THE LANGUAGE OF POLITICS

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Abstract:

This paper deals with Marx's claim that he has presented a scientific or non-ideological account of social problems. Having explained what an ideology is for Marx, I criticize those of his followers who view possible understandings of the world as self-inclosed language games which can offer no justification for their validity except by appealing to the rules of the particular language game in question. To show that Marx would be dissatisfied with the relativism implicit in the more contemporary position, I compare his analysis of history to Hegel's Phenomenology and argue that the latter work is useful in understanding why one particular mode of thought is seen as non-perspectival or scientific.
This essay is part of a larger work which deals with our apparent inability to offer a non-ideological critique of contemporary social and political questions.¹ I start by examining the work of Karl Mannheim, who is perhaps the first contemporary thinker to popularize the problem and conclude that his solution is far from satisfactory. He does clarify matters, though, by distinguishing between a particular and a total conception of ideology.² The former involves a critique of only some of the statements our political adversary makes and is closely connected with a psychology of interests. We do not question our opponent's reasoning powers or his general ability to make judgments. Rather, we say that this or that particular judgment is at fault and that our opponent's error can be traced to particular interests, motives or needs which make it impossible for him to assess the situation correctly. The total conception of ideology is somewhat different and involves a critique not of any one particular thought, but of an entire thought system. Our opponent has not made random errors. Rather his whole conceptual schema is askew. Although it might be consistent and whole, it nonetheless distorts reality, tints all his perceptions and makes agreement between him and his critic (who presumably has a less distorting system) impossible.

According to Mannheim, Marx is the first to deal systematically with the problem of false consciousness and the necessary and apparently insuperable limitations placed on us by the social constellation into which we are born. Although he recognizes that Marx has achieved a fusion of the two conceptions of ideology, Mannheim rejects the former's view as not being self-critical and as being as much the product of class position and class interest as the work of any other social critic. In this essay, I will try to sketch briefly what I feel Marx's reply to such charges would be and to outline the solution he would offer to the problem of relativism. In so doing, I will call into question the often cited split between


'the young and the mature' Marx and also hope to clarify the relationship between Marx and his predecessors, especially Hegel.

Marx is certainly aware of the problems alluded to above. He constantly castigates his predecessors and critics for reifying or eternalizing the set of social relationships which seems to characterize the society in which they live. Not only have they failed to discover the true nature of these determinants, they have also (and these two errors must be seen as codeterminate) blindly procrusteanized history by seeing nothing in the past, but an imperfect mirroring of the present. Marx purports to present, in contrast to the 'vulgar ideologues' he criticizes, a scientific analysis of the problems he treats. Unfortunately, he never clearly distinguishes between a science and an ideology, never clearly tells us how we can obtain the certitude of the former and avoid the illusions of the latter. It is possible, however, to cull from his work a consistent position on this subject. Theories of Surplus Value, Capital, and especially the small section on "The Method of Political Economy" in the Grundrisse are filled with passages in which Marx points to flaws in the work of other social analysts, contrasts their work with his own and talks of the structure of a non-ideological, self-critical and scientific analysis of society.

Marx distinguishes his work from that of his less successful colleagues first by pointing to a difference in method. The ideologue is one who deals in false abstractions, who illegitimately isolates different aspects of a complex problem and who fails to recognize that the parts cannot be understood without reference to the whole. Marx refuses to be bound by an arbitrary division of knowledge into various disciplines and insists that the categories used to describe problematic phenomena be subjected to a critical examination designed to expose the many relations uniting them. The result is that the object of his inquiry is significantly different from the object of any previous scholarly investigation.3

As to the apparent insularity of historical epochs and the seeming inability of modern thinkers to understand earlier cultures, Marx would reply that this is, indeed, the problem of the day. It does not signify, however, a necessary or universal limit to human reasoning. Instead, it reveals the limits of fetishized thought and can be circumvented as soon as we 'step out of our bourgeois skins.' We can go beyond these limits only after we locate the modern world in an historical process which leads to a certain kind of universality, a certain kind of epistemological priority which offers the key to an understanding of modern society, those societies which came before

3Ellard, esp. pp. 25 - 96.
the bourgeois epoch, and the new society which he sees as its necessary consequence. This process does offer, says Marx, a privileged position from which we can understand societal growth and decay.

The Problem Of Science

With this admittedly sketchy summary as a backdrop, I would like to examine a tendency I see as implicit in the writings of many contemporary Marxists and as more or less explicit in conversations I have had with many of my peers. This examination will, I hope, place in relief the central problem raised by contemporary discussions of ideology and help us in reaching our goal of understanding what Marx means by "science." The tendency I am going to argue against can be reduced to the position which grants the validity of Marx's approach to socio-political phenomena and the the truth of most of his substantive conclusions, but refuses to grant any sort of epistemological priority to any conceptual scheme. Thus, we find Mannheim claiming to be a Marxist and yet still faced with the problem of breaking down the insularity of historical epochs. There is also Sartre who claims that Marxism and all the other great philosophies are "insurpassable until the historical moment whose expression they are has been surpassed." Finally, there are those who acknowledge that Marx has at last discovered the principles governing social development and agree with Mao Tse-Tung that "the process of change in the objective world will never end, nor will man's knowledge of truth through practice." "Marxist-Leninism," he says, "has in no way summed up all knowledge of truth, but is ceaselessly opening up through practice the road to knowledge of truth."5

As far as I know, Marx never claims to have summed up all knowledge of truth, but I do think that he would insist on locating the significance of any social constellation in terms of its relation to the constellation definitive of the bourgeois world. But if, like Mao, you see contradiction as a necessary and eternal aspect of all things or if, like Mannheim and Sartre, you see historical epochs as discrete and closed entities, then you have undermined the priority of any particular social constellation and can no longer guarantee that historical change can be explained in terms of a conceptual system adequate to any historically prior development. Marx feels that, conceptually, capitalism


has exhausted everything new under the sun. Different societies can, of course, be imagined (remember, Marx did write the *Communist Manifesto*), but the categories truly applicable to bourgeois society are at once the most abstract and universal kinds of categories. Hence, they are not only applicable to, but also essential for, an understanding of every other possible kind of social relationship. The tendency which I see opposed to Marx is often expressed in language reminiscent of Wittgenstein: social orders are defined by their practice, by the rules which govern the moves within those orders. A person standing within one social game cannot understand the movement of another game unless he adopts the practices definitive of the latter. And finally, there is no practice which will enable us to stand above all practices while rendering a metacritique of practice. There is no hierarchy of practices; there is just practice.

We might find a solution to this problem, or at least see its significance more clearly, by using as a touchstone a caricature of Thomas Kuhn's analysis of the development of science. This notion of science, I will argue, parallels the view held by many contemporary Marxists, especially those just cited, and stands in contrast to the notion held by Marx, himself. Briefly, Kuhn sees the history of science as a succession of paradigms or models which provide the framework in which "facts" can be seen as facts, questions can be raised as to the relevance of any given phenomenon to an understanding of the object studied, and criteria can be established for determining both the proper method of approach and the kinds of answers which will be accepted as valid replies to the relevant questions. Revolutions occur in science when one paradigm is replaced by another. This change usually takes place through a gradual conversion of those members of the scientific community who come to see that the old paradigm cannot explain fundamental anomalies, and it signifies a radical shift in the criteria for determining what it is that counts as science. Paradigms provide scientists with glasses -- or, perhaps, with blinders. They define the object of study, provide the background against which certain phenomena will appear as anomalies or puzzles to be solved, give assurance that the various puzzles will have scientific solutions, and supply rules specifying the nature of acceptable solutions and the steps through which they can be validly obtained.

At first glance, Marx's description of classical political

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6*The Structure of Scientific Revolutions* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1962). I use this work to clarify the present problem. I do not mean to imply that Kuhn, himself, is caught in the kind of relativism implicit in the view I am criticizing.
economy is very close to this caricature of a Kuhnian
description of a formerly dominant, but now discarded,
scientific paradigm. Although Marx is rooted in the tradi-
he criticizes, the object of his study is essentially
different from the object of any previous study; he believes
that the standards he applies to his work are "entirely
foreign" to those of classical economy, that the methods of
Smith and Ricardo are fatally flawed, and that the questions
they ask, misconceived. Engels, for instance, comments on
Ricardo's analysis of the value of labor: "The question is
indeed insoluble, if put in this form. It has been correctly
formulated by Marx and thereby answered." Marx is not
looking at the same things which caught the gaze of his
predecessors; he is not concerned with the same questions,
would not be satisfied with their answers, even with those
correct answers which they stumbled upon, nor would he
approve of their modes of investigation.

Kuhn also argues that there is normally only one dominant
paradigm. The set of standards and assumptions which go to
define that paradigm are represented in textbooks as compris­
ing the one and only set of standards and assumptions which
make a discipline scientific. History is unconsciously
rewritten so that scientists who worked within a different
paradigm appear to share the same framework as the scientists
of the day, and the history of science is thus presented as
a linear development.

Here Kuhn, in Marxist terminology, describes fetishism and
the tendency of bourgeois thinkers to rewrite history so that
the past appears as nothing more than the undeveloped present.
We even have some direct testimony from Marx concerning the
"synthesizer," Say: "With Adam Smith, political economy had
developed into a single aggregate, and to a certain extent
the ground it covered had been delimited. It was this that
enabled Say to make a superficial but systematic condensation
of it in a textbook." We can only presume that with
Ricardo's revolution new textbooks were required and that
history had to be rewritten so that it culminated in the work
of the Ricardian school. The same would have to be done
in those places where Marx, himself, has been accepted by
the economic establishment as the new Ricardo. Witness this
remarkable quotation from a disciple of Marx, Louis Althusser,
who also delights in discovering remarkable quotations:

7Ellard, pp. 45 - 92.
8Capital, II, p. 15
9Theories Of Surplus-Value (Moscow: Progress Publishers,
If as we believe . . . Marx really did invent a new form of order for axiomatic analysis, what is true of the majority of the great inventors in the history of the theoretical must be true of him as well: time is needed before his discovery will even be accepted, and only then will it pass into normal scientific practice. A thinker who installs a new order in the theoretical, a new form of apodicity or scientificity, has quite a different fate from that of a thinker who establishes a new science. He may long remain unknown and misunderstood . . . 10

And so the claim is made (in language reminiscent of Kuhn) that Marx did indeed bring about a scientific revolution by undermining the dominant paradigm. Engels, for instance, warns the readers of Capital about a shift in the meaning of terms as they are used by the classical Political Economists and by Marx. 11 This is not merely a terminological dispute; it involves a significant change in the theoretical problematic. Engels hits the nail squarely on the head when he sees that the vocabulary used to describe bourgeois society as a natural and eternal form has to be conceptually different from that which describes it as a moment in a process of historical development. In another of those passages too remarkable to pass without notice, he compares Marx's work with the discovery of oxygen and wonders why Marx's analysis of surplus-value is so important, since the information he uncovers had already existed, at least latently, in his predecessors:

Marx stands in the same relation to his predecessors in the theory of surplus-value as Lavoisier stood to Priestley and Scheele. The existence of that part of the value of products which we now call surplus-value had been ascertained long before Marx . . . (The classical bourgeois economists and the Socialists who had made this discovery) all remained prisoners of the economic categories as they had come down to them.

Now Marx appeared upon the scene. And he took a view directly opposite to that of all his predecessors. What they had regarded as a solution, he considered a problem. He saw that he had to deal neither with dephlogisticated nor with fire-air, but with oxygen -- that here it was not simply a matter of stating an economic fact or of pointing out the conflict between this fact and eternal justice and true morality, but


11Capital, I, p. 5.
of explaining a fact which was destined to revolutionize all economics, and which offered to him who knew how to use it the key to an understanding of all capitalist production. With this fact as his starting point he examined all the economic categories which he found at hand, just as Lavoisier proceeding from oxygen had examined the categories of phlogistic chemistry which he found at hand. In order to understand what surplus-value was, Marx had to find out what value was. He had to criticize above all the Ricardian theory of value. Hence he analyzed labour's value producing property and was the first to ascertain what labour it was that produced value, and why and how it did so.12

Althusser uses this shift in theoretical problematic to explain Marx's famous "inversion" of both classical political economy and Hegel: to put a discipline which had stood on its head squarely of its feet means to change the theoretical base of the discipline.13 When a change in paradigm occurs, it is often not possible (according to Kuhn and Althusser) to date new discoveries precisely or to determine when the shift in base occurs. Thus, within Marx's own work, Althusser sees a middle period in which Marx stands with one foot in the old world outlook and the other in a new, and as yet not to well defined, framework. This is the period in which Marx struggles to make the "epistemological break" with his predecessors.14

At this point a little summarizing might be in order. I am criticizing a certain tendency in contemporary political philosophers whose opinion of the significance of Marx's work is analogous to Kuhn's description of what goes on in science when a revolution occurs in basic frameworks. So far, a good case has been presented in support of viewing Marx in terms of this analogy. But problems arise when we consider the final characteristic of scientific paradigms: the only practice which counts as scientific is that practice which is taken as such by the members of the given scientific community. Hence, a member of one community cannot validly criticize the standards and method of another community;

12Capital, II, p. 15. Note the dissimilarity between Marx and Lavoisier on the one hand and Ricardo and Priestly on the other. The former completely reexamine their categories and look for the links between them; the latter accept the dominant paradigm and perform a superficial reconciliation of incompatible categories. See Ellard, pp. 75 - 91.

13Reading Capital, p. 153.

they are not scientific, just different, or, at worst, not scientific according to the standards of the competing community. Furthermore, there is nothing which can guarantee that the framework of the now dominant community will not fall victim to a scientific crisis and be superseded by a new framework which can explain the disconcerting anomalies. In short, standards and modes of criticism are valid only within a given framework; hence, the existence of meta-framework principles (other than the assent of the scientific community) which could be used to judge between conflicting frameworks or to establish some sort of privileged framework is disallowed. "Science can only pose problems on the terrain and within the horizon of a definite theoretical structure, its problematic, which constitutes its absolute determination of the forms in which all problems must be posed, at any given moment, in the science."15 The practices adopted by the scientific community as scientific contain (or should we say "are"?) its own protocols for validating the character of its activity as scientific. "Marx's theoretical practice is the criterion of the 'truth' of the knowledges that Marx produced."16 But what is there to guarantee the supremacy of that practice? Competing paradigms represent for Kuhn and many Marxists incompatible world views. The choice between them cannot be made on the basis of the procedures of normal science, for the determination of which procedures should be followed is precisely that which is at stake when one paradigm challenge the supremacy of another. Hence, there is no meta-evaluative standpoint from which to specify that which will count as science; the assent of the scientific (or political) community provides the only relevant criteria. Scientists arguing out of different frameworks talk past each other, for they disagree about what will count as a problem, a solution and a valid method.

As I read Marx, he claims to present a science which is universal and objective and not given directly or immediately to man's consciousness. It is the product of an historical development and could only appear in a society which in some sense objectifies and makes manifest the universality on which the science is based. Hence, previous philosophers are necessary ideologues. This is not to question their sincerity, nor their mental powers, but is to emphasize the limitations placed on any thinker by the degree to which the society in which he finds himself has developed. Marx, for instance, concludes that it is the underdevelopment of the social form they describe and not any fault of the authors,

15Reading Capital, p. 25.

16Reading Capital, pp. 59 - 60.
Marx claims that the science he has discovered produces knowledge and that this knowledge, while obviously the product of a particular society, is transhistorical in its validity. We still have to discover the criteria which supposedly guarantee that this knowledge is transhistorically true.

Marx And The Philosophical Tradition

In the Phenomenology of Mind Hegel describes the Forms or Shapes which consciousness experiences on its way to Absolute Knowledge. Although this trip leads inevitably to Science, it can also be described as the way of despair since the many transitions between the various stopping places along the way are based on a conscious insight into the untruth of the phenomenal knowledge offered by the particular moment which is surpassed.

The inadequacy of a given form of knowledge is not necessarily understood by those who set themselves totally within that form, but is readily apparent to the Phenomenological Observer who stands outside the form and who, by carrying its basic assumptions to the limit, can compare that which the form actually achieves in terms of knowledge with that which it pretends to achieve. Thus, the Phenomenological Observer does not accept as correct the assumptions of any given moment, nor does he claim that they are untrue; rather, he stands outside the moment and judges its success not only in terms of its logical consistency, but also in terms of the adequacy of the conceptual approach which it advances as the instrument to be used in grasping Absolute Truth.

By taking each moment to its limit, the Phenomenological Observer can witness the inevitable collapse of that form of knowledge. The act of perceiving a form as untrue or as inadequate is not, however, totally negative. To see it as such would be to adopt the one-sided and skeptical attitude which actually comprises the essential principle of one of the shapes of uncompleted consciousness which has to be surpassed. Unlike the latter which improperly abstracts a concept of pure nothingness from the dissolution of the many modes of knowledge, the Phenomenological Observer sees the nothingness of a moment, which has been surpassed, as deter-

minate, as marking the negation of a specific moment and as providing the necessary links between the old form and the new one which will arise to take its place. Thus, we are presented not with a collection of randomly selected, incomplete shapes, but with an ordered series of progressively more complete modes of cognition which exhibits the necessity of its own progression. The end term of the series is the Absolute Truth of Science.

I offer this synopsis because I think that the Hegelian view of scientific progress is much more compatible with Marx's view than the view offered by Kuhn and his more politically minded compatriots. The schema presented by Hegel will help us in understanding the claim made by Marx about the final superiority of one perspective over all others. I am not arguing that Marx is an Hegelian, but rather that a certain basic understanding of Hegel's enterprise is an invaluable tool in understanding what Marx is up to.

Both Marx and Hegel want to observe history (each, of course, has a different idea of what this means); both want to stand above the seemingly unintelligible flux of human experience and to describe it in terms of moments or historical epochs which are well-formed entities, each governed by a set of strict, but not eternal, laws of development. Each sees in the particular moment the seeds of its own dissolution and in that dissolution the emergence of the terms which will form the limits for the next moment. In its mystified form, says Marx, the viewing of history in terms of a dialectical movement has become the fashion because it seems "to transfigure and to glorify the existing state of things." But in its rational form, "it is a scandal and abomination to bourgeoisiedom and its doctrinaire professors because it includes in its comprehension and affirmative recognition of the existing state of things . . . the recognition of the negation of that state, of its inevitable breaking up; because it regards every historically developed social form as in fluid movement, and therefore takes into account its transient nature not less than its momentary existence; because it lets nothing impose upon it, and is in its essence critical and revolutionary."18

Both Hegel and Marx claim that the laws which govern the development and dissolution of an historical moment are necessarily hidden from those who take the limits of that moment as their horizon. Nonetheless, these laws are

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18Capital, I, p. 22.
essential to an understanding of the moment, the implication being that those who are encapsulated in a certain form do not really understand the full significance of what they are doing. Both agree that it is necessary to specify, either conceptually or historically, the precise location of a given form before consciousness can understand its significance. And, finally, both agree with Aristotle that one cannot comprehend the richer or more developed form from the perspective of the lesser developed. This explanatory priority is guaranteed by the fact that phenomena are to be explained, not in terms of their temporal order of appearance, but in terms of the relationships which hold between them and the other elements of the fully developed, final form. Thus we come to the real reason why our caricature of a Kuhnian model is not adequate to describe the development of history as Marx sees it: For Hegel and Marx, we are not confronted with a random succession of paradigms; the series is ordered. Thus, the final form is scientific, not because it happens to be dominant during our lifetime, nor because it represents the complete development of an historical process which can be understood only in terms of its fully developed form. Unlike our Kuhn, Marx and Hegel do believe in a privileged position from which we can criticize and compare various paradigms or pretenders to science.

Thus, the most important common element in Hegel and Marx is the belief that they have isolated the motor forces behind the movement in the field they are investigating. For Hegel, this lies in the disparity between the object as it exists for consciousness and the object as it exists in itself. But what is it for Marx? Well, what is the object of his study? Capitalist production? Yes, but also, by extension and because of the unique properties of the prime object of study, all forms of production, their evolution, dissolution and the links between successive modes. In short, the complete object of Marx's study is the historical progression of the material forces of production. But why does this imply movement? Because every mode of production which has yet become dominant contains in itself forces which will inevitably destroy it.

Marx sees the prime concern of every community to be its own preservation, the reproduction of those social relations which seem to define that which makes the community unique. But, of course, he also claims that these relations are surface phenomena in the sense that they are limited by, and to be understood only in terms of, the deeper lying, and usually more unstable, material forces. The attempt to reproduce these social relations is at the same time the
production of a new set of relations and the destruction of the old form. For instance, societies based on the principle that each citizen should possess so many acres of land are forced by increases in population to colonize and to engage in wars of conquest in order to preserve that principle. This, in turn, leads to slavery, large standing armies, the rise of a governing class, and so on. The attempted preservation of the community implies both the destruction of the conditions upon which that community rests and the creation of a new social order. "In all these forms the basis of evolution is the reproduction of relations between individuals and community assumed as given -- they may be more or less primitive, more or less the result of history, but fixed into tradition -- and a definite, predetermined objective existence." Marx's point is that the intentions of the actors within a given historical period and the objective conditions of that period often conflict. Changes in social relations might seem compatible with the original set of relations or to be merely innocent extensions of the 'base.' "But evolution is from the outset limited, and once the limits are transcended, decay and disintegration ensue."19

Marx sees the proper study of history as an attempt to describe the continuous changes in the material forces of production and the social relations associated with particular constellations of material relations. But he does not offer a mere chronicle; rather, he sees change in terms of an intelligible evolution which will provide the key to understanding not only how these forces can be best used to satisfy human needs, but also how they lead to mystified systems of thought. Hence the frequent references of Marx to the technology of the societies he describes, for it is technology which enables us to distinguish between different epochs by providing a standard for comparing levels of economic development and a rather straight-forward key to the degree of social integration of a given economic constellation. "Technology," he writes, "discloses man's mode of dealing with Nature, the process of production by which he sustains his life, and thereby also lays bare the mode of formation of his social relations, and of the mental conceptions that flow from them."20

Like Hegel, Marx sees one of the steps in the evolutionary process as having epistemological priority. The


20Capital, I, p. 372, fn. 3.
totality Hegel finds in Absolute Truth, Marx finds imperfectly mirrored in bourgeois society. We must, therefore, stop for a moment to describe more fully that set of conditions which defines the capitalist state.

In a long section of the *Grundrisse*, Marx describes in great detail the historical process which dissolves those forms of production in which the laborer owns the means of production and the product of his labor. This process eventually leads to a system in which owner and laborer stand apart as members of mutual antagonistic classes. That which is really dissolved is the kind of relation which posits a natural link between an individual and the objective means for reproducing and maintaining his existence. That which had once been seen as natural is correctly understood by later epochs as a social product. Material development, changes in the social structure and its needs, must precede conceptual development. For Marx, the rise of capitalism presupposes the dissolution of four types of primary "natural" relationships.

The first involves positing man as naturally related to the earth, as related to a community whose members are proprietors of the earth solely by virtue of being its members. Here, the earth is seen as a natural condition of production, as an extension of man's being and as the background for, and the necessary precondition of, his life as a member of a community.

The second kind of relation which must be dissolved before Capitalism can predominate is that in which man appears as the proprietor of the instrument with which he works. Here, the mode of labor is hereditary and recognition as a "master" or certified proprietor depends on the development of those skills which are required to use the instrument properly. Hence, labor cannot be measured in quantifiably exact terms because there exists a difference in kind among various applications of labor. The labor of the carpenter is qualitatively distinct from that of the mason. In such guildlike surroundings, labor appears as an artistic enterprise which is partly its own reward.

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21*Pre-Cap*, pp. 75 - 117. This work is a translation of parts of the *Grundrisse*.

22"What is the precondition of a merely quantitative difference between things? The fact that their quality is the same. Thus units of labor can be measured quantitatively only if they are of equal and identical quality." *Grundrisse*, p. 76.
Thirdly, Capitalism must overcome those relations which insure that the laborer possesses prior to production the means to keep himself alive as a producer. These can take many concrete forms, savings, acquired skills, tools, and so on, and give the worker a certain degree of independence from a free-labor market.

Finally, the bourgeois state presupposes the dissolution of those relations which define the laborers, themselves, as part of the appropriated objective conditions of production. The laborer must not be a slave or a serf, since what the capitalist wants is not the laborer, but his labor. If he can find other, less expensive forms of labor (such as the extensive use of machines), he will choose those instead.

These are the historical prerequisites of Capitalism. Modern society, says Marx, is based on the separation of living labor from the objective conditions of its maintenance and reproduction. All those forms in which the community rests on an imputed objective unity among its members, together with those forms in which the community is seen as an objective condition for the existence of the individual, are dissolved through the evolution of the forces of production. Capitalism, then, while presupposing a previously unimaginable level of organized activity, dissolves all "natural" social bonds, leaving a collection of seemingly autonomous, abstractly equal units, contingently united by a complex industrial machine whose parts are everywhere interchangeable. This leads to a society based on exchange-value, the existence of propertied and non-propertied classes, owners and laborers. But it is also the society which, when stripped of its bourgeois skin, can offer the possibility of true liberation:

The process which has in one way or another separated a mass of individuals from its previous affirmative relations to the objective conditions of labor, which negated these relations and thereby transformed these individuals into free laborers, is also the same process which has liberated these objective conditions of labor potentially from their previous ties to the individuals which are now separated from them . . . They are still present, but present in a different form, as a free fund, one in which all the old political, etc., relations are obliterated, and which now confront those separated merely in the form of values. . . . The separation of the objective conditions from the classes which are now transformed into free laborers, must equally appear at the
opposite pole as the establishment of independence by those very conditions.23

This independence comes about in a curious way. All previous forms of society were dissolved through the development of productive forces antagonistic to the set of material conditions definitive of the original structure. Capitalism is distinct from all earlier stages of production in that its aim is not the reproduction of a given kind of society, but the creation of wealth in the form of commodities. It must, therefore, strive for the universal development of all productive forces. Exchange-value does not inhere in any particular kind of use-value; nor is it excluded from any; nor does it presuppose any special kind of consumption or trade. Any limited stage in the development of socially productive forces (and, here, we should include such factors as trade, law, science, political structure, and so on) appears only as a barrier to the maximization of exchange-value and not as something which should be reproduced for its own sake.24 This drive toward the maximal development of the productive forces, however, "offers the possibility of the universal development of individuals, and the real development of individuals from this basis consists in the constant abolition of each limitation once it is conceived of as a limitation and not as a sacred boundary."25

23Pre-Cap, pp. 105 - 106.

24In conjunction with this point, we could go on to distinguish capitalism from any previous mode of social organization according to the principles which are advanced to make the mode legitimate. Authority in a pre-modern society is justified in terms of tradition or status. With the apparent split between the political and the civil realm, the property form appears not as a political relation, but as a production relation and is justified in terms of the rationality of the market or the benefits to be achieved in a society based on exchange, but never in terms of a traditional power structure. See Ellard, pp. 38 - 44 and Habermas, Toward A Rational Society, pp. 96 ff.

25Grundrisse, p. 121. The entire argument is rather easily summarized in a non-technical fashion in the Manifesto: "The bourgeoisie cannot exist without constantly revolutionizing the instruments of production, and with them the whole relations of society. Conservation of the old modes of production in unaltered form was, on the contrary, the first condition of existence for all earlier industrial classes. Constant revolutionizing of production, uninterrupted disturbance of all social conditions, everlasting uncertainty and agitation distinguish the bourgeois epoch from
With the overthrow of Capitalism, Marx sees a reintegration of the worker with his labor, his fellow men and Nature. The social problems confronting him will then be seen for what they actually are — social problems whose existence and solution depend on historically conditioned modes of social organization.

CONCLUSION

Let us summarize by returning briefly to Hegel. In the Phenomenology, the goal of consciousness is to reach that point where it has no need to go beyond itself since its concept and the object it is trying to understand correspond to one another. But how will consciousness know that it has reached its goal? If the Phenomenology is seen as a description of the way science is related to phenomenal knowledge or as an investigation or critical examination of the limitations of cognition, Hegel asks, must we not accept some standard as the essence or the in-itself? How else can we judge concepts except by comparing them with the "truth" or some perfect description of the object as it exists in and for itself? Hegel's answer is that it is not necessary for us to perform the actual examination. We must simply observe the process through which one-sided concepts show themselves to be inadequate to their object. This inadequacy will force consciousness to pass on to a higher, more complete and multi-faceted moment until it reaches Absolute Truth.

I started this discussion of Hegel with a promise that it would help us understand Marx's claim to having produced a science.26 "What all earlier ones. All fixed, fast frozen relations, with their train of ancient and venerable prejudices and opinions, are swept away, all new-formed ones become antiquated before they can ossify. All that is solid melts into air, all that is holy is profaned, and man is at last compelled to face with sober senses his real conditions of life and his relations with his kind." The Social and Political Writings of Karl Marx (New York: Anchor Books, 1959), p. 10.

26In fact, this section might be seen as an attempt to give content to Hyppolite's claim that Capital "cannot be thoroughly understood by anyone ignorant of Hegel's Phenomenology, for it is the living image of it." Studies On Marx And Hegel (N.Y.: Basic Books, 1969), p. 103. It might also help us understand what it means to say that Marx believes in a "practical solution of these (Hegelian) contradictions, in an effective synthesis of Idea and reality in the here and now" (p. 112). Finally, it might also lead us to doubt the validity of Hyppolite's assertion that the labor theory of value is a "fundamental ethical testament" (p. 135).
were his standards?" I asked. How could he guarantee their transhistorical validity? The answer is, I think, that Marx, like Hegel, claims not to have any prior standards external to the historical forms he is examining. Or rather, that his aim is to describe the historical evolution of the material forces of production and their conflict with social relations. He does not take the labor theory of value as absolutely true any more than he does the feudal master's assertion that he is noble by blood. Rather, he describes the kind of society in which these principles form the base and locates those forces which erode the possibility that these principles can serve as cement for a form of life. Marx does not evaluate the standards for human interaction supplied by the various historical epochs, but watches as they prove their own inadequacy when the material forces of production, which gave them a certain viability, change. The transitions from one kind of society to another are not random; instead; they reveal a movement toward a categorical and social universality which lays bare all the theoretical and practical mystifications of ideology.

The highest point in the development of progressively more abstract and many-sided standards is bourgeois society, the last antagonistic form of human interaction. The categories which properly describe this society, says Marx, are perfectly abstract because they are the end product of a process which has gradually removed all "natural" determinants from social interaction. Both in slogan and in practice, bourgeois society proclaims the equality of man -- not in terms of class status, but in terms of the equality of abstract individuals, humanity sans phrase. The final task for Marx is to make this equality actual by replacing a social structure based on exchange-value and the maximization of surplus-value with one based on use-value and the satisfaction of human needs.

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