relative surplus-value' (*Capital*, Volume 1, Parts 3 and 4). The class struggle even comes in from a *third side*, namely that of the *State*, which is an object of struggle for the contending class forces, and which the aggravation of the contradiction causes to intervene in the labour process itself, in the form of increasingly organic 'social regulation'.¹⁹

If I have gone into these rather more technical arguments at some length, it is primarily to convince the reader that the problems of the philosophy of history in Marx should not be discussed at the level of the most general declarations, but at that of analyses, which is also the level of the maximum clarification of concepts. The point is quite simply to treat Marx as a theorist: what goes for the forms of consciousness in Hegel also applies to the mode of production in Marx. 'Reading *Capital*' is still worthwhile today. But I also want to draw the following conclusion: it is precisely the combination of the three levels of analysis, from the general line of development of the whole society to the daily antagonism within the labour process, which makes up what Marx means by the rationality of historical explanation. To put it in more philosophical terms, it follows from this that Marx resorted less and less to pre-existing *models* of explanation and increasingly *constructed a rationality* which had no real precedent. That rationality is neither the rationality of mechanics, physiology or biological evolution, nor that of a formal theory of conflict or strategy, though it has recourse to all of these from time to time. In the incessant transformation of its conditions and forms, the class struggle is its own model.

This is precisely the first meaning we can give to the idea of dialectic: a logic or form of explanation specifically adapted to the determinant intervention of class struggle in the very fabric of history. Althusser was right, in this connection, to stress the way Marx transformed the earlier forms of dialectic – particularly its Hegelian forms (whether we are speaking of the 'master-slave' confrontation in the *Phenomenology* or the 'division of subject and object' in the *Logic*). Not that he does not owe anything to those forms (in a sense, he owes everything to them, since he never stopped working on them), but he only does so insofar as he *inverts* the relation between the speculative 'figures' and the concrete analysis of concrete situations (to use Lenin's phrase). Situations do not provide illustrations of pre-existing dialectical moments. They are, rather, themselves types of process or dialectical development, the series of which may properly be regarded as open-ended. This, at least, is the *direction* in which Marx's work sets out.

The 'bad side' of history

But this thoroughgoing change of perspective merely brings out all the more clearly the difficulties, if not indeed the aporias, this project of rationality encounters. We have first to clarify the meaning of that project, before returning to the way in which, ultimately, the relations between 'progress' and 'dialectic' are established in Marx.

A striking formulation can serve as our guide here: 'History advances by its bad side.' Marx had used this in *The Poverty of Philosophy* against Proudhon, who, in the case of each social category or form, tried to detect its 'good side', the side by which justice was advanced.²⁰ But it goes beyond that particular application and rebounds upon its author: Marx's theory was itself, in his own lifetime, brought up against the fact that history advances by the bad side, the side the theory had not foreseen, the side which challenges its representation of necessity and, ultimately, challenges the certainty – which it believes it can draw from the facts themselves – that history does indeed *advance* and that it is not, like life for Macbeth, 'a tale told by an idiot, full of sound and fury, signifying nothing'.

When Marx deploys his irony at Proudhon's expense, what he is doing is rejecting a *moralizing, optimistic* (and thus, ultimately, conformist) version of history. Proudhon had been the first to attempt to adapt Hegelian schemas to the development of 'economic contradictions' and the advent of social justice. His conception of the progress of justice was based on the idea that solidarity and freedom were compelling values by virtue of the very universality they represented. Marx (in 1846) was at pains to remind him that history does not proceed 'by the good side' – i.e. by virtue of the intrinsic force and excellence of humanistic ideals. Nor, even less, is it made by force of conviction and moral education, but by the 'pain of the negative', the clash of interests, the violence of crises and revolutions. It is not so much the epic of right as the drama of a civil war between classes, even if that war does not necessarily take a military form. This was strictly in keeping with the spirit of Hegel, whom Proudhon and other representatives of reformism had very badly misunderstood in this respect.

Now, this is a demonstration which, precisely because it is in accord with that spirit, cannot but give fresh impetus to our question. Nothing, ultimately, is more in keeping with the idea of a guaranteed final outcome than a dialectic of the 'bad side', understood in this sense. For it precisely has the function of showing – and this is indeed the case with Hegel – that the rational *end* of historical development (whether we term it resolution, reconciliation or synthesis) is sufficiently powerful to *come about through its opposite* – unreason (violence, passion, poverty) – and, in this sense, to subjugate or absorb that opposite. It might even be said, by a circular form of argument, that it is the capacity it displays for converting war, suffering and injustice into factors of peace, prosperity and justice which proves the potency and universality of this dialectic. If we can today read Hegel's work as something other than a long 'theodicy' (as he himself put it, taking the term from Leibniz) – i.e. a demonstration that 'evil' in history is always particular and relative, whereas the positive end for which it prepares the ground is universal and absolute – do we not owe this to the way in which that work has been transformed by Marx? And even more to the way in which the Marxist transformation of the dialectic has historically run up against its own limits?

Taking this critical thrust to its extreme, we come to a position formulated by Benjamin in the ninth of his *Theses on the Philosophy of History*, a work we have already cited above:

This is how one pictures the angel of history. His face is turned toward the past. Where we perceive a chain of events, he sees a single catastrophe which keeps piling wreckage upon wreckage and hurls it in front of his feet. The angel would like to stay, awaken the dead, and make whole what has been smashed. But a storm is blowing from Paradise; it has got caught in his wings with such violence that the angel can no longer close them. This storm irresistibly propels him into the future to which his back is turned, while the pile of debris before him grows skyward. This storm is what we call progress.²¹

History not only advances 'by its bad side', but also *to the bad side*, the side of domination and ruin. This is a text in which, beyond 'vulgar Marxism' and beyond Marx, one must surely detect a terrible irony directed particularly against that passage in the Introduction to Hegel's *Lectures on the Philosophy of History* which describes the ruin of past societies as the condition of the progress of spirit, i.e. the *conservation* of what was universal in the 'principles' of those societies.²² Proletarian ideology might be said to be based on the blood-stained illusion of resuming and continuing this movement, which has always served not to liberate the exploited but to establish law and order. There then remains, as the only prospect of salvation, the hope of a caesura or an unforeseeable interruption of time, a 'messianic cessation of happening' which would 'blast a specific era out of the homogeneous course of history' (thesis XVII), and offer the dominated, the 'defeated' of the whole of history the improbable chance of giving a meaning to their scattered, obscure struggles. A prospect which still presents itself as revolutionary but not as dialectical, primarily in that it radically disqualifies the idea of practice, or of liberation as transformation by one's own labours.

Is there, then, a possible path between Hegel's and Benjamin's 'bad sides' for a Marxist dialectic? If this was indeed the case historically, in the sense at least that *but for Marx* (and but for Marx's difference from Hegel), such a critique of Hegel would never have been made, our task must be to investigate the extent to which this historical singularity finds a corresponding theoretical

formulation. But this is something we cannot discuss in isolation from the events which cut across the path of theory.

Real contradiction (dialectic II)

As I have pointed out above, Marx encountered the 'bad side' of history at least twice: in 1848 and 1871. I suggested that the theory of *Capital* was *also*, in a sense, a long-delayed, remarkably developed, but unfinished response to the failure of the revolutions of 1848, to the 'decomposition' of the proletariat which was to have 'decomposed' bourgeois society. Is it so surprising, then, that we can *also* read there the internal critique of the idea of progress?

Marx hardly ever uses this term (*Fortschritt*, *Fortgang*) in *Capital*, except to counterpose to it, in the spirit of Fourier, the picture of the cyclical ravages of capitalism (the 'orgiastic' squandering of resources and human lives that is its 'rationality'). He only uses it, then, in an *ironic* sense: so long as the contradiction between the 'socialization of the productive forces' and the 'desocialization' of human beings is not resolved, the talk of progress to be found in bourgeois philosophy and political economy can never be anything but a mockery and a mystification. But the contradiction can only be resolved – or diminished – by a change in the developmental *tendency*, by the affirmation of a counter-*tendency*.

This is where the second aspect emerges: what interests Marx is not *progress*, but the *process*, which he makes the dialectical concept par excellence. Progress is not something given or pre-programmed; it can only result from the development of the antagonisms which comprise the process and, as a consequence, it is always relative to those antagonisms. Now, process is neither a moral (spiritualist) concept, nor an economic (naturalist) one. It is a logical and political concept: the more logical for being built on a return to the idea – going back beyond Hegel – that contradictions are irreconcilable; the more political for having to seek its 'real conditions', and thus its necessity, in its apparent opposite: the sphere of labour and economic life.

We may express all this in a different way, employing a mathematical metaphor Marx used a great deal: what interests him is not so much the *general form* the graph of history takes – the

'integral', as it were – but the '*differential*', the 'acceleration'-effect, and hence the relation of forces in play at any particular moment, determining the direction of its advance. What interests him, then, is the way that 'labour-power' – individually and, above all, collectively – resists and tends to *elude* the status of pure commodity imposed on it by the logic of capital. The ideal end point of such a logic would be what Marx (opposing this to a merely *formal* 'subsumption' limited to the labour contract) terms the *real* submission or 'subsumption' of labour-power: an existence for the workers which is wholly determined by the needs of capital (skilling or de-skilling, unemployment or overwork, austerity or forced consumption, as required).²³ But that limit point is historically inaccessible. In other words, Marx's analysis tends to bring out the element of material impossibility contained in the capitalist mode of production: the *irreducible minimum* its particular 'totalitarianism' runs up against and from which the revolutionary practice of the collective worker in its turn starts out.

We have already been told in the *Manifesto* that the struggle of the workers begins with their very existence. And *Capital* shows that the first moment of that struggle is the existence of a *collective* of workers, either in the factory or enterprise or outside it in the town or city, in politics (but in reality always *between* these two spaces, moving from the one to the other). It is a presupposition of the 'wage form' that workers are treated exclusively as individual persons, so that their labour-power can be bought and sold as a thing of greater or lesser value, so that they can be 'disciplined' and 'made responsible'. But the collective is an ever self-renewing precondition of production itself. *In reality, there are always two overlapping collectives* of workers, made up of the *same* individuals (or almost) and yet incompatible: a capital-collective and a proletariat-collective. Without the latter, engendered by the resistance to capitalist collectivization, the capitalist 'autocrat' could not himself exist.

Towards historicity

This is the second sense of the 'dialectic' in Marx, which refines the first. The capitalist mode of production – the 'basis' of which

is also 'revolutionary' – *cannot but change*. The question then becomes: change in what direction? Its movement, says Marx, is an endlessly deferred impossibility. Not a moral impossibility or a 'contradiction in terms', but what might be called a *real contradiction*, equally distinct from both a purely formal contradiction (abstract terms which exclude each other by definition), and a mere real opposition (of external forces acting in opposite directions, where one can calculate the outcome or the point of equilibrium).²⁴ The entire originality of the Marxist dialectic lies, then, in the possibility of unreservedly thinking that contradiction *is not an appearance*, even 'in the final tally' or 'at infinity'. It is not even a 'ruse' of nature, like Kantian *unsociable sociability*, or a 'ruse' of reason, like Hegelian alienation. Labour-power keeps on being transformed into a commodity and thereby enters the form of the capitalist collective (which, in the strong sense, is capital itself as a 'social relation'). Yet such a process involves an incoercible residue, *both* in the individuals and in the collective (once again, this opposition does not seem pertinent). And it is this material impossibility which inscribes the reversal of the capitalist tendency in necessity, whatever the point at which it occurs.

The three questions of *contradiction*, *temporality* and *socialization* are, therefore, strictly indissociable. We can clearly see what is at stake here: it is what the philosophical tradition since Dilthey and Heidegger has called a theory of *historicity*. What we mean by this is that the problems of finality or meaning, which are posed at the level of the course of the history of humanity considered imaginarily as a totality – brought together in a single 'Idea' or a single grand narrative – are replaced by problems of causality or of reciprocal action on the part of the 'forces of history' – problems which are posed at every moment, in every *present*. The importance of Marx in this connection is that, no doubt for the first time since Spinoza's *conatus* ('effort'), the question of historicity (or of the 'differential' of the movement, instability and tension within the present which are carrying it towards its own transformation) is posed in the element of practice, and not in that of consciousness, posed on the basis of production and the conditions of production, not of representation and the life of the mind. Now, in spite of the cries of alarm uttered preventively by idealism, it turns out that this

reversal is not a reduction, still less the substitution of a natural determinism for historical causality. Once again, as in the *Theses on Feuerbach*, we have *left behind* the alternative of subjectivism and 'old materialism', but this time we have done so on firmly materialist or, in any event, immanent lines. In this regard, contradiction is a more decisive operator than *praxis* (which it nonetheless includes).

However, this does not remove the question of how a conception of historicity as 'real contradiction', developing among contemporary tendencies, could coexist with a representation of the 'totality of history' made up of evolutionary stages and successive revolutions. It even renders it more acute. Now, in 1871, Marx once again encountered the 'bad side' of history and, as I have said, the practical result was the interruption of his enterprise. He did not stop working, but from that moment on he was certain that he could no longer 'finish' his work, that he could not come to a 'conclusion'. *There would be no conclusion*.

It is, however, worthwhile examining the *rectifications* prompted by this new situation. We know of at least two. One was conjointly determined by Bakunin's attack on the 'Marxist dictatorship' within the International and by Marx's disagreement with the *draft programme* drawn up by Liebknecht and Bebel in 1875 for the unification congress of German socialists. That rectification led to the raising of what came to be known within Marxism as the question of 'transition'. The other rectification, which followed immediately, arose out of the need to reply to theorists of Russian populism and socialism who questioned Marx on the future of the 'rural commune' (*obshchina*). Here the question of 'non-capitalist development' was posed. Neither rectification put in doubt the schema of causality. But both induced a degree of wavering in the relation of Marx and his dialectic to the representation of time.

The truth of economism (dialectic III)

In the years following the repression of the Commune and the dissolution of the International (officially announced in 1876, but in practice a reality after the Hague Congress of 1872), it became very clear that the 'proletarian politics' Marx regarded

himself as advocating, and for which he believed he was providing scientific foundations with *Capital*, had no sure foothold in the ideological configuration of the 'labour' or 'revolutionary' movements. The dominant tendencies were reformist and syndicalist, whether parliamentary or anti-parliamentary. The most significant event, in this connection, was the formation of the 'Marxist' parties, foremost among them the German Social Democrats. After the death of Lassalle (Marx's old rival and, like him, a leader of the 1848 revolution) and the establishment of the German Reich, they had come together as a single party at the Gotha Congress, with Marx's disciples, Bebel and Liebknecht, taking the lead. Marx read their draft programme, which was inspired by 'scientific socialism', and discovered that, being built around the idea of a 'people's state' (*Volksstaat*), it in fact combined a utopianism of total redistribution of the social product to the workers with a 'state religion' which did not even exclude nationalism. Now, he had shortly before been very violently attacked by Bakunin, who had denounced Marxism for its twofold dictatorial ambition, its aim being, as he saw it, to achieve a 'scientific' dictatorship of the leaders over the rank-and-file (the *party* being modelled on the *State* it claimed to combat) and a 'social' dictatorship of the 'workers' over the other exploited classes (the peasants, in particular), and thus of industrial nations over agrarian ones like Russia. Marx thus found himself trapped between the Scylla of his opponents and the Charybdis of his supporters.²⁵ At the very point when Marxism was presenting itself as the means by which the revolutionary class could escape the perennial dilemma of mere incorporation into the 'democratic' wing of bourgeois politics or *anti-political* anarchism (or anarcho-syndicalism), the question once again arose of whether, strictly speaking, there was such a thing as a Marxist politics.

Now, in a way, Marx anticipated the answer to this question. There could be no Marxist politics other than that which arose from the movement of history itself and he took as his example the direct democracy invented by the Paris Commune, the 'political form at last discovered under which to work out the economical emancipation of labour',²⁶ which he made the core of a new definition of the *dictatorship of the proletariat*. But that answer does not enable us to understand why so many workers,

so many activists subscribe to other ideologies or other 'systems', why an *organization* or an *institution* is necessary, over against the bourgeois State, to educate them and instil discipline in them. Certainly, we are a long way here from the 'universal class' heralding the imminent arrival of communism.

The withering away of the State

The *Randglossen* (marginal notes) on Bakunin and on the Gotha Programme give no direct answer to this question. But they do provide an indirect response by introducing the notion of transition:

Between capitalist and communist society lies a period of revolutionary transformation from one to the other. There is a corresponding period of transition in the political sphere and in this period the State can only take the form of a *revolutionary dictatorship of the proletariat*.²⁷

And, shortly before, Marx outlines a distinction between two phases of communist society, one in which commodity exchange and the wage form are still dominant as the principles of organization of social labour, another in which 'the enslaving subjugation of individuals to the division of labour' has 'disappeared' and in which 'labour is no longer just a means of keeping alive, but has itself become a vital need', which will make it possible once and for all to transcend 'the narrow horizon of bourgeois right' and order social relations by the principle: 'from each according to his abilities, to each according to his needs!'.²⁸ These indications, taken as a whole, constitute an advance description of the *withering away of the State* in the transition to communism or, more exactly, an anticipation of the historical moment (however long it may last) in which a mass politics will unfold which has as its content the withering away of the State.

The tradition of orthodox Marxism (and particularly that of *state* Marxism in the socialist countries from the late twenties onwards) read these indications as an embryonic theory of the *stages* or *phases* of the 'period of transition' to the 'classless' society, a theory which culminated in the definition of *socialism* – as distinct from *communism* – as a specific 'mode

of production', a conception which has since collapsed with the socialist States themselves and their systems. Quite apart from its legitimation functions (what Marx would have termed its 'apologetic' functions), this use fitted quite naturally into an evolutionist schema. I do not believe this was what Marx himself had in mind. The idea of a 'socialist mode of production' totally contradicts his representation of communism as an *alternative* to capitalism, for which capitalism itself would create the conditions. As for the idea of a post-revolutionary 'socialist State' or 'people's State', this reproduces almost exactly what Marx criticized in Bebel and Liebknecht, as Henri Lefebvre has so clearly demonstrated.²⁹ On the other hand, it is clear that the space cleared 'between capitalist and communist society', here described in terms of periods or phases, is the proper space of politics. All these terms do nothing but translate the *return of revolutionary politics* – on this occasion as an organized activity – into evolutionary time. As if that time was to open up or stretch out to make way, 'between' the present and the future, for a *practical anticipation* of the 'classless society' in the material conditions of the old one (what Lenin, in a logically revealing formula, was to term a 'State/non-State', clearly thereby marking its status as a question, not an answer). Equidistant from the idea of imminence and from that of a progressive maturation, the 'transition' foreseen here by Marx is a political figure representing historical time's 'non-contemporaneity' with itself, but a figure which remains inscribed by him in *provisionality*.

The Russian commune

A comparable opening-up can be found in the correspondence Marx carried on some years later with the representatives of Russian populism and socialism. Scarcely had he finished defending himself against Bakunin's charge that he intended to create a hegemony of the industrially developed countries over the 'under-developed' ones (in the Preface to the first edition of *Capital*, we may recall, he had written that the 'more developed industrially' showed 'the less developed . . . the image of its own future'), when he was called on to settle a quarrel between two

categories of Russian readers of *Capital*. On the one side were those who inferred from the law of the historical tendency of capitalist accumulation (expropriation of the small producers by capital, followed by the expropriation of capital by the workers), which was presented by Marx as 'historically inevitable', that the development of capitalism in Russia was a prior condition for socialism; on the other, those who saw in the vitality of the co-operative 'rural commune' the germ of what we would today call a 'non-capitalist development', prefiguring communism. Marx gave a first theoretical response to this in 1877.³⁰ Vera Zasulich, one of the leaders of the 'Emancipation of Labour' group, once again sought his opinion on the subject in 1881. We know the four rough drafts he made of a reply, only a very succinct version of which was sent in the end.³¹ A single idea recurs in each of these texts. What is very striking is that that idea – whether or not it was correct – is perfectly clear. What is no less striking is the fact that Marx had the greatest difficulty not in formulating it, but in *accepting* it himself.³²

Firstly, the *law of the historical tendency of capitalist accumulation* presented in *Capital* does not apply irrespective of historical circumstances:

We have to come down from the realms of pure theory to Russian reality to discuss this . . . those who believe in the historical necessity of the dissolution of communal property in Russia cannot under any circumstances prove that necessity using my exposition of the inevitable course of events in Western Europe. They would have to provide new arguments, quite independent of the developments I advanced.³³

Secondly, the rural commune (established by the Czarist government after the abolition of serfdom in 1861) has within it a latent contradiction (an 'intimate dualism'), between the non-market economy and production for the market, which is most likely to be aggravated and exploited by the State and the capitalist system and which will lead to the dissolution of the commune (i.e. the transformation of some peasants into entrepreneurs and others into an agricultural or industrial proletariat) *if the process is not interrupted*: 'To save the Russian commune, a Russian revolution is necessary.'

Thirdly and lastly, the communal form ('a social grouping of free men, not attached by blood ties'), which had been preserved

by a peculiar evolution ('a unique situation unprecedented in history'), was, he wrote, an *archaism*, but that archaism *might* serve in the 'regeneration of Russian society', i.e. in the construction of a communist society, avoiding the 'antagonisms', 'crises', 'conflicts' and 'disasters' which had characterized the development of capitalism in the West, given that that communal form was '*contemporary*' (a term to which Marx insistently returns) with the most developed forms of capitalist production, the techniques of which it would be able to borrow from the surrounding 'milieu'.

What is proposed in these texts, then, is the idea of a concrete multiplicity of paths of historical development. But that idea is indissociable from the more abstract hypothesis that in the history of different social formations there is a multiplicity of 'times', each contemporary with one another, some of which present themselves as a continuous progression, whereas others effect a 'short-circuit' between the most ancient and the most recent. This 'overdetermination', as Althusser would later term it, is the very form assumed by the *singularity* of history. It does not follow a pre-existing plan, but results from the way in which distinct historico-political units, immersed in a single 'milieu' (or co-existing in a single 'present'), react to the tendencies of the mode of production.

Anti-evolutionism?

And so, by an astonishing turnabout, induced by a question from outside (as well as the doubts about the exactness of certain of his formulations prompted by the application 'Marxists' were currently making of them), Marx's *economism* gave birth to its opposite: a set of *anti-evolutionist* hypotheses. This irony of theory is what we might term the third phase of the dialectic in Marx. Surely it is clear, then, that there is a latent convergence between the replies to Bakunin and Bebel and the reply to Vera Zasulich. The one is, as it were, the converse of the other: in the one case, the new always has to make its way in what are still the old 'conditions', after a political rupture has occurred; in the other, the old must short-circuit the most recent, exploiting its gains 'against the current'.

Engels

The collaboration of Friedrich Engels (1820–85) with Marx over forty years rules out any Manichean distinctions (e.g. between Marx the 'good dialectician' and Engels the 'bad materialist'), but does not prevent us from recognizing Engels's intellectual originality, or assessing the extent of the transformation he wrought on the Marxist problematic. The major moments of his intervention came in 1844, when he published *The Condition of the Working Class in England*, which contains a much more complete version of the critique of wage-labour as alienation of the human essence than in Marx's writings of the same date, and in the period after 1875. In reality, it was Engels who set about giving a systematic form to 'historical materialism' and, in order to do so, linking together revolutionary strategy, conjunctural analyses and the critique of political economy. The most interesting aspect from our point of view is his *reprise of the concept of ideology* from *Anti-Dühring* (1878) onwards. Engels gives a primarily epistemological definition of ideology, centred on the appearance of the notions of law and morality as 'eternal verities'. In the draft manuscripts he produced in the same period, which were later (1935) published as 'Dialectics and Nature' (see *Dialectics of Nature*, trans. Clemens Dutt, Lawrence and Wishart, London, 1940), that definition practically amounted to the *converse* of the theses of *The German Ideology*: far from ideology being 'without a history of its own', it formed part of a *history of thought*, the guiding thread of which was the contradiction between idealism and materialism, a contradiction overdetermined by the opposition between the 'metaphysical' mode of thinking (what Hegel had called understanding [*Verstand*]) and the 'dialectical' mode (which Hegel had termed reason [*Vernunft*]). Clearly, the aim here was to provide Marxism with a guarantee of scientificity in the face of the challenge from academic philosophy. However, this project remained in abeyance, partly on account of its intrinsic aporias and partly because this was not the main problem to be confronted. That was the enigma of *proletarian ideology*, or the *communist world-view*, as Engels preferred to call it, since this enabled him to avoid the difficulty of the notion of a 'materialist ideology'. His last texts (from *Ludwig Feuerbach and the End of Classical German Philosophy*, published in 1888, to 'On the History of Early Christianity' [1894–5] and the article 'Lawyers' Socialism', written with Kautsky in 1886) discuss two aspects of this problem together: the succession of the 'dominant world-views' – i.e. the transition from religious to secular (essentially juridical) thinking and thence to a political vision of the world based on class struggle – and the mechanism by which collective 'beliefs' are formed in the relationship between the masses and the State. Historical materialism was, in this way, provided both with an object and a closure.

Surely it is also the case that these propositions, which in part remained private, clandestine and which were half-erased, are in implicit contradiction, if not with the analyses of real contradiction in *Capital*, then at least with some of the terms Marx used twenty years earlier in the 1859 Preface, when he had presented his causal schema as something closely allied to the image of a single line of development of universal history. 'No social order is ever destroyed before all the productive forces for which it is sufficient have been developed . . . Mankind thus inevitably sets itself only such tasks as it is able to solve,' he wrote then.³⁴ Now, he writes:

But this is too little for my critic. It is absolutely necessary for him to metamorphose my historical sketch of the genesis of capitalism in Western Europe into a historico-philosophical theory of general development, imposed by fate on all peoples, whatever the historical circumstances in which they are placed, in order to eventually attain this economic formation which, with a tremendous leap of the productive forces of social labour, assures the most integral development of every industrial producer. But I beg his pardon. This does me too much honour and yet puts me to shame at the same time . . . Thus events strikingly analogous, but occurring in different historical milieux, led to quite disparate results. By studying each of these evolutions on its own, and then comparing them, one will easily discover the key to the phenomenon, but it will never be arrived at by employing the all-purpose formula of a general historico-philosophical theory whose supreme virtue consists in being supra-historical.³⁵

Just as there is no capitalism 'in general', but only a 'historical capitalism',³⁶ comprising the encounter of – and conflict between – many capitalisms, so there is no universal history, only singular historicities.

We can thus not avoid asking whether such a rectification does not necessarily have repercussions upon the other aspects of 'historical materialism' – particularly on the way in which the 1859 Preface described the 'transformation' of the 'superstructure' as the mechanical consequence of 'the changes of the economic foundations' or base. Indeed, what are 'milieu', 'alternative', 'dualism', and 'political transition', if not concepts or metaphors which require us to think that the State and ideology react back on the economy – if they do not indeed constitute, in certain circumstances, the very basis upon which the tendencies of the

Lenin as philosopher?

From the moment 'dialectical materialism' was identified with 'Marxism-Leninism' (as the embalmed body of the 'founder' was placed in the mausoleum in Moscow's Red Square), the thought of Lenin – extracted from the 47 volumes of his *Collected Works* by thousands of commentators – became something other than a philosophy. In fact, it became an obligatory *reference point* which alone conferred the right to speak. Today, the converse applies (a recent exegete regards Leninism as a psychopathological phenomenon: see Dominique Colas, *Le Léninisme*, Presses Universitaires de France, Paris, 1982), and it will be a long time before anyone can really *study* Lenin's argumentation in its context and its specific economy.

Within French Marxism, two otherwise diametrically opposed philosophers have each proposed free interpretations of Lenin's relationship with philosophy. Henri Lefebvre (author of *Pour connaître la pensée de Lénine*, Bordas, Paris, 1957 and editor, with Norbert Gutermann, of Lenin's *Cahiers sur la dialectique de Hegel*, NRF, Paris, 1938) drew mainly on the unpublished writings of 1915–16 in which Lenin looked to the philosophical classics – particularly Hegel, but also Clausewitz – for the means to think war 'dialectically', as a process in which political contradictions continued to have their effects. Louis Althusser (*Lenin and Philosophy and Other Essays*, New Left Books, London, 1971), whose analyses were continued by Dominique Lecourt (*Une crise et son enjeu*, Maspero, Paris, 1973), sought via a new reading of *Materialism and Empirio-Criticism* (1908) for the elements of a 'practical' conception of philosophy, as the marking out of a line of demarcation between materialism and idealism in the complexity of intellectual conjunctures, in which science and politics are mutually determinant.

There are, however, other philosophical moments in Lenin, the most interesting of which are without doubt:

(1) the recasting of the idea of the proletariat as 'universal class', which is attempted in *What is to be done?* (1902) in a way that runs counter to the idea of 'revolutionary spontaneity' and towards that of the intellectual leadership of the democratic revolution (against this position, see Rosa Luxemburg's reply, after the 1905 Revolution, in *The Mass Strike, the Political Party and the Trade Unions* [1906]).

(2) at the other extreme, his theoretical work on the contradictions of the socialist revolution ('State' and 'non-State', waged and free labour), which runs from initial utopianism (*The State and Revolution* of 1917) to his last thoughts on co-operation ('On Co-operation', 1923). On this question, see also Robert Linhart, *Lénine, les paysans*, Taylor (Éditions du Seuil, Paris, 1976) and Moshe Lewin, *Lenin's Last Struggle*, trans. A.M. Sheridan-Smith, Faber and Faber, London, 1969).

'base' operate? But doubtless no theorist, when he has effectively found something new, can *re-cast* his own thinking: he does not have the strength to do it, or the willpower, or the 'time' . . . Others will do that. And it is worth noting here that the 'reciprocal action of ideology', *the true notion of economism* (i.e. the fact that the tendencies of the economy are only realized through their opposite: ideologies, 'world-views', including that of the proletarians), was precisely Engels's research programme in the late 1880s. And it is true that, a hundred years later, once again facing up to the bad side of history, Marxists are still beavering away at this problem.

Science and Revolution

Readers who have followed me so far will wish, I am sure, to express (at least) two criticisms.

Firstly, they will be thinking, you have proceeded from an account of Marx's ideas to a discussion 'with Marx', but have done so without clearly marking the transition. Hence your readiness to project 'voices' into the text and to interpret its silences or at least what it does not fully spell out.

Secondly, they will add, you have not really provided an *account* of Marx's doctrine: if we did not know it from elsewhere, we have not learnt how he defined the class struggle, how he justified the thesis of its universality and its role as the 'motor of history', how he demonstrated that the crisis of capitalism is inevitable and that the only possible outcome is socialism (or communism), etc. Nor, by the same token, have you provided us with any way of knowing where and in what ways he went wrong, whether anything in Marxism can be 'salvaged', whether it is compatible or incompatible with democracy, ecology, bioethics etc.

I shall begin with this last criticism and shall unreservedly plead guilty. Having chosen to concern myself with the way Marx worked in philosophy, and philosophy in Marx, I had to leave aside not just the 'systemic' perspective, but the doctrinal also. Philosophy is not doctrinal. It does not consist in opinions, theorems or laws of nature, consciousness or history; and certainly not in stating the *most general* of those opinions or laws. This point is particularly important, since the idea of a

'general synthesis', in which the class struggle is articulated with economics, anthropology, politics and epistemology, is purely and simply the model which, in the form of 'dijamat', was until recently the official doctrine of the international communist movement (and, it must be said, a great many *critics* of diamat share this same ideal of 'generalization' – doing so, indeed, with no greater subtlety). That form of thinking is, of course, interesting in itself from the standpoint of the history of ideas. And there is some encouragement for it in certain of Marx's writings and even more in those of Engels (who had to contend with the competing claims of the 'theories of knowledge', 'philosophies of nature' and 'sciences of culture' of the last third of the nineteenth century). It found some of its most fervent admirers among the neo-Thomists of the Pontifical University (this amazing episode is documented in Stanislas Breton's *De Rome à Paris, Itinéraire philosophique*).¹

Turning my back resolutely on the idea of doctrine, I have sought to problematize some of the questions which governed Marx's thought. For if it is true, as he himself suggested in *The German Ideology*,² that where there is 'mystification', it is 'in [the] very questions' asked before it is in the answers, must we not take it that this applies *a fortiori* to demystification, i.e. to knowledge? I have therefore attempted to re-examine from within the theoretical impetus which ceaselessly 'shifts the angle' of these questions. To this end, I have chosen to take three pathways through Marx's work which seemed to me to afford the greatest insight (though other choices were certainly possible).

Three philosophical pathways

The first of these, setting out from the critique of the classical definitions – both spiritualist-idealist and materialist-sensualist – of the 'human essence' (what Althusser termed 'theoretical humanism', though one might also call it speculative anthropology), leads to the problematic of *social relations*. The price to be paid for this move is a significant oscillation between a radically negative, *activist* point of view – that of the *Theses on Feuerbach*, where the social relation is merely the actualization of *praxis* – and a constructive, *positive* point of view – that of

The German Ideology, where it coincides with the division of labour and with 'intercourse' (*Verkehr, commerce*) or communication, which are forms of development of the *productive forces*. We might say that, in the one case, the human community (communism) comes about by the total evacuation of the old world; in the other, by the plenitude of the new one, which is in fact already here. In the one case, revolutionary practice takes absolute priority over all thought (truth is merely one of its moments). In the other, that practice is, if not subject to thought, at least presented in all its various ramifications by a *science* of history. Revolution and science (revolution in science, science of revolution): these are the terms of an alternative which, deep down, was never resolved by Marx. This also means that he never accepted sacrificing the one to the other, which is a mark of his intellectual intransigence.

The second pathway is grafted on to the preceding one and runs from a critique of the illusions and pretensions of 'consciousness', to a problematic of the *constitution of the subject* in the forms of its alienation (an alienation in 'things', the fetishism of commodity circulation, but also an alienation in 'the person', the fetishism of the juridical process – though I recognize that the status of the 'person' in Marx is profoundly uncertain). This second path is not a linear one, but forks off in a remarkable fashion (with the abandonment of the term 'ideology'). It moves through a series of analyses: the 'social horizon' of consciousness (which is that of transindividual relations and their historical limitation); 'intellectual difference' – and thus domination both *outside* thought and *within* it; and, lastly, the symbolic structure of *equivalence* between individuals and their 'properties', which is common to commodity exchange and (private) law.

Finally, there is a third pathway, running from the invention of a schema of causality (which is materialist in the sense that it overturns the primacy of consciousness or spiritual forces in the explanation of history, but assigns those things a place as 'mediations', as subordinate instances in the hierarchy of effectivity of the mode of production) towards a *dialectic of temporality, immanent* in the play of the forces of history (which are not things!). There are several outlines of this dialectic in Marx, the main one being that of 'real contradiction', i.e. the tendencies and counter-tendencies to socialization, or the antagonistic

realizations of the collective, each one enwrapped in the other, which occupies a large part of *Capital*. But if we do not mind taking a few risks in the reading of Marx's last texts, we should also accord full importance to the idea of the transition from capitalism to communism (here the 'moment' of revolutionary practice makes its spectacular return into the space that had been occupied by the 'science of social formations'), and also to the idea of alternative, *singular* paths of development, an idea which in itself represents the rudiments of an internal critique of evolutionism.

The difficulty with this third pathway is that the temporal dialectic brought out here is the opposite of the one which predominates in most of Marx's *general* texts (though these are, ultimately, few in number): the idea of a *universal history* of humanity, of an ascending, uniformly progressive line of evolution of modes of production and social formations. We have to be honest here and admit that this 'materialist' and 'dialectical' evolutionism is just as *Marxist* as the analysis of 'real contradiction' – and even that, historically, there is more justification for identifying it with *Marxism*. This was doubtless what Marx had in mind when he uttered his famous remark (witticism?): 'If anything is certain, it is that I myself am not a Marxist' (reported by Engels to Bernstein in a letter of November 1882),³ and Gramsci too, when he wrote his 1917 article, 'The Revolution against "Capital"', (another witticism), except that *Capital* is precisely the text by Marx which displays the liveliest tension between the two points of view.⁴ What is at stake in all this is clearly whether, as Volume 3 of *Capital* has it, in a formula entirely consonant with the idealist tradition in the philosophy of history, the post-capitalist classless society will be the passage from 'the realm of necessity' to the 'realm of freedom';⁵ or whether the (present) struggle for communism represents a *necessary development of freedom* (i.e. the inscription of a movement of liberation in its own specific material conditions).

Incomplete works

But let us return to the first objection which might be directed at me. I have said that reading Marx as a philosopher presupposes

that we position ourselves at a remove from doctrine, that we accord primacy to concepts and problematize the movement of their construction, deconstruction and reconstruction. But I believe we have to take a further step and, without fear of incoherence, say that *that doctrine does not exist*. Where, in fact, could it be said to be? *In which texts?* 'He did not have the time', as we know, and we are speaking here of something that goes way beyond any distinction between a young or old Marx, Marx as philosopher or Marx as scientist. All we have are résumés (the 1859 Preface), manifestoes (grandiose ones), outlines which are long and articulate, but which never arrive at final conclusions and which – as we would do well to remember here – Marx himself *never published* (*The German Ideology*, the *Grundrisse* of 1857–58). There is no doctrine; there are only fragments (and, elsewhere, analyses, demonstrations).

I would not wish to be misunderstood in this: I am not saying that Marx is a 'postmodernist' *avant la lettre* and I do not mean to argue that his thought represents a deliberate pursuit of the unfinished. I am tempted, rather, to believe that he never, in fact, had the time to construct a doctrine because *the process of rectification went faster*. Not only did that process anticipate his conclusions, it anticipated the critique of those conclusions. Out of intellectual obsessiveness? Perhaps, but that obsession was subordinated to a twofold ethic: a *theorist's* (scientist's) ethic and a *revolutionary's* ethic. We encounter the same terms once again. He was too much the theorist to 'botch' his conclusions, too much the revolutionary either to bow to reverses of fortune or to ignore catastrophes and carry on as though nothing had happened. And too much the scientist and the revolutionary to surrender to the hope for a messiah (though it is indisputable that such a hope was partly implied in his thinking. But a theorist or politician is not defined by what they repress, even if their energy derives in part from it and even if what is repressed – e.g. the religious dimension – is part of what most surely reaches the ears of their 'disciples' or 'successors').

So we have the right then to interpret the implications of what Marx wrote. Not to consider the fragments of his discourse as cards to be infinitely reshuffled at will, but, nonetheless, to take a foothold in his 'problematics' and 'axiomatics' – in other words, in his 'philosophies' – and push these to their conclusions

(to find the contradictions, limits and openings to which they lead). Thus, in an entirely new conjuncture, we find what we can do with and against Marx. Much of what is sketched out in his writings is far from having found its definitive form. Much of what today appears impotent, or criminal, or merely outdated in 'Marxism' was already so – if I dare put it this way – before Marx, since it was not an invention of Marxism. However, even if he had only confronted the question of the alternative to the 'dominant mode of production' *at the very heart of* that mode (which is also, more than ever, a mode of circulation, communication and representation), we would still have a use for him!

For and against Marx

We do, nevertheless, have to recognize that Marxism is an improbable philosophy today. This has to do with the fact that Marx's philosophy is engaged in the long and difficult process of separation from 'historical Marxism', a process in which the obstacles accumulated by a century of ideological utilization have to be surmounted. It cannot, however, be right for that philosophy to seek to return to its starting-point; it must, rather, learn from its own history and transform itself as it surmounts those obstacles. Those who wish today to philosophize in Marx not only come after him, but come *after Marxism*: they cannot be content merely to register the caesura Marx created, but must also think on the ambivalence of the effects that caesura produced – both in its proponents and its opponents.

This is also bound up with the fact that Marx's philosophy today cannot be either an organizational doctrine or an academic philosophy. That is to say, it must be out of step with any institution. The century-long cycle to which I have referred (1890–1990) certainly marks the end of any mutual attachment between Marx's philosophy and an organization of whatever kind, and hence, *a fortiori*, between that philosophy and a State. This means Marxism will no longer be able to function as an enterprise of legitimation: this is a *negative* precondition of its vitality. So far as positive preconditions are concerned, that depends on the part Marx's concepts will play in the critique of other enterprises of legitimation. But just because the

(conflictual) bond between Marxism and political organizations is dissolved, this does not mean it will be easier for it to transform itself into an academic philosophy, if only because the academy itself will take a long time to perform the analysis of its own anti-Marxism. Here again, the positive and the negative are suspended: the very future of an academic philosophy is uncertain and the part which ideas taken from Marx might play in the resolution of this other crisis cannot be determined *a priori*. We do, however, have to advance some hypotheses and this brings me to the reasons which lead me to think, as I said at the beginning, that Marx will still be read and studied in various places in the twenty-first century. Each of these, as will become evident, is also a reason to oppose Marx, but to do so in a relation of 'determinate negation', i.e. by drawing from his work questions which can only be developed by taking the opposite view, on particular points, to the arguments he advances.

Firstly, a living practice of philosophy is always a confrontation with non-philosophy. The history of philosophy is composed of processes of renewal whose significance has always depended upon the indigestibility of the exteriority with which philosophy has had to contend. The displacement Marx inflicted on the categories of the dialectic is one of the clearest examples of this 'migration' of philosophical thought, which leads it to reconstruct the very form of its discourse starting out from its other. But that displacement, resolutely as it was undertaken, is not complete: and it is not even near to being so, for the foreign land that has to be reached here – namely, *history* – is ceaselessly changing its configuration. Let us say that humanity cannot abandon a problem which it has not yet solved.

Secondly, historicity – since this is what we are speaking of – is one of the most open questions of the present time. This is so because, among other things, the universalization of the social relation heralded in the philosophies of history is now a *fait accompli*: there is now one single space of technologies and politics, of communications and power relations. But that universalization is neither a humanization nor a rationalization. It coincides with exclusions and splits more violent than before. If we put aside the moral discourses which counter this situation with the reformulation of juridical and religious principles, there are, it seems, only two possibilities: either to return to the idea

of the 'war of each against all' (referred to by Hobbes), which requires the creation of an external *power* of constraint; or to plunge historicity into the element of *nature* (which seems to be an emergent tendency in the current revival of vitalist philosophies). There is a third possibility, which Marx sketched out: to think the change of historical institutions (or, more precisely, the 'change of change', and thus the alternative to immediately observable changes), on the basis of the relations of force which are immanent in them, in a way that is not merely retrospective but, above all, prospective, or, if one prefers the term, conjunctural. Here, against the models of linear evolution and overthrow, alternately adopted by Marx and periodically rediscovered by his successors, we have to liberate the third notion which gradually took shape within his writings: the notion of *tendency* and its internal contradiction.

Thirdly, a *critical* philosophy is not just a reflection on the unexpected in history; it has to think its own determination as an intellectual activity (i.e. it has to be, according to a very old formula, a 'thought of thought' or the 'idea of the idea'). In this regard, Marx is in the most unstable possible situation as a result of the theorization of ideology he outlined. I have said above that philosophy has not forgiven him for this concept, or has done so only grudgingly, which makes it something of a permanent and at times openly declared nuisance (a good recent example is Paul Ricoeur's book *Lectures on Ideology and Utopia*).⁶ The thing is that ideology points to the element in which philosophy itself is formed, not just as something 'unthought' within it, but as a relation to social interests and intellectual difference itself, a relation forever irreducible to a simple opposition between reason and unreason. For philosophy ideology is the materialist name of its own finitude. However, the most flagrant of Marxism's shortcomings has been precisely the blind spot which its own ideological functioning, its own idealization of the 'meaning of history', and its own transformation into a secular mass, party and State religion have represented for it. We have seen that at least one of the causes of this situation relates to the way in which Marx, in his youth, *counterposed* ideology to the revolutionary practice of the proletariat, at the same time elevating that class into an absolute. This is why we must *simultaneously* defend two antithetical

positions here: philosophy will be "Marxist" as long as, for it, the question of truth is a question of analysing the fictions of universality which it raises to autonomous status; but it first has to be 'Marxist' *against Marx*, to make the denegation of the ideology in Marx the first object of its critique.

Fourthly, Marx's philosophy is, between Hegel and Freud, the example of a modern ontology of relations, or, as I have expressed it here, of the transindividual. This means that it locates itself *beyond* the opposition between individualism (even 'methodological' individualism) and organicism (or 'sociologism'), permitting us to retrace the history and demonstrate the ideological functions of those positions. But this is not sufficient to characterize its originality, since *relations* can be thought either in the mode of interiority or in that of exteriority or, indeed, once again, in terms of naturalness. In contemporary philosophy, these would be illustrated by the theme of *intersubjectivity*, on the one hand (there is no isolated 'subject' representing the world to itself, but rather an originary community of many subjects); and by that of *complexity*, on the other (the most alluring expositions of this are based metaphorically on the new alliance between physics and biology). Marx is not reducible to either of these positions. This is because the transindividual was fundamentally conceived in Marx as a correlate of the *class struggle*, the 'ultimate' social structure which simultaneously divides labour, thought and politics. Philosophizing for and against Marx here means posing the question not of the 'end of class struggle' – the eternal pious wish of social harmony – but of its *internal limits*, i.e. the forms of the transindividual which, while intersecting with it at all points, remain absolutely irreducible to it. The question of the great 'anthropological differences' which are comparable to 'intellectual difference' (beginning with sexual difference) may serve as a guide here. But it might also be that, even in distancing ourselves from Marx to this extent, the model of articulation between a problematic of *modes of production* (or of the 'economy' in the general sense of the term) and a problematic of the *mode of subjection* (and therefore of the constitution of the 'subject' as an effect of symbolic structures) remains a constantly necessary reference – precisely because it expresses that dual rejection of subjectivism and naturalism which periodically brings philosophy back towards the idea of dialectics.

Fifthly and finally, I have tried to show that theorizing social relations is, in Marx, the counterpart of the primacy accorded to revolutionary practice ('changing the world', 'countervailing tendency', 'change in change'). It is first of all the reciprocity established between the individual and the collective in the movement of liberatory, egalitarian insurrection which is trans-individual. The incompressible minimum of individuality and sociality that Marx describes with regard to capitalist exploitation is a fact of resistance to domination which, as he wished to show, did not have to be invented or incited, since it had always already begun. We may take it that it was in order to ground this argument that he took over a periodization of universal history which allowed him to conceive the struggle of 'those at the bottom' as arising from the very core of collective history.

We must, however, take one step further for, if Marx had merely been the thinker of revolt, the sense of his constant opposition to utopianism would be completely lost. That opposition never sought to be a return to a standpoint which could not encompass the insurrectional and imaginative power represented by the utopian spirit. It will be even less like such a return if we recognize ideology as the element – the very stuff – of politics, renouncing once and for all the positivistic vein in Marxism. But this will simply emphasize all the more the element of questioning contained in Marx's dual *anti-utopian* thrust, one strand of which goes by the name of '*praxis*', the other by that of '*dialectic*'. This is what I have called *action in the present* and what I have attempted to analyse as a *theoretical* knowledge of the material conditions which constitute the 'present'. Having long designated the *reduction* of rebellion to science, or vice versa, it may now be that the dialectic will simply come to designate the infinitely open question of their *conjunction* (the term is used by Jean-Claude Milner in his book *Constat*).⁷ This is not to restrict Marx to a more modest programme, but to grant him for many years to come the role of inescapable 'go-between' for philosophy and politics.

Notes

1. Marxist Philosophy or Marx's Philosophy?

1. See Georges Labica, 'Marxisme', in *Encyclopaedia Universalis, Supplément 2*, 1980; and the articles 'Marxisme' (Labica), 'Matérialisme dialectique' (Pierre Macherey) and 'Crise du marxisme' (Gérard Bensussan), in Labica and Bensussan, eds, *Dictionnaire critique du marxisme*, second edition, Presses Universitaires de France, Paris, 1985.
2. Karl Marx, 'The Eighteenth Brumaire of Louis Bonaparte', trans. Ben Fowkes, in *Surveys from Exile*, Penguin *New Left Review*, Harmondsworth, 1973, pp. 143–249. Cf. Jean-Paul Sartre, *Search for a Method*, trans. Hazel E. Barnes, Vintage, New York, 1968.
3. Marx and Engels, 'Manifesto of the Communist Party', in *The Revolutions of 1848*, Penguin/*New Left Review*, Harmondsworth, 1973, pp. 62–98.
4. On the vicissitudes of the 'dictatorship of the proletariat' in Marx and among his successors, see my article in Labica and Bensussan, eds, *Dictionnaire critique du marxisme*. The best presentation of Marx's different models of revolution is to be found in Stanley Moore, *Three Tactics: The Background in Marx*, Monthly Review Press, New York, 1963.

2. Changing the World: From Praxis to Production

1. To these we must add the set of reading notes published in the new *Marx-Engels Gesamtausgabe* (Volume IV/2, Berlin, 1981). The text which is known by the title *Ökonomisch-philosophische Manuskripte* is, in fact, put together from the most "fully composed" portions of these working notes. An English translation by Rodney Livingstone and Gregor Benton can be found in Marx, *Early Writings*, Penguin/*New Left Review*, Harmondsworth, 1975, pp. 279–400.

2. The *Theses* were published in 1888 by Engels, in a somewhat corrected version, as an appendix to his own essay *Ludwig Feuerbach and the End of Classical German Philosophy*.

3. Also published posthumously in 1932. The first part of this work is also entitled "Feuerbach" and it would not be long before this came to be regarded as the most systematic of the general expositions of "historical materialism", aside from the works of Engels.

4. Georges Labica, *Karl Marx. Les Thèses sur Feuerbach*, Presses Universitaires de France, Paris, 1987. Labica gives the text of the two German versions of the Theses and provides a French translation.

5. Ludwig Feuerbach, *The Essence of Christianity*, trans. George Eliot, Harper and Row, New York and London, 1957.

6. A reference to *Quand dire c'est faire*, the French translation of J.L. Austin's *How to do things with words* [trans.].

7. André Breton, "Speech to the Congress of writers" (1935), in *Manifestoes of Surrealism*, trans. Richard Seaver and Helen R. Lane, University of Michigan Press, Ann Arbor, 1972, pp. 234–41.

8. Thanks, in particular, to the studies of Michel Espagne and Gérard Bensussan on Moses Hess, the future theorist of Zionism, who was then a socialist very close to Marx and Engels, both of whom, like him, saw the discovery of communism as the "solution of the riddle of history". See Gérard Bensussan, *Moses Hess, la philosophie, le socialisme (1836–1845)*, Presses Universitaires de France, Paris, 1985; see also Michel Espagne's edition of Hess's *Die europäische Triarchie* in French translation: *Berlin, Paris, Londres (La Triarchie européenne)*, Éditions du Lérot, Tusson, 1988.

9. See Jacques Grandjonc, *Communisme/Kommunismus/Communism: Origine et développement international de la terminologie communautaire prémarxiste des utopistes aux néo-babouistes 1785–1842*, 2 volumes, Schriften aus dem Karl-Marx-Haus, Trier, 1989.

10. See Kant, "Perpetual Peace: A Philosophical Sketch", "What is orientation in thinking?", and "An answer to the question: What is Enlightenment?", in Hans Reiss, ed., *Kant, Political Writings*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, second edition, 1991.

11. See chapter 7: "The Labour Process and the Valorization Process", in Marx, *Capital*, Volume 1, trans. Ben Fowkes, Penguin/*New Left Review*, Harmondsworth, 1976, p. 286.

12. *The German Ideology: Part One*, ed. and trans. C.J. Arthur, Lawrence and Wishart, London, 1970, p. 42.

13. In 1810 Humboldt had founded the University of Berlin which today bears his name. His major linguistic and philosophical monographs appeared after his death in 1835 (see Humboldt, *On Language: The Diversity of Human Language Structure and Its Influence on the Mental Development of Mankind*, trans. Peter Heath, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 1988).

14. A term coined in the eighteenth century to refer to what Aristotle had called the "science of first principles and first causes", and which he identified with thinking on "being as being" (*on hê on*), as distinct from particular kinds of being.

15. Cf. Louis Dumont, *Homo aequalis I. Genèse et épanouissement de l'idéologie économique*, Gallimard, Paris, 1977, for whom Marx, "in spite of appearances . . . is essentially individualistic". Starting out from different premisses, one of the main representatives of "Analytical Marxism", Jon Elster, reaches a similar conclusion (*Making sense of Marx*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 1985), as does Jacques Bidet (*Théorie de la modernité, suivi de Marx et le marché*, Presses Universitaires de France, Paris, 1990).

16. See, especially, Gilbert Simondon, *L'individuation psychique et collective*, Aubier, Paris, 1989.

17. Max Stirner, *The Ego and its Own*, trans. Steven T. Byington, Jonathan Cape, London, 1971.

18. *The German Ideology*, p. 48.

19. *Ibid.*, pp. 92–3.

20. *Ibid.*, p. 93.

21. 'Manifesto of the Communist Party', p. 87.

22. "A class which in all nations has the same interest and with which nationality is already dead; a class which is really rid of all the old world and at the same time stands pitted against it" (*The German Ideology*, p. 78).

23. 'Manifesto of the Communist Party', p. 79.

24. Hannah Arendt, *The Human Condition*, Chicago University Press, Chicago and London, 1958. See also a commentary by André Tosel, "Matérialisme de la production, matérialisme de la pratique: un ou deux paradigmes?", in *L'Esprit de scission. Études sur Marx, Gramsci, Lukács*, Université de Besançon, Diffusion Les Belles Lettres, Paris, 1991.

3. Ideology or Fetishism: Power and Subjection

1. As we know, Marx did not invent the term 'ideology', which was coined, of course, by the French *ideologues* (and apparently first used by Destutt de Tracy, whose *Éléments d'idéologie* first appeared between 1804 and 1815). It was not even Marx who first reversed its use from positive to negative, a move which is sometimes attributed to Napoleon. For a detailed analysis of the problem, see Patrick Quantin, *Les Origines de l'idéologie*, Economica, Paris, 1987. Beyond its immediate sources, the term has a whole philosophical genealogy which, via Locke and Bacon, takes us back to two opposing ancient sources: the Platonic forms (*eidè*) and the 'simulacra' (*eidôla*) of Epicurean philosophy.

2. 'Clearly the weapon of criticism cannot replace the criticism of weapons,

and material force must be overthrown by material force. But theory also becomes a material force once it has gripped the masses' ('Critique of Hegel's Philosophy of Right. Introduction'). This article first appeared in 1843 in the *Deutsch-Französische Jahrbücher* published in Paris by Marx and Ruge. (The text here is taken from the translation by Gregor Benton in Marx, *Early Writings*, p. 251.)

3. *The German Ideology*, p. 64.

4. See Sarah Kofman, *Camera obscura. De l'idéologie*, Éditions Galilée, Paris, 1973.

5. Daring to plagiarize Habermas here, one might say that for the Marx of *The German Ideology*, consciousness is clearly from the outset a 'communicative action'. We can see this in the description he offers of the relations between consciousness and language: 'language is practical consciousness that exists also for other men, and for that reason alone it really exists for me personally as well; language, like consciousness, only arises from the need, the necessity, of intercourse with other men . . .' (*The German Ideology*, p. 51). But that action is not subject *a priori* to any logical or moral *norm*. On the other hand, it remains indissociable from a teleology or internal finality, as expressed by the identity of the notions of 'life', 'production', 'labour' and 'history'. See Jürgen Habermas, *The Theory of Communicative Action*, trans. Thomas McCarthy: Volume 1, *Reason and the Rationalization of Society* (Beacon Press, Boston, 1984); Volume 2, *Lifeworld and System: A Critique of Functionalist Reason* (Beacon Press, Boston, 1987).

6. *The German Ideology*, p. 80.

7. Étienne Balibar, 'Division du travail manuel et intellectuel', in *Dictionnaire Critique du marxisme*; the Fourierist influence on Marx (and Engels) is very strong here (cf. Simone Debout, *L'utopie de Charles Fourier*, Petite Bibliothèque Payot, Paris, 1978), as also is that of Robert Owen.

8. *The German Ideology*, pp. 51–2.

9. This is generally recognized as having been founded by Karl Mannheim; see his *Ideology and Utopia* (1936), trans. L. Wirth and E. Shils, Routledge and Kegan Paul, London, 1972. See also Jürgen Habermas, *Knowledge and Human Interests*, trans. Jeremy J. Shapiro, Beacon Press, Boston, 1971.

10. The word '*Stand*' translates into English, depending on the context, as rank, status or estate. For a description of the role of intellectuals in Hegel, see *The Philosophy of Right*, trans. T.M. Knox, Clarendon Press, Oxford, 1942. For an analysis of the later developments of this problematic, see Catherine Colliot-Thélène, *Le Désenchantement de l'État de Hegel à Max Weber*, Éditions de Minuit, Paris, 1992.

11. 'Manifesto of the Communist Party', p. 84.

12. The Eighteenth Brumaire is the text in which Marx essays a description of the historical imaginary of the masses. See Paul-Laurent Assoun,

Marx et la répétition historique, Presses Universitaires de France, Paris, 1978 and Pierre Macherey, 'Figures de l'homme d'en bas', *A quoi pense la littérature?*, Presses Universitaires de France, Paris, 1990.

13. The section on 'The Fetishism of the Commodity and its Secret' forms the conclusion to chapter 1. It is, in reality, all of a piece with the short chapter 2, 'The Process of Exchange', where the correspondence between economic and juridical categories is presented. Both of these occupy the place – essential in Hegelian logic – of the *mediation* between the abstract ('The Commodity') and the concrete ('Money, or the Circulation of Commodities').

14. A very precise and clear account of all this is given in the recent work by Alfonso Iacono, *Le Fétichisme. Histoire d'un concept*, Presses Universitaires de France, Paris, 1992.

15. On this question, see chapter 48 of *Capital*, Volume 3 (published by Engels), 'The Trinity Formula', which draws a line of demarcation between 'classical' and 'vulgar' economists and concludes as follows:

Capital-profit (or better still capital-interest), land-ground-rent, labour-wages, this economic trinity as the connection between the components of value and wealth in general and its sources, completes the mystification of the capitalist mode of production, the reification of social relations, and the immediate coalescence of the material relations of production with their historical and social specificity: the bewitched, distorted and upside down world haunted by Monsieur le Capital and Madame la Terre, who are at the same time social characters and mere things. It is the great merit of classical economics to have dissolved this false appearance and deception, this autonomization and ossification of the different social elements of wealth vis-à-vis one another, this personification of things and reification of the relations of production, this religion of everyday life . . . (Marx, *Capital*, Volume 3, trans. David Fernbach, Penguin/*New Left Review*, Harmondsworth, 1991, pp. 968–9.)

I shall return below to the question of the merits of classical economics.

16. *Capital*, Volume 1, pp. 165–6.

17. The Latin word *sacer* has the dual religious meaning of 'sacred' and 'accursed'. The best account of how commodity and monetary circulation engenders fetishistic appearances is provided by Suzanne De Brunhoff in 'Le langage des marchandises', *Les Rapports d'argent*, PUG/Maspero, Paris, 1979. See also by the same author, *La Monnaie chez Marx*, Éditions sociales, Paris, 1967.

18. *Capital*, Volume 1, p. 170.

19. *Ibid.*, p. 187.

20. Michel Foucault, *The Order of Things. An Archaeology of the Human Sciences*, Vintage Books, New York, 1973, p. 322.

21. *Capital*, Volume 1, p. 169.

22. Georg Lukács, *History and Class Consciousness. Studies in Marxist Dialectics*, trans. Rodney Livingstone, Merlin, London, 1971.

23. Lucien Goldmann, *Lukács and Heidegger, Towards a New*

Philosophy, trans. William Q. Boelhower, Routledge and Kegan Paul, Boston, 1977.

24. E. B. Pashukanis, *Law and Marxism: A General Theory*, trans. Barbara Einhorn, Pluto, London, 1983.

25. In *Freud, Marx, économie et symbolique*, Éditions du Seuil, Paris, 1973.

26. In his short work, *Critiques des droits de l'homme*, Presses Universitaires de France, Paris, 1989.

27. Marx, *Grundrisse*, trans. Martin Nicolaus, Penguin/*New Left Review*, Harmondsworth, 1973, p. 245.

28. *Capital*, Volume 1, p. 280.

29. *Ibid.*, pp. 544–53: chapter 15, 'Machinery and Large-Scale Industry', section 4, 'The Factory'.

30. *Ibid.*, pp. 412–16.

31. *Ibid.*, p. 929.

4. Time and Progress: Another Philosophy of History?

1. 'The Poverty of Philosophy', in Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels, *Collected Works*, Volume 6, Lawrence and Wishart, London, 1976, p. 174.

2. Preface to *A Contribution to the Critique of Political Economy*, Lawrence and Wishart, London, 1971, pp. 20–1.

3. *Capital*, Volume 1, pp. 614–19.

4. *Ibid.*, pp. 928–9.

5. Basic Books, New York, 1980.

6. 'La décadence de l'idée de progrès', *Revue de métaphysique et de morale*, 4, 1987.

7. *Illuminations*, trans. Harry Zohn, Fontana/Collins, Glasgow, 1973, pp. 258, 260.

8. In his 'Reply to John Lewis', *Essays in Self-Criticism*, trans. Ben Brewster, New Left Books, London, 1976, p. 89.

9. On the way Marxism transcribed the revolutionary idea of socialization into an evolutionist language, see Jean Robelin, *Marxisme et socialisation*, Méridiens-Klincksieck, Paris, 1989. On socialist images of the future in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, see Marc Angenot, *L'Utopie collectiviste*, Presses Universitaires de France, Paris, 1993.

10. Cf. Jean-François Lyotard, *The Postmodern Condition*, trans. Geoff Bennington and Brian Massumi, Minnesota University Press, Minneapolis, 1984.

11. *Evolutionary Socialism: A Criticism and Affirmation*, trans. Edith C. Harvey, Schocken Books, New York, 1961, p. 202.

12. John Rawls, *A Theory of Justice*, Oxford University Press, Oxford, 1973.

13. 'Since the *whole of what is called world history* is nothing more than the creation of man through human labour, and the development of nature for man, he therefore has palpable and incontrovertible proof of his self-mediated *birth*, of his *process of emergence*' (Marx, 'Economic and Philosophical Manuscripts', *Early Writings*, p. 357).

14. *Ibid.*, p. 354.

15. Georges Canguilhem, 'What is a scientific ideology?' (1970), in *Ideology and Rationality in the History of the Life Sciences*, trans. Arthur Goldhammer, MIT Press, Cambridge (Mass.), 1988. An excellent account of evolutionism before and after Darwin is given in Canguilhem, Georges Lapassade, Jacques Piquemal and Jacques Ulmann, *Du développement à l'évolution au XIX^e siècle*, Presses Universitaires de France, Paris, 1985; see also Yvette Conry, ed., *De Darwin au darwinisme: science et idéologie*, Librairie Vrin, Paris, 1983.

16. 'The Anti-Christ', in *Twilight of the Idols and the Anti-Christ*, trans. R. J. Hollingdale, Penguin, Harmondsworth, 1990, p. 128.

17. 'The bourgeois mode of production is the last antagonistic form of the social process of production – antagonistic not in the sense of individual antagonism, but of an antagonism that emanates from the individuals' social conditions of existence – but the productive forces developing within bourgeois society create also the material conditions for a solution of this antagonism. The prehistory of human society accordingly closes with this social formation' (Preface to *A Contribution to the Critique of Political Economy*, pp. 21–22).

18. *Capital*, Volume 1, chapter 10, 'The Working Day', section 2: 'The Voracious Appetite for Surplus Labour. Manufacturer and Boyar', pp. 344 ff.

19. *Capital*, Volume 1, chapter 15, section 9: 'The Health and Education Clauses of the Factory Acts. The General Extension of Factory Legislation in England', pp. 610–35. It is the Italian so-called 'operaista' school which has been the most vigorous in stressing this aspect of Marx's thought: cf. Mario Tronti, *Operai e capitale*, Einaudi, Turin, 1971 and Antonio Negri, *La classe ouvrière contre l'état*, Éditions Galilée, Paris, 1978. See also the debate between Nicos Poulantzas (*Political Power and Social Classes*, New Left Books, London, 1973) and Ralph Miliband (*Marxism and Politics*, Oxford University Press, Oxford, 1977) on the 'relative autonomy of the State' in the class struggle.

20. 'It is always the bad side that in the end triumphs over the good side. It is the bad side that produces the movement which makes history, by providing a struggle' (Marx and Engels, *Collected Works*, Volume 6, p. 174).

21. *Illuminations*, pp. 259–60.

22. '[W]e walk amidst the ruins . . . We are dealing here with the category of the negative . . . and we cannot fail to notice how all that is finest and noblest in the history of the world is immolated upon its altar . . . In the

rise and fall of all things it discerns an enterprise at which the entire human race has laboured' (*Lectures on the Philosophy of World History. Introduction*, trans. H. B. Nisbet, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 1975, pp. 32, 43).

23. *Capital*, Volume 1, chapter 16, 'Absolute and Relative Surplus Value', pp. 643–54. Cf. also Appendix, 'Results of the Immediate Process of Production', pp. 948–1084.

24. The possibility of thinking a 'real contradiction' is the touchstone of the Marxist dialectic. Cf. Henri Lefebvre, *Logique formelle et logique dialectique*, third edition, Éditions Sociales, Paris, 1982 and Pierre Raymond, *Matérialisme dialectique et logique*, Maspero, Paris, 1977. The possibility has been vigorously contested, particularly by Lucio Colletti in 'Marxism and the Dialectic', *New Left Review* 93, September/October 1975, pp. 3–29. The contribution of Althusser precisely consisted in reformulating this possibility.

25. The essential documents here are two sets of notes produced by Marx, known respectively as the 'Conspectus of Bakunin's *Statism and Anarchy*' (1874–5) and the 'Critique of the Gotha Programme' (official title: 'Marginal Notes on the Programme of the German Workers' Party) (1875). The former remained unpublished until they appeared in the twentieth century with other manuscripts of Marx (notably in Volume XVIII of the *Marx-Engels Werke*, Dietz Verlag, Berlin, 1964). The latter, which were communicated privately to the leaders of German Social Democracy (Marx stated that in the end he considered it pointless to make them public, since the socialist workers had read into the draft programme something it did not contain, namely a revolutionary platform), were published twenty years later by Engels as a pendant to his own 'Critique of the Erfurt Programme' (1892). Both texts are printed in Karl Marx, *The First International and After*, Penguin/*New Left Review*, Harmondsworth, 1974, pp. 333–59.

26. 'The Civil War in France: Address of the General Council', in *The First International and After*, p. 212.

27. *The First International and After*, p. 355.

28. *Ibid.*, p. 347.

29. Henri Lefebvre, *De l'État*, Volume 2: *Théorie marxiste de l'État de Hegel à Mao*, Union Générale d'Éditions, Paris, 1976.

30. The text in question is the 'Letter to *Otechestvenniye Zapiski*' (also known as the 'Letter to Mikhailovsky'): see Marx/Engels, *Selected Correspondence*, Progress Publishers, Moscow, 1975, pp. 291–4.

31. 'Dear Citizeness, a nervous illness that I have been suffering from periodically for the last ten years has prevented me from replying earlier to your letter . . .' (Marx to Vera Zasulich, in Maurice Godelier, ed., *Sur les sociétés précapitalistes. Textes choisis de Marx, Engels, Lénine*, CERM/Éditions Sociales, 1970, pp. 318–42). All these letters are in French. Marx had learned to read Russian, but did not write it.

32. At the same time, Engels was outlining similar considerations on the basis of his reading of the works of the historian Georg Maurer on ancient Germanic communities (see 'The Gens among Celts and Germans', in Engels, *The Origin of the Family, Private Property and the State*, Penguin edition, Harmondsworth, 1985, and the commentary by Michael Löwy and Robert Sayre, *Révolution et mélancolie. Le romantisme à contre-courant de la modernité*, Payot, Paris, 1992, pp. 128 ff.). These works are, however, still dominated by the influence of the anthropological evolutionism of Lewis Morgan (*Ancient Society*, 1877) whom Marx greatly admired.

33. This and subsequent quotations are from the letter to Vera Zasulich, as reprinted in Godelier.

34. Preface to *A Contribution to the Critique of Political Economy*, p. 106.

35. 'Letter to *Otechestvenniye Zapiski*', *Selected Correspondence*, pp. 293–4.

36. Cf. Immanuel Wallerstein, *Historical Capitalism*, Verso, London, 1983.

5. Science and Revolution

1. Desclée de Brouwer, Paris, 1992.

2. *The German Ideology: Part One*, p. 40.

3. The remark was originally made to Lafargue in French and is reported in a letter from Engels to Bernstein of 2–3 November 1882, Marx and Engels, *Collected Works*, Volume 46, p. 356.

4. A translation of this article is published in Antonio Gramsci, *Selections from Political Writings 1910–1920*, Lawrence and Wishart, London, 1977, pp. 34–7.

5. *Capital*, Volume 3, p. 959. See also Engels, *Anti-Dühring: Herr Eugen Dühring's Revolution in Science*, Progress Publishers, Moscow, 1947, pp. 343–4.

6. Columbia University Press, New York, 1986.

7. Verdier, Paris, 1992.

Bibliographical Guide

Finding one's way around the enormous bibliography of the works of Marx, his successors and his commentators has become a difficult undertaking on its own account. Apart from a few specialist librarians, no one can now claim a complete command of all the material available, even in a single language. (The decline in the popularity of Marxism, which, it should be said, varies very considerably from country to country, has not improved this situation, since the effect has been that many texts and editions – including recent ones and not necessarily those of least merit – have become impossible to find.) In spite of these obstacles, I shall try to point here to a number of articles, books and reference works which flesh out the references provided in the main text. Priority will be accorded to texts which originally appeared in French, but a number of works from other countries, for which there is no French equivalent, will also be listed.*

1. Works by Marx

There is a twofold problem here. On the one hand, Marx's work remained unfinished. As I have pointed out above, there are various reasons for this: the external constraints on Marx's work, its intrinsic difficulties and an intellectual attitude which meant constantly calling his results into question

* I would like to thank Gregory Elliot for providing the information on English editions of Marx's work. This replaces comments on French translations of Marx given in the original edition of this book. In the additional bibliographical information that follows, the works listed are generally those which figure in the original edition and are thus, of necessity, predominantly French. [Trans.]

and which led him to 'rework' his concepts rather than finish his books. There are, then, many unpublished works, some of which have subsequently become 'works' as important as the finished texts. On the other hand, the publication of those texts (the selection of which are considered to be essential and the manner in which they are presented and even divided up) has always been an issue in political struggles between different 'tendencies' – powerful State, party and even academic apparatuses. Publication of a *Marx-Engels Gesamtausgabe* (complete works of Marx and Engels, abbreviated to MEGA) has been violently interrupted on two occasions, first in the 1930s, when the Stalinist regime crushed the project begun after the Russian Revolution by Ryazanov, and then when 'real socialism' collapsed in the USSR and GDR, halting (temporarily?) the production of a 'MEGA mark II'. There is therefore nothing neutral about choosing a particular edition: it is often the case that works of the same title do not, in reality, contain precisely the same text. The most commonly used edition of the German original texts is the *Marx-Engels Werke* published by Dietz Verlag of Berlin (38+2 volumes, 1961–68).

An English edition of the *Collected Works* of Marx and Engels in fifty volumes, jointly prepared by Lawrence and Wishart (London), International Publishers (New York) and Progress Publishers (Moscow), in collaboration with the Institute of Marxism-Leninism in Moscow, commenced publication in 1975. A *Selected Works* in three volumes appeared from Progress Publishers in 1969–70, as did a revised edition of *Selected Correspondence* in 1975. An excellent anthology of Marx's *Selected Writings*, edited by David McLellan, was published by Oxford University Press in 1977. Translations of most of Marx and Engels's individual works have been released under the imprint of Lawrence and Wishart or Progress Publishers.

Perhaps the most useful edition of Marx available in English is the Pelican Marx Library, which is intermediate between the *Selected* and *Collected Works*. Published, under the general editorship of Quintin Hoare, by Penguin Books in association with *New Left Review*, it comprises the following:

(1) *Early Writings*, ed. and introd. Lucio Colletti, trans. Gregor Benton and Rodney Livingstone, Harmondsworth, 1975. Includes the *Critique of Hegel's Doctrine of the State*, *On the Jewish Question*, *A Contribution to the Critique of Hegel's Philosophy of Right*. *Introduction* and the *Economic and Philosophical Manuscripts*, as well as the 1859 Preface to *A Contribution to the Critique of Political Economy* and the *Theses on Feuerbach*.

(2) *Political Writings* in three volumes, ed. and introd. David Fernbach, trans. Ben Fowkes, Paul Jackson et al.: Volume 1, *The Revolutions of 1848*, Harmondsworth, 1973; Volume 2, *Surveys from Exile*, Harmondsworth, 1973; Volume 3, *The First International and After*, Harmondsworth, 1974.

These include the *Manifesto of the Communist Party*, *The Class Struggles in France*, *The Eighteenth Brumaire of Louis Bonaparte*, *The Civil War in France*, and the *Critique of the Gotha Programme*.

(3) *Grundrisse: Foundations of the Critique of Political Economy (rough draft)*, trans. with a Foreword by Martin Nicolaus, Harmondsworth, 1973.

(4) *Capital: A Critique of Political Economy* in three volumes, introd. Ernest Mandel: Volume 1, trans. Ben Fowkes, Harmondsworth, 1976; Volume 2, trans. David Fernbach, Harmondsworth, 1978; Volume 3, trans. David Fernbach, Harmondsworth, 1981.

2. General works

There is no good recent biography of Marx in French. The following may profitably be consulted:

Franz Mehring, *Karl Marx: The Story of His Life*, trans. Edward Fitzgerald, Harvester, Brighton, 1981.

David Ryazanov, *Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels*, trans. Joshua Kunitz, Monthly Review Press, New York, 1973.

Jean Bruhat, *Marx et Engels*, Union Générale d'Éditions, Paris, 1971.

It is interesting to complement this reading with the *Correspondence* between Marx and Engels.

On Marx's intellectual development, the essential work remains Auguste Cornu, *Karl Marx et Friedrich Engels*, Volume 1, *Les Années d'enfance et de jeunesse. La gauche hégélienne 1818-1820/1844*, Presses Universitaires de France (PUF), Paris, 1955; Volume 2: *Du libéralisme démocratique au communisme. La Gazette rhénane. Les Annales franco-allemandes, 1842-44*, PUF, Paris, 1958; Volume 3: *Marx à Paris*, PUF, Paris, 1961; Volume 4: *La Formation du matérialisme historique*, PUF, Paris, 1970.

On the constitution of the notion of 'Marxism', and the reactions of Marx and Engels, see Georges Haupt, 'From Marx to Marxism', in *Aspects of International Socialism*, trans. Peter Fawcett, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 1986. The best general history of Marxism is the one published by Einaudi of Turin in five volumes, entitled *Storia del marxismo* (ed. E. J. Hobsbawm et al.). The first volume is translated into English as *The History of Marxism*, Volume 1, *Marxism in Marx's Day*, Harvester, Brighton, 1982. Also worthy of attention are: Leszek Kolakowski, *Main Currents of Marxism: Its Rise, Growth and Dissolution*, Volumes 1 and 2, Clarendon, Oxford, 1978; and René Gallissot, ed., *Les Aventures du marxisme*, Syros, Paris, 1984.

An excellent account of the history of Western philosophical Marxism is provided by André Tosel, 'Le développement du marxisme en Europe occidentale depuis 1917', in *Histoire de la philosophie, Encyclopédie de la Pléiade*, Volume 3, Gallimard, Paris, 1974.

3. Additional references for the chapters of the present work

Marxist Philosophy or Marx's Philosophy?

Paul-Laurent Assoun and Gérard Rautet, *Marxisme et théorie critique*, Payot, Paris, 1978.

Centre d'études et de recherches marxistes, *Sur la dialectique*, Éditions Sociales, Paris, 1977.

Lucio Colletti, *Marxism and Hegel*, trans. Lawrence Garner, New Left Books, London, 1973.

Max Horkheimer, *Critical Theory: Selected Essays*, Continuum, New York, 1982.

Karl Kautsky, *Ethics and the Materialist Concept of History*, trans. John B. Askew, Charles H. Kerr, Chicago, 1906.

Karl Korsch, *Marxism and Philosophy*, trans. Fred Halliday, New Left Books, London, 1970.

Karel Kosik, *Dialectics of the Concrete: A study on Problems of Man and World*, D. Reidel, Boston/Dordrecht, 1976.

Georges Labica, *Le Marxisme-Léninisme*, Bruno Huisman Éditions, Paris, 1984.

Henri Lefebvre, *Métaphilosophie*, Éditions de Minuit, Paris, 1965.

—, *Problèmes actuels du marxisme*, Presses Universitaires de France, Paris, 1970.

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