

OPEN MARXISM

Edited by
Werner Bonefeld, Richard Gunn
and Kosmas Psychopedis

VOLUME I
DIALECTICS AND HISTORY

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Introduction

W. BONEFELD, R. GUNN, K. PSYCHOPEDIS

In 1978 Althusser announced that Marxism was in crisis.¹ Apparently, throughout the 1980s, this crisis merely intensified: the resurgence of liberalism and the 'New Right', the accommodation of socialist and social democratic parties to a 'realistic' monetarism and – at the close of the decade – the crumbling of socialist regimes in the East. Marxism seemed to become at best unfashionable and, at worst, outdated. 'Post-Marxism', sometimes indistinguishable from anti-Marxism, undertakes to announce what it terms 'new times'. In all of this, however, the target identified by Marxism's critics has been Marxist theory and practice to which various kinds of 'closure' applies. Indeed, the Marxism proclaimed by Althusser to be in crisis was specifically structuralist Marxism, a sophisticated variety of determinism of which his own earlier works had been the prophetic texts. Ironically offshoots of structuralist Marxism flourished in the 1980s under the patronage of what became known as the Regulation Approach. It was as if Marxism felt it necessary to trump New Right sociologies by playing the card of a sociology of its own. Marxism succumbed to precisely the danger of *scientism* inherent in sociological projects, as in the equation of 'new times' with the scenarios dubbed post-fordist: just here, in the celebration of new technology (computers, the microchip revolution) and in the foretelling of a novel historical stage just-around-the-corner, the ancient themes of technological determinism and of a teleological conception of social change broke out. Sometimes, of course, the colonisation of Marxist theoretical and political territory by New-Right liberalism was more bare faced: Rational Choice Marxism, which throughout its development has wriggled on the pin of the atomised, self-interested individual whom Marx condemns, and which makes even the scientism of sociology appear radical by approaching what Althusser called the 'society effect' solely in terms of a logic of

unintended consequences and equilibria, is the main case in point. What used to be known as the 'dialectical' dimension of Marxism was, in all of this, the main casualty. The most rigorous schools of Marxist methodology enunciated in the 1980s – for instance Critical Realism – were animated by a slogan as old (within Marxism) as the 1890s: 'Back to Kant!' Or rather back to precisely the Kant of Anglophone, analytical philosophy. Back to the closure and positivism of sociology, too, inasmuch as sociological discipline tapped originally Kantian, or rather neo-Kantian, roots².

These methodological shifts had their parallels in Marxist social theory. One central topic of concern was the crisis of Keynesianism and the resurgence of monetarist views. This crisis brought with it a crisis in a 'Marxism of structures', à la Althusser and Poulantzas, inasmuch as such Marxism took as its object precisely the structures whose demise now seemed to be sure. The attempt to reconstitute social relations on the basis of flexibilisation³ and ever more sensitised market relations (imposed, in the event, through international money markets) was proclaimed as the end of Marxist social theorising *per se*. Underwriting this attempt was the boom of the 1980s. Thus, the 'legitimacy crisis' of the Keynesian state⁴ and the 'crisis of Marxism' could be portrayed as one and the same. Marxism, where it endorsed this diagnosis, became accordingly disarmed. The resulting incorporation into Marxism of scientism, of structures reinvoked and reformulated, of conceptions of historical periodisation (as in the fordist/post-fordist debate),⁵ dependent ultimately on Weberian ideal-type discourse and of analytical-philosophy concepts of the individualist agent within a market arose, consequently, from particular social and political conditions. The Regulation Approach, for example, holds in the 1980s to the programme of a reformed and restated Keynesianism, a Keynesianism so to say appropriate to new times. The 1980s thus became, all too easily, dismissable as a merely transitional phase – for which teleological legitimation (in the name of a Marxism 'keeping up to date') could be no less easily supplied. 1980s Marxism, in this fashion, was all too ready to endorse existing reality (and its ideological projections) so that its project became confined to one of chasing the tail of the capitalist dog. Two points follow from these comments: the first is that a Marxism which restricts its horizons to those of the crisis of existing structures remains blinkered, in such a way that their crisis becomes its crisis; social contradiction and hence revolutionary practice drop out of sight. The second is that the closure of 1980s Marxism – indeed of all Marxism which takes social developments at their face

value – carries with it the danger of accepting reality uncritically and thereby reinforcing the foreclosure upon possibilities which such reality finds itself unable to incorporate as its own. Almost *all* 1980s Marxism counts as 'closed' Marxism in this, scientific and positivistic, sense. The weakness of 1980s Marxism appears to us consequent upon its endorsement of the thesis that Marxism has been outpaced and defeated, a thesis deriving its surface plausibility from that decade's social reconstitution and – the other side of the same coin – its abrasive attack on the working class.

Hence, the timeliness of supplying an alternative reference-point: open marxism. 'Openness', here, refers not just to a programme of empirical research – which can elide all too conveniently with positivism – but to the openness of Marxist categories themselves. This openness appears in, for instance, a dialectic of subject and object, of form and content, of theory and practice, of the constitution and reconstitution of categories in and through the development, always crisis-ridden, of a social world. Crisis refers to contradiction, and to contradiction's movement: this movement underpins, and undermines, the fixity of structuralist and teleological-determinist Marxism alike. Rather than coming forward simply as a theory of domination – 'domination' reporting something inert, as it were a heavy fixed and given weight – open Marxism offers to conceptualise the contradictions internal to domination itself. Crisis, understood as a category of contradiction, entails not just danger but opportunity. Within theory, crisis enunciates itself as critique.

Critique is open inasmuch as it involves a reciprocal interrelation between the categories of theory (which interrogates practice) and of practice (which constitutes the framework for critique). Of course the question of Marxism's openness (or closure) is as old as Karl Popper's polemics of the 1940s;⁶ and indeed Popper's charge of dogmatic closure could, perhaps, be seen as applying to Marxisms of a deterministic (that is dialectical materialist or structuralist) kind. Their closure is that of the societies to whose conceptualisation they restrict themselves, and whose *modus vivendi* they take at face value. It should be apparent, however, that open Marxism in the present collection's title refers to an openness not to be specified in Popper's sense. For Popper, openness refers to the ability-to-be-continued of empirical research programmes. For us, the continuation of such programmes is in no way incompatible with closure at the level of categories, methodologies and concepts, that is, with precisely the *scientism* which reflects (and flatters) a closed social world. Openness in our sense refers to

categories first and to empirical continuation second; it is the openness of theory which construes itself as the critical self-understanding of a contradictory world.

A further brief indication of what we understand by 'closure' in contrast to openness may be helpful at this point. 'Closed' Marxism is Marxism which does either or both of two interrelated things: it accepts the horizons of a given world as its own theoretical horizons and/or it announces a determinism which is causalist or teleological as the case may be. (Closure in Popper's sense encompasses only teleological determinism.) These two aspects of closure are interrelated because *acceptance of horizons amounts to acceptance of their inevitability* and because *determinist theory* becomes complicit in the foreclosing of possibilities which a contradictory world entails.

This being so, a central target for Marxism with an open character is *fetishism*. Fetishism is the construal (in theory) and the constitution (in practice) of social relations as 'thinglike', perverting such relations into a commodified and sheerly structural form. Closed Marxism substitutes fetishised theory for the – critical – theory of fetishism which open Marxism undertakes. Hostile to the movement of contradiction, the former reinforces and reproduces the fetishism which, officially, it proclaims against. It follows that the crisis of structures is equally the crisis of the Marxism which takes structures as its reference point, and however allegedly 'flexible' the structures, the crisis of their theory runs no less deep. Accordingly, the category of fetishism is one which, directly or indirectly, all of the contributors to the present volume address.

This is not to say that 'open Marxism' is a wholly novel approach. Far from it: a subterranean tradition of open Marxism has, since the turn of the century, subsisted alongside Marxisms of more mainstream, and also academic, kinds. Figures in the open Marxist tradition include, *inter alia*, Luxemburg, the early Lukács, Korsch, Bloch, Adorno, Rubin, Pashukanis, Rosdolsky and Johannes Agnoli (from whom our title derives).⁷ Lists of such a kind are, to be sure, always problematic and not all of the authors represented in the present work would evaluate the figures mentioned in the same way. Nonetheless this tradition supplies a common background against which questions are raised. In the 1970s, the sources of the tradition were renewed through republication and translation, and through a series of methodological debates. At the same time, in Britain, debates flourishing within the CSE (Conference of Socialist Economists) reopened discussion of categories such as value, labour process, the state, world market, social form, etc., upon the soil of a

Keynesianism in crisis.⁸ These diverse debates placed at issue the conceptual and political status of fundamental Marxist categories. For a brief period, it seemed that what was hitherto marginal could lie at the centre. Underlying this centring was the (for the post-war period) unprecedented class conflict of the late 1960s and early 1970s. Along with the exhaustion of this conflict and with the failure of social democratic responses to it, erstwhile marginal theory became remarginalised once again. Realistic and scientific currents already present in the 1970s (capital-logic, structuralism, realism – however 'critical' – and the Marxist assimilation of corporatism)⁹ entered the ascendant, modifying themselves to fit the contours of 1980s terrain. One aim of the present volumes, accordingly, is to reopen a space – only uncertainly established during the 1970s – wherein voices of theoretical and practical critique can gain new strength.

Within the tradition of Marxism which the present volume seeks to develop, the central category of openness is that of critique. The connection between openness and critique is straightforward enough: if society develops openly, and thereby *contradictorily*, then an identification of its contradiction(s) amounts to a reflection on the instability of whatever forms this contradiction assumes. Social 'structures' only have a parlous existence in a contradictory world. Marx launched the term 'critique' on its contemporary course when he subtitled *Capital* 'A Critique of Political Economy'. However, Marxists have disputed amongst themselves the force and meaning of the term 'critique'.

Either it can be said that Marx criticised only bourgeois political economy, and sought to replace it with a revolutionary political economy of his own. In this case – and it is the reading of the subtitle favoured by Marxists and Marx-critics as diverse as Hilferding, Lenin, Althusser and Joan Robinson – we are returned to the notion that social structures exist, as facts or artifacts, and that the only problem is to identify the cogwheels which allow the structures to be meshed. Or it can be said that Marx sought to criticise, not just bourgeois political economy, but the notion of political economy as such. This latter is the reading favoured by our authors.

The contributions in this and the following volume address, within a framework of openness and from different perspectives, a wide range of topics which have become classic in Marxist discussion: epistemology, dialectics, theory and practice, crisis, value theory, class, normative values, state theory, historical materialism and questions of periodisation. Implicitly and/or explicitly, each contri-

bution involves criticism of 1980s Marxist debates and seeks to map the outlines of an alternative view. Thematic issues common to various of our contributors include: subject-object dialectics, the relation of abstract to concrete analysis, structure and struggle, logical/historical interrelations, form-analysis and the preconditions for theory of a revolutionary kind. On these scores, the debates are not merely external but internal: an intersecting of differing views is to be found amongst our contributors themselves. We have made no attempt to avoid this, the reopening of a space for critique involving, necessarily, a problematising of the category of 'openness' *per se*. Thus the format of both of our volumes – a collection of articles – is intrinsic to its substance. An open critique enunciated monologically would amount to a contradiction in terms.

* * *

The present volume focuses on dialectics and history, whereas our second volume concentrates on the unity of theory and practice. The questions of dialectics and of the unity of theory and practice are of course interlinked, especially through an emphasis on historical and political concerns. The continuing political and conceptual importance of 'dialectics', a term which these days may appear to have an all too unfashionable resonance, is something that we hope to make clear as we proceed.

Within Marxism, an understanding of the term 'dialectics' has always been a matter of contention. Sometimes, as in Engels' later writings and in the 'dialectical materialism' of the Lenin and Stalin years, the term has connoted general laws of nature and society: the most famous of these is the 'law' according to which quantitative change will at some point become qualitative change (as when a quantitative increase in the temperature of water leads to a qualitative alteration between water and steam). At other times, and especially in Anglophone Marxism, dialectics is taken to mean simply an interaction or interdependency as between two or more terms. Sometimes, indeed, dialectics is dismissed altogether as a Hegelian baggage which Marx, unfortunately, felt compelled to carry around. Writers as diverse as della Volpe, Colletti, Althusser and Roy Bhaskar tend to take this positivist tack. At the opposite extreme there stands a tradition of 'Hegelian Marxism' (Lukács, Korsch and Bloch, for example) who emphasise dialectics as signalling a unity of opposites and a movement of contradiction, and who stress the centrality of the idea of contradiction in Marx's work.

The 'Hegelian Marxist' understanding of dialectics moved into the centre of Marxist debates during the 1970s on issues such as 'value' and the 'state'. The theme of the state debate was dialectics understood as movement-in-contradiction. The state debate focused on the question of state-*form* and the historical *periodisation* of the bourgeois state's development. Hence the structure of the present volume: two of our contributors (Psychopedis and Backhaus) emphasise the questions of concept formation which are traditional in dialectical theory whereas our three others (Bonefeld, Clarke and Gerstenberger) take up questions of dialectics in relation to state theory. The theory of the state, apart from its evident political importance, is arguably *the* site where the difference between structuralist and dialectical/critical (that is 'open') Marxism emerges most clearly. Structuralist Marxism (for instance Poulantzas) and conjunctural analysis (for instance Jessop)¹⁰ construe the state, either explicitly or implicitly, as one 'region' or 'instance' of society amongst others, distinguishing itself from traditional dialectical-materialist or economic-determinist style Marxism only by emphasising the state's 'relative autonomy', whereas dialectical and critical Marxism understands the state as a form assumed by the class struggle. This latter approach allows us to see the separation between the 'economic' and the 'political' as a difference subsisting within, and constituted by, an active unity. On the other hand the structuralist approach makes a methodological principle out of the economics-politics separation inscribed in bourgeois society itself.

The issues of *form* and of *periodisation* call for further, brief, comment.

Most often, at any rate in Anglophone discussion, 'form' is understood in the sense of 'species': the forms of something are the specific characters it can assume. For instance, the state can adopt specifically 'fascist' or 'authoritarian' or 'bourgeois-liberal' or 'fordist' or 'post-fordist' forms. An enormous amount of Marxism (especially recent Marxism, and not only Anglophone Marxism) has understood 'form' in this way. On the other hand, 'form' can be understood as *mode of existence*: something or other exists only in and through the form(s) it takes. The commodity, for example, exists only in and through the money-form and the credit-form and the world market. Upon these two understandings of 'form' crucial theoretical and practical differences turn.

Theoretically, the idea of form as a species of something more generic has underpinned both the dialectical-materialist-style concep-

tion of *general* laws which have to be applied to *specific* social instances and the conjunctural approach which says that 'intermediate concepts'¹¹ are necessary if the gap between generic and specific analysis is to be bridged. What is taken for granted, here, is a dualistic separation of the generic from the specific (otherwise there would be no 'gap' to 'bridge') and of the abstract from the concrete. On the other hand, the idea of form as mode of existence makes it possible to see the generic as inherent in the specific, and the abstract as inherent in the concrete, because if form *is* existence then the concrete can *be* abstract (and *vice versa*) and the specific can *be* generic (and *vice versa*).¹² Putting the matter in the bluntest possible fashion, those who see form in terms of species have to try to discover something behind, and underlying, the variant social forms. Those who see form as mode of existence have to try to decode the forms in and of themselves. The first group of theorists have, always, to be more or less economic-reductionist. The second group of theorists have to dwell upon critique and the movement of contradiction as making clear, for its own part, the 'forms' that class struggle may take. To this, old-style dialectics together with new-style sociology are, thus, implacably opposed.

During the 1980s, those who see form in terms of species have tried to reformulate their approach by drawing upon Gramsci's 'conjunctural' analysis. An example is the debate on the alleged transition, within recent and current capitalist development, from 'fordist' to 'post-fordist' new times.¹³ Proponents of the thesis that such a transition is under way see themselves as breaking, definitively, with the idea of applying dialectical laws as a means of elucidating historical change.

However, their own approach may not be so very different. A *sociological* approach to social change still seeks to identify key variables (such as technological development from mass assembly lines to 'new technology' or shifting articulations of 'the economy' and 'politics') which make everything clear. Talk of 'laws' may not be in fashion, but the identification of key variables is. And, in the event, the notions of 'laws' and 'key variables' stand or fall together: identification of laws depends on the identification of such variables and, once such variables are identified, why not speak about laws? *Sociological* laws and *dialectical* laws, alike, abut on to determinism and by doing so marginalise class struggle, and historical agency in general, as a 'voluntarism' which merely complements the movement of social structures themselves.

The relevance of the issue of *historical periodisation* is this: whoever divides history into 'periods', whether or not these periods be termed 'modes of production', is thinking of form in a genus/species way. First of all we have a global theory of social change, and then we have its specific, or conjunctural, deployment. In contrast to this, form-analysis construes the historical development of capitalism as discontinuous only in and through the continuity of its form: that is through the movement of contradiction constituted by class. Once the relation between structure and struggle is seen in terms of form as mode-of-existence one can never return to ideas of the development of capitalism on the basis of distinct stages, as it were from the liberal state to state monopoly capitalism (as in Lenin) or from fordism to post-fordism. Dialectics comes into its own as the critique of, precisely, such a division into stages. Critique comes into its own dialectically, as inherent in the movement of contradiction and, so, an open Marxism is able to demystify the notion of new times in a forceful way.¹⁴

The political implications of all of this are drastic. That is, they are exciting because they open on to a terrain where nothing is assured. If we are told, theoretically, that we live under the sign of some species of capital's existence then there is nothing for it but to buckle down and make the best of a poor (poor because oppressive) social and technological job. New times are our fate. If, on the other hand, we learn that form amounts not to species but to mode of existence then it is incumbent on ourselves to act within, and through, and against, the form(s) under which we live. In 'the last instance', these forms are our own. The traditional Marxist dichotomy as between 'structure' and 'struggle' is surpassed because class struggle is *informed* while, at the same time, class struggle forms and *informs* the conditions which it either takes on board, reproduces, or explodes.

A number of practical as well as theoretical points turn upon the understanding of dialectics. If, for instance, one thinks of dialectics in terms of 'laws' it is only a small step to envisage a (Leninist) revolutionary party which, in virtue of its knowledge of these laws, should be entrusted with deciding how they should be applied. If, on the other hand, one sheerly dismisses dialectics then one is forced to think of society as an articulation of static structures and, once again, a pathway is cleared to the notion of an élite (not of dialecticians, this time, but of sociologists) who should intervene in order to juggle the structures in a leftist way. The notion of the movement of contradiction points in a quite different political direction: if society

is the movement of contradiction then the further development of such contradictions is a matter of what Marx called the 'self-emancipation' of the working class.

The dichotomy of immediate struggle and socially static structures has to be transcended. Form-analytical categories *are* social categories, and *vice versa*. Such categories exist not just in theory, as generic abstractions from the specificity of political practice, but in and through and as practice as well.

* * *

The contributions to this volume attempt to recover this dialectical insight from different perspectives.

Kosmas Psychopedis, who has published widely on Kant, Hegel and the dialectics of social theory, in the present volume attempts a reconstruction of dialectical theory which portrays Kant as a forerunner of Hegel and Marx. Psychopedis's reconstruction of dialectics is a critique of varieties of recent Kantian Marxism (for instance Colletti, Bhaskar) which focus only on isolated aspects of Kant such as transcendental deduction. Further, it allows the question of material preconditions of social existence to come (politically) to light. Psychopedis criticises on the one hand the downplaying of materiality in favour of solely formal discussion in Marxist theory of form determination and, on the other hand, the conception of materiality as structure to be found in the scientific and structuralist Marxism of form-determination's enemies. These latter – the realists and the structuralists – fail to pose the crucial questions inherent in a subject-object dialectic of materiality and form.

Hans-Georg Backhaus, a student of Adorno's, is currently researching, together with Helmut Reichelt, the methodology of political economy in relation to critical theory. Backhaus's publications are devoted to value theory, money theory and dialectics. His concern is with the relation between the philosophic and economic dimensions of political economy's approach. For Backhaus, a *critique* of political economy is impossible unless these dimensions are synthesised. His emphasis in the present volume is on the 'double character' of Marxist categories (as both subjective and objective, abstract and concrete). His definition of objectivity as alienated subjectivity develops conceptions of Adorno's. For Backhaus, the abstract categories in Marx are concrete; value thus exists as social practice and, as such, contradictorily.

Werner Bonefeld, who has published widely debated articles on

state theory and Marxist methodology, reworks form analysis as a critique of recent Marxist state-debates. His contribution focuses on the internal relation between structure and struggle, permitting an understanding of the state-*form* as a movement of contradiction in and through class.

Simon Clarke, whose numerous publications have been pivotal for the development of Marxist state theory in Britain, focuses on the form and development of class struggle in the face of crises of global overaccumulation. Clarke's emphasis is upon the specific functions arrogated to itself by the state in the course of class struggle. His contribution explores and rejects attempts to periodise the development of capitalism in a Marxist way.

Heide Gerstenberger contributed to the state debates of the 1970s and 1980s. Her work has been characterised by a synthesis of social theory and historical analysis. Here, she critically discusses some classic questions of historical materialism: the role of classes in social development, the dynamics of historical change and the nature of 'bourgeois revolution'. These questions are debated in relation to the new 'revisionist' historiography concerning the French Revolution.¹⁵ This historiography problematises notions of a revolution carried through by a 'rising bourgeoisie': Gerstenberger rejects the 'rising bourgeoisie' thesis in and through a reformulation of historical materialist ideas.

Notes

1. L. Althusser, *Die Krise des Marxismus* (Hamburg/Berlin, 1978)
2. For a discussion on the relation of Kant to Marxism see Psychopedis (present volume). On the schools of Marxism above mentioned, see: L. Althusser/E. Balibar, *Reading Capital* (London 1970); N. Poulantzas, *Political Power and Social Classes* (London, 1973); M. Aglietta, *A Theory of Capitalist Accumulation* (London, 1979); A. Lipietz, *The Enchanted World* (London, 1985), *Mirages and Miracles* (London 1987) and 'Imperialism or the Beast of the Apocalypse' *Capital & Class*, no. 22 (1984); J. Elster, *Making Sense of Marx* (Cambridge, 1985); J. Roemer (ed), *Analytical Marxism* (Cambridge, 1986); R. Bhaskar, *A Realist Theory of Science* (Leeds, 1975); and *Reclaiming Reality* (London, 1989); B. Jessop, 'State Forms, Social Basis and Hegemonic Projects', *Kapitalistate* 10/11 (1983) and *Regulation Theories in Retrospect and Prospect* (Bielefeld, 1988); J. Hirsch and R. Roth, *Das neue*

- Gesicht des Kapitalismus, Vom Fordismus zum Post-Fordismus* (Hamburg, 1986).
3. For critiques of 'flexibilisation' see: F. Murray, 'Flexible Specialisation in the "Third Italy"', *Capital & Class* no. 33 (1987) and A. Pollert, 'Dismantling Flexibility', *Capital & Class*, no. 34 (1988).
 4. Cf. J. Habermas, *Legitimation Crisis* (London 1976); C. Offe, *Strukturprobleme des kapitalistischen Staates* (Frankfurt, 1972) and C. Offe, "'Ungovernability": The Renaissance of Conservative Theories of Crisis' in J. Keane (ed), *Contradictions of the Welfare State* (London, 1984).
 5. Cf. W. Bonefeld and J. Holloway (eds), *Post-Fordism and Social Form* (London, 1991); also *Science as Culture* no. 8, (London, 1990) (special issue on post-fordism).
 6. The classic statement is K. Popper, *The Open Society and Its Enemies* (London, 1945); also *The Poverty of Historicism* (London, 1957). See further I. Lakatos and A. Musgrave (eds), *Criticism and the Growth of Knowledge* (Cambridge, 1970) and T. W. Adorno *et al.*, *The Positivist Dispute in German Sociology* (London, 1976).
 7. See E. Mandel and J. Agnoli, *Offener Marxismus* (Frankfurt/New York, 1980).
 8. See the journal *Capital & Class* and the forthcoming series of CSE publications from Macmillan.
 9. For 'capital-logic', cf. E. Altvater 'Some Problems of State Interventionism' in J. Holloway and S. Picciotto (eds), *State and Capital: A Marxist Debate* (London, 1978). For an instance of the assimilation of corporatism, see B. Jessop 'Capitalism and Democracy: The best Possible Political Shell?' in G. Littlejohn (ed), *Power and the State* (London, 1978).
 10. See B. Jessop, *Nicos Poulantzas: Marxist Theory and Political Strategy* (London, 1985) for a reworking of Poulantzas in terms of 'conjunctural analysis'.
 11. For example M. Aglietta, *A Theory of Capitalist Accumulation*; B. Jessop, *Regulation Theories in Retrospect and Prospect*: cited in footnote 2 above.
 12. The *locus classicus* for this theme is Marx's 1857 Introduction to the *Grundrisse*.
 13. Cf. *Marxism Today*, October 1988 'New Times: A Marxism Today Special on Britain in the Nineties'; 'Facing Up to the Future' 7 Days (London, September 1988).
 14. Cf. E. Peláez and J. Holloway 'Learning to Bow: Post-Fordism and Technological Determinism', *Science as Culture*, no. 8, (London, 1990).
 15. For the origins of the 'revisionist' historiography see A. Cobban, *The Social Interpretation of the French Revolution* (Cambridge, 1968). Cf. G. Comminel, *Rethinking the French Revolution: Marxism and the Revisionist Challenge* (London, 1987).

1

Dialectical Theory: Problems of Reconstruction

KOSMAS PSYCHOPEDIS

Today, the concept of dialectics seems to have been expelled from the set of problems pertaining to the foundations of the social sciences. Arguments accusing dialectics of being metaphysical are on the ascendant, as are several scientific attempts to salvage dialectics. Rather than contributing to a reconstruction of dialectical argument, they create the necessity of defending dialectics from its false friends.

In particular, the difficulties of addressing the methodological problems set by classical dialectical theory, and especially Hegelian philosophy, are apparent and have led to simplistic interpretations of the notion of dialectics. Even today, in many approaches to the problem of dialectics, various reductionist constructions, such as that of the transition from quality to quantity, the unity of opposites, etc., are propounded as characteristic dialectical ideas – only to be subsequently rejected as in essence metaphysical – without justifying their systematic status, their meaning or their domain of application.

The present situation in the theory of dialectics arose, in part, as a result of the waning of dogmatic essentialist ideas in the discussions of the European Left and of the decline of the idea of a historical dialectic supposed to be able to guarantee the transition from a society of necessity to a society of freedom. As late as in the 1950's, one can discern, in scientific guise, Zdanovian conceptions in the *Logica* of della Volpe. The structuralist attacks, from the 1960's onwards, on the Hegelian 'subject' and the recourse to 'structure without a subject' can be viewed as a renunciation of dialectics. This renunciation continues today and is intensified, reaching into the

heart of current epistemologies and the scientific theory-constructions of the 'Left' (realism, the Regulation School, Neo-Structuralism and various 'spontaneist' approaches.

In view of this development, one is faced with the problem of comprehending the process which led to a loss of understanding of dialectics, as a problem of 'theory crisis', which is itself an expression of a societal crisis. In the face of this crisis, there arises the methodological problem of the *rehabilitation of dialectics*. In order that this be accomplished, it is necessary to reconsider the essential dimensions of dialectical theory, which have been neglected by theory-in-crisis. This reconsideration involves an examination of a number of complex problems, viewed methodologically as a unity by classical dialectical theory and analysed as separate matters by current scientific approaches to the social sciences. These problems pertain to the apprehension of the social link between agents and their class relations as a relation of the division of labour, and of the nature of these antinomic relations as *historical* relations, as well as to the evaluative character of the analysis of socio-theoretical issues. This latter aspect of classical dialectical theory, in particular, has fallen out of contemporary post-Weberian social science, which, even in its 'leftist' versions, takes for granted the Weberian separation of the evaluative from the descriptive and, thus, accepts the Weberian doctrine of the irrationality of values. In contrast to this position, which constitutes an expression of crisis in contemporary social theory, a reconstruction of the idealist dialectical argument can demonstrate that classical theory associates questions pertaining to foundational problems in the social sciences, that is to problems concerning the validity of our knowledge of social reality, with questions of the rational justification of praxis. Under the term 'dialectics' is understood the inherently antinomic relation between political *Reason* founded upon the idea of *Freedom* and of the social oppositions marked by *Necessity*. In its abstract expression, this postulate of rationality has been posed within the framework of Kantian and Hegelian dialectical theory in the form of a relationship between the logic of mechanism and the logic of values – while in Marxian theory, this postulate acquires a constitutive force through the construction of a materialist labour theory of value. Contrary to what contemporary 'leftist' scientism seems to imply, Kant's contribution is not exhausted by his transcendental deduction and his formalism. A number of issues, concerning the structure of *dialectical judgement*, are developed in his work, to which we refer today both

in order to derive and found the dialectical argument, and to criticise anti-dialectical references to Kant himself.¹

According to the Kantian argument – which forms part of the tradition of Rousseau – one may, in rough outline, distinguish between two theoretical standpoints insofar as society as an object is concerned; in addition, one may discern, in his work, the ideal of the transposability of theoretical reflection between these two standpoints. According to the *first standpoint*, theory views society as an object and conceives of it as a set of power relationships, interest-directed practices, and rule-generated interests, in which value elements can be located as facts. The *second standpoint* reflects on the status of theory as an involved part of the object, in consequence of which its own axiological framework of freedom, equality and critique is transposed into the object. This second standpoint, thus, connects social and political phenomena with the axiological framework which constitutes the conditions for theory-construction. This generates complex methodological problems. For instance, the connection may take the form of a critique of social phenomena based on the non-conformity of these phenomena to their conditions. Alternatively, it may manifest itself as a description of those aspects of social phenomena which, irrespective of the agents' goals, supports the framework of values intrinsic to theory. In both cases, the second (transcendental) approach to the object refers to the results of the first one (the description of power relations and 'mechanisms', the technical analysis of the relation means to ends, etc.). It is, therefore, evident that political theory constitutes itself within this framework of the transposition from the external, theoretical standpoint to the internal, practical, axiological one. In fact, it constitutes itself through the contradiction between theoretical and practical reason, which characterises the Kantian transcendental philosophy. This is why Kant described this movement as a reflective process, involving antinomies, to which practical reason is asked to give 'solutions'. This antinomic relationship and the subsequent 'solutions' to it are described as a dialectical process in which the theoretical argument of necessity, terminates.

Although transcendental philosophy disclosed this logic of transpositions as a field of research, it did not examine it exhaustively, since its interest was concentrated on the confrontation between values and factual processes. The mediation processes between these opposed poles were posed as distinct methodological issues by Hegelian and Marxian dialectical theory. These issues are there

conceived as problems concerning the *dialectical exposition of the categories (Darstellung)*.

In the dialectical *Darstellung*, the methodical exposition of the categories conceptualises the processes of social reproduction, which determine the contemporary social formation, as well as the values which are binding on both agent and theory. It views the processes of the genesis of these values, and of the constitution of society, as being one. The issue of the relevance of the object for dialectical theory, with reference to the essential characteristics which determine its nature, is deemed to be binding on this process. Kantianism conceived of these issues as reflective ones and did not hold that they lead to a binding, content-based analysis of society – for epistemological reasons, Kant believed that a *Darstellung* referring to a binding theory of relations is impossible.

The object of the Hegelian dialectic is such an analysis. The Hegelian dialectical *Darstellung* develops the theoretical categories which refer to essential relations of the social object, the conceptual presuppositions of the development of these essential relations, as well as developing the ‘surface’ categories which refer to the way in which essential relations manifest themselves in existent institutions and social relations. These are rendered intelligible by being mediated through the essential relations already developed. The relational character of the object is preserved, in the exposition, through the development of the relation between its concepts. The positing of some isolated ‘essential elements’ as primal and non-mediated is, thereby, avoided. (Such a positing characteristically leads theory to spontaneist or structuralist shortcomings.)

It can be shown that, notwithstanding its claim to justify the ‘absolute’ through its concepts, the Hegelian *Darstellung* reflects on the historical character of the categories and develops its concepts in such a way that the manner in which they are affected by the question of the nature and the antinomies of modern historical society become apparent. The historical form of modern society is analysed as a process of realising an axiological element, freedom, which asserts and imposes itself through its necessary social and institutional determinations. The consequence of this analysis for the dialectical *Darstellung* is that it refers to a normative standpoint, from and towards which it constructs its concepts. This standpoint provides the relevance horizon of the analysis, while the analysis itself incorporates the question of the processes whereby the values which constitute this standpoint are formed.

This type of dialectical analysis presents complex methodological problems which also constitute a challenge to contemporary epistemology. First of all, it insists on the idea that the coherence of the social totality is vouchsafed with reference to an axiological-practical process of the highlighting or *elevation* of the object with respect to the *essential*, while, on the other hand, the renunciation of such an elevation leads to the disintegration of the object into particular, unconnected determinations. When one follows the argument justifying this elevation, one sees that the axiological idea is connected to a practical postulate of the reproduction of concrete social relations and the institutional frameworks which carry and realise these ideas. Through the Hegelian phenomenological *Darstellung* and the *Darstellung* of the philosophy of Right (*rechtsphilosophische Darstellung*), the Hegelian dialectical analysis raises, as a central methodological problem, the problem of positing the *preconditions* of the reproduction of this socio-axiological framework. Through the philosophical postulate that ‘the concept itself posit its own *preconditions through freedom*’, it inquires into the historical and political preconditions which must be ‘posited’ in order that the socio-axiological ‘concrete’ not disintegrate into bad abstractions and the coherent philosophical-practical ideal, to which the dialectical categorical exposition refers, not be destroyed.

The above outline of aspects of dialectical theory within the tradition of idealist philosophy makes explicit the inherent connection between the classical dialectical argument and the problem of values, thus disclosing the *normative* character of the former. The Marxian analysis takes the following dual stand towards the idealist argument. On the one hand, it acknowledges the relevance of the idealist theoretical constructs for the foundation of social theory. On the other, it denounces their positivist character: they do not allow the location of class relations and the exploitation process that exist beneath the dialectical concepts and relations. In other words, it holds that the program – which idealism had set for itself – of a rational justification of values, is not carried through to its completion. The Marxian analysis of class relations and of the exploitation process situates the constitution of *value* within the labour process and raises the question of transcending the existing alienated society. Value-analysis as a critique of the inverted forms of bourgeois society coincides with a materialist foundation of axiology. *Critique* is constituted on the antinomic process of this foundation. Should one discard this reflective relation to values, dialectical analysis

would end up as a 'real science', *facing* its object, and would, merely, consist in a critique of its axiological elements (a critique of ideology). Materialist dialectics would, thereby, turn out to be scientific and reductionist, for it would ignore the fact that the Marxian approach also involves an attempt to inquire into the problems of its own normativity and values.

In methodological terms, the above problems present themselves as those of the materialist *Darstellung*. Here, the critique of the separation of the social agents and concealment of the inner relational character of social reality is inextricably interwoven with the axiological-practical idea of the re-appropriation of the productive forces, from which they have been separated, by the social agents.

This axiological idea is developed in Marxian dialectics as an idea intrinsic to the object, resulting from the relation, constitutive of the social object, of the latter's materiality to its formal determinations. This is why the issue of the materialist *Darstellung* raises anew the problem of the *deduction* of the concept of materiality in dialectical theory as an *open* problem. This problem has been neglected by Marxist discussions, which have tended to follow the abstract course of formalism (neglecting the development of the content of materiality) or of dogmatism (developing an 'objective logic' of productive forces).

An attempt at such a deduction makes apparent two central dimensions of the dialectical concept of materiality: first, the historicity of the concepts of dialectical theory (as against historicist relativism) and, second, the abolition of the alienating forms of society, that is, the dimension of praxis.

The logic which connects the historical and the practical and constitutes the 'mode of movement' of materiality, can be conceived as an anti-Hegelian logic operating with the idea (of Hegelian origin) of a logic of 'positing preconditions'.² This whole issue raises the question of the conditions under which, not the ontological conceptual framework, but social life, is reproduced; that is, it inquires into the activation or failure of activation, through antinomic social forms, of the physical and social preconditions of social life. The dialectical analysis of social relations reveals that the constitutive *conditions* of social reproduction, namely, the historically constituted form-determinations of society (which consists of the separation of men both from the means of social life, and from the decisions as to the form this will take) either cause society to be unable to reproduce itself from within the system of these separations, or lead to the reproduction of this inability, that is, to a threat to society and the danger of

fetishism. The issue of praxis and politics as a necessary and continuous antithesis to a blind adjustment of social relations to the logic of things is, thus, raised; that is, it is raised in juxtaposition to irrationality, to holding as rational the orientation of social action towards the 'logic' of reified relations. In other words, the issue of dialectics is raised as a problem of discovering, within the historical present, and *positing*, the practical and political *preconditions* for eliminating this reification and realising the ideal of self-determination.

Dialectics and the Critique of the Scientific Approach to Society in Kant

The central idea of Kant's dialectical argument for the analysis of bourgeois society – an argument which has been largely ignored in current discussions – may already be discerned in the Kantian conception of the dialectical antinomies. Characteristically, the Marxist versions of scientism (Colletti and the East German School of Logicians), when referring to the Kantian conception of dialectics, do not touch upon the Kantian analyses of transcendental dialectics, but focus on the pre-critical Kantian theses about real oppositions (*Realrepugnanz*). Should one, however, turn to the core of the Kantian dialectical argument, one realises that, by dialectics, Kant understands an inner relation obtaining between the evaluative-teleological element and the problem of the 'movement' of reality effected by forces and mechanisms which act upon it. This teleological idea and the antinomies immanent to it are located at the core of the foundations of the historical and social sciences: The logic of mechanism is already bound, at the very moment of its incorporation in an epistemological framework, by the idea of realising in it a normative framework, acceptable to social theory, which includes freedom, equality before the law, communication and critique. This connection between mechanism and teleology is, according to Kant, the act of a reflective judgement on the possibility of the social sciences. However, as we shall endeavour to show, this connection remains external in the Kantian work, since, according to Kant, values cannot be generalised by social mechanisms – values are formed by abstraction from the logic of technical and strategic action.

Starting with Kant's foundation of the sciences of 'praxis' (in a sense which includes not only ethics, but also the principles of the

social, historical and juridical sciences), one notes that this foundation involves the critique of what we will call a 'scientistic' approach to these sciences. By the term 'scientistic' we mean an approach, subjected by Kant to critique and adopted whenever the analysis of social and economic reality (of social laws, mechanisms, actions and historical events) makes no reference to the binding practical principles which have been shown by the *Critique of Practical Reason* to underlie every genuinely practical proposition: 'when the will follows no other principles than those by which the understanding perceives that the object is possible according to them as laws of nature, then, although the proposition, which contains the possibility of the object's occurring through the causality of the volition, may be called a practical proposition, for all that it does not differ in the least, with respect to its principle, from the theoretical propositions which pertain to the nature of things; rather must it borrow its own [principle] from the latter in order to exhibit [*darstellen*] the representation of an object in reality', (vol. IX, p. 175)³ Kant's position is that the construction of a conceptual framework for the analysis of politics and society involving concepts belonging to the philosophy of the natural sciences, would lead to a conceptualisation of society, in analogy with 'nature', as an object, as a totality of causal relationships, and would thereby preclude its foundation in freedom.⁴

This critical Kantian approach to scientistic method finds its justification in the analyses of the problem of the antinomies in the *The Critique of Pure Reason* and, in particular, in the way in which Kant approaches the question of the preconditions necessary for an event to occur. Kant holds that every event of the phenomenal world can be understood through its preconditions and they, in their turn, through theirs, and so on, thus leading to an infinite series of preconditions. To this infinite regress of preconditions, Kant juxtaposes the postulate of Reason for the *completion* of the series, that is, for the unconditional. This 'ontological' postulate is itself a precondition of scientific thought, while at the same time it allows us to think of the problem of an action without external determinations, that is, of a *free* action which breaks through the logic of *conditions* and raises the problem of the transition to *freedom*.⁵

It is apparent from the above that the Kantian critique is not merely limited to a demonstration of the consequences of scientism for the theory and praxis of the social sciences, but also addresses the problem of the praxeological character of the preconditions and

of the transcendental framework, not only of science, but of thought itself.

The practical preconditions of theoretical reason come to light in the way in which Kant's theoretical philosophy understands the problem of the framework of the development of concepts, but also in the formal characteristics of these concepts. The framework for developing these theoretical concepts is to be found in the ideas of freedom of thought, of dialogue, of communication and of critique, which are considered preconditions of this freedom and which are to be preserved from the danger of external threats. Although thinking is independent of external influence, the freedom to communicate can be suppressed and the correctness of thought, which presupposes communication and dialogue, may thus be threatened: 'Only, how much and how correctly would we really be able to *think*, did we not think together in community with others to which we communicate our thoughts and they theirs. One can then very well say that the external force which tears away from men the freedom to *communicate* their thoughts publicly, also takes away from them the freedom to *think*'. (V, 280). Correspondingly, the way of constructing theoretical concepts reflects on the fact that these concepts are incorporated in a transcendental systematic which has a practical foundation. The transcendental systematic itself cannot be founded without a reflection on modernity and the correct politics of reason, which make critique possible. Reason itself is oriented towards the idea of a civil association (*bürgerliche Vereinigung*), in the context of which the legitimation of the claims of its own dogmatic or anarchic prehistory will be decided. The fact that the critique of reason is not oriented towards the despotic exercise of power, but towards civil jurisdiction corresponds, according to Kant, to the 'mature judgement' of the epoch (III, 13), which is an epoch characterised by the practical postulate of *enlightenment*. Such a judgement is a reflective and 'regulative' precondition of the knowledge of nature itself.⁶

Turning now to the genuine 'practical' propositions which refer to 'freedom under laws', we notice that these are defined in direct opposition to the scientistic approach to social reality. Kant distinguishes between laws of nature to which the will is subject and a nature which is subject to the volition which refers to free praxis and is the 'cause' of practical objects (VII, 158). The latter alternative constitutes a binding idea for praxis according to the categorical imperative. According to this idea, maxims, that is, subjective principles, are to be assessed by practical reason with respect to their

suitability as laws of nature and are to be rejected in case they are found wanting. All contradictory principles are, thus, rejected and, in particular, principles establishing privileges or allowing the pursuit of egoistic goals. Kant, thus, introduces a programme for the moral foundation of praxis which seems equally to exclude the possibility of a scientific foundation of genuine social concepts. Because these concepts refer to 'real' social forces which are in competition with each other and form constantly varying equilibriums, depending on their mutual relationships, the adoption of a 'practical' attitude leads to their unequivocal rejection on the grounds that they are in contradiction to the practical ideal of non-egoistic action.

At this point, it is important to stress that the questions we have so far considered on the Kantian foundation of the social sciences are understood by Kant as problems of *dialectical analysis*. In his theoretical philosophy, Kant had already characterised as 'dialectic' the use by the intellect, beyond the limits of experience, of *a priori* concepts and principles which should be properly limited to objects given in intuition. It is the task of dialectics to disclose the illusory character of transcendent judgements, although the illusion itself cannot be removed.⁷ Dialectics show that ideas of reason lead to contradictions, if they are used as transcendent concepts, and aim to overcome these contradictions with recourse to a 'binding' concept of critique as the analysis of the architectonic nature of reason itself (cf. III, 308f, IV, 695f).⁸ Corresponding to this function of critique, we find, in Kant's practical philosophy, a *dialectic* relating to the antinomic relations which arise whenever one tries to connect an ethic of content, that is, one oriented towards the ideal of happiness, with the formal idea of an ethic. This analysis leads to a theory of the primacy of practical reason based on the refutation of the scientific approach to practical matters. Kant argues that a scientific approach, which explores the manifestations of 'pathological' motives of action, cannot establish a connection between the theory of action and practical values. Scientism precludes the possibility of bridging the gap between theory and praxis. In the Kantian approach, on the contrary, theoretical reason, by taking into account practical reason founded on critique, has to accept the propositions which bear upon the practical interest of reason and are not in contradiction with theoretical knowledge. It has to compare and connect them with all that which speculative reason has at its disposal (VII, 251).

It is apparent that this 'solution' of the dialectical antinomy

constitutes a 'solution' to the problem of *theory* and *praxis* at the level of the *moral* foundation of praxis, but not at the level of the foundation of the *social sciences*. An answer to the problems raised by the latter is contained in Kant's *Critique of Judgement* where the issue is once again understood as one of dialectics and, in particular, of a dialectical analysis of the teleological judgement. Kant, here, analyses the antinomy between *mechanical* and *teleological* explanation and concludes that for certain natural forms 'we may, in our reflection upon them, follow the trail of a principle which is radically different from explanation by the mechanism of nature, namely, the principle of final causes' (X, 501). Kant stresses that a dogmatic confrontation of the two methodologies would lead to a contradictory juxtaposition of them, while a confrontation on the basis of a critical principle of reason (the reflective judgement) would allow their compatibility as disparate principles (X, 531).

Teleology as a science does not represent a 'doctrine', but a 'critique'. It reflects, when confronted with phenomena which present themselves as a complex of 'competing motive forces', on the possibility of understanding them as a totality in which ends are realised. This reflection, which accompanies every positive knowledge about the character and the direction of powers and forces, is proposed by Kant as a method of locating, through analysis, (*Erörterung*) the possibility of an object according to principles – in opposition to the strict scientific method of explanation (*Erklärung*) (X, 531).

The analysis of the teleological dialectic acquires a social-philosophical relevance inasmuch as it allows the connection of ends of reason with laws of nature in the domain of the social and historical sciences. It reveals an approach which mediates the interpretation of socio-political action in terms of natural causality, on the one hand, and in terms of practical 'causality', based on freedom, on the other. According to this approach, action from egoistic motives, for instance, can be explained by an analysis which focuses on the agents' goals and means and describes what results their actions lead to. But they can, alternatively, also be analysed in terms of the possibility of such actions resulting, in a given historical situation, in historical events and institutions, of which philosophical reason approves and which can, thus, be viewed as the rational 'ends' of natural processes. For example, a constitution based on political equality (a value approved of by reason) may be also analysed as arising from actions motivated by private utilitarian considerations.

By means of it, a rational end is realised, without being intended by the agents. Teleological analysis is interested in such convergences of the *mechanical* and the *axiological* which allow us to discern the 'progress' of the whole institutional framework. All Kantian analyses of modern institutions, embodying and founded on the general laws of bourgeois government, are characterised by this reflective approach. The orientation of this analysis reveals the interior axiological dimensions of the object and is contrary to every scientific approach.

In scientism, the unity of the empirical multiplicity of social relations is established by relations of power; the reflective-teleological approach establishes it by relating it to a general political norm (a law). The constitution of the social object and of the concept of Right itself follows the logical form of the Kantian teleological judgement: since this law is compulsory ('necessary'), it has the intellectual form of the understanding (*Verstand*), in analogy to the natural laws of the *First Critique*; but so far as the generality of its form is concerned (abstracting from its compulsory/necessary character), it coincides with a law of reason. The connection of the form of the understanding (necessity) with the form of reason (generality) is a teleological one: it forms part of a reflective process which ascertains, with reference to a binding theory for the totality of human abilities and powers, how each of them is involved in the form-determination of a social or historical event.

The reflectiveness which characterises the teleological-dialectical exposition of the categories is immanent to the whole social theory of Kant and provides a procedure for concept formation in the social sciences in which the antinomy between the mechanistic and axiological element arises. This reflection leads to a juxtaposition and critical comparison of the (already achieved) results of social action with the practical idea of freedom, which provides the criterion through which the relativism and historicism implicit in scientism is transcended. Historicism is confronted with the political ideal of consensus as to the preconditions for the coexistence of agents pursuing different goals in society. The criticism of the *volonté de tous*, in the *Critique of Practical Reason* (VII, 137), is developed, from teleological premises, in the direction of a reflection on the possibility of a normative political theory grounded on a dialogical-contractual basis. The idea of egoistic motives of action is critically juxtaposed to the idea of the state as a political unity (*universi*), VIII, 434).

In contrast to Rousseau's construction of a '*contrat social*', Kant's analysis is sharpened to a transcendental argument: a condition of the possibility of men living together in society is the establishment of an 'external' framework of freedom grounded in reason. Corresponding to this dialectical argument, the ideas of law, equality and legitimate power are introduced in opposition to the scientific concepts of positive law, the equilibrium of (unequal) powers and government founded on power.

The idea of Right as equality is the result of a dialectical critique which transcends the scientific conceptualisation of society and politics. As Kant shows, this conceptualisation conceives of society by analogy with a problem in mechanics: 'Given a force which is in equilibrium with a given load, to find the relation of the respective arms of the lever etc.' (IX, 174). The idea of equilibrium put forward here is that of a general equilibrium between several unequal forces in a system – at the level of society it is that of relations of domination. This idea is juxtaposed to the idea of equality as constituting the abolition of political domination and as, instead, the constitution of a society subject to general laws, whose members are free and independent persons who deliberately contract self-imposed obligations. In such a society, social and personal inequalities, which are teleologically evaluated with respect to their adequacy in promoting progress, in developing human capacities, and so on, continue to coexist with political equality. In this model the coexistence of the general, formal law with the evolution of the content represents a projection of the structure of the teleological judgement in real societies.

The Kantian view of the relationship between Right and politics can be ascertained from the perspective of dialectical concept formation briefly discussed above. According to Kant, politics has to 'adapt itself, its decrees and its administrative mechanisms to the idea of Right' (VIII, 642). How this 'adaptation' is to be implemented is not described, but it can be reconstructed on the basis of the Kantian view that power cannot be adequately analysed without practical reflection on certain *conditions of normative commitment* – conditions which seem to point to a sort of 'transcendental' framework of conditions of the possibility of coercive action. Such conditions, indicated by the teleological analysis, are 'right concepts about the nature of a possible constitution', a great 'experience' and the 'good will' to accept and enforce the constitution.⁹ These elements (right concepts, experience, will) correspond to the struc-

ture of reason as the capacity to form general concepts, as reflective judgement and as practical capacity – a structure on to which the concept of power is projected in order that it acquire a practical foundation. In a political society founded on these principles, the element of enforcement which is necessary for law to become ‘positive’ shows itself to be reducible to freedom – enforcement is not considered an impediment to freedom, but an ‘impediment to an impediment to freedom’ (VIII, 338) in a society subject to general laws.

A critical differentiation is to be found here between enforcement with the object of guaranteeing rational, general rules, and the enforcement, without rational justification, which takes place in contingent historical societies. The dialectical consideration which differentiates between the mechanical and the teleological aspect of a social phenomenon and then mediates the two aspects in a judgement here finds its expression. It is this judgement which leads Kant to construct and espouse a ‘republican’ government, which contains normative elements and is considered to be binding on whatever historical type of exercise of power might be established.

At this point, we shall have to address the question of the implications of the structure and movement of the dialectical teleological judgement, discussed above, for the issue of the understanding of the real as a totality of *conditions*. It appears that a teleological approach of a Kantian type transcends the strict division between the infinite regress of conditions and freedom as the *unconditional* and raises the issue of the *preconditions* which are necessary for a rational axiological framework to be realised, as well as the issue of the axiological framework whose institution is necessary for social life itself not be threatened.¹⁰ However, one should not ignore the fact that the central argument of Kantian dialectics does not entail a reconciliation, without remainder, of the philosophical standpoint (‘ends of reason’) with the historical processes (the consideration of the development of real forces). This is prevented, to begin with, by the dialectical (antinomic) relationship of theory and praxis and the idea that their mediation can occur exclusively through the aspect of ‘form’. To this ‘formal’ element is attached the ‘normative’ one (the transcendental framework of freedom, etc.) which gives meaning to history. So far, one could consider the Kantian conception of the historicity of the categories as an ‘anti-historicist’ (anti-relativist) one, since it reflects on contemporary formal values (transcendental ideas) as founding principles

of the ‘epoch of critique’. Kant, thus, writes that the idea of Right ‘guides’ historical development, that the French Revolution can be viewed as a ‘sign’ of the activity of reason in history, and so on.¹¹ Reason, however, should not be read into actions of violence, which are merely symptomatic for the historical revolutionary process, but should only be traced in results which are compatible with a ‘constitution according to natural law’. In fact, we can see that the two sides of the judgement (force and natural law) demarcate and emancipate themselves in concrete historical cases. Critical practical philosophy, unlike the Hegelian *Weltgeist*, does not consider itself to be responsible to the ‘totality’ of the relations and consequences of historical development. It separates the historical into a part which can be approved by reason (which recognises in it its own form) and a part whose materiality does not meet the demands of reason. This division of historical materiality into reason-supporting and reason-nonsupporting structures, which is immanent to dialectical teleology, transposes, it seems, the transcendental antinomy into the methodology of the socio-historical sciences, thus destroying the unity of their subject. Kant was aware of this difficulty – the cost of his commitment to formalism. This can be shown to be so for the *Critique of Judgement*, and in particular for the *Methodenlehre*, where an exposition of the methodological consequences of dialectical analysis for the theory of culture is to be found. The subject of this theory is the development (cultivation) of sensory and intellectual forces which determine the content (goals) of action – a development which becomes essentially the development of the capacity to *abstract* from contents and is, thus, a condition of the possibility of moral action. In the concept of culture a relation between reason, the understanding and the will is reflectively established within a logic of ‘discipline’, of egoism and a competitive society, but also of respect towards the norms dictated by reason. Central to this is the idea that, on the basis of teleological analysis, an exposition of moral self-determination itself as a problem is impossible. Such an analysis can only show how men can be ‘prepared’ for the ‘domination of reason’ (X, 556). Consequently, there is no transition without a break from the object of a teleological approach to a condition of society adequate to reason.

We can now complete our discussion of Kantian dialectics. We argued that Kantian dialectics can be understood as a methodological critique of the scientistic attempt to analyse society as an equilibrium of forces. The Kantian analysis disclosed antinomies which arise

when we shift our interest from the sphere of theory to that of teleology and then to the concept of praxis. In Kantian terms, this shift has a systematic function in the analysis of socio-historical 'objects', as a necessary dislocation (movement of the judgement) from the transcendental framework, where it constitutes the unity of the logic of the natural sciences, to a practical-teleological transcendental idea (Rousseau's contractual/consensual *a priori* of freedom and equality). It is precisely this movement of judgement which scientism does not explore.

The dissolution of the scientific approach to questions about the ends of nature (teleology) and the ends of reason (praxeology) is the Kantian answer to the problem of the relation between evaluation and description in the social sciences. The incorporation of values in the construction of historical reality (in a relation of interdependence with facts) is accepted for teleological analysis (for certain given values which consist in general rules), but rejected for praxeology, for which values are the criteria by which historically conditioned reality is to be judged and, thus, cannot depend on it. A mediation between the antinomic methodologies (description, teleological evaluation, practical evaluation) occurs with reference to the generative forms of norms for the natural and social sciences and for moral action. Types of norms are critically related to each other, while, as regards social analysis, Kant insists on the primacy of the practical-teleological sphere and demands the integration in it of the dynamics of 'forces'. Because this integration occurs with reference to a *rigid* system of norms, there is always the risk that its results be conceptualised as incoherent and inconsistent, and that no modification of norms is thought to be effected by changes in the equilibrium of forces. Kant's purpose is to preclude any modification of norms, for that would lead, according to him, to historicist relativism. (This is the problem of Hegelian-Marxian dialectics, dealt with by proposing a new solution to it based on an attempt to evaluate contents.) But, although Kantian dialectics try to immunize themselves against experience and content-based conditions, they nevertheless do have a 'content', a formal essentiality, in the antinomic relations of transcendental philosophy which constitute a 'binding' context, the conditions of the possibility of describing and evaluating the relation of theory and praxis in contemporary societies. And in this sense, starting from this context, they annul the scientific thesis of irrationality and the contingency of the historical content.

Hegelian Dialectics and the Problem of the Exposition of the Categories

Contrary to Kant, in Hegelian social theory the connection between mechanism and teleology is held to be an internal relation of a *dialectical* kind. Hegel holds that the problem of values presents itself in social theory as a problem of the very constitution of the object, not as a problem of the confrontation of the non-rational object with the axiological framework of pure formal reason; that is, Hegel transposes the problem of rationality into the object. Dialectical theory does not project an abstract idea on to reality, demanding of it that it adapt itself to this ideal, but looks for the axiological element in contradictory modern social reality itself. The entire Hegelian argumentation is informed by this thought. In particular, it is to be found in the Hegelian understanding of the historic-social as Objective Spirit whose forms are determined by dialectical logic. It is also to be found in the analysis of totality, typical for Hegel, in which attitudes and activities determined by individual and particular motives (and rejected by the Kantian philosophy of praxis) are integrated, and in the idea that the totality reproduces itself through those particular aspects by reproducing the limits within which these aspects may develop. At the same time, Hegel raises the problem of the acceptance of the totality as a value by the agents (as well as by theory) on the basis of normative and political elements, which are considered to be immanent to it (abstract law, class relations, relations between the system of needs and the state, the rational balancing of forces and powers, *Bildung*).

The Hegelian analysis of the axiological nature of social Being (*Sein*), presupposes a readjustment of the relation between Being and thought, and their *elevation* (Vol. 8, p. 56)¹² above the empirical multiplicity of social facts; that is, the axiological constitution of Being is related to the problem of 'correctly' abstracting from the empirical, and is understood as the directedness of an act, as praxis. The goal of this elevation is that the world acquire Being, in the sense of 'true Being', with respect to a universal end. The understanding of Being, thus, requires its elevation with respect to the essential and true. As long as this is not achieved, Being is fractured into a multiplicity of isolated and non-connected existences and ends; with its achievement, however, the work is organised in such a way that the multiplicity results as a necessary epiphenomenon of the essential. According to Hegel, a binding theory of social Being is

constituted on the basis of this axiological conception. The course of the axiological conception of social reality is conceived by Hegel as the development of logical form. In the Hegelian logical form are concentrated the central issues of dialectical methodology, that is, (a) the problem of totality and the incorporation of the particular in it, (b) the constitution of the real through its *conditions* and the limits within which these conditions are posed, and (c) in particular, the problem of *positing* the *axiological* and *political* conditions for the constitution of the real. Hegel himself summarised (*Enzyklopaedie* par. 79, 8/168) the concept of logical form by emphasising three aspects which allow, albeit in an 'anticipatory and historical' manner, an understanding of the problems it raises.

The *first* aspect of logical form is generated by an act of abstraction which isolates elements of the social object by giving them an identity, incorporating them into classificatory schemes and determining them in their distinctness (that is, classes, state institutions and functions). The development of logical form depends on the critical questions of the conditions under which the Being of particular elements 'is as it is', of the relations between these elements and of the critical process of abstraction and relativisation, which is presupposed by distinctness. A *second* moment of logical form is the process of relativisation activated as a dialectical element ('negative-rational'): 'the dialectical moment is itself the self-transcending of such finite determinations and their transition to their opposites.' The dialectical (in contrast to the reflective) constitutes a 'transcendence from the inside', a coming out of the distinct form itself, during which its one-sidedness is cancelled (*Enz.* par. 81).

In order to understand these obscure Hegelian analyses one must turn to the issue of the mutual constitution of object and abstractive method which forms the core of dialectical methodology. The object, which, at the abstractive level of the first moment, presents itself as particular and individual, is presented in the dialectical approach as part of a complex of relations, which mark the limits within which the particular ranges. With respect to the particular, the analysis shows its development in a certain direction towards its limits. The location of these limits from various points of view and their interrelation raises the question of a unified theory of the production of relationships and of the limits of their reproduction. Such a theory coincides with a dialectical theory of the objects, whose various relational forms and manifestations constitute the mutual limits of each other.

By considering each particular object 'for itself', the limits of the one-sided, abstract determination of the object become manifest. By conceiving of the object as involved in comprehensive relations, one is led to a conception of a comprehensive object, an object 'in itself', whose analysis is also the analysis of the processes by which particular vantage points are constituted and on the basis of which one-sided and abstract determinations are generated; that is, these determinations appear as abstractions through which the comprehensive object is constituted. The specific hierarchisation of the particular abstractions is connected with the process of their elevation, which shows up the axiological nature of the former. Included in this whole problem is the idea of a transition to a *third* moment of logical-dialectical form, which is the philosophical element *par excellence*, that is, the 'positive-rational' element of dialectical activity. The negation of the determinations, when they transcend their limits, is their affirmation within these limits, that is, the affirmation of the relation in which they stand by right. The process of checking the validity of the claims of every categorical-axiological element coincides with the process of constituting the object in the form of 'truly being' as a concrete whole of its moments.

The problem of the development of logical form allows Hegel to raise once again the Kantian problem of the antinomic relation between an object wholly determined by its conditions and freedom as the unconditioned. He also addresses again the problem of the relation between the *historical* and the *logical*, thus leading to the central issue of dialectical method, namely, the problem of the exposition of the categories (*Darstellung*).

The *problem of preconditions* was raised by Hegel, in particular in his analysis of scepticism, for which the reference to preconditions constituted a strategic argument according to which the validity of a proposition as being relative to its conditions of validity was emphasised.

Hegelian dialectics aimed at transcending scepticism by developing the problem of 'positing' the preconditions of a concept: the conceptual elements which have been 'posited' in a concept constitute its content, in which is expressed the degree of its development in relation to a binding conceptual totality. Those conceptual elements which have not been posted remain, as such, in 'reflection' and may either concern the 'nature of the concept' or be extrinsic to it. The positing of these preconditions coincides with the conceptual development of the concept, with its *Darstellung* (*Log.* 5/117). The

Hegelian analysis views objectivity as being posited by the conceptual, that is, as the externalisation of the *relational* and *axiological* framework which is binding for philosophy itself. The positing of preconditions for every aspect of the real takes place within this framework and does not transcend it. 'True dialectics' consists precisely in the binding interrelation of preconditions, in their mutual reference not to any arbitrary form-determination, but to a derivation internal to the relations of these determinations (11/480, 485). Hegel developed in the 'Logic of Essence' the conceptual framework of a logic of 'forces' each of which conditions the other (cf. 6/173f). The development of the categories in the 'Logic of Essence' places the relation between forces within the issue of causality, which is understood as 'pre-positing action' (*Voraussetzendes Tun* 6/233). Every substance pre-positing another substance and their relation presents itself as an external imposition of force (behind which one should inquire to what extent a rational relation of power is realised) (6/237). A central issue of these analyses is the unity of the causally determined world; they criticise the scientific concept of 'mechanism', concerning which they hold that it cancels itself in the interaction of substances which presuppose and condition each other (6/237). If something is a condition, it is a condition of something else and that which makes possible its realisation (8/287). A generalised logic of conditions conceives of the world as a world of necessity, in which the conditions enter into the real, while the *movement* itself, which transforms the pre-positing conditions into realities ('activity'), participates in necessity (8/293). The Hegelian analysis identifies, here, the reification of this movement and raises the problem of transcending the relations of reification and necessity as a problem of positing the precondition from within relations of freedom and as the possibility of understanding the Logic of the Object as a 'genetic exposition' of a conceptual relation of freedom (6/245). The complex issue of the transition to freedom is based on a transposition of the logic of positing of preconditions: the object is the realisation of the world of 'passive' substances, of which the one is the precondition of the other, as a world in which substance becomes the subject. This activation takes place in the social, in the world of ends. The movement of the end consists, according to Hegel, in the fact that it is directed to the cancellation of the precondition and to *positing* it as determined by the concept (6/447); that is, this positing of the precondition is not a mere reproduction of the 'necessary', but realises, rather, the

axiological *elevation* of the real as the condition *par excellence* of its constitution.

The fact that the constitution of the relational character of the historical object requires the positing of axiological preconditions, leads to an understanding of a central problem of dialectical theory, namely, that of the *historical content* of dialectical concepts. This problem was raised by the social sciences, in Hegel's time, as the problem of historicist relativism.¹³ The manner of relating particular elements in a (cultural) totality, so that they no longer remain as abstractions, but constitute a concrete dialectical whole which reproduces itself as a value by reproducing its own limits, could, according to the historicist argument, vary in such a way that every variation would lead to a historically different totality. The limits of the single one-sided abstractions would eventuate historically from the position of every moment in relation to all the other moments of a concrete culture. It is evident that a historicist argument of this sort fails to pinpoint the axiological-historical core of Hegelian dialectics. The combinatory logic immanent in the historicist argument presupposes the particular as an atomic element which preserves its identity when it enters into various combinations. In contrast to this argument, Hegelian dialectics hold that the particular is constituted in its concrete form by the whole: the whole which constitutes the particular is not one possible contingent whole – amongst the many possible combinations – but a necessary whole, which can be conceptually grasped. The real/logical is a 'value'. The process of reproducing social action and knowledge is normative *ab initio*. The process of the quantitative assessment of facts, the correlation of forces with the relations on which they act, the totality of real and necessary relations, are analysed from the vantage point of an axiological logic of concept which transcends the logics of necessity (that is the logic of Being and of Essence). In this axiological dimension, the Kantian problem of the relation between mechanism and teleology is shown to be a central issue of Hegelian dialectical logic. Mechanism is conceived as an abstraction from a real totality of relations, ends and means, conditions and consequences of the accomplishment of intentional action. This teleology is governed by the telos of philosophy which is realised in a dialectic of knowledge and praxis.¹⁴ The value realised in this logic has the form of a logical syllogism which contains a major premiss (the general), a minor premiss (the particular) and a conclusion (the individual), which consists in the decision to *posit* the conditions of the logical as its necessary

moments.¹⁵ This syllogistic movement itself confirms the freedom-based nature of the logical system. The particular is reproduced as the content of the logical relation by being incorporated into relations governed by general, normative frameworks. The process, itself, of reproducing the rational norm participates in reason as a rational social relation. Every process, reproducing particularity and singularity, which divorces itself from the axiological and normative bases of the totality, is considered a bad abstraction (a mechanism that does not obey its teleological constraints) confronted by the opposing moment of a reality which cancels it. The condition for reality to reproduce the oppositions which cancel bad abstractions is that it be dialectically structured, that it be based on freedom, that is, that it already be constituted on the basis of general and free institutions, and that it allow the mobilisation of consciousness and rational action which support and perfect them. In this construction, every moment finds its right. Freedom is here realised as a relation in which the relative claims of each moment are legitimated by being recognised relative to the claims of the other moments. This idea leads us to understand the Hegelian analyses of *The Philosophy of Spirit* and *The Philosophy of Right*, not as analyses which are independent of the corresponding ones in the *Logic*, but as analyses of the necessary expression of the logical-dialectical in the historical. This necessary relation between the two – which presents a number of difficult methodological problems requiring a special examination¹⁶ – constitutes the Hegelian answer to historicism: from the vantage point of a binding dialectical theory, it claims that it grounds a critical argument against historicist relativism.

The logical presupposition behind the thesis of the unity of the logical and the historical is the dialectical concept of ideality, which demands of historiography that it become aware of the constitutive character of the conceptual and axiological frameworks of contemporary society and science in the reconstruction of the historical content. Dialectical theory, as an anti-historicist, axiological theory, refers to an emphatic historicity of the contemporary epoch. This epoch is held to be rational, because, although it contains a tension between antinomic social relations and rational rules, the latter are not destroyed by the dynamics of the former. In his early work Hegel had already come to the conclusion that the division of labour and property were the 'fate'¹⁷ of the contemporary epoch and that the axiological framework results as a process which reproduces the mediation of particular viewpoints from within the universality of the

law and the conscious political process. The criteria for the conceptual appropriation of the contemporary epoch must be made explicit in order that the concepts constitutive of the contemporary, the hermeneutic conditions for the understanding of preceding historical formations, and the conceptualisation of a rational shaping of the future be clarified.

The above-mentioned aspects of the dialectical analysis of the historical object shape Hegel's conception of the *dialectical exposition* (*Darstellung*) of the categories, that is, of the hierarchisation and evaluation of these aspects by theory.

Through the idea of the exposition of the categories and by emphasising its axiological dimension, dialectical argument formulates the problem of the reconstruction of historical reality and circumscribes itself critically with respect to relativism and transcendentalism. So far as the critique of Kantian transcendentalism is concerned, this circumscription is, of course, a complicated process in view of the fact that the dialectical argument takes over and reconstructs central elements of the transcendental argument. The idea itself of the exposition of the categories is formulated by Kant in the context of his transcendental approach, which is apprehended as purely formal. Kant writes in the *Critique of Pure Reason* that the exposition (*Darstellung, exhibitio*) of a concept is connected with the judgement's function of demonstrating the use of this concept by correlating a corresponding intuition with it. This conception of an exposition is cognitive and differs from the corresponding aesthetic one (*apprehensio*), as well as from the methodical approach to physical phenomena as products of the teleology of nature (IX, 197, 267). In its strictly scientific version, the Kantian exposition of the categories is, thus, a conceptual schematism which proceeds from theory to its material. It is characteristic of the nature of this schematism that the Kantian epistemology prohibits the incorporation, in it, of content-based criteria of conceptual development which refer to the inner structure of the object. This prohibition leads to a downgrading of the problem of the exposition of the categories in the whole Kantian work. According to Kantian transcendentalism, an exposition which refers to essential, content-based aspects of the object is not possible. However, a reconstruction of the epistemological claims of the transcendental argument would show that it already contains the idea of a binding conception of method, which pre-shapes the relevant conception of the nature of the object: the idea that the conditions of the possibility of knowledge

coincide with the conditions of the possibility of the object, results in a determinate idea of nature. Correspondingly, the teleological analyses, which are constitutive of a Kantian logic of institutions, have recourse – as we have already shown – to the theoretical framework of the exposition of the categories, with a simultaneous inversion of the schematism and a grounding of the relevant concepts in the idea of freedom. On this basis, concepts such as ‘state’, ‘power’, ‘competition’, etc. are reconstituted and incorporated in the teleological framework. This Kantian programme was never completed, owing to the above-mentioned methodological prohibition. However, the direction of Kant’s thought shows that the very same concepts employed in his transcendental construction are reconstituted by him and developed into a framework of institutional normativity based on freedom and autonomous praxis. What this amounts to is that the exposition of concepts referring to social praxis is provided with a framework of unity and cohesion for the structuring of these concepts, which derives from the transcendental paradigm itself. (Cf. for instance the analysis of the process of the constitution of civil institutions from the state of nature, in the Kantian philosophy of right, which follows the inverted conceptual development of levels of cognitive appropriation, from the level of intuition to the level of understanding).¹⁸ In addition, the cohesion of these concepts is, thereby, ruptured, since the *desideratum* is not the inversion of the ordering of these concepts in the context of a given (transcendental-rationalised) logic, but the rejection of this logic through free praxis and the realisation of freedom as a value. This dialectic of limits and rupture in method remains, in Kant, for reasons which we have already given, open and non-systematic.

The Hegelian exposition of the categories seeks to investigate this antinomic relation. The Hegelian exposition is a binding conceptual appropriation of historical contents, which refers to their axiological character. It is binding in that it refers to the, in some sense, necessary character of historical relations and their axiological nature; that is, it adopts a critical attitude to contingent and historicist ontologies. It is also binding with respect to the method of the exposition of these contents, that is, it adopts a critical attitude towards historicist conceptions of the contingent nature of method. The expository process aims at bringing forth, in a methodologically controlled way, the essential dimensions of the historical object, so far as its mode of constitution and its axiological nature are concerned, and at locating the mediation of these dimensions through

freedom-oriented praxis. In Hegel, the concepts themselves, referred to by this methodical reconstruction of reality (that is, essence and appearance, necessity and freedom) constitute categories in the sense of a dialectical logic. They do not constitute transcendental conditions of the constitution of a ‘possible’ reality, but expressions of its ‘real’ aspects. The methodical exposition of the categories coincides with dialectical ontology.

In the face of this claim, raised by dialectical theory, two central methodological problems arise concerning the binding character and legitimation of the dialectical exposition. The first problem concerns the relation between the exposition and what we called the ‘elevation’ of the object above the contingent-historical and empirical moments, and the manner in which this elevation acquires a unitary and necessary character. The second problem concerns the nature of the justification of the exposition’s axiological basis and, in particular, the way in which formalism and positivism are to be avoided, seeing that both may be reproduced in the absence of a clarification of the former issue.

Insofar as the *first problem* is concerned, one can find in Hegel’s work a differentiation in the concept of a *Darstellung*, which can be discerned in the different ways in which the problem of the axiological and historical preconditions of the social object is raised in works such as *The Phenomenology of Spirit* and *The Philosophy of Right*. Specifically, Hegel’s early work raised the question whether the historical, essential moments of the genesis of socio-political reality, referred to by the exposition, themselves constitute an integral part of the latter. The problem of the historical character of dialectical theory is, thereby, brought to the fore as a problem of dialectical exposition. The methodological distinction between historical moments and their characterisation as essential or non-essential to the constitution of historical reality may be conceived as a genetic process by which the present is constituted and which coincides with the genetic development of reality, characterised by Hegel as ‘phenomenological’. The phenomenological exposition develops the contents of consciousness in a historical process reaching up to the historical present. Phenomenological analysis claims, with respect to methodology, to demonstrate the *socio-historical conditions* which constitute, and must constitute, the necessary contents of contemporary historical consciousness. In this way, the phenomenological appropriation of the object is shown to be a binding social and political theory, and history is, thus, transformed into social objectiv-

ity. As Hegel writes in the *Encyclopaedia*, in such a methodological process the viewpoint of simple consciousness should be abandoned and the contents, which arise if one adopts the standpoint of philosophical knowledge, should be taken into consideration. Thus, beginning with simple consciousness, ethical contents, social practices and aesthetic and religious contents, which are presupposed in order that the contents of simple consciousness be rendered comprehensible, should be developed; however, the difference between consciousness and the former contents, that is, the unachieved appropriation of these contents in all their essential dimensions and relations, is also similarly presupposed. The exposition of these contents is the exposition of the 'in itself' (*an sich*) which is valid 'behind the back' of the particular consciousnesses constituted 'for themselves' (*für sich*). 'The methodical exposition of the categories, thus, becomes more complex.' (*Enz.* 25, note, 8/91). It is, thus, apparent, from the above remarks, that the demand of the *exposition* of the categories for a Phenomenology of Spirit includes the development of the relation of social, aesthetic and religious contents, not in an external articulation of these elements, but in a unified methodology, which shows up the historicity of this relation and refers to the conceptual and axiological framework which constitutes essentially the contemporary epoch.

From such an understanding of the nature of exposition, which predominates in *The Phenomenology of Spirit*, one should distinguish the methodological views prevailing in Hegel's later work, such as *Logic* and *The Philosophy of Right*. The emphasis here falls on the methodical development of the 'objective' dimensions of social and political reality and of their *axiological presuppositions* ('Objective Spirit'), and not on their methodological-genetic prehistory. An understanding of the organisation of this reality is presupposed in order that attitudes and values of subjective consciousness be reconstructed as parts of this reality. At the same time, the exposition has recourse to an impressive – as regards the early phenomenological analyses – rupture, namely, that between logical analysis and the analysis of Objective Spirit. Whereas in *The Phenomenology of Spirit* we are confronted with a unified logical-social analysis, the exposition of the categories of socio-political reality in *The Philosophy of Right* presupposes, in its methodological steps, a transcendent, separately developed, axiological conceptual scheme, namely dialectical *Logic*. This separation is an answer to the problem encountered by the Hegelian analysis, namely, the necessity

of emphasising the axiological dimension in the *Darstellung* of the relations of reality. In other words, the problem was raised as to how the realisation of values in the historic-social was to be guaranteed (given that the phenomenological analysis does not seem to contain any particular such guarantee). The (idealist) answer to it is that this can be achieved if a pure ('logical') evaluative process, with which the historic-social will later be mediated, were to be separated from the historic-social and developed independently of it. The attempt to develop such a pure process is presented by Hegel in the *Logic* and the *Encyclopaedia*.¹⁹ Structurally, *Logic* is constituted as an 'absolute' process of intellectual abstraction, proceeding from the location of quantitative and qualitative factors, through causal understanding, the investigation of essential and necessary relations, and a system of ends and means, to the unity of this whole process as a relation of knowledge and free praxis,²⁰ which is reproduced and must be reproduced in social relations and in the relations of man to nature. Hegel holds that the realisation of the practical claims of *Logic* has a *historical condition*, namely, the institution of political relations of freedom and Right,²¹ but that the logical relation is constituted by transcending its condition and *positing* it as a moment of logical *freedom*. The dialectical exposition of the categories appropriate to a theory of the contemporary world is founded on this transcending and positing of this condition as a moment (ideality). The tension between the binding axiological normativity of *Logic* and its realisations in *The Philosophy of Right* can be conceived as a continuing transition from necessary moments to freedom, thus reproducing a critical element of Hegelian dialectics in relation to every historical crystallisation.

The exposition in *The Philosophy of Right* locates the essential axiological dimensions of social reality in its normative-legal core and investigates the modes of development, on the basis of Right, of a totality of relations: particularity, atomism and property are developed ('posited') within this totality as necessary relations in such a way that the normative-legal values realised in this totality are not destroyed, but themselves 'posited' and consciously accepted by the agents.

The axiological element governing the Hegelian dialectical analysis can be located in the individual phases of the categorical arrangement. The initial categories (the 'beginning' of the exposition) have the character of 'Abstract Right'. They provide the normative constraint which guarantees that the development of the individual

aspects of the political totality will not impair its freedom-based constitution. The exposition of those aspects, in their legal and social dimension, into particular 'Stände', classes and political institutions of political society, render historically concrete the initially abstract normative ideal. A guarantee of the reproduction of the concrete whole as a value is the 'mode of movement' itself of the concepts in the context of the dialectical exposition, which constrains them to produce only such inter-relationships as affirm the axiological nature of the whole.

One can, thus, perceive in the dialectical analysis a logic which follows the movement of opposed relations in the direction of, and up to, the point of equilibrium at which the mode of movement itself, together with its normative results, are revealed as aspects of a unified, binding value. The mediatory activity of the concept excludes from the relevant moment – because it holds them to be abstract – those elements which, entailing crisis, destroy the relational and institutional equilibrium. In order to achieve this exclusion, the exposition orients itself to the categorisation, in particular, of *political* activation and the intensive, mutually referring relationships of the movement of the totality. These intensive concepts are political (cf. the decision to maintain the equilibrium of forces in a bourgeois society of freedom-based institutions).²² They are, however, at the same time, logical. They are presented as particularisations of a foundational politics of the concept which consists in the will to preserve and intensify its movements. With respect to the totality of socio-politically relevant relations, the analysis of individual forms of social-institutional action follows the development of each form up to the limits that are set by the other obtaining relations, and, when it reaches these limits, it 'transcends' them by shifting its point of view in the direction of the relations which generate these limits. Thus, the limit of institutionally constituted legal action is illegality (which itself finds its limit in state law enforcement); the limit of utilitarian action is the result itself of social cooperation which takes place 'behind the back' of the agents and is a condition and a result of their action (welfare: *Wohl*) (7/125 ff). Behaviour which violates these limits provokes reactions at an institutional level (for example reactions of the bureaucracy or the courts) or at a non-institutional one (for example, unexpected developments in the market as a result of individual action). In the context of the analysis of *The Philosophy of Right*, these reactions are considered to be strategically relevant to the dialectical exposition to the extent that they allow the

reproduction of the framework of socio-economic action and guarantee the preservation of the political-institutional totality. In the concept-formation of the categories of Objective Spirit, one can discern a constitutive politics of exposition, which is founded on the politics of the logical Concept itself and which emphasises the aspects of the mobilisation of the political-institutional as necessary to the maintenance of cohesion and the very axiological substance of reality.

The consequences of the above 'political' element of Hegelian logic appear, at a methodological level, in the exposition (development or *Darstellung*), discussed above, of categories from the abstract to their limits and from these limits to the essential processes which reproduce them. In the Hegelian exposition, the abstract moments form abstract constituent elements of the concrete (Social Ethics) which is the essential result of their development and from the standpoint of which the abstract character of the moments is revealed to be necessary. However, this epistemological implication for the exposition gives rise to a *second problem* of dialectical method, related to the threat that historicism – which was intended to be ruled out by this method – may make a comeback. Since, within a Hegelian framework, the essential is constituted exclusively as the concrete and as the result of the whole exposition and location of its abstract moments, the essential reproduction process of these moments (a postulate of the Hegelian positive dialectic) ends up by coinciding with an inversion of the process by which the concrete is constituted, that is, with the inverse process from the concrete to the abstract. The process of constituting the essential and the concrete can be inverted into a process of the constitution of abstract moments through the dynamics of essential relations.²³ This logic leads to a paradoxical result: in the Hegelian exposition, the concepts of the concrete and the essential coincide with, and are exhausted in, the constellation of the abstract moments which precede them in the order of the exposition. Thus, the justification of the dialectical argument seems to be affected by the epiphenomenal and the abstract, since the latter take precedence over the essential and are supposed to constitute it. In this way, the concept of the essential and the whole process of the exposition is mystified and appears as a unique, unrepeatable formation (that is, a historicist totality). In view of this difficulty, the question arises as to the possibility of a conceptualisation of essential, socio-political and axio-genetic procedures, independent of their abstract moments. In other words, this

difficulty raises the problem of the conceptualisation of the abstract-essential, which is not exhausted in the integration of its abstract moments. Logically, such an exposition of the elements of social reproduction should transcend the totality of dialectical mediations by raising the problem of a distinct theory of the constitution of their own formal determination. Such a distinct theory is to be found, in post-Hegelian dialectics, in the theory of the materiality of the exposition.

We saw that Hegel also raised the issue of a distinct theory, which would found the particular forms of the historical, but he conceived of it exclusively from the side of the axiological framework, as Logic. However, it is precisely this Hegelian construction of the logical categories which renders impossible a radicalisation of a theory connecting the problem of values with the problem of the materiality of the socio-historical forms. In the Logic of Essence, Hegel understands the material as a multiplicity of 'existences reflected in themselves', as 'abstract determinations' (6/88 ff, 8/257), which are indifferent as to their mutual relationships. The possibility of their synthesis lies outside them with reference to a *thing* which 'has' them as its properties, that is, it is influenced by a logic of reification.²⁴ Consequently, such a logic of materiality cannot be foundational, but is itself founded on a development of the categorial exposition towards more developed dialectical relations (Appearance, Reality, Concept). Thus, Hegel seems to be faced once again with the problem he tried to solve by putting Logic, as a distinct axiological framework, before political theory. In classical dialectical analysis, the means of which the exposition avails itself in order to overcome historicism do not derive from a theory of the reproduction of the moments of the whole, but from the development of the concepts themselves, which, as a pure movement which cannot be further questioned, is supposed to guarantee that it will lead to the development of society as based on freedom.

Marxian Concept-Formation and the Problem of the Reconstruction of Dialectical Materialism

The mode of constructing categories, which is characteristic of the Hegelian conception of dialectics, presents an effect of 'concentration' of the categories with reference to the historical object analysed. By 'concentration' we mean the fact that the analytical apparatus is

bound by those elements which the analysis has determined to be historically essential for the social formation under consideration and that the entire conceptual framework, at its various levels of abstraction, 'bends itself' towards this privileged field of reference. This 'bending' of the categorial framework, in the Hegelian version of dialectics, ensures the coherence of the object. The effect of concentration is ensured by the 'movement of the concept' itself, which 'persists' in the totality of Objective Spirit, which it constitutes and proclaims to be rational. This concentration is intended to ensure that the analysis of the contemporary society's privileged object is binding, at the same time, on the methodology of the ways in which processes of change in this society can be conceptualised, but also on the way in which other historical societies can be analysed.

Clearly, such a conception is in opposition to evolutionist conceptions of social change, as well as to historicist attitudes which hold that a particular social formation can be conceptualised as a *constellation* of abstract concepts. Contrary to both, a dialectical 'concentration' of the Hegelian type makes 'metatheoretical' reflection and the construction of transhistorical concepts dependent on the analysis of the character and the contradictions of the historical present. In developing dialectical theory, Marxism frequently criticised idealist dialectics for absolutising the present, for ignoring its dynamic dimension, etc. However, this valid criticism led to the neglect of some central methodological implications of idealist dialectics – implications central to a critical approach to the problem of the historicity of dialectical concept-formation. Thus, especially in the first formulations of Marxian dialectics, for instance in the *Poverty of Philosophy*, we encounter pre-critical positions. Here, dialectics appear as an attempt to transcend the Hegelian method with respect to the search for the constitutive elements of capitalist society, for example the capital/labour relationship and class struggle but, parallel to and independently of this first attempt, an element of 'hastiness of theory' dominates the analysis; the search for the movement of the object towards its deconstruction and its reconstruction in a new form (its disappearance as a society of competition and its reconstruction as a socialist society) appears in such a way that the categories for analysing the object orient themselves towards the transcendent movement, that is, towards a centre outside the object. The pre-critical differentiation from Hegel, thus, takes the form of a deconcentration of the categorial framework and the transcendence of the object – which, of course, occurs only in theory.

We can trace this element of 'hastiness of theory' right into the analyses of Marx's later work, namely, in the critique of the categories of political economy, although its strategic significance is here radically altered. Right up to and into the 1850's, Marx holds probable the occurrence of 'stormy movements' which will alter the object under consideration so radically as to render his analyses worthless. (Cf. letter from Marx to Lassalle of 22 February 1852: 'If I will be ready too late to find the world interested in such matters [viz. in the analysis of the anatomy of bourgeois society] the mistake is evidently my own.') One can discern traces of this 'hastiness of theory' right into the interior of the exposition of the categories in the Marxian *Darstellung* of *Capital I* and, in particular, in the parallel analyses of the third and fourth parts (Production of Absolute and Relative Surplus Value); these appear in the development of the argument to a point of intensity, identified as the historic present, in which it is believed that the conditions for the radical change of the object have already been fulfilled and a radical transformation of society is at hand.²⁵ However, I believe, I believe it can be shown that the element of 'hastiness of theory' and spontaneism is not the central characteristic of Marx's later work.

Marx first diagnosed the problematic character of this version of dialectics in the 1850's: in view of the imminent change of the object, it omitted even to constitute it and clarified neither the manner of its reproduction and change nor the problem of the constitution of political action in it. Correspondingly, the values espoused by the theory were extraneous to it and were juxtaposed to the 'movement' and the proletarian action which were supposed to realise them.

This critique of elements of his own pre-critical method led Marx to the requirement that the 'real movement' of the object be analysed within the methodological framework of a *Darstellung* of the object (cf. *Nachwort* 1873 to the second edition of *Capital* (vol. 23/p. 27)). This amounts essentially to a return to the Hegelian problem of a mode of movement characteristic of the modern historical formation. In this sense, Marx is led to the analysis of the social relations of reproduction, of their development and change in the interior of the contemporary, bourgeois, social formation and of the demonstration of the limits of this formation. This conception of *Darstellung* presupposes a sort of 'persistance' of theory with respect to the object it wants to change. The *Darstellung* renders problematic how far beyond the limits of the private appropriation system the emancipation issue is to be resolved – as seems to be suggested by some

of Marx's sketches (cf., amongst others, *Grundrisse* p. 175,²⁶ 'Real Positing of Individual Labour as Social') – given that the *Darstellung* itself has revealed these materialist elements and separations which are instituted by the division of labour and which do not disappear when the means of production cease being offered as commodities in the capitalist market. The conception of the 'utterly different', which is supposed to succeed the present, is thus radically relativised and attention is directed to what remains and to its consequences for human freedom. (This conception is documented by Marx's remarks on the status of value when the form it takes under capitalism disappears).²⁷

This development of Marx's methodological thought raises new problems for theory: to what exactly does the demonstration of the limits of the formation amount? And in what sense does the persistence of theory with respect to the object it wants to change lead to the understanding of change itself? I believe the answer to these questions is related to some problems concerning the logical structure of what we characterise as the materiality of Marxist theory; which have yet to be solved.

In contrast to the Kantian conception of the material as subsumable, amorphous matter, the Marxian theory of materiality appears as a complex relation of conceptual determinations. The investigation of the logical structure of materiality leads us, first, to an examination of the type of dialectical abstraction which characterises the materialist as against the idealist dialectical exposition; second, to the location of the historicity of the object and of the conceptual framework; and finally, to the revelation and the justification of the axiological nature of materialist dialectics as a problem which is also of primary significance for contemporary social theory.

The *first* issue is connected by Marx, in texts such as the Introduction to the *Grundrisse*, with the problem of the opposition between method and reality. In this Introduction, Marx accepts, on the one hand, the Hegelian position that the only possible way of appropriating the concrete is through the construction of a totality of *thoughts*, that is, as a 'result of the head'. On the other hand, however, he conceives of the real as an autonomous creative process of the concrete itself, which occurs by itself, outside the head, that is, the concrete is considered as already given. (This can be apprehended by the 'bumps' received from reality. Marx here used the Fichtean term '*Anstoss*' (p. 22).)

This antinomic relation between the theoretical appropriation pro-

cess and the self-constitution of the real through its own movement reproduces an antinomy between theory and praxis. For the agents the movement of the real does not reside outside the acting subjects, but is identical with the movement of their own powers and relations. Consequently, their practical activation realises an emphatic societal object. A corresponding problem also arises with respect to the theoretical appropriation of the object, in view of the fact that in this case as well the understanding of the particular dimensions of social objectivity presupposes the anticipation of its essential relations, that is, an elevation of reality as to the essential. Marx, Introduction: 'In theoretical method too the subject, society, must always hover before the representation as a presupposition.' (ibid.) The direction of Marx's argumentation here raises the issue of abstraction as the central problem of the materialist exposition.

Marx accepts that it is possible to develop a theory of the 'abstract-essential' as a condition of the understanding of manifest social phenomena and the particularism of appearances. (This methodological standpoint of the Marxian *Darstellung* is opposed to the Hegelian one which does not accept that the analysis of substantial relations must, of its nature, be abstract, but identifies the essential with the concrete and the achieved (*Resultat*), that is, with the end of the analysis.) Thus, problems of real reification and atomism, expressing the situation of social agents in the market, are developed in *Capital III*²⁸ after the analysis of substantial capitalist relations (the latter analysis is located in the first volume).

This mode of analysis constitutes a break in method, because it allows the confrontation of social appearances with a distinct, abstract concept of society, mediated by the former.²⁹ This abstract concept of society has a formal side, which refers to the historical, (exploitative) form of the social reproduction of capitalism, and a material side which refers to the level of development of the social division of labour and the modes of social cooperation in this society. In particular, with reference to this material dimension, the *Darstellung* raises, in relation to the method of abstraction, the issue of the change of the form of society, that is, it allows the demand for the practical realisation of a society in which relations between its members will not be mediated by alienation and atomism. That is, in order that such a society be realised, the elements which transcend its present alienating substance (the capital-labour relationship) have already, in a sense, been included in the exposition of its abstract, essential character. This idea led della Volpe³⁰ to a theory of

materiality as the positive element of the social productive forces, which is juxtaposed to the negative element of their alienating social forms. In reality, this problem is much more complex than della Volpe's scientific conception of it, and is connected with the understanding of a *second* dimension of the structure of materiality pertaining to its historicity.

Marx's emphasis on the historicity of the material aspect of the analysis aimed at revealing the dimension of the division of labour from the standpoint of contemporary historical consciousness and action as a foundational element of dialectical analysis. The logical structure of this dimension has not been sufficiently investigated as, on the one hand, it has been dogmatically distorted by the HISTO-MAT (historical materialist) theoreticians. On the other hand, and as a reaction to the former, it has also been neglected by the theoreticians of form analysis (capital logic analysis, derivationists, etc.). It is clear that in Marxian theory, the concept of essential relations, analysed in a *Darstellung* of the categories, acquires a *wider* sense than that of a conceptual framework referring exclusively to the capitalist economy of the middle of the nineteenth century and the corresponding political systems (English parliamentarianism, the Prussian state). It organises relational concepts for the analysis of societies, referring, in particular, to elements such as a division of labour organised on the basis of industrial production, property relations, modes of dependence of labour, typical forms of the division of labour between the economic and the political, as well as questioning the historical separation instituted by these relations – a question raised by social labour. A wider conception of the historical-social is thus formed. However, neither the way in which this wider issue is related to the analyses of particular societies, nor the logical foundation of the relevant concepts, were specifically investigated and elaborated by Marx. In his Introduction to the *Grundrisse* he raises this problem with respect to concepts like population, production, distribution, securing the product of labour. Of interest, in relevant analyses of his later work, is the reference to relations pertaining to minimum qualitative conditions of life, which are required by the continuance of the productive process, such as hygienic working conditions, the avoidance of disease, the protection of children, etc. In other words, the labour processes which constitute the material – in contrast to the formal – aspect of the production process (cf. labour process vs. valorisation process) are not merely understood schematically as the technical composition of society

which supports its organic-capitalist composition, but as a wider relation of humans to nature, to each other and to the means of production. This wider relation includes, together with the economic conditions of production, the historical, cultural and natural preconditions³¹ of this production process. These preconditions, on the one hand, constitute functional conditions of reproduction, while on the other hand, they express the possibility of a formation of the relations between humans to each other, and between humans and nature, which will differ from the way it occurs under capitalist conditions.

The above considerations give rise to the question of to what extent it is possible to conceptualise the social object as a specification or combination of general concepts of the sort described. The answer to this question also constitutes the answer to the problem of the exposition of the categories. If the abstraction of the essential characteristics of society takes place only with respect to the characteristics of this society, the resulting analysis will be a historicist one and will, thus, neither have the means of conceiving problems concerning the constitution of other societies, nor of transcending the dynamics of this society (that is, it will not be historical). Because change is an essential constituent of reality, the analysis will have fewer components than are necessary for conceiving the real. If, however, the abstraction is such as to let in wider elements than those specific to this society, it stands in danger of being trans-historical and of using combinations of trans-historical concepts whose constellation will, in each case, yield the concrete: the analysis will, thus, lead by another path to historicism.

This dilemma is broached by Marx in his Introduction to the *Grundrisse* in his critique of the method of the 'Economists' (pp. 7f.) This method consists of the introduction of general distinctions (production, distribution, etc.) and, through them, of the legitimation of the particular bourgeois conditions which appear as the expression of trans-historical relations. (The concepts of appropriation and of securing that which has been appropriated are emphasised as characteristic of 'all' societies.) Marx copes with this dilemma by developing a dual methodological procedure. *On the one hand*, he refers the general concepts to their own historicity, which results from their formation through the processes of constituting bourgeois societies. In other words, Marx is led to an inversion of methodology with respect to the economists' methodology. The most simple abstraction, which is valid, because of its abstract character, for 'all

societies', becomes possible, acquires 'practical truth' and 'full validity', 'full intensity', only as a category of the most modern society. Contemporary bourgeois relations constitute conditions of the possibility of the formation of general concepts for the social scientists.³² (And, correspondingly, the oppositions which characterise these relations are expressed or suppressed in epistemology, that is, they transfer their antinomies to it.)

This reflexive reference, by general abstract determinations, to the anatomy of bourgeois society, is expressed, in the Introduction to the *Grundrisse*, in the 'division' of concepts and, in particular, in Marx's conception of general, abstract determinations which apply to all societal forms: these determinations, as Marx writes, must be conceptually constructed 'in the way explained above' (p. 28), that is, reflexively with respect to their own historicity, in relation to the anatomy of modern society, etc.

On the other hand, Marx's methodological analysis brings to the fore a point which is often neglected by many of his interpreters. This is that general concepts are of a kind that refer to the logic of the anatomy of bourgeois society, without degenerating into historicism, relativism, etc., precisely because this logic comprises an anti-historicist turn and constitutes a framework of materialist analysis which is wider than the historical form of its object. The logical character of this wider framework refers to the *third* dimension of materiality mentioned above, that is, to the practical-axiological dimension characteristic of the social. This dimension is constituted antinomically to the historical form of class relations, property relations, etc., as a postulate of the cancellation of the divisions introduced by these relations. In the analysis of bourgeois society, the concept of capital comprises elements which transcend the determinations of form of capitalist society and refer to the concepts of materiality (of the division of labour, of social labour as a totality and of praxis), which are required by this analysis. The development of the individual concept of the theory of value has recourse to theoretical abstractions with respect to the social division of labour, the mode of appropriation of the social product and the historical mode of movement of social forces in the total society. Of particular importance here is the element of abstraction from the individual and the elevation of abstraction with respect to the total social labour in a society which does not represent itself as a total reproductive process, but, rather, as a mere sum of separate individual goals. This abstraction constitutes the core of the Marxian theory of value and

organises the exposition of the categories in a way which allows a critical approach to the exploitative character of the labour process. *This theoretical, abstractive elevation, on which the categorial exposition is founded, cannot be addressed independently of its axiological-practical dimension.*³³ Associated with the dimension of society as a totality, as total social reproduction, is a practical meaning: the social division of labour, which constitutes the unconscious link of social relations, should become the object of the agents' conscious, creative and solidary interaction. The condition for understanding society is presented as a practical problem and acquires its meaning from the latter problem – in relation to which the critique of existing historical relations is grounded. By reconstructing the existing exploitative relation of the appropriation of the surplus product on the basis of the conceptual framework of the materialist exposition, the demand that this relation be subjected to critique is raised and validated, and the practical, normative idea of the reappropriation of the product of social labour by the workers is constituted. The dimension of materiality is identified with the axiological dimension of praxis and is contrasted with the forms of social cooperation of historical societies. In this way Marxian analysis re-engages with the subject *par excellence* of dialectics (which it reformulates in materialist terms), namely, with the antinomic relations of the practical-axiological and of the socio-historical processes through which it is realised and which it criticises.

This conception of dialectics transcends the pre-critical understanding of dialectics as a process of de-concentration towards the value-laden future. It places, at the centre of social analysis, the problem of values, which presents itself rationally with reference to processes of the genesis and legitimation of values – a problem which is central to Marx's later epistemological and methodological explorations. One can, however, already trace in Marx's early work this axiological dimension of materialist theory. The axiological dimension of materiality in the early texts draws on the gnosiological distinction between the 'material' element of human properties and forces, such as sensation and intuition, and the formal-intellectual element, which alienates aesthetic relations. Thus in the *Economic-Philosophic Manuscripts* of 1844, the search for an aesthetic foundation of the social sciences becomes apparent (pp. 539–43);³⁴ whereas in the *Theses on Feuerbach* it is equally apparent that Marx adopts the position of intuitional materialism (social matter conceived as proletarian, emancipatory activity which will rupture rationalised,

alienative relations) whose standpoint is identified with the standpoint of 'humanity'.

Notwithstanding the displacement of the problem of materialism from the gnosiological-intuitional sphere to the sphere of productive forces and the division of labour as the material basis of society, one can still trace, in the later Marxian work, the idea that the abrogation of the capitalist form of social relations will allow the free development of aesthetic, intuitional and intellectual human properties and forces, that is, sociality will coincide with the liberation of individuality, needs and 'use values' in social reproduction.³⁵ In particular, as we have already seen, there still remains, in the later Marxian work, the connection between the concept of materiality and the problem of values.³⁶ Reality is understood as social cooperation which takes place in an alienative form 'instead of'³⁷ in a solidarist one. In the conception of labour value theory, social materiality includes the value of 'social cooperative production' which is binding on theory: the production process is to be treated as a social result, notwithstanding the non-solidary and atomised historical form of appropriation prevailing in contemporary bourgeois society. The form which the division of labour historically acquires in these societies can be understood as a form of historical cancellation of the cooperative and solidarist processes which are dictated by its own social and cooperative nature. This thought contains the radical critique of the class character of society, which expresses itself as the opposition of social materiality (of cooperative social labour) and the dominant social form (private property and orientation towards capitalist profit). According to Marx it is precisely this relation between matter and form which characterises the concept of capital and constitutes the object of the exposition of the categories of materialist analysis.

A consequence, for the exposition of the categories, of the above analysis of the concept of materiality is that it may be understood as a methodological procedure which presupposes axiological reflection and at the same time demonstrates how values are generated. In this way it answers to the specificity of the socio-historical object. This can be understood in its antinomic nature to the extent that theory is elevated to a standpoint of consciousness produced by an axiogenetic process which is itself the object of theory. This classic issue of dialectics has been described by Lukács³⁸ as a process by which class consciousness is formed; however, this description has an irrational foundation, since it has been disconnected, in a voluntarist way, from the exposition of the historical categories. In the Marxian work

this exposition allows a rational approach to the axiogenetic processes of contemporary society. It allows the location, with reference to the reproduction of antagonistic social relations, of the ideological positions adopted by individualised agents, as well as the axiological frameworks within which the relevant actions take place – such as freedom, equality and utilitarianism – (vol. 23, p. 189f) and it understands these reduced forms of value-oriented action as form-determined by the very logic of social relations. The solidarist ideal itself, which underlies the analysis, is reproduced through the division of labour which creates such conditions for the concentration and self-consciousness of social labour as are necessary in order that the demand for the transcendence of fragmented and alienated relations be raised. This demand is raised by the very constitution of dialectical theory and draws upon a materialist conception of justice as the re-appropriation of the product of the producers – as mentioned above. In this way, Marxian dialectics bases the Hegelian subject of '*Bildung*' as the phenomenological development of Spirit on a materialist foundation, proceeding not towards a legalistic normativism, but towards the historical relation/value of social cooperation. But, precisely in relation to the mode of foundation of materialist theory and the way in which the axiological problem is integrated in it, complex methodological problems have arisen in Marxist discussion and have persisted up to the present. In this discussion, axiological sociality and solidarity are directly and frontally juxtaposed to particular and egoistic forms, and the dialectical approach to the subject, based on the wider concept of materiality mentioned above, is neglected. Contrary to such positions, I hold that Marxist methodology has a critical recourse to classical dialectical theory and connects the understanding of the materialist nature of society to a problematic which refers to the positing of preconditions of the socio-historical process. By the 'positing of preconditions' is meant the actualisation – by understanding the relational nature of the real – of the presupposed and latent conditions of social reproduction, an actualisation which is identical with the mode of movement of social relations.

In capitalism, such preconditions of social reproductions are capital itself (vol. 23, p. 184), the form of labour as wage-labour, the means of production as capital and surplus product as surplus value (vol. 25, p. 888f). These preconditions have recourse to historical preconditions, such as the concentration of a large mass of money (vol. 24, p. 345) and the separation itself of labour from the

means of production (vol. 23, p. 714ff). A precondition of capitalist production is the legal-political framework which guarantees this separation, protects property and secures the peace necessary for the continuation of production. In the process of capitalist accumulation, a standing precondition of reproduction is the restoration of certain relations between the sectors of production (vol. 24, p. 391ff, 485ff), at the level of the whole society, a precondition which becomes manifest and is 'posited' in the crises, that is, when these relations are not restored and no exchange between the sectors is achieved.

Of particular interest is the way in which certain 'obvious' preconditions enter the Marxian analysis, amongst which are the very existence of the earth (vol. 23, p. 195), the physical (geographical, climatic, general environmental) preconditions of life, as well as the preconditions which refer to the 'physical needs' (vol. 23, p. 185) of man (food, housing, health, etc.). The Marxian analysis stresses the historical form-determination of all these preconditions.³⁹ Preconditions of social reproduction, such as the preservation of life, labour, health, peace, a favourable natural environment (water, air, etc.) as is shown by our deduction of the concept of materiality are 'focused', in their historical actualisation, by the contemporary division of labour and the antinomic relations of contemporary society, while the logic of their actualisation is a practical problem. In their social practices, men anticipate conditions of life, under which they consider it 'worth' living. (They anticipate a life in which the materialist/axiological element of these preconditions, such as health, peace, an environment which has not been destroyed, and social cooperation, will be actualised without the mediation of separatist and alienative social forms.) But, the attempt to change the given conditions, by positing directly, as a condition of social life, the cancellation of the alienative relation, is impeded by the particularist nature of the mode of production and atomisation. In consequence of which, in contemporary alienative societies, activation is rather directed against the threat and the destruction of particular preconditions of social life, when these are acute and can, thus, be brought to awareness. It is clear that the possibility itself that the questioning of the destructive forces of the mode of production find expression, and the conditions of a life characterised by solidarity and dignity can be claimed, presupposes the existence of a framework within which political demands can be formed and expressed – which in contemporary societies takes the form of a system of rights, publicity and

institutionalised political procedures, whose absence hinders and adulterates the timely positing of threatened preconditions of social life; that is, it threatens social life itself. (Consequently, where such a framework is lacking, there arises the requirement of positing it as one of these preconditions.)

A large portion of these theoretical questions can be reconstructed on the basis of central passages of Marx's work. A classical analysis of the positing of preconditions is to be found in Marx's analysis of the working day in *Capital I*, Chapter 8, where it is shown that, as a result of the social essence itself being threatened by the over-exploitation of social labour, processes which lead to the preservation of this precondition of the reproduction of social labour are activated. In a capitalist society, the problem of the preservation of the preconditions of reproduction and social life is not posited directly, but in the form of a general, legal-political norm regulating the working day; that is, the process by which these norms are generated is not understood as the juxtaposition of solidarist vs. egoistic values, but as their mediation which arises from the very precondition of social reproduction. In sentences such as 'Society forces capital . . .', (vol. 23/285) 'society' refers to the sum of the conditions of social reproduction and to their positing and preservation within the appropriate political frameworks.⁴⁰

Attention should be drawn to the special methodological significance of the fact that the problem of the genesis of norms from an antinomic relation of exploitation is accompanied by a demonstration of the need to develop a political normative framework and a society of *citoyens*, in which the question arises of how the anarchically developing and destructive economic relations can be brought under political control. A case in point is the close connection between the problem of the working day and the problem of the *Chartist* movement.⁴¹ Similar thoughts are expressed in *The Poverty of Philosophy*, where political and regulative functions of contemporary bourgeois societies are expounded in relation to socio-economic development and the rise and organisation of the labour movement (vol. 4/178, 180). These political frameworks are considered a presupposition of reproduction itself, as well as a normative, axiological framework⁴² necessary in order that political forces find expression, that the political can be shaped and that scientific critique of the antinomic character of society can be expressed. (This element of critique is to be found in the very program of a *Critique of Political Economy*.) Such a political framework constitutes the point of

reference of emancipatory theory, through which it activates politically its final, socialist ideal.

Phenomena referring to the actualisation of social activities, both in the antinomic relations of capitalist societies and in post-capitalist ones, can be approached on the basis of a dialectical analysis of the positing of preconditions. The Marxian analyses of labour legislation have already shown how the public functions of the 'welfare' state are formed as a political process in relation to the necessity of preserving labour as the basic precondition of reproduction. One may similarly analyse social activation in the face of threats to the environment, to the physical conditions of life in general, to the maintenance of peace and to the political framework of freedom of communication – in particular when it is realised that the threat to the above is total and irreversible. In other words, a characteristic element of materialist dialectical analysis is the activation and historical actualisation (incorporation in the relevant conceptual scheme) of the general conditions of social life and of the axiological-practical conditions which allow them to be conceived as political problems when they are threatened by the concrete historical relation.⁴³

Through this mediation, the comprehension of the transition to an institutionalisation of a given relation, or of the transition to a new one, becomes possible. In this sense, the issues pertaining to the exposition of the categories draw not merely upon a logic of abstract laws of capitalist production, but upon these latter as parts of the wider division of labour and in a wider sense of 'society', and contain the *politicity of the conditions* which allow the reproduction and change of society. This analysis clearly refers – as a standpoint for the constitution of theory – to a wider teleology of ends in the contemporary world, a world in which the conditions of physical existence will not be threatened, a world of free *citoyens*, with no exploitation.

The methodological problems connected with the above were not fully understood by Capital-Logic-Analysis and the Derivation Debate, which did not view the problem of the wider materialist categories as a problem of the positing of preconditions, that is, as a problem of the conditions of social reproduction and of the historical way of activating them. They narrowly interpreted the form-analysis problem as a problem of the analysis of the *formal side* of the social process and neglected to investigate the forms of social *materiality* and the ways of activating them (with the result that the 'materialist'

side of the analysis was left to dogmatic and structuralist approaches of the type: 'the development of productive forces leads to changes in relations of production', etc.). In particular, the attempts, after the Derivation Debate, to thematise problems of 'new social movements' loosened their relation to a materialist form-analysis and led them, from an epistemological point of view, to articulationism.⁴⁴ The Derivation Debate, nevertheless, constitutes a significant attempt towards a rehabilitation of dialectical analysis, by raising the question of the internal relation of the political to value theory; it fails, however, to investigate the relation of the political to materiality and, thus, engages with a restricted sense of the capital relation.

This issue has some important theoretical (epistemological) and practical consequences and leads to the necessity of once again addressing the problem of dialectical theory – in particular today when, owing to the attacks of neo-liberal ideologies, the very socialist project and the value of dialectical thought is questioned.

From a theoretical point of view there arises the necessity for a content-based development of concepts which can be included in the exposition of the categories of contemporary societies. Such concepts refer to contemporary preconditions of social reproduction and to the political framework within which these are actualised in every relational change of the social forces. In particular, concepts which can be transformed into such categories refer (a) to problems of the conditions and the manner of reproduction and preservation of social 'substance' (and especially to problems of new social movements which develop when the preconditions for the preservation of society are negatively affected and cannot be fulfilled by traditional forms); (b) to problems of class constitution and the activation of frameworks of political freedom antinomically related to the former with respect to the social division of labour, that is, to the corresponding class relation and social hierarchisation in capitalist societies and in societies of 'really-existing socialism', through which reproduction is realised in an alienated form; and also (c) to problems of the constitution of the individuality of the members of a society and their ability to criticise and resist and to express their sensual-intuitional and intellectual claims, which are in opposition to the existing social forms of alienation. These concepts, thus, refer to problems of the juxtaposition of values with respect to the social division of labour – rarely, however, in the sense of an immediate confrontation of egoistic vs. solidarist positions, but rather as a juxtaposition mediated through the modes of the real genesis of political norms, that is, of

the historical realisation of values. The antinomic character of society, as well as the political framework which allows the formation of processes which make possible the control of such antinomic social relations, are expressed through such processes of the political generation of norms as are mentioned above.

The search for and the characterisation of these concepts acquires the abstract form of a transcendental framework for social theory, if it proceeds by abstracting from a logic of the positing of preconditions. An analogy with the Kantian way of proceeding may here seem apt, given that the Kantian transcendental idea also contains a juxtaposition of mechanism and freedom. In Kant, however, these elements are cut off from historicity and a content-based theory: the emphasis on the historical relation, and on the determinate way in which theory reflects on the materiality and normativity of the social, is lacking.⁴⁵

These questions, which pertain to the quasi-transcendental (determinations of reflection (*Reflexionsbestimmungen*)) and normative elements in Marx, as they result from the deduction of the concept of materiality, have been distorted both by Marxist dogmatic orthodoxy (which orients itself towards a non-reflective theory of the development of the material basis), and by the Neo-Kantian Austro-Marxists,⁴⁶ who emphasised the emancipatory character of the formal and general concepts of the Enlightenment (the ideal of a 'community of ends'). In contrast to such views, Marx argued in the Introduction to the *Grundrisse* (p. 10) that the abstract concepts referring to the appropriation of nature, the securing of that which is appropriated, etc., should not be taken for a mere context of reflection, with contingent connections (that is the connection must not have the contingent form of articulation), but should be analysed with reference to their determinate mode of relation.

However, the clarification of the character of materialist dialectics' 'determinations of reflection' also has *practical* consequences, which become manifest when – in the context of a wider conception of an exposition in which the non-posed preconditions are included as determinations of reflection which are transformed into categories – the problem of the change of social relations and of emancipatory action is addressed. Praxis can, thus, be understood as the cumulative actualisation⁴⁷ of the reproductive preconditions of social life, when threatened and in crisis, and as a process of constituting axiological demands for the securing of such preconditions by averting the impediments to them.

On the basis of such a conception of praxis, an issue closely connected to it, namely the approach to novel phenomena, can be critically discussed. This approach is understood by irrationalist historicism and Weberianism as a rupture in the continuity of explanation and as the search for the 'individuality' of the historical event.⁴⁸ From the standpoint of a dialectical exposition, on the contrary, the issue of novel historical phenomena is developed with reference to a logic of the activation of preconditions in the sense mentioned above. The new social reality cannot, of course, be produced from the exposition in the sense of a pure emanation. However, if the expository relations, which activate the conditions of social reproduction, are not taken into consideration, the novel social phenomena will be incorporated into the wrong context. Dialectical theory, thus, stresses the necessity of developing the moments of the exposition within a relation, rather than developing them arbitrarily. Within this relation one can examine to what extent the existing relations of domination are reproduced or tend to be re-articulated or, else, whether men posit relations of freedom and sociability as preconditions of social reproduction. Dialectical analysis is, thus, open analysis and, precisely because of its freedom-based character, neither its pace and its direction, nor the precise priority of the positing of the preconditions, can be fully reconstructed (which would amount to genuine prediction, conceiving of society as a physical object). In contrast to what is accepted by irrationalism, the 'new' can be apprehended rationally as the result of social praxis which participates in an open process of changing the historical preconditions of social life.

From a methodological point of view, it is significant that in the dialectical approach the novel is not approached exclusively from the axiological angle, but from a judgement as to the historical mode of its involvement in social relations. When the novel is approached exclusively from the axiological angle, the approach itself obstructs knowledge of the phenomenon, by substituting for it the entirely Other. The novel is, thus, transformed into the opposite of the now – a transformation encountered in actionism. When, on the other hand, the novel is approached exclusively from the angle of mechanisms of the real, the selection of mechanisms is in danger of becoming arbitrary as long as the relation of these mechanisms to the axiological-practical dimension has not been restored. Consequently, in a practical dimension, the new and the Other, referred to by emancipatory argument, must have recourse to the mode of

constitution of the contemporary. The transcendence of the now is not the entirely Other, but the practical elevation within the now, the change in the relations of the social mechanisms of property and exploitation towards the political process which relativises them and which is, at the same time, a process formative of values, political consciousness and communication, aiming at bringing the process of social production under social administration.

This set of problems confronts us with an issue around which classical dialectical theory revolves: the issue of the politics of the axiological framework as a practical issue. The processes of the social division of labour manifest themselves politically in a totality of priorities and hierarchisations which express the relations between the social forces within the given social formation. However, parallel to the system of 'effective' hierarchisations, which guarantee the reproduction of exploitative relations, processes which question these relations come into being, as do also alternative hierarchisations; through them are expressed demands for the rearrangement of the relations between classes and the subsumption of exploitative relations under political processes allowing labour to take control of them. In the context of such a logic, it is possible to reconstruct concepts which have been one-sidedly analysed in Marxist tradition, such as the concepts of the state and the market. The concept of the market, in particular, was developed exclusively as a surface form of essential exploitative processes in capitalist society and, from the side of praxis, was approached through the logic of the direct confrontation of the socialist, practical ideal with the atomistic-alienating forms in which social action appears ('hastiness of theory'). In this way, the nature of competition as the expression of the division of labour – as expressed in the Marxian concept of the 'inner nature' of capital – is overlooked.

The above abstract confrontation ignored the character of the relation of the two poles of sociality vs. egoism, which is expressed through a logic of 'positing the preconditions', a logic referring to the social division of labour. Thus, on the basis of such abstract theoretical constructions, theory is led to wrong political evaluations and, in particular, to the idea that, with the transcending of the specifically capitalist way of production, the market would also disappear and its place would be taken by solidary and cooperative processes of production and distribution. It is evident that, in the context of a wider concept of the dialectical exposition of the categories (as we endeavoured to analyse with reference to the idea

of social materiality), the transcendence of bourgeois society goes hand in hand with the activation of preconditions of reproduction which are not posited as such in market economies precisely because they are satisfied in an alienated way by the market. The problem of the 'allocation of resources' is such a problem. Consequently, from the standpoint of political praxis, the problem of the market arises not as a problem of its immediate disappearance (a view which would ignore the nature of the market as an expression of the division of labour), but primarily as a problem of the subsumption of market processes under frames of political rules legitimated from a materialist viewpoint, in the sense we have given the term; that is, the problem is analysed with reference to the axiological-political dimension of social mechanisms. Especially today when, in view of the crisis of contemporary bourgeois societies, liberal programs endorsing market processes are widely propagated and acclaimed – also by a part of the 'left' – the response to these programs cannot consist in utopian proposals for abolishing the division of labour and replacing it immediately with solidary communication, but in the discovery of new political relations and conscious productive processes by which the relations of anarchic communication in the market will be rendered dependent and will be relativised – instead of the latter being determinative of politics. This dialectical relation of socio-economic antinomic mechanisms to the political frames for their functioning is also reproduced in societies of 'really-existing socialism' as a problem of the political control, by *citoyens*, of the division of labour, both in its form of conscious processes of production and in its form of markets. A strategy of questioning existing social relations, which refers to their political character, is legitimated not by abstracting and going off on a tangent from the central issue of the political approach to the problem of the social reproduction and division of labour, but by turning back to the material and axiological core of the social relations whose formal determinations and political expressions it questions and by inquiring into their nature as a precondition of their possible/desired change.

The practical dimension of the dialectical concept of the exposition of the categories consists in this antinomic relation of convergence/transcendence/politicisation, that is, it is with reference to this relation that the political argument concerning the critique of contemporary society and the possibility of rational action is constituted. This thought, as we have tried to show, was not adequately developed in the Marxist tradition which sought to found the axiological-

political directly on the social-solidary element. Thus, the rational was conceived with reference to a final emancipatory ideal, while the political presented itself as the dependent element and as the overlay of the essential-social, that is, as functional (the functionality of politics for the preservation or change of social relations) and as diverging from the political axiological. In this way, however, the axiological element of theory is also rendered irrational, because it appears as a separate and 'final' ideal, and loses its relational reference to the conditions of its actualisation and its political character. The separation of the axiological from its constitutive conditions and the separation of the analysis from its historical and materialist dimension is an expression of the crisis of theory, which is itself an expression of the crisis of society. In the face of this crisis, the problem of the reconstruction of the dialectical is raised anew as a theoretical and practical problem.

Notes

1. It was obvious to past research into dialectics that the constitution of the dialectical argument looks back to Kant and, in particular, to the relation between the teleological and the mechanistic standpoints, which Kant proposes for the social sciences. Cf., amongst many others, C. Schmidt, 'Über die geschichtsphilosophischen Ansichten Kants', *Sozialistische Monatshefte* VII, IX Jahrg. (1903), pp. 683f.
2. This dimension of dialectical theory is of special interest, because it raises the problem of causality in dialectical theory and its relations to teleology. The problem of preconditions and their incorporation in historical relations of action, in which values are shaped, has not been systematically discussed in contemporary social theory. Cf., so far as analytic philosophy is concerned, G.H. von Wright, *Explanation and Understanding* (Ithaca, N.Y., 1971), for a discussion of the connection between causality and a logic of preconditions. Cf., so far as the Frankfurt School is concerned, T.W. Adorno, *Negative Dialektik* (Frankfurt/M, 1966) pp. 264f., where the concept of causality is connected to the idea of freedom.
3. References to Kant are to *Immanuel Kant, Werkausgabe*. Weischedel Edition (Frankfurt/M Suhrkamp), by volume and page number.
4. Cf. XI, p. 241, where humans are compared to 'living machines'.
5. This problem is developed by Kant in relation to the issue of the transcendental ideas, III, p. 327f.
6. Concerning this problem, cf. K. Psychopedis, *Geschichte und Methode* (Frankfurt/M/New York, 1984) and in particular pp. 23ff.

7. The Kantian theory of the transcendental illusion (*transcendentaler Schein*), III, pp. 308ff., could be considered the first formulation of a theory of 'necessary false' consciousness.
8. In this sense, dialectical analysis prohibits any sort of scientific articulations and combinations, which do not have recourse to the transcendental framework by which theory is constituted.
9. Cf. Kant's 'Idee zu einer allgemeinen Geschichte in weltbürgerlicher Absicht' (1784), 6. Satz, XI, pp. 40–41.
10. In particular, in order that Hobbesian-type 'states of nature' be avoided. On this issue, cf. Kant's text 'Über den Gemeinspruch: Das mag in der Theorie richtig sein, taugt aber nicht für die Praxis', XI, pp. 143ff.
11. Cf. Kant's 'Streit der Fakultäten', XI, pp. 356–7.
12. References to Hegel are to *G.W.F. Hegel, Werke in zwanzig Bänden* (Frankfurt/M, Suhrkamp, 1969ff.). The problem of elevation is developed in vol. 8, p. 56 with reference to a theological idea which corresponds to the Kantian transcendental idea of totality. Cf. also, vol. 8, p. 53, concerning the issue of the elevation from the empirical and its mediation, where the problem of the modification of the categories during their elevation, with reference to a speculative value, is addressed.
13. Cf. the Hegelian critique of Savigny's legal relativism in *Grundlinien der Philosophie des Rechts* (1821), § 211, note.
14. Concerning mechanism and teleology in *Logic*, cf. *Wissenschaft der Logik*, Part 2, ii (Die Objektivität), chaps 1 and 3, respectively (vol. 6, pp. 409ff. and vol. 6, pp. 436ff.). The relation between knowledge and praxis (The Idea of the Good) is developed in the Chapter on the Idea of Knowledge, vol. 6, pp. 487ff.
15. Cf. *Logic* vol. 6, pp. 548ff., vol. 6, p. 569f. and *Enzyklopaedie* § 236ff. This abstract logical movement is realised in the social through the activity of the state, its total power and the subjection of the element of society to it (*Rechtsphilosophie* § 273, 278). However, the realisation of this political value does not coincide with a decisionist foundation of the political in Hegel, in view of the fact that the *content* of the state-based decision consists in a *Darstellung* of the value of freedom and the principle of generality, as against dependence and un-freedom.
16. Concerning this relation, cf. an attempt of mine to discuss it: K. Psychopedis, 'Die Möglichkeit der Gesellschaftsphilosophie bei Hegel', *Gesellschaft 5* (Frankfurt/M, Suhrkamp, 1975).
17. Cf. in particular the early Hegelian work *Der Geist des Christentums und sein Schicksal* (1798–1800), vol. 1, p. 333.
18. I attempted an analysis of this logical figure in K. Psychopedis, *Untersuchungen zur politischen Theorie I. Kants* (Göttingen, 1980), pp. 82ff.
19. Before engaging with the pure separation of the logical and the historical, Hegel analysed interesting problems concerning the separa-

- tion and the relation of axiological elements *within* the historical. Such a separation, between a class of public men who are exponents of political values and a class of exponents of particularism and private interests, can be found in the early Hegelian text *Naturrecht*, vol. 2, pp. 287ff., and in particular vol. 2, pp. 494f. A similar correspondence of the axiological with particular classes and an understanding of the highest value as a relation of the right separations of the elements within a whole, is also to be found in the *Rechtsphilosophie*.
20. Cf. the analyses of the Idea of Knowledge in *Logic* vol. 6, p. 487ff., *Enz.* § 223ff. (vol. 8, p. 377ff.).
 21. Cf. Hegel, *Vorlesungen über Rechtsphilosophie* (ed. Ilting) (Stuttgart/Bad Cannstatt, 1973/1974) vol. 3, pp. 96f. and vol. 4, p. 89, where Hegel reflects on the historical conditions of the Generality of Right whose principle coincides with that of the Generality of Thought.
 22. In *The Philosophy of Right* § 279 (vol. 7, pp. 444ff.), this element of decision, which concentrates all the other elements of the political system, appears to be the (monarchical) sovereignty itself, which appropriates the social content through the functions of government and legislation.
 23. Hegel emphasises this thought in the *Logic* (vol. 6, p. 570), where he writes that the 'backwardgoing founding of the beginning coincides with the 'forwardgoing further-determination'.
 24. In vol. 8, p. 256 Hegel develops the concept of 'Having' ('*Haben*') as a relation which takes the place of Being. This analysis is accomplished within the framework of a discussion of the problem of 'Thing' ('*Ding*'). Cf. also *Logic* (vol. 6, pp. 129f.) and *Phenomenology of Spirit* (vol. 3, pp. 93f.) ('*Die Wahrnehmung oder das Ding und die Täuschung*').
 25. Cf. vol. 23 p. 320, p. 504, p. 526, p. 528, where the development of the constitution of the working class, the introduction of legislation regulating and limiting capital, seem directly to raise the problem of the change of social form and emancipation. References to Marx's work, where not otherwise indicated, are to *Marx-Engels-Werke*, (Berlin (east), 1956ff.) by volume and page number.
 26. K. Marx, *Grundrisse zur Kritik der Politischen Ökonomie* (Berlin (east), 1953).
 27. Cf. *Capital III*, chap. 50, on the 'Schein der Konkurrenz', vol. 25, pp. 860ff., in particular p. 883, where Marx writes of the 'Grundlagen der Produktionsweisen', which he connects with the axiological problem of the 'full development of individuality'.
 28. Cf. the problem of the 'trinitarian formula' of political economy: vol. 25, pp. 822ff.
 29. For this 'break in method' Marx's later work cf. K. Psychopedis, *Geschichte und Methode*, (Frankfurt/New York, 1984), pp. 173f.
 30. G. della Volpe, *Logic as a Positive Science* (NLB, London, 1960).

31. K. A. Wittfogel is the first Marxist theoretician who called to the attention of research the social form-determinations of 'nature' in 'Die natürlichen Ursachen der Wirtschaftsgeschichte'. *Archiv für Sozialwissenschaft und Sozialpolitik* (Tübingen, 1932) vol. 67. These analyses contribute to the re-formulation of the concept of materiality in Marxist tradition and to the critique of the dogmatic theory of the 'dialectic of nature'.
32. This issue raises the question of the unity of theory and metatheory in Marx. Cf. R. Gunn's 'Against Historical Materialism' in volume 2.
33. Cf. Marx's explicitly expressed thesis that the political activation of labour is a precondition of the *theoretical* constitution of the critique of political economy, for example vol. 23, p. 19, but also the thesis that the inter-relation of the factors which constitute the theory of value presupposes the conscious activation of 'society', vol. 25, pp. 196f. In vol. 25, pp. 190f. 'society' appears as an exponent of 'social needs'. Below I develop, in particular, the problem of the materialist/axiological concept of 'society' in relation to labour and factory legislation, cf. note 40.
34. Marx-Engels-Werke, Ergänzungsband 1 (Berlin (east), 1973).
35. Cf. the concept of 'individual property' in vol. 23, p. 791. The idea of the liberation of the 'materialist' element as intuition and praxis is already formulated by Marx in the first 'Thesis on Feuerbach'.
36. Consequently, on the basis of our previously mentioned problematic concerning materiality, the Marxian work can be read as a justification, in terms of social theory, of a *philosophy of subject*; in the latter the historical relationship as well as a *sui generis* division of labour between aesthetical/intuitional, logical/intellectual and practical aspects of human sociality can be analysed. The reconstruction of such a theory is indispensable, particularly today, in opposition to structuralist and positivistic attacks against the philosophy of subject.
37. Cf. characteristically vol. 23, p. 89: To the producers, 'their own social action takes the form of the action of objects, which rule the producers, instead of being ruled by them'. This structure of '*instead of*' refers to the materiality of the analysis which encompasses the axiological dimension and the reflection upon the historical possibilities of its actualisation. Cf. also vol. 23, p. 87 (to the producers 'the relation connecting the labour of one individual with that of the rest appear not as immediate social relations between individuals at work but as what they are, material relations between persons and social relations between things'), where it is emphasized that in the existing social relations appears 'what is' (and what ought not to be) *instead of* immediate social relations, which still are to be actualized through praxis.
38. G. Lukács, *Geschichte und Klassenbewusstsein*, 1923 (Amsterdam 1967).
39. Cf. vol. 23, p. 185: 'On the other hand the extent of the so called necessary needs, as well the kind of their satisfaction is itself a historical

- product' (This in contradiction to Hegelian analysis in *Rechtsphilosophie* §§ 190–195, 'The kind of need and satisfaction').
40. Here the concept of society is developed as an instance that necessitates capital to take care of the health and life-duration of the workers. Cf. vol. 23, p. 504 where factory legislation has been characterised as 'the first conscious and planned reaction of the society' towards the anarchic and unregulated form of 'its' reproduction process. In all these formulations the connection of the concept 'society' with the axiological-material dimension of the analysis becomes manifest.
41. Cf. vol. 23, pp. 297f. For Marx's paralleling of the 10-hour Bill with the Charter; Cf. also vol. 23, pp. 300, pp. 302.
42. The dialectics between functional and normative elements can be found in the case of education, too. Cf. vol. 23, pp. 506.
43. Cf. vol. 23, p. 253 on the threat of deracinating the 'life-forces of the nation'. It is evident that the relationship between 'threat' and 'positing of preconditions' is not to be understood as a deterministic process; rather, it constitutes an open practical problem and a crucial dimension of the concept of materiality.
44. Thus social movements like, for example, the feminist and the ecological movements are not treated from the standpoint of social reproduction and its continuity under the existing forms of unequal social relations and destruction of conditions of life, but as separate and isolated 'discourses' analysed according to their particular 'logics' and are *ex post* connected with the dominant 'logic' of the economic.
45. However, the Kantian claim for a Transcendental Philosophy seeking to analyse in a critical and binding manner the relations and the conditions of possibility for activating the human intellectual and intuitional-aesthetical capacities as well as emancipatory praxis, maintains its validity for materialist theory. Posed within this very tradition, materialist theory proves itself as exactly opposite from what it has been accused of, namely of being an 'emanatist' and 'fundamentalist' theory, from which everything and anything may be derived.
46. Cf. H.J. Sandkühler: 'Kant, neukantianischer Sozialismus, Revisionismus', in: R. de la Vega, H.J. Sandkühler (eds), *Marxismus und Ethik* (Frankfurt 1979).
47. From an epistemological point of view, such an open cumulative actualisation is not of an articulationist nature, because it reflects on the binding problematic of materialist 'exposition'.
48. Cf., on the problem of the 'novel' in Weber, particularly his discussions of this question in relation to the positions of historicism in his 'Sociology of Law', *Economy and Society* (Univ. of California Press, 1978), vol. II, ch. 8, §3: 'The formal character of objective Law'.

2

Between Philosophy and Science: Marxian Social Economy as Critical Theory

HANS-GEORG BACKHAUS

Recently a very unfruitful debate took place between representatives of neo-classical and Marxist theory. The only point of agreement was in a concluding statement to the effect that the debate had had to be curtailed for the lack of 'even the minimum of common ground upon which to conduct the discussion.'¹ Contemporary epistemology used the term 'incommensurability' to describe such instances where two theories seem to lack any point of comparison.

Of course such incommensurability is never total. Indeed Joan Robinson had set out to produce a synthesis of the neo-Ricardian and the Marxian approach. She too, however, experienced great difficulties in coming to terms with the discourse of Marxist economists, who 'refuse' to cooperate in the important task of 'translating Marxian terminology into a language, which is no longer open to the accusation of being unintelligible'² – an accusation which, as early as 1893, Wicksell levelled against 'the "Hegelian" obscurity – and conceit (*Dünkel*)³ of *Das Kapital*. Clearly the mutual 'incomprehensibility' of two theory-systems, or the existence of two apparently only partially 'translatable' theoretical language systems, is not a recent problem thrown up by the attempted formalisation of competing economic approaches: from its very inception the exclusive position claimed by *Capital* militated against its ever being included in the canon of economic doctrines.

In 1923 Georg Lukács began a discussion of this unresolved problematic, which was later taken up by Marcuse, Horkheimer, and Korsch: the crucial issue is the position of Marxian economy 'in

between' the two extremes of philosophy and science. By the process of reflection on the conceptual apparatus of 'critique' and the resultant self-critique of traditional Marxism, a critical Marxism evolved, which, like Lukács, no longer held the Marxian critique of political economy 'as one science amongst others', but as a 'fundamental science' (*Grundwissenschaft*) in an emphatic sense; 'the chapter on the fetish character of commodities comprises . . . the whole of historical materialism.'⁴ But it is precisely the 'claim to totality of the theory'⁵ of political economy which Engels and Lenin ignored, thereby laying the foundations of the Leninistic dogmatization of Marxism.

It was Horkheimer who first attempted to clarify the unique methodological status of the Marxian critique of political economy in terms of its position 'between' philosophy and science. For this very reason he drew the distinction between traditional and critical theory as the 'difference between two modes of cognition; the first was grounded in the *Discours de la méthode*, the second in the Marxian critique of political economy'.⁶ The paradoxical intermediary position of the latter is articulated in the fact that, on the one hand, Marx's critique of economy opposes philosophy by insisting that it 'is an economic, not a philosophical system', and moreover that 'philosophy appears in the concepts of economy'.⁷ On the other hand, however, the critique of economy is adamantly opposed to 'economism', stipulating that the 'critical theory of society, as critique of economy, remains philosophical'.⁸ Precisely because 'philosophy appears in the concepts of economy', 'every single one of these' is 'more than an economic concept'.⁹ The clarification and justification of the claim that these concepts are 'more' than just economic, entails a critique of economic concepts in the narrow sense and thus reintroduces the problem of commensurability.

Joan Robinson's argument obviously relies on a *petitio principii*: tacitly it is assumed that the concepts of political economy in the narrow sense are more appropriate to their object. But what are the 'things themselves', and how is it possible to reach a prior agreement on the object of political economy, given that, after nearly a century of ongoing debate, economists themselves have not been able to reach an agreement on this point? Finally: Joan Robinson herself has noted the profoundly problematical character of economic concepts: 'money and the rate of interest, as commodities and purchasing power, prove themselves to be highly elusive concepts as soon as we seriously try to get to grips with them'.¹⁰ Would it not be worth

considering whether it was precisely this 'incomprehensibility' which Marx had in view, when he characterised the 'categories of bourgeois economics' in general as 'deranged forms' (*Kapital* vol. 1, p. 90)?¹¹ Was it not the awareness of this very problematic which forced Marx to 'translate' economic concepts into other concepts which were to be 'more' than merely economic? And is it not the case that any translation of Marx's concepts, which in truth would amount to a re-translation, would hide the very problem, which led to the development of a critical theory of economic categories in the first place? The problem is that intelligible, and yet in some sense 'incomprehensible', concepts prove to be only *apparently*-intelligible, which means, unintelligible concepts.

Can it be claimed that the use of these apparently-intelligible concepts, that is specifically economic concepts, has succeeded in establishing economic theory as science? On the contrary, according to Joan Robinson 'academic economics became impoverished by its refusal to take Marx seriously', and hence finds itself now 'in a state of apparent disintegration'. This 'pitiful state' is 'the result of its refusal to engage with the questions which have been posed by Marx'.¹² If this assessment is correct, then the no doubt legitimate demand for the establishment of a commensurable basis to the two conceptual systems cannot be met by means of a translation, which would necessarily lead to a levelling of fundamental differences.

The Subjective-Objective Twofold Character of Society

At the forefront of Adorno's work is 'society' as the unity of subject and object instead of the 'established terms superstructure and base or infrastructure', which necessarily 'trivialize' the 'deduction' of ideologies, that is their 'derivation from structural laws like the fetish character of commodities', the '*proton pseudos*'.¹³ Thus he makes the claim that: 'society as subject and society as object are the same and yet not the same'.¹⁴

Society as Object – Social Objectivity

What Adorno calls social 'objectivity' is the 'generic term for all relations, institutions, and forces in which humans act' – that is, lawfully regulated forces and irrational conditions, which are always

already presupposed by the actions of an individual. The 'fundamental life-process' (*tragende Lebensprozess*) of society is always 'economic', which raises the question of whether the theory of society is in any way actually 'distinct from economics'. The answer is as short as it is simple: social theory 'is economics only insofar as it is political'. Economics in the narrow sense then deals 'with a cast, with something which is already reified', that is, it accepts at face value 'the mechanism of a developed society based upon exchange'. The distinctive feature of the theory of society, on the contrary, is that it 'deduces . . . the established forms of economizing (*Wirtschaftens*)',¹⁵ which the former presupposes.

The categorial difference from traditional Marxism then consists in the fact that for Critical Theory, following Lukács, the modes of production do not *eo ipso* constitute a base for the so-called superstructure. The terms 'base' and 'objectivity' are here critical: analogous to first nature, economy establishes itself according to its own laws as a 'second nature', in total disregard of the needs and wishes of individuals and imposes itself 'behind their backs'. The difference between the object of traditional theory, that of the natural sciences in particular, and the objectivity of critical theory can be made clear in the following manner. Society is not merely object, but at the same time subject. Its autonomy (*Eigengesetzlichkeit*) is thus paradoxical. Society is only 'objective' insofar as and 'because' its 'own subjectivity is not transparent'¹⁶ to it. However, what proceeds 'behind the back' of the subjects is the supraindividual totality of work (*überindividuelle Gesamtarbeit*), which Adorno also terms the 'universal', the epitome of 'labour in general'. But only one determinate form of this universal presents itself, at the same time, as objectivity, that is the form of 'abstract universality', which subsumes and dominates the particular.

Society as Subject

'Society is subjective in that it refers back to the human beings which form it', because it only exists and reproduces itself by virtue of the latter. This 'totality does not lead a life of its own above and beyond what it gathers together and what it consists of'.¹⁷ Objectivity 'realizes itself only through individuals', everything is 'mediated by consciousness'.¹⁸ Seen from this point of view, the 'base' requires the 'superstructure', it is in need of individuals who act according to

intentions. Society can be conceived in idealistic terms as ‘the aggregate content of both human consciousness and the unconscious’, and can as such be deemed intelligible. Subjective economics and hermeneutics therefore seem to be the appropriate ways of gaining access to it. And yet no particular subjective mode of behaviour will allow adequate access to the ‘objective mechanism of society’: the autonomy of the domain of economy in particular, and the resistance of its concepts to rationality, suffice to show the untruth of subjectivism. ‘It is objectivity which constitutes the subjective modes of conduct in the first instance’.¹⁹ Thus Adorno holds subjective economics to be ‘ideological’, a claim which is vindicated by a glance at the work of Pareto who depicts ‘society as nothing other than the average value of individual modes of reaction’;²⁰ such an account always already presupposes objectivity as the very notion of anonymous forces and abstract forms.

The ‘Transformation of Economic Theory into Critical Theory’

Subject-Object-Dialectics and Base-Superstructure-Model

Only by positing a subject-object-dialectic as the core proper of the economic process – which is dialectical insofar as subject and object ‘are the same and yet not the same’ – does it become sufficiently clear that and how Marx transforms ‘economic theory into *critical theory*’.²¹ It is now transparent for the first time how in economic theory, as a form of traditional theory, the unified subject-object splits into an object and a subject. Since economic theory is unable to mediate the two it simply oscillates between them. When the object of theory is determined in its specific subject-object character, then this in turn necessitates a critique of Marxist ‘economism’, the major failing of which is not to underestimate ‘the importance of economics, but to take it in too narrow a sense’. Its failure is to lose sight of the ‘originary intention of grasping the whole’.²² Simultaneously the base-superstructure-model turns out to be a simple popularisation, a fact which is still unrecognised by vulgar Marxist thought. The stagnation of methodological reflection along with the upsurge of the psychological (*interessenpsychologische*) and mechanistic assessment of ideological formations must be put down to this popularistic simplification of a complex mental structure. The obso-

lete model must not merely be replaced by a new one. Nevertheless, the superimposition of the base-superstructure-model by the subject-object-structure raises some terminological problems, which we can begin to elucidate by the following diagram. A more comprehensive schematisation would, amongst other things, call for the integration of the universal/particular dichotomy, which occurs frequently throughout Adorno’s work.

Society as Object	Society as Subject (Proceeding through the heads)	
‘objectivity’, ‘objectivity of value’, ‘second nature’, disregard for individuals, ‘behind the back of individuals’	Human being in relation to its ‘first nature’ and other people	Subject in the narrow sense (consciousness)
O ‘deranged Forms’, ‘Madness’ ‘Things outside of the human being’ ‘abstract’ ‘spiritual’, ‘immaterial’, ‘a priori’, ‘ideal, or: supersensible’. ‘World of exchange value’ (‘Valuables’, Volume of value’, ‘movements of values’: objective illusion) ‘Commodities’ Money Capital ‘Relation between things’	S1 Things of human being ‘concrete’ ‘sensual’ use values ‘Products’ Metal, Paper Means of Production ‘Relations between People’ ‘Relations of Production’	S2 Act of ‘Displacement’, ‘Projection’, ‘Mediation’ 1. The economic categories are mirrored in consciousness in a very inverted [<i>verkehrt</i>] way’ (Categories as ‘inversions’ and fetishes) 2. non-economic contents of consciousness. (Ideologies)
Categories, Forces, Laws	Actions	
Relations of Production as base (‘Dual-Positioning’)		Contents of consciousness as superstructure

‘The same and not the same’: ‘Unity and Difference of subject and object’

It is clear at first sight that the economic subject-object schema cuts right across the classical dualism of matter and spirit and the vulgar Marxist base-superstructure model. It might seem bizarre at

first sight that exclusively abstract, traditionally 'mental' items are ascribed to the realm of the objective, that is the material domain as it is traditionally conceived, and that conversely material factors, in particular the relations of production, are ascribed to the subjective domain.

As there has been much good work written on this issue, we shall merely refer to the relevant literature, not least the methodological work of Leo Kofler, who, following Lukács, and wholly independently of the authors of Critical Theory, produced some important work on this issue. One point, which Kofler stresses time and time again, is essential to a correct understanding of the above schema, that is, that subject and object do not statically oppose each other, but rather are caught up in an 'ongoing process' of the 'inversion of subjectivity into objectivity, and vice versa', – a process which overall represents 'the most general form of existence of society'.²³ There is essentially nothing enigmatic in this thought; it is just the concretisation of the admirably lucid Marxian thesis that 'circumstances make man just as much as man makes the circumstances', and Kofler makes it quite plain that the 'concept of circumstance'²⁴ is only truly comprehended by the concept of the 'relations of production'.²⁵ The 'conditions' or the 'base' act as subject and the human being as object insofar as the human being is determined and 'made' by the 'base', the laws of which 'assume a subjective character'.²⁶ The 'objectivity' represented by the diagram also takes on a subjective character and, conversely, the subject takes on an objective character, insofar as the socio-economic 'categories', 'laws', and 'forces' determine the economic agents, that is the subjects. These subjects are thus transformed into objects and 'produced' by the socio-economic categories. The base-superstructure-model stresses this latter part of the social process in much too one-sided a fashion.

It is rather ironical that the methodological self-understanding of none other than academic economics unwittingly affirms the one-sidedness of this determination and thus proceeds in complete agreement with the base-superstructure model. According to their theory the economic categories contain elements which are not available for rational analysis, that is to say, elements which are not mediated by the subject but possess an *a priori* character. This way of thinking was philosophically justified by Simmel's analysis of money, which claimed that abstract value, as is found above all in money *qua* value unit, constitutes an 'originary phenomenon' and

hence an *a priori* factor, which is a presupposition to all thinking. But even in those economical treatises which make no mention of *abstract value* and which speak more generally about abstract quantities and units of calculation, and even about 'immaterial', 'ideal', or 'spiritual' quantities, the authors believe they are dealing with ultimate, rationally irreducible entities, in short, with ideas *a priori* and original phenomena. Usually such enigmas are handed over to philosophy. Schumpeter for one explicitly refused to inquire 'too deeply' into the 'presuppositions' of economics: 'We cannot pursue the question of what the particular elements of our systems "are" and why they are as they . . . are, right up to their "ultimate grounds". We take them as given'.²⁷ It is not difficult to show that, since philosophy for its part has hitherto either failed completely in its allotted task, or has at most achieved only fragmentary results, contemporary economics has only been able to erect its quantitative and partially formalised superstructure on the grounds of an infrastructure of wholly irrational, and therefore 'incomprehensible', concepts. This finding can be further explained by means of the subject-object schema of the diagram; from the 'standpoint of economics', economic categories are absolutely divorced from consciousness and appear to the latter as something 'immediate', something which is not mediated by thought, and thus as something impenetrable. Economic objectivity or the 'objectivity of value' is thus a case of objectivity (*Gegenständlichkeit*) *sui generis*, a 'second nature' structured according to its own laws and concealed behind what it is 'in itself'. It is not supposed to be something man made. The young Marx sums up this position in a nutshell; it is the belief that the economic object is an 'object outside of the human being' (*Sache außer dem Menschen*) – an object outside the human being and outside of nature. This is because the former can indeed be sensibly perceived, whilst the latter consists of complexes, which are characterised by Marx as 'sensuous supersensuous things'. The latter contain structures which academic literature calls 'immaterial', 'ideal', etc., and which resemble Platonic ideas more than first nature. Social 'objectivity' thus presents itself rather as something 'supersensuous' than as something material.

The opposing Marxian thesis is that this conception is an illusion, although a necessary, 'objective illusion'.²⁸ Economic forms are deranged. Marx here intentionally makes use of the ambiguity of this word, an ambiguity which is innate to the German language alone. Thus, on the one hand, money is a 'deranged (*verrückte*) form' in

the sense that it is the 'most nonsensical, most unintelligible form', that is, it is 'pure madness (*reine Verrücktheit*) (G 928). On the other hand, money is a deranged form also in the other, spatial sense of 'derangement' (*Verrücktheit*), as an object which is de-ranged (*verrücktes*), dis-placed out of its natural locus. It is not merely a 'sensuous' but also a 'supersensuous thing', and as such it is a thing which has been transferred and dis-placed into the external world which is independent from consciousness. This displacement 'results from the economic process itself' (G 934). Hence this dis-placement can be characterised as 'transposition': namely as the 'necessary process' by which labour 'posits its own forces as alien to the worker' (G 216). Marx also used the term 'projection' (K1/634), synonymously with 'transposition'. Thus forms are also 'deranged' (K1/90) in the sense that they are dis-placed, transposed, and projected into a 'supersensuous' domain. This as it were spatial dis-placement results in something equally deranged, namely a sensuous object which is at the same time a supersensuous object.

That both meanings of *Verrücktheit* fuse together in this case, is obviously an essential trait of economic forms. Of course, academic economics only knows the result of this dis-placement – the 'finished'²⁹ or *a priori* formations, the inhuman elements, the 'things outside of the human being' – provided that the human is in the first instance only hypothetical. It is the task of economy as 'critical theory' to exhibit the 'genesis' of these 'deranged' or 'alienated' forms, that is to show their human origin. Marx makes explicit why he begins with an analysis of classical economy: because 'the forms of alienation keeps classical and thus critical economists busy and [because they] try to do away with these forms in their analysis' (T3/493). The forms are alien to each other, but they are also something 'immediate' for human beings. The price of production is an aggregate of 'alienated forms'. For Marx it is not its quantitative determination, but the 'doing away with the alienated forms' which constitutes the main task of critical economy, which sees itself to be diametrically opposed to mathematical economics, which, indeed feels 'completely at home in *alienation*', that is to say, in its element (*bei sich*).

If Joan Robinson demands the 'translation' of Marxian terminology, this demand unwittingly betrays the fact that even left neo-Ricardianism mistakes 'alienated forms' for 'natural ones' (K3/838), 'floats' in them as in its 'natural element' (T3/493). What is at issue here is a way of thinking that 'possesses the natural air of superficial

rationalism' (K2/96), which considers the produced forms to be 'natural', to be structures of nature which are not produced by us.

The Subjectively–Objective Twofold Character of Socio-Economic Categories and the Problem of their Genesis in Marx and Adorno

The subject-object-terminology used in the diagram obviously contains an irritating ambiguity. All the concepts employed in the column headed S1 signify something which is understood, in conventional terms, not as subjective but as objective, whilst, conversely, the terms used in the 'objectivity' column sometimes signify something subjective in the conventional sense. S1 deals with 'concrete', 'sensual' objects, that is with objects of 'first nature' and, henceforth, with extra-mental or objective items in the common sense of the word, whereas S2 contains items which are mental, or subjective in the narrow sense. Furthermore, the 'relations between people' in S1, insofar as they are subsumed under relations of production, should rather be understood as something objective.

A further difficulty is raised by Marx's description of economic categories as 'objective forms of thought', since 'objective' in this context obviously does not only signify the extra-mundane aspect of 'objectivity', but in a more general sense inter-subjective validity.

Finally, and most confusingly of all, the objective in the emphatic sense – also comprising 'forces' and 'laws' – is objectivity understood in an even higher degree to that adumbrated in S1; this opaque and autonomous objectivity is supposed to be the very opposite of itself – illusion (*Schein*), purely illusory, 'second' nature.

In the face of this terminological ambiguity, which, as Adorno repeatedly stresses, is intrinsic to the matter itself and which therefore cannot be avoided, how is it possible to come up with a clear definition of the subjective-objective twofold character of the socio-economic concepts?

The Problem of the Twofold Character in Marx

We have not yet completely emerged from the terminological labyrinth. As we will see, an adequate understanding of the mature critique of economy will require further conceptual refinement. Thus

the discussion so far only holds true for the distinctions drawn in the early writings.

The Concrete-abstract Twofold Character of Economic Categories in Hegel

A glance into the *Economic-Philosophic Manuscripts* shows that the reflection upon the twofold character of commodities and the economic categories in general is not only central to Marx's mature economic analysis but already set the terms for his earlier engagement with economic works. Actually he had long been cognisant of this kind of reflection from his reading of Hegel's texts on the philosophy of spirit. In his *Critique of Hegel's Philosophy of Right* Marx excerpts and comments upon the dialectical determination of money as it occurs in § 299 of the *Philosophy of Right*, and in *Capital* Marx cites the definition of money from § 63. The definition of money in the *Manuscripts* directly refers to the one he gives in *On the Jewish Question*, but there is no doubt that the latter, and hence also the one in the *Manuscripts* – that is, 'money is the existing concept of the value of all things' (P566) – originates in Hegel himself. It stems from the definition of § 204 of the *Philosophy of Right*, according to which 'the abstract value of all commodities is actualized in money'. It can be assumed that Marx also knew §§ 486 and 494 of the *Philosophy of Spirit*, in which the problem of the twofold character and the changing form of value is most clearly articulated. Both sections have to do with value as 'abstract' or 'generalised'. Marx will have realised quite early on that Hegel makes only a few obscure statements on the content of this 'abstract value'. For this very reason Marx characterised it later as the 'hyroglyphe of society' (K1/88), in reference to the obscurity of both Hegel's account and that given by political economy.

In § 494 the twofold character of commodities is formulated as follows: 'the difference between the immediate specific constitution of the object [*Sache*] and its *substantiality*, that is its value, . . . is posited . . . internally to the object . . . thus a property [*Eigentum*] becomes capable of comparison . . . and can . . . be equated with that what is heterogenous to it'. In § 483 this is anticipated in the way that 'objectivity as a given . . . splits in two', and in § 486 Hegel claims that '*value* takes on multiple forms when being exchanged', although throughout this process it remains 'in itself identical'. If Hegel is indeed formulating the thought of abstract and absolute value undergoing a metamorphosis, then it would not be wrong to

assume that he is here drawing upon the very same passages of Smith, Ricardo, and Say which Marx excerpts – some even before 1844 (P491) – passages which had a decisive influence on his own conception of value.

That Hegel already anticipated the Marxian thought of the 'duplication of commodities into commodities and money' can be seen from the fact that Marx takes up Hegel's definition of money as early as 1843/44. Hegel came up with an admirably lucid formulation of this thought in one of his early manuscripts, which Marx, however, cannot have known: 'The object itself is divided into the particular, or the commodity, and the abstract, or money'.³⁰

Hegelian phrases like 'positing a difference internally to the object', 'split in two', 'sunder', etc., find their way into Marx's vocabulary and indeed they can be found quite literally in the *Grundrisse* in the descriptions of what Marx calls the 'dual positing', the 'twofold existence', the 'doubling up' (*Gedoppeltes*), and the 'twofold form', etc. One might even think that the 'twofold character of work' was first thought up by Hegel. But, although this was a consequence of his own thought, Hegel remains strikingly undecided, inconsistent and contradictory on this point, just as he does on the twofold character of commodities.

The Twofold Character of Economic Objects in the Young Marx

Inconsistencies of this kind will obviously raise the question of whether or not they are due to some basic design faults of Hegel's philosophy of spirit. The young Marx is adamant that such inconsistencies cannot be merely contingent. The 'critique of political economy' together with the 'critique of Hegelian dialectics and philosophy in general', which seems to bear only an external relation to the former, actually constitute an undivided unity. This holds true for those tropes which he understands as 'the *positive* moments of Hegelian dialectics' (p. 583), in as far as they harbour within them 'all elements of critique' including the elements of a critique of political economy; but it equally holds true for the Marxian thesis that these 'positive moments' are only positive 'within the determination of alienation', such that the critique itself is 'not transparent to itself and is mystifying'.

It is frequently overlooked that there is an internal relation between the critique of political economy and 'German philosophy in general', not just Hegelian dialectics. This relation stems from the fact that traditionally both have been exclusively concerned with the

traditional subject-object dualism. In our diagram this dualism has been represented as the relation between S1 and S2, the relation between objective conditions of labour and self-consciousness. This limited focus has always been a feature of economic theory, which in its quest for methodological legitimation unreflectively put its trust in epistemological categories which in turn are borrowed from the traditional philosophical account of subject-object dualism. Consequently Marx's critique of the Hegelian rendition of this dualism also bears upon the epistemological ground of economics and thus upon economy itself.

Alienation is . . . the opposition of *Object and Subject* . . . within thought itself. All other oppositions and their movements are only . . . the *exoteric* form of these, the only interesting oppositions, which bestow *meaning* upon the other, profane oppositions . . . hence the *subject* is always *consciousness* . . . [and] the human being only exists as self-consciousness . . . the differentiated forms of alienation . . . are thus only different forms of consciousness.
(P572f)

As examples of these 'profane oppositions' or 'forms of alienation' in Hegel, Marx explicitly refers to Hegel's treatment of 'wealth, state power, etc', which, as 'items of thought (*Gedankenwesen*)', can only be accounted for as the 'alienation of pure thought'. The successful treatment of these economic or 'profane oppositions' stands and falls by its ability to develop a profane subject-object dialectic, which should result not only in differences, but also in similarities between the two forms of the subject-object dialectic.

The differences result from the position of the 'subject', which is no longer occupied by 'consciousness', but by the 'human being' as member of the 'species', that is by the 'essential forces (*Wesenskräfte*) of the human being'. According to traditional theory the subject of the profane subject-object dialectic is itself a subject-object; the object of traditional theory, however – that is the economic reality of commodities, money, and capital – is quite indistinguishable from the objects of natural science. 'Second' nature is equated with the 'first', the economist takes himself for a physician of economic facts and deems his subject matter similar in essence to that of the exact, scientific disciplines. The qualitative difference between physics and economics is not intelligible from the standpoint of the traditional subject-object dualism. It is true that certain advocates of subjective

economics have been forced to define economic reality as a reality *sui generis*; for example 'the concept of reality in the social sciences has a quite different meaning than it does in the natural sciences'.³¹ But hitherto they have always failed to characterise this 'quite different meaning' in a positive way instead of only registering it in negative terms. This failure is not only due to immanent economic reasons – since subjective economy is not able to deduce objective, supra-individual structures – but due more fundamentally to epistemological, or ontological reasons. The concept of a reality, which is grounded on laws and yet is supposed to elude the grasp of natural science is impossible to conceive from the vantagepoint of the subject-object dualism of traditional theory. Hence, so the argument goes, such a reality does not exist.

Adorno throws light upon this 'totally different meaning' of economic reality by characterising it as 'objectivity', which seems to me to be an extremely useful terminological innovation. Speaking in Marxian terms it is a question of the 'system' or the 'world of exchange values', that is of the abstract 'reified value' (*Wertgegenständlichkeit*).

The common traits of the Hegelian and the 'profane' subject-object dialectic apparently consist in the fact that in both cases the 'object' vanishes whereas only the 'subject' really exists: the object exists by virtue of an 'unconscious production' of the 'subject'. The 'idealism' of Hegel is here constrained to the field of economic objectivity and is put on an equal footing with the 'idealism' of the left-Ricardian 'critical economists'. Their theory of value is thus doubly 'objective': it deals with labour as an 'objective' quantity in the sense of traditional subject-object dualism, but at the same time with capital as an object *sui generis*, with 'objectivity' as Adorno understands it, that is, as the object of the 'profane' subject-object dialectic. The fact that 'objective' value theory turned out to have always had this 'objectivity' in view, has been constantly ignored by its subjectivist as well as by its neo-Ricardian critics.

This blindness on the part of economists is certainly promoted by traditional epistemology, which is just as incapable of adequately differentiating the two meanings of 'objective' and thus conflates 'objective' in the sense of extra-mental with 'objective' in the sense of extra-human, that is objectivity outside of the human domain.

The Continuity of Subject-Object Dialectics from the Early Writings until Das Kapital

The fusion of the subject-object inversion with the problem of the concept of capital is the fundamental theme of Marx's *oeuvre*, which not only distinguishes it in principle from political economy as it was known to him and from contemporary economic theory, but also constitutes the red thread which unites all other problematics in the early writings with those of the later works. *Capital* sets out to decipher the concept of capital, in order to provide the basis for a theory of the 'real movements of capital', which, however, was kept back for other investigations. All other problems – and this is what is unique to Marx's economic analysis – are subordinate to and classified by this basic theme. Hence the primacy of qualitative over quantitative analysis is posited automatically:

The question for the concept of capital [is] . . . that fundamental question which arises on the threshold of the system of modern society. . . . The exact development of the concept of capital [is] necessary as it [is] the fundamental concept of modern economy, as capital itself [is] the basis of civil society . . . [and its] fundamental presupposition.

(G233, 237)

There is another good reason why the qualitative way of posing the question concerning the 'concept' of capital, that is the 'What is . . .?' question, outlawed by positivist methodology, has to be deemed the 'fundamental question': the reason is that, along with the form of money – this 'most meaningless, most elusive form' – the form of interest, which is posited simultaneously with capital, has to be accounted for as a 'purely thoughtless . . . unintelligible form' (T3/458), and hence capital has to be rated as nothing but an 'obscure thing' (T3/447). Here we can only mention a few of the paradoxes thrown up by this 'fundamental concept of modern society' which Marx discusses, and we must begin with one which has remained enigmatic for Smith, Marx, and neo-classic theory right up to the present day. Joan Robinson describes this problem as follows:

The capitalists are able to transform their factors from one concrete form . . . into another . . . But this then means that it is not the concrete enduring factors which are given, but an abstract quantity of 'capital'. What it means to claim that a determinate

quantity of 'capital' remains identical whilst its form changes, has remained an unsolved mystery to this very day.

Furthermore, and no less enigmatically, we find expressions like 'any quantity of wealth measured in purchasing power', or even: 'a stock of concrete capital goods, embodying a certain quantity of wealth'. All these 'abstract quantities', 'quantities of wealth', or 'quantities of prosperity' appear under the seemingly harmless heading of 'capital stocks';³² they are given a symbol and then form the material for economic models. In these models there appear 'quantities of capital . . . without any statement about what this quantity is a quantity of'.³³ In this way Joan Robinson claims to have accurately located the true achilles heel of academic economics. An 'abstract quantity' is 'transformed' from 'one concrete form' into another, and yet is supposed to stay 'the same'. A. Smith came up with a very similar formulation 224 years ago:

Capital does not produce revenue as long as it . . . continues to stay in the same form. It is continually taking leave of one person in a particular form and returning in another form, and it is profitable only by virtue of this circulation . . . or modification.

(quoted from P491)

This passage forms one of the points where the young Marx begins to reflect on the theory of capital, and it can be found again in the tenth chapter of the second volume of *Capital*, where the late Marx is concerned with a critique of the classical concept of capital. What Joan Robinson sees as the 'unsolved riddle' of economy relates to what Marx called the 'formal aspect' of capital in distinction to its 'material aspect';³⁴ he is mainly interested in the former, not the calculation of quantitative relations. At the beginning of the fourth chapter of *Capital*, 'The Transformation of Money into Capital', he makes it quite clear that 'only the economic forms' (K1/161) are being examined – a statement which is often repeated, for example when he claims that only 'the universal forms of capital are at issue', not its 'actual movements' (T3/463). But here again Marx is content to hang on to what classical economy has in fact always done when reflecting upon value, money, and capital in general. A contemporary mathematical economist will doubtless be put off by the Marxian determination of the object of economy – 'political economy deals with the specific social forms of wealth' (G736) – but it evinces the

awareness that the founders of political economy had for the scope and nature of their subject matter in a far more appropriate way than its modern translation into quantitative relations.

Throughout his analyses of forms, Smith is informed by physiocracy and especially by Turgot. When he repeatedly mentions the 'opaque relation' between money and commodities, he probably has in mind a formulation of Turgot's, according to which 'money represents all types of value, just as conversely every type of value represents money' – a circumstance later named the 'economic (*wirtschaftlicher*) circle', since here the two extremes mutually 'represent' and presuppose each other. This obviously constitutes a logical anomaly and it seems that here the 'form as such' resists conceptualisation; this is certainly true of the phenomenon which Turgot reputedly first designated as 'abstract value'. Both Smith and Turgot are asking the primordial question of economic circulation, the question of 'capital', which likewise owes its name to Turgot; it is the question of that particular type of circulation which enables capital to take on various 'forms'.

Although Smith refines these descriptions to the effect that in the context of the circulation of capital, 'value' is what has the power to assume the polar 'forms'³⁵ of money and commodities, his reflections did not directly inspire the Marxian analysis of forms. We mentioned Hegel, but we ought not to forget two authors who developed the analysis of forms in the domain opened up by Turgot and Smith: it is not Ricardo whom we have in mind here, but Say, and later also Sismondi. It was not Ricardo, but these two authors, who directly inspired Marx's reflections of the theory of capital in the *Rohentwurf* of 1857/58, alongside with the impulses which Marx gained by his polemic against Bastiat and Proudhon. And in the light of the following words of Say, which Ricardo cites and endorses in his principal work, it should be perfectly clear that Marx's analytical expositions of the value form are not only indebted to Hegel's apparently purely philosophical tropes, but also to Say's constructions which were developed in economic terms: Say speaks of 'forms' into which we can 'force a value' and even of 'metamorphoses' which 'we can make it undergo.'³⁶

Not all of the young Marx's exercise books have been preserved. In particular the extracts from the works of Say and Sismondi with regard to their description of capital are missing. Nonetheless such passages are to be found in the later works, and one must therefore draw on these if one wants to elucidate the origin of Marx's

conception of capital, which, at the time of his initial engagement with economic literature, he formulates in the following way:

Capital, wherein all natural . . . determinateness of the object is erased, private property . . . that in which one and the *same* capital remains the *same* in the most variegated . . . existence (*Dasein*) (P525). Contradiction . . . against itself . . . dis-integrating into *itself* and into its *interest* . . . labour as moment of capital. (P529)

When Marx describes capital as subject or as self-relation he is only making explicit what he already found in the works of the great economists; the same holds for the highly contradictory relation between capital and labour as expounded in the classical literature. Since this is at the heart of what Marx, in opposition to mainstream contemporary economics, takes to be its main objective, that is the analysis of 'the forms of wealth', we ought to make ourselves more familiar with the historical background of their economic dogmas.

It is rather ironical that John Stuart Mill made the first attempt to ostracise these traditional problems from the realm of economics in the very year (1844) in which Marx started to work on the analysis of these 'deranged' forms of wealth:

The concept of wealth is surrounded by a haze of blurred and nebulous associations, which makes everything which is visible through it barely recognizable. Let us replace this concept by a paraphrase. Wealth is to be defined as comprising all objects which . . . are useful.³⁷

Mill refrains from giving a more detailed description of this apparent 'obfuscation'. He is obviously referring to what Marx calls the 'twofold existence' or 'twofold form' of commodities and capital, that is the fact that 'wealth has two existences, on the one hand as commodity, on the other as money', formerly as 'abstract' wealth, or indeed as the 'abstract form' of wealth, and latterly as concrete, or 'material wealth' (G876).

It should be remembered that what bothered Joan Robinson was the twofold existence of capital – as an 'enduring concrete factor' and as a *non-concrete* 'abstract quantity' – so that the quantity remains the same when its concrete 'form changes'. That economics has ceased to ponder this contradictory 'twofold being' is also due to

the resignation of Mill, who attempted to cut the Gordian knot of the 'duplex thing' by replacing the enigmatic 'duality' with a 'simple unity'. Mill, by defining what from now on should be termed 'goods' or 'useful things', tries to get rid of 'commodities', which are emphatically so-called because they 'reduplicate themselves into commodity and money'. The putative 'revolution in value theory' is due above all to intellectual incompetence and the refusal to come to terms conceptually with the 'dual form' of wealth. The effort required to suppress this difficulty can be easily demonstrated with the example of Joan Robinson. In the second chapter of her book there is a critique of the concept of value which is found in Marx and the classical literature – the objective concept of value, which is supposedly 'no more than a mere word'. She does not actually get around to dealing with the problem of capital before the third chapter on 'use theory', in which context she introduces the unfortunate term 'abstract quantity'. In the light of this remark one is as it were waiting for her to appreciate the meaning of 'objective value' and to take up the theme of the second chapter. However, she is apparently inclined to forget that what she called 'abstract quantity' designates capital in the most traditional way as *value*-quantity, and that, since Turgot, this value has, at least occasionally, been termed 'abstract value'. So she is obliged to repress the thought which threatens to surface here, namely that the 'objective value', which in chapter 2 she disdainfully calls a 'mysterious appearance', has returned to haunt her in the form of the 'abstract quantity' – this time as a quite 'real mystification' (13/35). As if she were afraid of calling this mysterious thing by its name – 'abstract value' – she takes refuge in meaningless transcriptions such as 'quantum of prosperity' or 'quantum of wealth'. And these mysterious economical quanta are supposed to manifest or materialise themselves in 'concrete capital goods' – a very mysterious process indeed.

Along with all advocates of mainstream economic theory she is even less willing to see a connection between the 'concrete-abstract' twofold character of wealth or capital and what Marx was about to identify as the 'decisive point' (*Springpunkt*) of political economy, namely the 'concrete-abstract' twofold character of labour. This denial of the 'internal relation' of commodity, money, and capital, manifest in the separation of value theory (misconstrued as price theory) from money theory, and the further separation of both value and money theory from the theory of capital, this disintegration of a whole into a rigid trichotomy lies at the core of dominant economic

theory and is the chief reason why, for more than a century, it has consistently failed to come to terms with the Marxian analysis. The internal disputes between the different schools of modern economics are only of secondary importance in comparison with this overriding failure: for none of them can provide an adequate analysis of the 'concrete-abstract' twofold character of wealth, which unfolds in the three moments of commodity, money, and capital, that is, an analysis of what is indeed the 'unresolved mystery' of economy. This lack of understanding with respect to their own history implies a lack of understanding, or even an inability to see what is going on in Marx's analysis of forms and his *Critique of Economic Categories* (B101).

If Marx describes the simplest form, that is value, as a 'hieroglyph', a 'fantastic figure', a 'mystical' or 'deranged form' (K1/88ff), then this is done not only in a neutral or descriptive manner, but obviously also with a critical intention. Otherwise how could Marx understand his work as a 'general critique of the whole system of economic categories' (T3/250)? If, however, for Marx 'every element, even the simplest (for example the commodity), is already an inversion' (T3/498), then this must also hold for capital and its internal dynamic, which Say has described as the 'metamorphosis' of 'value'.

However, it is not merely the concept of 'metamorphosis', which Marx critically developed, but also his definition of capital, which he likewise takes from Say. When Marx writes of capital that in its movement 'the same stays the same, indifferent to its content', then it is not difficult to recognise the Sayian origins of the description, which Marx takes over albeit critically:

One and the same capital can exist at one moment in the form of a sum of money, at another in the form of some raw material, of an instrument or of a finished product. These *things* are not actually *capital* itself; the capital dwells in the *value* that they have.³⁸

Say's description of capital takes itself for a clarification of the description offered by Turgot and Smith, and is a marked improvement not only on the latter, but also on the neo-classical definition given by Joan Robinson. She retains a certain ironical distance though, when she claims that the 'abstract quantities' of capital 'remain the same, even when their form changes'. Say for his part clearly recognises that the machine itself is not capital, but rather represents a specific form of its existence. Intuitively Say even

manages to broach the more difficult subject matter of the impossibility of an identity between value and capital, thereby making the same claim for the formal transformations which value and capital undergo, which he termed 'metamorphoses'. Capital is not value, but merely 'dwells' within it. Nevertheless, in this negative determination the actual essence of capital obviously remains an open question.

How could the young Marx have related himself to such descriptions of capital leading this as it were ghostly existence? It was not enough just to take refuge in irony, as Joan Robinson did. But then the question arises of whether or not Turgot, Smith, Say, Ricardo and Sismondi (in short, classical economic theory as such) describe a phenomenon which is virtually non-existent; are they not all suffering from economic delusions, are they not seeing economic ghosts? And even if, as in the case of Joan Robinson, it is merely a matter of 'abstract quantities' realising themselves in something concrete – a position which must hold true for all economists, at least as far as money is concerned – one is still left with this spectre to contend with. Does it then really matter whether one calls this spectre by its proper name 'abstract value', or searches frantically for other, seemingly less contentious descriptions, as Joan Robinson and neo-Ricardianism are inclined to do?

In the *Grundrisse* of 1857/58, supposedly drawing on excerpts from 1844, Marx takes to task more than 12 definitions of capital by the above mentioned authors. Horkheimer has already noted that Marx takes over and develops the 'most advanced definitions' which are given 'new functions . . . in the course of the exposition': 'The whole of materialist economics is opposed to the classical system, and yet certain concepts of the latter are retained by the former . . . in the context of which they become moments of new units of meaning'.³⁹ Such concepts are not just 'names' in the sense of 'handy abbreviations' as in physics, because they generate 'disputes about what is united within them'. The conceptual units refer to real ones, to a real 'system': the 'name' is thus more than a mere 'abbreviation and fiction', it rather 'unites what has continuity', that is, real continuity, not merely mental continuity produced by the efforts of the understanding. The procedure which Marx, following Hegel and Feuerbach, terms genetic 'exposition', also known as the 'dialectical method of development' (B183), implicitly contains 'authentic moments of cognition'.⁴⁰ The construction or 'exposition' becomes a source of cognition, an instrument of 'non-empirical cognition'.

Actually, at least as far as the German literature is concerned, there has been quite a clear consensus that in the case of the theories of value, money, and capital, we are confronted with the question of 'the possibility of a non-empirical doctrine'.⁴¹ Georg Simmel, Schumpeter, and Amonn are all unequivocal on this point: where it comes down to the 'sources', the 'real grounds', and the 'ultimate principles', 'matters of fact . . . are wholly uninteresting';⁴² 'looking to the facts will not help us any longer'.⁴³ Adorno makes the point in the following manner: 'empiricism and theory can never be inscribed in a continuum . . . but empirical proofs for certain structural laws are always readily contestable on their own empirical terms'. In this sense too the theory of value *qua* money and capital is to be located in the no man's land 'between philosophy and empirical science'.⁴⁴ Hence there can be no alternative to the procedure of Marxian 'exposition', even if the latter is still in an experimental and fragmentary state and thus still in need of critical treatment.

In fact all the capital-theoretical tropes of classical authors, which, according not merely to Joan Robinson, but to all scientifically minded economists, still contain 'unsolved mysteries', are in need of 'exposition', that is, they require genetic derivation from explanatory principles. Whilst mathematical economists insist on trying to reduce substantial concepts to quantitative, functional ones and end up by shrugging their shoulders, bewildered by such reviled 'essentialist' determinations, Marx himself attempts to throw light on the 'objective meaning' of these determinations, and therefore to understand these authors better than they understood themselves. Here are a couple more definitions of capital by Say and Sismondi, which Marx repeatedly worked upon. Say claims that capital is '*essentially always immaterial*', since it is not matter which constitutes capital, but the *value* of this matter, a value which has nothing corporeal about it' (quoted from Marx, G216).

Sismondi goes even further. According to his account, 'permanent value' 'wrenches itself free from the commodity . . . which nevertheless always remains in its possession like a metaphysical, insubstantial quality'. 'Commerce split the shadow from the body, introducing the possibility of possessing them independently' (quoted in G172/131). 'Capital is a commercial idea'.⁴⁵ Thus the value of capital is 'immaterial', has 'nothing corporeal about it', and resembles a 'metaphysical quality'. Hence it is an 'idea', but one which can assume the 'form' of something material, thereby attaining the character of a *subject*. The 'inversion of the subject into the object and back' must

be taken quite literally. If the formal aspect of money already confronted us as an 'a priori', as an 'Urphenomenon', then the formal aspect of capital appears here as an 'idea', as something 'immaterial', 'non-corporeal', as an 'object outside of humankind and nature'. Since capital, however, must not remain a 'mere idea', but most also be understood as a 'factor of production', and since the problem of mediation between the sensible and the supersensible remains unsolved, Marx is fully entitled to formulate his critique of economy as follows: it is the 'standpoint of the economist who only knows palpable things or ideas',⁴⁶ which is to say the standpoint of someone who cannot get to grips conceptually with the paradox of the economic object in general, which Marx conceptualised as a 'sensible – supersensible thing'.

Marx holds just as rigorously to what he already found within economic literature as did Say and Sismondi, who tried analytically to work out and to find new expression for what they found in Turgot and Smith, the co-founders of economics. What then should we think of those mysterious definitions within classical economics, which come back and haunt modern authors, and to which could be added a whole host of similar mysteries from the literature on money theory, which followed in the wake of Simmel and Knapp? Is it mere chance that the school of economics has hitherto ignored the Marxian critique of 'the' economy, without on its part producing any significant contribution to the assessment of the 'fetish character' of money and capital? It has long been evident, certainly since Marx's time, that 'conceptual economics' of the theory of capital contains mysteries, yet no further light has been shed upon the meaning or indeed the meaninglessness of this branch of economics. If economists want coherently to rebut the claim that these descriptions can only be understood as the products of an unbridled imagination, then they must provide evidence that the conceptual apparatus belonging to the capital theories of Smith and Turgot contains at the very least a rational core.

But if it is true to say of the intellectual situation of contemporary economics – a theory which according to its self-understanding is exclusively concerned with the construction of models – that it does not possess the requisite conceptual means to give an account of the genesis of its categories, and that as 'quantitative science' it is barred from the investigation of qualitative problems, then only Marxian theory can provide a way out. As a critique of economy 'beyond the standpoint of economics' (2/32) Marxian theory is then no longer

political economy, but rather critical theory, which is to say a critique of categories and ideology. The fundamental concepts of this critique – 'inversion' (*Verkehrung*), 'objective' (K1/97) and 'objective illusion' (G409), 'rational' and 'irrational form' – and, furthermore, its method of genetic 'exposition', including the distinction between 'undeveloped' and 'developed', that is 'completed' forms – have nothing whatsoever to do with economics in the sense of quantitative model theory. And it is only by dint of these critical distinctions of different forms, the continual conflation of which legitimates the critique of economy, that Marx is able to work out coherent statements on the meaning or the meaninglessness of the mysterious fundamental concepts of the classical theory of capital.

The Reception and Foundation of the Labour Theory of Value by the Critique of Ideology

From the very beginning the young Marx was not merely interested in the critique of particular schools of economic thought, but in the analysis of the *unreflective* 'assumptions of political economy'. In the first half of the *Manuscripts* he, just like the young Engels, does not take sides in the dispute between the labour theory of value and the utility theory. The object of critique is economics in general. This attitude changes in the second half, and in the final pages of the economic manuscripts Marx definitely decides in favour of the labour theory of value: '. . . that labour is the essence of private property is a claim which cannot be proven by the economist, but we intend to supply the proof for him' (P561). Like Say and Hegel, Marx does not use the concept of private property in the juridical sense, for 'value is the civil (*bürgerliche*) existence of property' (1/114), and the 'existence of private property . . . has . . . become . . . value' (P453) – the 'articulation of private property' is 'for example . . . value, price, and money' (2/33) – both capital and wealth are also mentioned in this context. The '*movement* of private property' is therefore the movement of the value of capital. Hence, if it is now permissible to substitute, in the above and the following quotation, the word *value*, in the sense of the value of capital, for the word *private property*, then the question arises of why Marx, after his initial hesitation, gave up his neutrality and came down on the side of the labour theory of value. Arguments immanent to economics are in his view unable to resolve fundamental categorial problems. Engels too claims that the

economist, who 'lives from contradictions' and 'wanders around in contradictions', is incapable of resolving the conflicts inherent to the very principles of his theory: 'economists can decide nothing' (1/505f); their standpoint is characterised by a total lack of awareness with respect to themselves and their own conduct. The economist 'himself does not know which cause he is serving'. The advocate of the labour theory of value is not much better off than the advocate of a theory of utility. They can both 'decide nothing'; only a critique of the economist who subscribes to the labour theory of value can 'provide the proofs for him'. His own arguments, being based on 'the fiction of an originary status quo' (P511), are utterly useless to this end. Value theory *qua* price theory seems to be of no interest to Marx and on the rare occasions when he does broach quantitative issues, he is sharply critical of the 'school of Ricardo' (P445).

If therefore the labour theory of value is to be defended against the weak and even false arguments of its founders, and if one cannot make use of arguments immanent to economics, because they cannot be grounded within the parameters of economics, then the field of debate will have to be shifted onto a terrain quite unfamiliar to the economist. How does Marx's proof structure fit in now? Where, and in which contexts, will he be confronted by value? On what grounds, if not internal economic ones, does value become a problem for him, and on what grounds is the newly transformed labour theory of value supposed to offer the solution?

The first author Marx read during his stay in Paris was Say. Under this influence Marx problematised the concept of value from the very beginning not in terms of *price* theory, but in terms of the theory of capital. Thus he became the first author to reflect on value not as 'simple' but as 'developed', that is as value of *capital*, to which Ricardo pays less attention than Say. Marx excerpts the definition of capital as 'the sum of values', which Say takes from Turgot, and, in the kind of meta-economic terms, which has hitherto remained anathema to all economists, makes this comment: 'Here the concept of value, which has not yet been developed, is already being presupposed'.⁴⁷

At a later date Marx will note that Say, *qua* subjective theorist of value, unthinkingly employs physiocratic terms 'with no regard for the consequences' (K1/178). This is because he is not aware that the value of capital cannot be grasped as relative value, which it must be if it is to be determined subjectivistically, but, on the contrary, only as 'absolute', 'abstract' and 'objective' value. In these determinations

value necessarily remains a 'mystery' for subjective value theories, which also holds for neo-Ricardianism. The value of capital can not be subjectivistically thematised, a point which was later to be convincingly shown by Marx in his dispute with S. Bailey.⁴⁸

Although he might well have suspected this in 1844, he is here primarily concerned with another more general lack of reflection on the part of economic theory. In the main part of the *Manuscripts* Marx sums up his position:

We began with the presuppositions of political economy. We assumed . . . the concept of exchange value etc. . . . Political economy . . . assumes what it ought to develop . . . The political economist . . . presupposes the very fact which he ought to explain.

(P501f)

As one can see, Marx unambiguously formulates his chief objection to the 'standpoint of political economy' as 'standpoint of already present phenomena' (*Standpunkt der fertigen Phänomene*) as early as 1844. Later he will claim that categories 'drawn from the domain of empiricism' were 'smuggled in' or 'fell from the heavens' rather than being 'developed' or 'derived'. This is just as true of Say as of Ricardo, of the subjective as of the objective value theorist, such that when confronted with this objection the internal theoretical differences pale into insignificance. Actually Marx does not criticise the doctrines of exchange value propounded by either subjectivistic or labour theories of value in any way – they are not even mentioned – what matters is that both schools of thought are equally guilty of 'assuming the concept of exchange value', that is, they both employ the notion of exchange value as a category. Everything hinges on the objection that both standpoints refuse to thematise the 'inner ground' (T3/135) of value, that is, the sufficient ground of its existence, and merely accept its existence as self-evident. When the Ricardian enquires after an 'unchanging measure of value' he 'presupposes the *values* whose measure he seeks', that is, he assumes their existence, whilst the question for Marx is the 'genesis of value itself' (T3/155). On the contrary Ricardo is '*indifferent*' to the 'form as such', to value *qua* value, 'just because it is natural' (G236). He forgets that values, which *qua* value are not consciously produced by individuals, are nevertheless to be understood as 'social product' (K1/88). The basic concepts of political economy, and its version of a labour theory of

value, are inadequate to the task of evincing this 'genesis' of value, for which reason Marx has recourse to other considerations outside of the domain of political economy, in order to capture its inner rationality. This becomes apparent where Marx decides, as far as I know for the first time, in favour of the labour theory of value. If we replace the words 'private property' by 'value' once again, the passage reads:

. . . when one speaks of *value*, it is thought this has to do with a thing outside of and apart from human beings. When one speaks of labour, it is known that this has directly to do with human beings. To ask the question in this new way is already to have answered it.

(P521f)

It is this thought which in my opinion constitutes the *beginning* of the Marxian labour theory of value. For if one specifies value as value of capital, than it transpires that by this thing, which exists outside of human beings, but is nevertheless produced by the human species, Marx could only have meant the 'immaterial' or 'commercial idea' of the value of capital, in other words its subject-character. What is new in this 'new way' of asking the old question concerning the essence of 'wealth as residing outside of mankind and as being independent of it' (P530), consists in the fact that value is here situated for the first time in its mode of being, namely its being displaced, and is thus assigned the same status as those other forms of the objectification⁴⁹ of human essential forces, namely the platonic, ontotheological ideas. It was thus a necessary and consistent move to make use of Feuerbach's notion of the 'total effectivity of mankind' (P574), of man's 'generic activity and essential forces' (P561) to clear up the unsolved problem of the classical economist, that is to 'supply him with the proof [of the labour theory of value]' (P561): the 'total effectivity' becomes the social totality of labour and the objectified 'forms of appearance' (K1/70) which belong to it; the meaning of 'total effectivity' is thereby not significantly altered but merely specified. The dispute between the competing economic theories of value is resolved with the aid of the extra-economic criterion of whether the underlying principles of these theories, utility and labour, can at the same time serve as a ground of explanation for the value's residing 'outside of human beings', for its 'being dis-placed', in short, for its particular 'form'. The scope of the

theory of economy must be enlarged in order to ground the more narrow domain of economics. To the original economic problem of the content and size of value is added the further problem of its 'deranged form', in order to give a coherent solution to the former. As a result of this procedure it transpires that the principles of subjective value theory – use and scarcity – are not adequate to grasp the 'internal ground' of the mere existence of abstract, absolute, objective value. Only the principle of labour can be developed in such a way as to explain the existence of value as the objectification of the generic forces of mankind. The economic principles are thus grounded through what Marx in 1844 termed the '*positive* moments of Hegelian dialectics' (P583). Marx's basic thought, hitherto ignored by all economists, is that human beings confront their own generic forces, that is their '*collective forces*' (G481) or 'social forces', (K3/823) as an autonomous, alien being. This thought culminates in the conception of the autonomous totality of social capital as a real total subject, which abstracts itself from the weal and woe of individual subjects and is 'indifferent' to them. Its 'governing might' reigns 'over the owners themselves' (P484). Only now does the meaning of what Marx calls the 'self-movement' or autonomy of capital, and with it the meaning of the title of his later work, become fully clear. The source of this new departure is Feuerbach's concept of the objectified generic forces.

The Three Attitudes of the Economic Subject Towards Economic Objectivity

Any meaningful discussion of the Marxian 'revolutionising' (B144) of social economy, of his 'first attempt at applying the *dialectic method* to Political Economy' (B202; English in the original) must be conducted in the context of the two traditional attempts to successfully conceptualise the problem of economic objectivity.

The Economic Object on the Level of Traditional Subject-Object Dualism

There have been numerous attempts in German philosophical literature to thematise the economic problem in the context of the general problem of value – Max Scheler, A. Meinong, H. Vaihinger, and H. Rickert amongst others. All these attempts to grasp economic objects 'as things invested with value' have failed. Heidegger makes this

problem explicit and firmly notes the 'obscurity of this structure of investiture with value', without, however, being able to solve the riddle: 'what does value mean ontologically? How are we to characterize this "investing" and Being-invested?'⁵⁰

Certainly, the starting point of all these failed attempts is the tacit assumption of the subjective theory of value here formulated by Schumpeter: 'values must live inside a consciousness, if the word is to mean anything at all'. Nevertheless, on the same page he unwittingly formulates the antithesis, namely that 'purchasing power is to be understood as abstract power over goods in general'.⁵¹ We have to bear in mind that we are dealing here with 'objective value', which, *qua* value, however, was supposed to be located 'in a consciousness'.

In such a manner the prevailing theory hops blithely between existences 'in' and 'outside' consciousness, here subjective, there objective, always forgetting the one when it switches to the other. The 'investing' of value, that is the investing of objective with subjective value, whereby the former must 'embody' and 'represent' the latter, remains categorially incomprehensible – which in Marxian terms means that it cannot be grasped from the 'standpoint of its form'. If one insists that values 'live in a consciousness' – whatever that means – then one negates their material existence. If, on the other hand, one affirms their objective being 'outside' of consciousness, and insists on the strength of their characteristics as 'exchange' or 'purchasing power', hence on the paradoxical existence of an economic 'relation of things amongst themselves' (T3/145), then one negates their being 'in a consciousness'. The prevailing economic theory knows no way out of this dilemma.

The Economic Object on the Level of Philosophical Dialectics.

The insoluble nature of the problem of value, which for Heidegger is 'categorially' difficult to 'grasp' on the level of subject-object dualism, is unequivocally affirmed by those who put this dualism as such in question. Following Hegel, this can be seen in Georg Simmel's *The Philosophy of Money*, and under the aegis of Hegel, Simmel and Johann Georg Hamann,⁵² we find a particularly glaring example of this in the work of Bruno Liebrucks.⁵³ For him the so called 'philosophy of reflection', which is still hindered by subject-object dualism, 'will never know what money is'. One can find dialectical determinations of commodity and money not only in Simmel but also in Marx; roughly he claims that the product as commodity is 'sublated

particularity, universality' (G111). Furthermore, this commodity as a 'sensuous-supersensuous thing' has to count as what Liebrucks calls a 'real ideal', an 'object transcending objectivity' (*übergegenständlicher Gegenstand*), in opposition to the 'positive objects' of natural science. But lastly and most importantly the particular is 'at the same time' a universal, which is to say that the problem of universality recurs in the economic domain in the same fashion as it was formulated by Hegel, that is, that the difference between the 'real' and the 'ideal world' has to be dialectically negated. In Marx's words: 'it is as if along with and apart from lions, tigers, hares and all . . . real animals . . . there also existed the *animal*, the individual incarnation of the whole animal kingdom. Such a particular . . . is a universal'.⁵⁴ In this case the existing particular, the 'real', is its opposite, it is a universal, the 'abstraction' of the animal as such. Money is interpreted as the economic paradox of an existing universal or an existing abstraction. This is exactly what is meant when it is claimed that money is abstract value and that this abstraction exists.

It seems that with the definition of the object of economy as 'supraobjective' or 'real-ideal', the bridges back to economics have finally been burned. One glance at the relevant literature just prior to the 1960s, however, suffices to show that not just dialectical philosophers, but also the majority of the economic theorists of money have all equally described the subject matter 'money' in this 'philosophical' manner. Take for example one of the most prominent money theorists of the period, who otherwise deals only with quantitative issues. It seems that in those days a paradox could be quite correctly pointed out, and yet treated in scarcely more than a cursory, aphoristic manner.

In the sign for money, however paradoxical this might seem, *abstract economic value* is brought to real appearance . . . Food for thought for so many who see in this type of abstraction only a hopeless renunciation of reality, and who refuse to grant what is 'abstract' any kind of existence.⁵⁵

Something which is abstract, or in more common terms, is thought or subjective, is at the same time an 'entity', or in common parlance, something objective, something which is not thought. 'Reality' is claimed to be abstract in itself. Is it then really only the language, which Joan Robinson alleges to be incomprehensible, the language not only of Marxian theory, but of this 'reality' itself? Is it not rather

the case that the empirical notion of reality (and hence that of a philosophy of reflection) so naively presupposed by Joan Robinson and in general by quantitative economics, necessarily contains within it the reason why this type of economics 'will never know what money is', a commodity or capital? How can such economics even begin meaningfully to discuss the relationship between theory and actuality, model and reality, when it has already dogmatically decided that the economic 'reality' is not abstract, because, according to the empirical epistemology to which it subscribes, such an abstraction could not exist?

*The Economic Object in the Frame of Reference
of the Philosophico-Economic Dialectic*

The most powerful objection to the second attitude is obviously that it is incapable of completing its own program; it is unclear how it can succeed in giving a genetic account of the economic categories. Just as with Hegel – not to mention Simmel and Liebrucks – we learn nothing of any significance about the category of capital, which remains, as it did for Hegel, an originary phenomenon with the status of a 'Platonic Idea'. When it comes to the case of the category of value, Hegel seems incapable of applying his own major insight, namely that every immediacy is mediated: instead of being able to derive value as the objectification of the subject, he draws on empirical matters. With Hegel as with economics the existence of a 'world of exchange values' is always already presupposed, and with it the world of the social as such.

*The transformation of Hegel's dialectic into
an anthropologico-economic dialectic*

Rather than as the objectification of self-consciousness, the manifestations of economy should be conceived of as the objectifications of an earthly subject, as what Feuerbach terms 'generic forces', which now receive their concretisation as the 'collective forces' of labour. By 'proceeding on a purely human, universal basis' (1/502) these forces are 'traced back [to their] ground, the actual human being, and are posited as his or her own work' (1/231). Only in this way can the 'positive moments of the Hegelian dialectic' be saved, that is to say the program of the 'destruction of the alienated determination of the material world' (P583), the destruction of the economic substances 'dwelling apart from and outside of mankind', of the 'metamorphosis' of a profane universal into the subject.

This transformation renders redundant the claim that there actually exists a primal material source of all values. Such another ontology would be a superfluous addition to the doctrine of base and superstructure, which is neither in need of a new first philosophy, nor of a *Weltanschauung*. This doctrine is successfully and exclusively grounded in a critique of economy.

Far more important than the young Marx's materialism is the thought that will from here on form the basis of his life's work: namely the thought that 'all economic categories [should be] developed from the two factors' (P521) inherent to the 'tension in the essence' (*gespanntes Wesen*) of private property, this is from the contradiction between the 'objective manifestations' of private property on the one hand, and its 'subjective essence' – labour as total effectivity – on the other. All categories of economics would on this account be understood as 'developed expressions' of the two primordial foundations or factors.

The terminus *ad quem* of this development is capital, which can be shown by its being understood as early as 1844 as 'the completed manifestation of private property' (P533). Numerous 'less important' determinations are teleologically directed towards the latter as their 'fulfilment'. From the first instance it is the *value* of capital which is seen as the authentic, consummate value, of which the exchange value of classical economy is but an '*undeveloped* manifestation'. The conception of a development of value in the sense of a *negative teleology* – Marx sees in the 'completed, objective manifestation of private property . . . the completion of its domination over human beings' (P533) – is that point of difference where he parts company with the model theory of economy and first establishes his theory as a *critique* of political economy. Hence the thought which forms the basis of this conception is already established in 1844; the later works merely develop this idea further.

*The return of traditional problems regarding the constitution of
fundamental concepts in the philosophic-economic dialectics*

In this final section let us recapitulate upon the content of this essay. We began with the problem of whether contemporary economics or Marxian economics had developed a terminology which was adequate to its object. It transpired that academic economics comes unstuck, because it remains in the shackles of the traditional dualism of the subject *qua res cogitans* and the object *qua res extensa*. Economics cannot rationally articulate what it means to claim that

an 'abstract' power of disposal is 'bound' to 'concrete' goods in which it is reified. But certainly, even for traditional philosophy and epistemology this 'investing' of value 'in' goods remains, in Heidegger's words, an 'obscure' structure which is scarcely comprehensible as a category. This kind of economics therefore suspects that in the social-economic domain 'reality has a completely different meaning', but it cannot positively develop this hunch.

It seems that what is required here is the dissolution of the subject-object dualism. Yet dialectically oriented theory can neither explain the autonomy of these objects, nor give a genetic account of them as products of objectification. Marx's analysis of forms is an initial step in this direction, since it determines the generic forces of society, rather than self-consciousness, as subject. The conceptual subject-object dichotomy now refers to the difference between the 'human' forces, that is labour, and the economic object as 'a thing apart from people and nature'. It is, however, also possible to find the traditional application of these terms in Marx, and, above all, in Adorno, in the context of recurrent epistemological investigations. This is shown in Marx's characterisation of the economic category as an 'objective form of thought' (K1/90). At one point he states explicitly: 'the social forms of their own labour – [are] subjective-objective ones.'⁵⁶

These forms are therefore neither merely subjective, that is mere thought, nor something merely objective; rather they are both. Now it is an essential feature of Hegel's concept of spirit that 'spirit is always subjective-objective'.⁵⁷ However, the objective moment of this unity is in the final analysis shown to be a product of the reification of self-consciousness, and not at all of the subject in the sense of social labour.

How the two forms of the subject-object dialectic interpenetrate is a question which remains unclear to this day: the question has not even been posed. Certainly we can here offer no more than a few preliminary considerations and conceptual clarifications, leading towards an understanding of what Marx called his 'dialectical method of development' (B183) which he never put down in writing. It is known that Engels searched the unpublished works in vain for Marx's planned '*Abriss über Dialektik*' (B311).

Hitherto only Adorno has methodologically adumbrated the problems which this question opens up, above all in his essay on 'Sociology and Empirical Research' and in the 'World Spirit and Natural History' chapter of his *Negative Dialectics*. In my estimation, four central thoughts can be drawn out which centre around this

issue: (1) Adorno is to my knowledge the only author to have thematised what Marx terms the 'objective illusion' (K1/97) of economic categories; (2) In Adorno's portrayal of the 'ether' of society, the subjective-objective character of the categories is first of all related to the Hegelian concept of spirit and the traditional subject-object dialectic; (3) Adorno's idea of 'concepts . . . which the object has of itself' as that 'which the object itself wants to be';⁵⁸ (4) The conception of 'objective irrationality'.⁵⁹ There is perhaps a fifth central thought of equal relevance to the philosophic-economic problematic, which cannot be broached here: the dynamic character of social-economic categories.

None of these five major themes were addressed by what is known as the *3rd German Dispute on Method*, the '*Positivismusstreit*', which lasted for so many years. This is scandalous above all because the only early essay Adorno included in the publication of *The Positivism Dispute in German Sociology*,⁶⁰ 'Sociology and Empirical Research', is of utmost importance here. The failure to address these issues is symptomatic of the taboo upon the problems of the constitution of social economy which Adorno raised with respect to Marx.

Adorno formulates the central problem in the following passage from his essay:

To say that there is something conceptual about social reality is not tantamount to being an idealist. It means that there is something which holds sway in the thing itself . . . the act of exchange implies the reduction of . . . goods . . . to something abstract, not to something in any way material in the traditional sense of this world. . . . Exchange value, which unlike use-value is merely something thought, reigns over . . . need, . . . illusion reigns over reality. . . . At the same time this illusion is what is most real . . . it is something conceptual the logic of which is quite different from that of the natural sciences, where any particular elements can be reduced to their common features.⁶¹

Abstract value, which for Adorno is the central structure of 'false' or 'negative objectivity',⁶² is thus on the one hand *subjective* – 'something merely thought' – and on the other hand *objective* – that is 'what is most real', 'conceptuality that holds sway in the thing itself' – 'reality [is] in itself abstract'.⁶³ Value is 'material', objective, and yet also illusion, that is, subjective, it is a product of social

consciousness and not an *Urphenomenon*, it is not *a priori*, and certainly not first nature.

It suddenly becomes crystal clear that we have transcended traditional subject-object dualism – we are here only referring to the O–S2 relation in the diagram – when the question arises of whether ‘abstract quantities’ should be attributed to the subjective or the objective side of reality. The natural scientist may study the natural side of money and capital, that is, he may analyse paper or machines, but he will never discover their (abstract) value. Therefore value must be something thought or something subjective. The economist on the other hand searches in ‘circulation’, ‘transport’, ‘storage’, ‘destruction’, ‘production’, ‘measurement’, etc. for this very something which ‘invests in’ physical objects. It therefore cannot be a question of something thought, something subjective, but rather of something extramental and in this sense objective.

The unresolved methodological problems which bear upon the traditional subject-object relation – the O–S2 relation in the diagram – are legion. They culminate in the question of whether and of how one can come up with a concept of value to which every economist could assent, regardless of whether he falls in the camp of subjective or objective value theory, or even of neo-Ricardianism. No doubt Marx did make such a claim for his own theory. He speaks explicitly of the ‘universal characters of value’, which ought to contradict their ‘material existence in a determinate commodity’ (B110). When he further stipulates that simple ‘value’ is ‘abstracted from concrete economic determinations’ – from the concept of capital – then it becomes clear that he cannot be talking about the distinctive value of the labour theory, but rather of the kind of value which one has in mind when one uses such expressions as ‘value’-reservoir or ‘value’-creation, etc.

And we do actually differentiate between (abstract) value on the one hand, and work or use/scarcity on the other. Work is work and not value, and vice versa. Consequently there must be certain features of value which everyone uses without being aware of it. Economics has never systematically come to terms with this, and Marx reproaches Ricardo for example with ‘not developing the different moments in the conceptual determination of value’, saying that these ‘occur merely as facts’ in his work (T2/162).

This critical question must now be turned against Marx himself. Where does he succeed in doing what he demands from Ricardo? This question I think points to the most serious flaw in Marx’s work.

He is right to call for the development of an ‘objective concept’ of value, for a ‘totality of moments’, and for a universal characterisation of value. But the work he handed over to us falls far short of this goal and remains but a *fragment*. Like Adorno, Marx himself demands the working out of a concept which ‘the thing has of itself’, that is, an objective concept. Otherwise it would not make sense to claim that the ‘universal characteristics’ of value should contradict their ‘material existence’. It is only the tension set up between these two poles which can legitimate the ‘dialectical method of development’ in the first place. And insofar as objective value theory is the only one which can talk of an existing universal, of ‘something thought’, as ‘what is most real’, it is possible to hold that a contradiction can indeed exist between the immanent concept of a thing and the thing itself. This thesis lies behind Marx’s ‘dialectical method of development’, which he practiced *in extenso* in the *Grundrisse*. That he stuck firmly to his principle is evident above all where he differentiates the ‘mode of existence’ of money from its function as world money, such that it is only in its latter function as world money that its ‘mode of existence’ (K/156) is adequate to its concept. The same principle can be shown at work in his treatment of money in its function as ‘treasure’ or as a means of the preservation of value, when he claims there is a contraction between ‘the quantitative limits and the limitlessness of money’ (K/147). In a similar passage from the 1859 work *Toward a Critique of Political Economy*, it is even more evident that Marx is assuming an objective concept of value: ‘The quantitative limit of exchange value contradicts its qualitative universality, . . . The extent to which it [money] is in accordance with its concept as exchange value . . . depends on the amount of exchange value’ (13/109). Again in the fourth chapter of *Capital* when he characterises amounts of surplus value as ‘limited expressions of exchange value’ (K1/166), it is abundantly clear that he again has an objective concept of value in mind.

And yet there is no doubt that compared to the *Grundrisse*, the original meaning of the ‘method of dialectical development’ has dwindled. The possibility of reconstructing this method in its original form thus depends upon a satisfactory resolution of the problem of the ‘universal character of value’.

Notes (TN = Translators' Note)

1. G. Gutmann, D. Ipsen, 'Politische Ökonomie' (Frankfurt am Main., 1977), pp. 242, 253
2. Joan Robinson, 'Die Arbeitswerttheorie als analytisches System', in: 'Arbeit und Wirtschaft' (Wien, 1977), Jg. 3, p. 346
3. K. Wicksell, 'Über Wert, Kapital und Rente' (Jena, 1893) (Aalen 1969) p. IV.
4. G. Lukacs, Werke Bd. 2,2. Aufl. (Neuwied, 1977), pp. 684, 354.
5. H. Marcuse, 'Philosophie und kritische Theorie', in: 'Kultur und Gesellschaft I' Frankfurt a. M. 1965, p. 102.
6. M. Horkheimer, 'Kritische Theorie', (Frankfurt am Main, 1968), vol. II, p. 192.
7. H. Marcuse, op.cit., pp. 103, 102.
8. M. Horkheimer, op.cit., p. 195
9. H. Marcuse, op.cit., p. 102
10. J. Robinson, 'Doktrinen der Wirtschaftswissenschaft' (München, 1965), p. 109.
11. The works of Karl Marx are referred to in the following manner: Numbers in parenthesis denote the volume and page of the *Marx-Engels-Werkausgabe* (East-Berlin). K = *Kapital* (Capital), T = *Theorien über den Mehrwert* (Theories on Surplus Value), P = *Pariser oder Ökonomisch-philosophische Manuskripte* (Parisian or economic-philosophical manuscripts) (East Berlin) B = *Über 'Das Kapital'* ('On Capital'), letters edited by H. Skambraks, (East-Berlin, 1985). MEGA = *Marx/Engels/Gesamtausgabe*, (East-Berlin). G = *Grundrisse zur Kritik der politischen Ökonomie* (East-Berlin, 1953).
12. J. Robinson, *Die Arbeitswerttheorie . . .*, op.cit., p. 346.
13. Theodor W. Adorno, 'Gesammelte Schriften', vol. 8 (Frankfurt a. M., 1972), p. 559.
14. Op.cit., p. 317
15. Op.cit., p. 199. See also: T.W. Adorno, 'Soziologische Exkurse', edited by the Institut für Sozialforschung (Frankfurt a. M., 1956), p. 28.
16. T.W. Adorno, *Gesammelte Schriften*, vol. 8, p. 316
17. Op.cit., pp. 316, 549.
18. Op.cit., p. 548
19. Op.cit., pp. 200, 239, 570.
20. *Gesammelte Schriften*, vol. 6, p. 198.
21. H. Marcuse, 'Vernunft und Revolution – Hegel und die Entstehung der Gesellschaftstheorie' (Neuwied, 1962), p. 248.
22. M. Horkheimer, op.cit., vol. II, p. 197.
23. L. Kofler, 'Geschichte und Dialektik. Zur Methodenlehre der dialektischen Geschichtsbetrachtung' (Hamburg, 1955), p. 199. See furthermore pp. 130, 162ff, 183.

24. TN: the term *circumstances* is here used for the German *Umstände*, which could also be rendered by *environment* or by *conditions*, as in *material conditions*.
25. Op.cit., p. 123. See furthermore Stanislaw Warynski (pseudonym for Leo Kofler), 'Die Wissenschaft von der Gesellschaft' (Bern, 1944), p. 148
26. St. Warynski, op.cit., p. 67
27. J. Schumpeter, 'Das Wesen und der Hauptinhalt der theoretischen Nationalökonomie', (new print) (Berlin, 1970), pp. 47, 26, 57. See furthermore pp. 38, 49, 540.
28. TN: the expression used here *gegenständlicher Schein* is deliberately contradictory. *Schein* means *illusion*, *semblance*, and *appearance*,
29. TN: the German adjective *fertigen Gebilde* here means *finished* in the sense of *accomplished*.
30. G.W.F. Hegel, 'Frühe politische Systeme', ed. by G. Göhler (Frankfurt/Berlin/Vienna), p. 274.
31. A. Amonn, 'Objekt und Grundbegriffe der Theoretischen Nationalökonomie', 2nd print (Leipzig, 1927), p. 431.
32. J. Robinson, *Doktrinen der Wirtschaftswissenschaft*, p. 76f (TN: the German phrase here is *Kapitalbestände*).
33. Op.cit., p. 85.
34. MEGA II/4.1/p. 80.
35. Turgot, 'Betrachtung über die Bildung und Verteilung der Reichtümer' (East-Berlin, 1981), pp. 134f, 166, 120, 177.
36. Say, quoted from Ricardo, 'Über die Grundsätze der politischen Ökonomie' (East-Berlin, 1979), p. 213.
37. John Stuart Mill, 'Einige ungelöste Probleme der politischen Ökonomie' (Frankfurt, 1976), p.152.
38. MEGA II/4.1/p.75f.
39. Horkheimer, *Kritische Theorie*, op.cit., vol.1,p.268.
40. Op.cit., vol. 1, p. 223; vol.2, p. 112f.
41. H. Möller, 'Das Problem der Verteilung', in 'Weltwirtschaftliches Archiv', vol. 43, p. 538.
42. Schumpeter, 'Dogmengeschichtliche Aufsätze' (Tübingen, 1954), p. 90.
43. A. Amonn, 'Cassels System der Theoretischen Nationalökonomie', in 'Archiv für Sozialwissenschaft und Sozialpolitik', vol. 51, p. 334.
44. Adorno, *Gesammelte Schriften*, vol. 8, p. 198.
45. MEGA II/4.1/p. 76.
46. MEGA II/3.1/p. 133
47. MEGA IV/2/p. 319.
48. compare: T3/129; 149; 153; and K2/110.
49. TN: following the major translations of Hegel and Marx, we translate *Veräußerung* as objectification, which presupposes the framework of Hegelian dialectics. Literally it means *exteriorisation*, and can be rendered as *alienation* or *expenditure*.

50. Martin Heidegger, *'Sein und Zeit'* (Tübingen, 1976), p. 68. Translation by John Macquarrie and Edward Robinson, *'Being and Time'*, Oxford, (Blackwell) 1962, p. 96.
51. J. Schumpeter, *'Theory der wirtschaftlichen Entwicklung'* (München, 1962), p. 72.
52. Johann Georg Hamann, *'Schriften zur Sprache'* (Frankfurt a. M., 1967): 'Money and language are two objects the investigation of which is as pensive and abstract as their use is universal . . . Their theories mutually explain each other; hence it seems that they are based on shared grounds' (p. 97). Marx was opposed to such comparisons which first have been brought forth by Hamann (c.f.: G80).
53. Bruno Liebrucks, *'Sprache und Bewußtsein'*, vol. 1 (Frankfurt a. M., 1964).
54. MEGA II/5/p. 37.
55. E. Lukas, *'Geld und Kredit'* (Heidelberg, 1951), p. 14.
56. MEGA II/4.1/p. 122.
57. Bruno Liebrucks, *'Sprache und Bewußtsein'*, vol. 5, p. 188.
58. Adorno, *'Gesammelte Schriften'*, vol. 8, p. 197.
59. Op.cit., p. 359.
60. Th.W. Adorno and others, *'Der Positivismusstreit in der deutschen Soziologie'* (Neuwied, 1969).
61. Adorno, *'Gesammelte Schriften'*, vol. 8, p. 209f.
62. Op.cit., vol. 6, p. 191, 31
63. Op.cit., vol. 6, p. 206.

3

Social Constitution and the Form of the Capitalist State

WERNER BONEFELD

Introduction

After the slowdown of the state derivation debate at the end of the 1970s,¹ interest in the state arose again with the conservative shift to power in almost all western capitalist countries at the beginning of the 1980s. Recent work on the capitalist state has been influenced by the debate on (post-)Fordism (see Hirsch/Roth 1986).² The discussion of the (post-)fordist state aims at a more concrete conceptualisation of the state in order to come to grips with changes in the relation between the state and the economy. The key issue for those participating has not been to reject the state derivation debate but to subsume it into a theory of capitalist development. In this way, the perennial theme of Marxist controversy – that is the relation between structure-struggle – is discussed more concretely in the context of contemporary developments. I have argued elsewhere that the crucial weakness of the debate on (post-)Fordism is the disarticulation of structure and struggle (see Bonefeld 1987a). This weakness already existed in Hirsch's contribution to the state derivation debate (see Holloway 1988).

The problematic issue of the relation between structure and struggle is the central question for any attempt to understand capitalism. In this paper, I intend to carry forward the discussion opened by my assessment of the debate on the (post-)fordist state by examining some of the conceptual questions regarding the issue of structure and process in relation to the capitalist state. I shall argue that structures should be seen as a mode of existence of class antagonism and hence as result and premise of class struggle.

The following is the order of presentation: the section on Structure and Struggle in Debates on the State introduces briefly the problem as it occurred in Hirsch's contribution to the state derivation debate. This section includes also a brief presentation of 'structural Marxism' which proved influential in the debate on (post-)Fordism. There then follows a presentation on the capitalist state as mode of existence of class antagonism in capitalist society. This section is divided into two subsections: social form and substantive abstraction of the state. The first subsection looks at the constitution of Marxist categories and the second discusses this constitution in relation to the state. The conclusion sums up the argument and confronts its findings with the debates introduced below.

Structure and Struggle in Debates on the State

Hirsch's derivation of the state aimed at understanding the state in terms of the capitalist relations of production. What, according to Hirsch (1978), constitutes the state as a capitalist phenomenon is the separation of the collective social organisation from society itself, an abstraction which posits the state as an external force of society, subjugating rulers and ruled alike to a form of domination and social organisation independent from them. This separation is understood as a mode of existence, and mode of motion, of social relations; the state is understood as a form of the class relation of capital and labour. In the event, Hirsch's approach to the state made it possible to see the historical existence of the capitalist state as a process, the historical form of which is a concrete reality of class antagonism.

Although Hirsch's reasoning implies that the relation between structure and class antagonism is not external but rather an historical process (a dialectical relation) between object (historical result of class struggle) and subject (class struggle conditioned by and transcending its own historical premise; see Lukács 1968), he failed to follow through this inner relation between structure and struggle. The potentiality of Hirsch's emphasis on the importance of class struggle in the historical development of the state remained underdeveloped: 'The course of capitalist development is not determined mechanically or by some kind of law of nature. Within the framework of its general laws, capitalist development is determined rather by the action of acting subjects and classes, the resulting concrete conditions of crisis and their political consequences' (Hirsch 1978,

pp. 74-5). The tension between objective law and struggle lies in the term 'in the framework' (see Holloway/Picciotto 1978). Objectivity (objective laws of capitalist development) is juxtaposed to class struggle, and the disarticulation of class struggle from objective laws ('in the framework of') subordinates class struggle as a motor of history to a predetermined, objectively given, development of capitalism. This dualism is clearly expressed in Hirsch's (1976, 1977) treatment of the development of state functions. Hirsch's dualist view of structure and struggle is reminiscent of Poulantzas.

The main thrust in Poulantzas's (1973) contribution to state theory relates to the conceptualisation of the state as a level that is relatively autonomous from the economic (for an assessment see Clarke 1977, 1978).³ As Holloway/Picciotto (1977, 1978) put it, the conceptual discussion in *Capital* is seen in Poulantzas as confined to theorising the economic level. A theory of the capitalist state had hence to develop new concepts for the political level (hegemony, political class character). The aim of this approach was to identify the structural adequacy of the political in relation to the economic. Structural adequacy concerned the existence of the state as a 'relatively autonomous' entity *vis-à-vis* the economic. This understanding is grounded on the base-superstructure metaphor (see Marx 1981).⁴ The question of the 'inner nature' of the relation of capital and labour within diverse social and political phenomena was reduced merely to a question of the historical cohesion of different structures. The condensing and homogenisation of different structures was seen as achieved by the hegemonic fraction of capital. The state was seen as the global factor of cohesion (see Poulantzas 1973). Class struggle played an important, but secondary role, determining the development and the particular configuration of the structure of the state in historically specific conjunctures. The systemic existence of the relatively autonomous entities followed objectively given laws of development. The class struggle was seen as subaltern to the structural configuration of capitalism. Poulantzas's problem was to combine, in a systematic way, what, following Marx's writing, belongs together: the theorising of externalised, systemic existence of separated structures and the attempt to introduce a social process which develops these structures, relates them to each other and mediates their transformation.

Jessop's contribution to the dialectic between structure and struggle attempts to build on, and to develop, Poulantzas's approach in response to its critics (see Jessop 1985). Building on Poulantzas,

Jessop argues for a 'conjunctural' (or 'relational') approach to the relation between the political and the economic, equating, in its most extreme version, not only struggle with strategy, but class struggle with capital strategies (see Jessop 1983, 1985, 1986, 1988). In order to overcome the problem of determinate structures in Poulantzas (for example the economic determining in the last instance the political), Jessop proposes a theory of 'structural coupling' or a theory of 'articulation' (Jessop 1986). The former relates to system-theoretical analysis as developed by Luhmann; the latter is said to be the Marxist version of a similar analysis which, however, avoids the cul-de-sac of the former (see Jessop 1986).⁵

For Jessop, the task of understanding the political system is that of theorising, without falling into functionalism, the 'non-necessary correspondence' (cf. Jessop 1986) between the political and the economic. Hence Jessop's concern with a relational approach to the state. The relational approach to the state is said to provide insights into the '*sui generis* operation of different social subsystems even though they were not (and could not be) completely insulated from their environment and in many respects depend on it' (see Jessop 1986, p. 93). The term charged with the task of translating this into scientific practicability is the 'mode of articulation'. A mode of articulation is said to permit a concentration of the political, economic and ideological systems in historically concrete situations, unifying these three systems into a historically specific conjuncture in determinate forms. The mechanism, through which the different systems are integrated into a corresponding and complementary mode of articulation, is the hegemonic projects of capital. The segmented parts of the social body have no unity until they are coordinated into a project by a somehow hidden agency of condensation. Jessop seems to imply that a successful hegemonic project leads to results which correspond to the needs of a specific shape of economic development. Since the political sphere is seen as providing through its self-determined and closed operation outputs corresponding to the needs of the economic system (see Jessop 1986), the precise historical working of this correspondence relates to strategic forces (Jessop 1983, 1985) that promote hegemonic practices which melt the different institutional spheres together (*ibid*). This would seem to be a functionalist and voluntarist view of capitalist reproduction (see Clarke 1983; Bonefeld 1987a).

Jessop seeks a structuralist understanding of Marx's (1973) phrase concerning the existence of the abstract in the concrete and *vice*

versa. The structuralist version of this relation involves the introduction of intermediate concepts⁶ seen as a mechanism that combines the abstract and concrete; 'abstract, unitary, and essentialised laws of motion and needs of capital constructed by the capital logicians [are combined] into a series of more concrete, competing, and contingent logics of capital' (Jessop 1985, p. 344). Hence the charge against structuralism of positing essentialised *laws* of motions. Hence also the charge of voluntarism in terms of the structuration of hegemonic interests, aiming at capturing the state and shaping a historically specific mode of articulation (for critique see Clarke 1983). The deficiencies of the conception of structural relations are to be overcome by combining them with the explication of reactive and reflexive patterns of behaviour of different capital 'logics' that follow, in subjective fashion, the impulses given by the development of objective laws of capitalist development. As a consequence, capital no longer exists as class struggle, pervading social reality as a whole. Instead, social reality is seen as determined by multiple causes and effects, the integration of which is ensured by the imposition of a dominant hegemonic logic of capital, a logic derived from the interest-based struggle of one capital logic against another within determined forms of structural development. While Poulantzas referred to the class struggle as mediating the unfolding of the objective laws of capitalist development, Jessop sees the mechanism of social practice in terms of the individualised and pluralist allocation-interests of different 'capital logicians' (cf. Jessop 1985). The resulting eclecticism construes the fragmentation of different phenomena as a *causal* relation (see Bonefeld 1987a; Psychopedis 1991).

In the debate on the (post)-fordist state of which Hirsch and Jessop are the main proponents, the unresolved tension between structure and process is discussed in terms of Jessop's understanding of the 'dialectic between structure and process'. The assumption of a corresponding, and hence functional, relation between mode of accumulation and regulative forms of the state theorises crisis as a structural dysfunctionality (disintegration of mode of articulation). The prevailing notion of a crisis as an 'objectively given' unfolding of the law of capitalist development transforms into the notion of objectively given recovery (for critique see Holloway 1988): that is the recoupling of structural regularity and correspondence in a different historical form such as (post-)Fordism. Within the framework of an emerging reconstruction of the role of the state vis-à-vis

the social, the class struggle is seen as playing a subordinate role (Hirsch/Roth 1986), merely accelerating or retarding an inevitable transformation of social reality. Basic is the struggle between different capital strategies in their attempt to capture the state within a structurally predetermined development, making the recoupling of a mode of articulation a contingent process (Jessop). The disarticulation of structure and class struggle entails a descriptive and suggestive understanding of social development (see Bonfeld 1987 a; Gerstenberger 1989) that can only identify static structures, and is forced to pose a qualitative change as a sudden discontinuity, a quantum leap between structures, for example the leap from Fordism to post-Fordism; and not as a process, a qualitatively changing continuum in and through the class struggle.

An Appraisal

Contrary to these approaches to the state, I want to show that 'structures' are modes of existence of the class antagonism of capital and labour. The 'laws of capitalist development' are nothing else than the movement of the class struggle. The 'laws of capitalist development' are an abstraction in action, an historical reality, a process and a movement of the presence of labour within capital (see Holloway 1988; Clarke 1988a, b; Gunn 1989, 1990).

Rejecting the disarticulation of structure and process does not mean rejecting an understanding of the state as performing a particular role in capitalist social reproduction. However, the role performed by the capitalist state will be discussed here as determined by its social form (class antagonism of capital and labour) and as an historical process of the class struggle. Instead of the apparent 'autonomy of the state' (however relative it may be; and however much it seems to justify a particular degree of 'relatively'), the political and economic will be discussed as constituting a contradictory *unity*. This unity does not exist as a monolithic block but as a movement of contradiction, in which the unity manifests itself through difference and *vice versa*. The fragmentation of the economic and political, as well as the historical composition of their interrelation, is only real as a process of class struggle.

Form and Content of the Capitalist State

Social Form and Difference-in-Unity of the Political and the Economic

Following Marx (1973), the social phenomena (for example economy and state) around us have manifold determinations. The task is to trace out 'the inner connexion' (Marx 1983, p. 28) between social phenomena, so as to establish the 'inner nature' (cf. Marx) of their relation. To trace out the inner connection between social phenomena is to search for the substantive abstraction (see below) which constitutes their social reality as interconnected, as complex forms different from, but united to, each other, in order to theorise this interconnection, the theoretical approach has to specify the historical process which constitutes the common element that makes social phenomena different from each other in unity. The attempt to understand the 'inner nature' of social existence relates to a way of thinking which moves within the object (social-historical form of human relations) of its thinking. Dialectics does not proceed to its object from outside but from inside as it attempts to appropriate conceptually social reality in its proper motion (see Negt 1984). Dialectical thinking conceptualises itself within, and as a moment of, its object (see Lukács 1968; Gunn 1987b, 1989, 1991). Such a conceptualisation of social existence seeks an understanding of the apparently isolated facts of life as comprising a mode of existence of social relations. 'While in the completed bourgeois system every economic relation presupposes every other in its bourgeois economic form, and everything posited is thus also a presupposition, this is the case with every organic system. The organic system itself, as a totality, has its presuppositions, and its development to its totality consists precisely in subordinating all developing to itself, or in creating out of it the organs which it still lacks. This is historically how it becomes a totality. This process of becoming this totality forms a moment of its process, of its development' (Marx 1973, p. 278). Such a reasoning implies an internal relation between conceptual and historical analysis.

Every phenomenon exists only in relation to other phenomena, or, in other words, exists only in and through other phenomena. Every phenomenon exists only as a movement of contradiction, that is as a movement of its own historical constitution. Hence the

question of determinate negation, or, social form of human relations: what constitutes the relation which makes it possible for phenomena to exist side by side in an apparently independent manner but nevertheless through each other; what is the historical determination which constitutes them as in a relation of mutual dependence and determinate negation, a relation which makes an independent existence for each impossible? Hence the economic and the political, although seemingly existing independently from each other, stand to each other as moments of one process. This understanding raises the question of the social relation which suffuses their existence *qua* contradiction within their respective forms and in relation to each other. According to this argument, diverse phenomena, such as the state and the economy, do not exist as externally related entities one of which is determining and/or dominating the other, but as forms of existence of the relation which constitutes them. The question arising here concerns the substantive abstraction that makes particular forms (for example the political and economic) different from each other and which, at the same time, unites them and hence relates them to each other as complementary forms of social existence. Substantive abstraction is thus the inner nature of social phenomena themselves; their constitution and process. In Marx, the substantive relation which constitutes the relation between things as a contradictory relation of historical specificity and which bathes all social phenomena in a certain historical form of existence in bourgeois society is the social relations of production, that is, the class antagonism between capital and labour. Social phenomena are thus constituted as modes of existence/motion in and through which class antagonism exists. This argument will be taken up in less abstract terms below.

Marx's starting point is the social determination of labour. Labour was seen by Marx (1973, p. 361) as the 'living, form-giving fire; it is transitoriness of things, their temporality, as their formation by living time'. This general determination of labour needs to be specified in its historically concrete form. By conceptualising from the indifferent (labour as fluidity) to the determined (social form of the fluidity of labour) and from the formless (general fluidity of labour) to the formal (historical and social specific form of fluidity) (see Elson 1979, pp. 129–130), Marx understood labour, in capitalist society, as specified by abstract labour (universal ability and capacity to work, homogeneous labour) in and through the particular social context of surplus value production under the command of capital (exploitation). The historical specificity of the determining power of labour in

capitalism concerns the (contradictory) unity of exchange and production, that is, the exchange of commodities through which private labour is reduced to its common substance as abstract labour. The social determination of labour as abstract labour, as social labour in a private context, determines capital as self-valorising value in terms of expanding abstract wealth by increasing the appropriation of somebody else's labour; that is the imposition of work and the measurement of the product of labour in terms of money. 'The capitalist mode of production is not distinguished by the existence of surplus labour, or of abstract labour or the value form, but by the integration of the value form with abstract labour as the substance of value, and of the labour process with the valorisation of capital, as the appropriation and distribution of surplus labour is achieved through the exchange of commodities' in the form of money (Clarke 1989, p. 136; see also Clarke 1980; Elson 1979). Money attains generality as the most elementary form of the capitalist imposition of the value form over the conditions of life and as the supreme power in and through which social reproduction is subordinated to the reproduction of capital. Hence the treatment of money as presupposition, premise and result of the social process of value, integrating value and money theory as moments which presuppose and which are the result of each other (see Backhaus 1974, 1986).⁷ The category of abstract labour attains generality in capitalist society as command over labour within the circuit of capital as a whole. The social relation which constitutes this determination of labour in capitalist society is the relation between necessary labour and surplus labour, that is, the class antagonism of capital and labour which constitutes the (social) working day. The determining power⁸ of labour appears as the power of capital to set labour in motion (see Marx 1973 on capital as being productive). However, the determining power of capital exists only in and through labour as substance of value. The constituting power of the working class inverts into the power of capital insofar as capital is able to contain labour as a moment of its own social existence. The power of capital is hence a historically specific form of social command that appropriates the determining power of labour as a moment within the process of capital as self-valorising value.

The social antagonism of capital and labour is a relation of classes, and, as a relation of classes, a relation in and against domination and exploitation, or, in other words, a relation in and against the inversion of the determining power of labour into a property of capital's power

to impose the value form over the conditions of life. This inversion is the commanding power of capital that brings together, and sets in motion, means of production and labour power – a commanding power based on capital's ability to constitute the determining power of labour as a moment of capital's own existence: self-valorisation of value through expanded surplus value production. The relation of classes manifests itself as a contradictory movement between objectification (however alienated in form as social reality of reproduction) and revolutionary separation (as relation between ruled and rulers). The contradiction is expressed in the term antagonism as mutual dependence of opposing classes (social form of reproduction and objectification in and through exploitation and domination). The contradictory character of oppression, as indicated by the unity of the production process as labour and valorisation process (see Marx 1983), is a substantive one as capital exists only in and through labour. Hence, objectivity (social reproduction) as domination (imposition of work as valorisation of capital). There is no movement outside social antagonism. Social existence is constituted as a movement of contradiction in and through the presence of labour within capital. The working class, for its part, is a moment of this same process of contradiction. The working class exists in and against capital, while capital, however, exists only in and through labour. The contradictory existence of the working class is manifest in its antithesis to capital's command and in its existence as a moment of social reproduction in the form of capital: labour as opposite to capital and as a moment of the latter's existence. Class is not a group of people to whom sociologists assign particular characteristics which, in turn, allows social pigeonholing in terms of ascribed class character. Rather, class needs to be approached as a relation of struggle (see Gunn 1987c) in and against domination that denies social self-determination. As a relation of struggle, class, as substantive abstraction of social reality in action, attains a contradictory existence as the movement of transcendence (revolution as process in and against capital in terms of working class self-determination) and integration (reformism in terms of labour as a moment of social reproduction in the form of capital). Transcendence and integration do not exist separately, but as the movement of one process – extreme poles of a dialectical continuum that social practice represents (see Negt/Kluge 1971). As extreme poles of a dialectical continuum, transcendence and integration constitute a contradictory process that is open to the process of struggle itself and as such open to the social composition of class (Negri).

It is the historical development of the contradictory unity of the relation between social reproduction as domination in and through class which constitutes society in terms of a continuous displacement and reconstitution of the 'enchanted and perverted world' of capitalism (cf. Marx 1966, p. 830). This process is informed by the self-contradictory mode of existence of capital, that is, by the continuous need for capital to revolutionise the relation between necessary and surplus labour in order to increase the latter. However, surplus labour exists only in antithesis to necessary labour. It is here that capital's self-contradictory mode of existence becomes manifest in its most intense terms: capital depends entirely on living labour as substance of value, and hence surplus value. The working through of this antagonistic tendency compels capital towards the elimination of necessary labour which undermines the existence of capital as existing only in and through labour. Capital cannot autonomise itself from living labour; the only autonomisation possible is on labour's side. Capital's domination is a process of its own self-contradictory mode of existence. The social mediation of this contradiction, a mediation which does not sweep away the contradiction itself but which rather provides a *modus vivendi* in and through which the contradiction can move temporarily, constitutes a form of social reality in which the class contradiction between capital and labour is manifested in terms of market relations. This organisation of labour entails a constitution of labour in the form of 'wage labour', defined primarily by the resource of its income and as an equal and free exchange relation on the market (see Marx 1983, ch. 19; Marx 1966, ch. 48). Labour assumes an existence in terms of wage labour, an existence upon which exploitation rests (that is value form as formally free and equal exchange of commodities) while it, at the same time, 'eliminates' (see Marx 1966, p. 814) the specific character of surplus value production (exploitation). The attempt to confine living labour to wage labour entails the disorganisation of labour's existence as class, harnessing living labour as a moment of capital. The attempt to disorganise labour's (revolutionary) autonomisation from capital and to organise labour as social reality in and through valorisation, rather than being an accomplished fact, is a process of contradiction in and through the class struggle itself. Hence, displacement and constitution need to be seen as moments of one process, in which each moment presupposes the other, while each moment is, at the same time, the result of the other – unity as contradiction.

Understanding class antagonism as a movement of contradiction

between dependence and separation and conceptualising social phenomena as a mode of existence and mode of motion of class antagonism, it follows that the contradiction inherent in 'social form' is, at the same time, a contradiction within social phenomena, as for example the self-contradictory form of the state; and between social phenomena, as for example between the economic and political. It is for this reason that Marxism is neither a theory of oppression/domination nor an economic theory, but a theory of the contradictions of social reality and, as such, a theory of the historical movement of the contradiction of domination. I shall refer to the social relations of production in terms of the presence of labour within capital because the latter expresses the meaning of the former in a more explicit way.

In order to understand the form of the state, the notion of 'substantive abstraction' needs to be characterised more strongly. I argued above that every social phenomenon is placed as a presupposition and premise to each other as a mode of existence and mode of motion of the historical process of the presence of labour within capital. Substantive abstracting seeks an understanding of the society's concrete existence and development. 'Substantive abstraction' is not to be understood as the empirical abstraction criticised by Marx (1983, p. 352, fn. 2) as 'abstract materialism': 'It is, in reality, much easier to discover by analysis the earthly core of the misty creations of religion, than, conversely, it is, to develop from the actual relations of life the corresponding celestialised forms of these relations. The latter method is the only materialist, and therefore, the only scientific one. The weak points in the abstract materialism of natural science, a materialism which excludes history and its process, are at once evident from the abstract and ideological conceptions of its spokesmen, whenever they venture beyond the bounds of their own speciality'. Contrary to empirical abstraction, to abstract substantially is to trace out the inner connection of social phenomena, an inner connection which constitutes social phenomena and their relation to each other as modes of existence of this very inner connection: the presence of labour within the concept of capital. Whereas empiricist abstraction aims at grounding things by identifying their common essence, substantive abstraction attempts to understand essence as the interrelation between things which is constitutive of those things themselves. In addition, substantive abstraction, unlike empiricist abstraction, exists in and through practice (as the inner form of social relations) and not just in the

theory by which the abstraction is made. Hence, the working of substantive abstraction constitutes an abstraction *of and in*,⁹ as opposed to an abstraction *from*, social reality – an abstraction which exists as concrete and in practice, through, in and as social reality and as its process. Social form has no existence separate from concrete historical development, as for example Jessop's understanding of 'determinate form' to which more practical terms have to be added, seems to suggest (for critique see Gunn 1989, 1991).

For Marx (1983, p. 106), social antagonism can by itself have no existence. Antagonistic relations express themselves always in forms (value form, money form, form of the state). Form is seen here as the *modus vivendi* of antagonistic relations and, as such, form is 'generally the way in which contradictions are reconciled' (Marx 1983, p. 106). The term 'mediation' (see Gunn 1987, 1989; Psychopedis 1988; Bonefeld 1987b) is of vital importance here since it connotes the mode of existence of a dynamic relation of antagonism which allows antagonistic relations to 'exist side by side' (Marx 1983, p. 106). The existence of social antagonism in forms 'does not seep away' (*ibid.*) the inconsistencies of antagonistic relations; rather, these forms constitute the existence of this relation, a constitution which exists historically and has to be analysed in an historical fashion. However, as noted by Psychopedis (1988, pp. 75–6), 'the point of the mediation of abstract and concrete is to show that the abstract category of labour *presupposes* capitalist society (that is the abstract element in the notion of labour presupposes the real abstraction of labour *sans phrase* in this society)'. Hence, the interrelation of the logical and historical: 'As a rule, the most general abstractions arise only in the midst of the richest possible concrete development, where one thing appears as common to many, to all. Then it ceases to be thinkable in a particular form alone' (Marx 1973, p. 104). Substantive abstraction is a 'methodic assertion that one cannot find the categories beginning naively with the "real" or the "concrete", but only on the basis of the development of a "process of synthesis" of the givens of intuition and representation' (Negri 1984, p. 47). This method of theorising works within the proper motion of its object which it has to keep 'in mind as the presupposition' (Marx 1973, p. 102). Conceptualising social reality in this way opens up the idea of the world as 'nothing else than the material world reflected by the human mind, and translated into forms of thought' (Marx 1983, p. 29). Substantive abstraction seeks an understanding of the constitution and movement of the (self-contradictory)

reconciliation of the capital/labour antagonism that constitutes social reality as a whole.

It follows that the primacy of class antagonism is a logical and, at the same time, an historical presupposition. The social relation between capital and labour is an *historical* presupposition because the foundation of this relation is the historical struggle which led to the separation of the mass of the population from the means of production and subsistence during the process of primitive accumulation (see Marx 1983). The separation of the labourers from the means of production had to be accomplished historically before capital could constitute itself as the social form determining the conditions of life. The capitalist mode of exploitation and mode of domination rests on this historical presupposition. At the same time, the historical presupposition of the separation of the mass of the population from the means of production and subsistence has to be reproduced during the development of capitalism as the 'sine qua non of the existence of capital' (cf. Marx 1983, p. 536; see also Bonefeld 1988). The historical result of class struggle during primitive accumulation inverts into historical presupposition and serves as premise and precondition for the historical existence of the class antagonism between capital and labour, a premise which has to be reproduced in the motion of capitalist reproduction if the social form of capitalist domination is to continue. From the standpoint of accomplished capitalism, the *conceptual* approach is bound up with the historical reality of the process of capitalist social-historical existence within its *proper* motion. This process is determined by the substantive abstraction that illuminates social reality as a mode of existence of the class antagonism of capital and labour. In turn, this class antagonism was itself the result of the historical processes which led to the capitalist form of social reproduction. Hence, the result (capitalist social relations) presupposes its historical generation which, in turn, has to be continually reproduced through the operation of the historical process of capitalism. The latter serves now not as historical result but as conceptual and historical presupposition. This historical presupposition attains generality, from the standpoint of accomplished capitalism, in an inverted form: it would be wrong to let the conceptualisation of forms follow one another 'in the same sequence as that in which they were historically decisive. This sequence is determined, rather, by their relation to one another in the mode of bourgeois society, which is precisely the opposite of that which seems to be their natural order or which corresponds to

historical development' (Marx 1973, p. 107). The presence of labour within capital as the historical result of primitive accumulation inverts into the historical and conceptual presupposition of the social reality of capitalism. The political, as will be discussed below, inverts from the historical process of bourgeois revolution to an historical form determined within the context of the category of the abstract labour, namely social form of reproduction as domination. The development of capital's domination fosters a process of displacement and constitution of the contradictory unity of class antagonism as every set of forms provides a mode of existence in which the antagonism of capital and labour can move. The contradictory existence of abstract labour as the social form of wealth founded on exploitation pushes each mediation of the contradictory existence of surplus value production to its point of supersession resulting in a new set of contradictions. Hence, the displacement of production towards the state and towards the world market as the most developed mode of existence of abstract labour.

In sum, the foundation of the social relations of capital and labour, as argued by Clarke (1978, 1982), lies outside the economic and the state *simpliciter*. Or, more precisely, the foundation lies not just outside of the economic and the state, but rather 'it suffuses the circuit' (Clarke 1980, p. 10) of capital as social reality. Having said this, it follows that 'it is the concept of class relation as being prior to the political, economic and ideological forms taken by those relations (even though class relations have no *existence* independently of those forms) that makes it possible for a Marxist analysis to conceptualise the *complexity* of the relation between economic and political, their interconnections as complementary forms of the fundamental class relation, without abandoning the theory for a pragmatic pluralism' (Clarke 1978, p. 42). It follows that political and economic relations imply different modes of motion of the fundamental class antagonism of capital and labour. Lastly, as a reality of class antagonism, bourgeois society exists only as a movement of contradiction, the development of the contradiction being determined by the outcome of the class struggle.

What is the social context within which the proper motion of the category of abstract labour attains generality as mode of domination of the capitalist form of social reproduction? Capitalist social reproduction is social reproduction in inverted form: private production in a social context. Since the sociality of private production is not a matter of the conscious decision of society, and since the latter exists

only in the inverted form of private fragmentation (commodity production), the sociality of private production confronts individual producers as an external and independent process, which, as argued by Marx (1974, p. 909), is their condition of existing as private individuals in a social context. Hence, labour as substance of human existence in a specific social form. The existence of labour as homogeneous and quantitative ability to work assumes social quality, or, social form as abstract labour confronting individual producers of commodities as social power within the circuit of social capital. The 'most general abstraction' attains practically existing generality as production of abstract labour, that is, value. Capitalist production is not use-value production, but value production which, in turn, is surplus-value production (see Negri 1984), and not only surplus-value production but the social reproduction of the social relations of production (see Clarke 1982). In the social process of value, productive, commodity and money capital are forms taken by capital-value in its self-contradictory process of self-valorisation. The circuit of social capital exists only as a mediation of the restless appropriation of labour. 'If we take all three forms [money, commodity, productive capital] together, then all the premises of the process appear as its result, as premises produced by the process itself. Each moment appears as a point of departure, of transit, and of return. The total process presents itself as the unity of the process of production and the process of circulation; the production process is the mediator of the circulation process, and vice versa' (Marx 1978, p. 180). Thus, the movement of every particular capital is itself only a particular moment of the generality of its form. Value can only be grasped as a movement, and not as a static thing. Considering the movement of value as a mere abstraction is to 'forget that the movement of industrial capital is this abstraction in action' (Marx 1978, p. 185). The different forms of value relate differently to labour as the substance of value and as means of valorisation in the process of exploitation. The motion of value exists therefore in the form of a dialectical continuum as production *sans phrase* (objectification of capital in machinery and hence as immobilised) and, at the same time, as mobility *sans phrase* (value in the form of money as social incarnation of abstract wealth). This dialectical continuum exists as a process of contradiction within which different forms of value coexist and within which particular capitals transform in a successive movement from one to the other value form. Seeing productive, commodity, and money capital as forms that value assumes in its restless

process of expansion, their distinctiveness exists only as unity in difference, and hence as a contradictory movement full of inconsistencies. Capital 'circulates in the shape of a constant change of form, its existence is process, it is the unity of its form, it is the constant change between the form of generality and the form of particularity, of money and of commodity' (Reichelt 1978, p. 48). The foundation of this process is living labour as substance of value that assumes social existence in and through the circuit of social capital.

The transformation of value from one form to the other integrates production and circulation as different moments of one process. Each moment is a result and a presupposition of the other in and through the exploitation of labour. The total movement of capital exists as social capital within which different capitals exist only as distinct moments of the one process (difference-in-unity; result and presupposition of each other). Hence circulation and production are opposites in unity tearing down the barriers to restless capitalist intercourse, an association of the 'valorization of value as the determining purpose, the driving motive' (Marx 1978, p. 180). The social validation of appropriated labour in circulation implies the social comparison (*Vergleichung*) of particular capitals in terms of their worth to the dynamic limits of *socially* necessary labour-time expressed in money (realisation of an average rate of profit). Since capitalist production is social production in private form, the question is how socially isolated (private) labour is rendered social: this question contains the key to understanding the social process of value and the measurement of all things in terms of money. Capital exists as individual capital only within the historically dynamic and changing composition of the social process of value – appropriation of labour in terms of social labour. Particular capitals are only moments of this process, the mobility of which is made felt to each particular capital in and through the fluidity of money capital. The circuit of money capital is, according to Marx (1978, p. 140), the 'most striking and characteristic form of appearance of the circuit of industrial capital'. Social capital, as the movement of the social totality of value, achieves a real existence in and through the circuit of money capital. The latter is the 'form in which the social character is manifested to particular capitals' (Clarke 1978, p. 65).

In money capital the difference of the material existence of value is obliterated. Money capital expresses the 'undifferentiated, homogeneous form of value' (cf. Clarke 1978). As such, money capital is the 'ultimate expression of value'; that is an expression of 'capital's

ability to impose work (abstract labour) through the commodity form (exchange value)' (Marazzi 1976, p. 92). Hence, money capital is the ultimate expression of the 'abstraction in action' of labour in capitalism. This 'abstraction in action' achieves its most elementary form of the existence in the circuit of money capital (M. . . M'), a form which reduces capital 'to a meaningless condensation' (Marx 1966, p. 391) without, however, dissolving the existence of particular capitals. Rather, it imposes upon them the social character of their own existence, while 'eliminating the relation to labour' (cf. Marx 1976, p. 456). At the same time, money capital exists only in and through labour (M. . . P. . . M'). The value of money capital is not determined through the value it represents in relation to commodities, but through the surplus value which it produces for its owner (see *ibid.*). Hence the contradiction between labour as substance of value and its obscuration in the circuit of money capital – the incarnation of the process of abstract wealth appearing in money capital's apparently self-valorising capacity. The constitution of the contradictory unity of surplus value production in terms of money represents the determining power of labour as constituents of social form.

Money capital is the rational expression of equality, productivity, repression and thinghood (*Dinglichkeit*) that characterises the determination of wealth as social process of abstract labour. 'The general interest is precisely the generality of self-seeking interests. Therefore, when the economic form, exchange, posits the all-sided equality of its subjects, then the content, the individual as well as the objective material which strives towards the exchange, is *freedom*. Equality and freedom are thus not only respected in exchange based on exchange values, but, also, the exchange of exchange values is the productive, real basis of all *equality* and *freedom*' (Marx 1973, p. 245). As an expression of equality, money serves as a moment of exchange that constitutes the working class in terms of wage labour. However, the exchange between capital and labour is not just a simple economic exchange on the market. Rather, the wage is not the price of labour as such but of labour power, the ability to work. The realisation of this potential is a process which occurs outside the limits of the market. Hence Marx's vital distinction between labour and labour power. The separation-in-unity of labour and labour power indicates the contradictory power of money, expressing equality as a mode of existence of domination. The concept of money, displaced from the contradictions of surplus value production and, at the same time, the ultimate expression of these contradictions, is a

concrete representation of the social reality of class antagonism. Money posits the exclusive form of the self-contradictory existence of the category of abstract labour. 'Money has the advantage of presenting me immediately the lurid face of social relations of value; it shows me value right away as exchange, commanded and organised for exploitation' (Negri 1984, p. 23). As a relation of formal equality, money signals the inequality of property relations and represents formal equality as a relation of domination. Whether money serves as measure, medium of exchange or capital, it realises and represents the social process of value whose existence appears to be constituted by the property of capital and not by the property of labour as the formative power of social reality. Money as form of value measures the productive power of capital to impose work in a repressive and oppressive, nevertheless contradictory, way. In the circuit of money capital, as a distinct moment of the circuit of social capital, capital assumes a reality which disregards labour as concrete labour (use-value aspect of commodities) inasmuch as the social usefulness of labour is eliminated; labour assumes a mode of existence in the meaningless, but elementary, form of money capital. Money capital is capital in its general and elementary form (see Clarke 1978). 'Capital in general, as *distinct* from the particular real capitals, is itself a *real* existence. . . . For example, capital in this *general form*, although belonging to individual capitalists, in its *elementary form* as capital, forms the capital which accumulates in the banks or is distributed through them, and, as Ricardo says, so admirably distributes in accordance with the needs of production' (Marx 1973, p. 449). The self-contradictory social process of value comprises different moments of capital which exist only as distinct-in-unity from the continuum of forms of abstract labour in process. Hence an 'internal but necessary' differentiation of one process: social reality of class antagonism.

The central contradiction in this process is not the contradiction between production and exchange, or between value created (latent value) and value realised (as socially necessary labour). The central contradiction of this process is, rather, constituted in the class relation of capital and labour. The context of the social production of value is composed of the inversion of social production as private production and the realisation of the sociality of private production behind the back of the private producer. The contradiction between the crisis-ridden process of unfettered accumulation (value as process of self-valorisation) and the historical limits of capital, as expressed

by market constraints upon the realisation of value with an average rate of profit, constitutes a constant compulsion to each individual producer to conform to the process of abstract wealth in action, so as to determine the productive power of labour as a moment of expansive valorisation. The compulsion upon each individual capital, if its devaluation is to be avoided, not only to produce, but to increase relative surplus value in the course of accumulation, forces upon each capital the necessity of expelling living labour from the process of production and of attempting to decrease necessary labour to its utmost. This process relates to the '*relation between necessary labour and surplus labour* that is . . . the relation between the constitutive parts of the working day and the class relation which constitutes it' (Negri 1984, p. 72). Capital exists only in antithesis to living labour as the substance of abstract labour.

The contradiction of social production in the form of capital relates thus to the substance of the social reality of value, the presence of labour within capital. The self-contradictory existence of capital is temporarily 'normalised' through the class struggle over the recomposition of the production process and, of importance here, through the expansion of production through circulation. The compulsion towards expanded appropriation and homogenisation of social reality is a tendential part of capital's own reality: that is, the displacement of production to the world market. At the same time, the mode of existence of the abstract in the concrete reality of the world market is presupposed and premised by the whole process of capitalist reproduction. The most developed form (that is the world market) 'is directly given in the concept of capital itself' (Marx 1973, p. 163). The world market constitutes the presupposition of social reproduction 'as well as its substratum' (Marx 1973, p. 228). The world market posits the most developed mode of existence of abstract labour. The world market constitutes the place 'in which production is posited as a totality together with all its moments, but within which, at the same time, all contradictions come into play' (Marx 1973, p. 227). The inversion of social reproduction as production of capital is complete: the world market as the result of the conceptual displacement of substantive abstraction transforms into a premise of abstract wealth; a premise which serves as a presupposition for the reproduction of the social relations of production. The world market constitutes a mode of existence of the presence of labour within capital. The conditions of life are thereby subordinate to the richest concrete development of the antagonistic tendency of capital and labour.

Accordingly, the utmost expansion of the process of abstract wealth founded on exploitation comprises also the expansion of the power of money as form of value because of the international character of the circuit of money capital within the circuit of social capital situated on the world market. From the conceptual standpoint advocated here, the displacement of the presence of labour within capital from production to the world market subordinates the conditions of life to the most richly developed form of the category of abstract labour. Hence, the development of national economies is subordinated to the equality, repression, ultimate expression and thinghood of value in the form of (the international character of) the circuit of money capital. The constitution of the world market turns into the premise of the imposition of work in national economies (see v. Braunmühl 1978).

Some Implications

The notion of the primacy of class antagonism as the 'logical and historical presupposition, the social condition for the existence of individual capitalists and workers' and as 'the basis on which exploitation' (Clarke 1982, p. 80) and political domination rest, makes it possible to conceptualise the complexity of the relations between diverse phenomena, notably the relation between the economic and the political. Further, it provides a conceptual tool for analysing the interconnections of the variety of forms as complementary forms of existence of the fundamental class relation (see Clarke 1978). The political relations do not primarily correspond to, or reproduce, economic relations (the so called functions of the state for capitalist accumulation). Rather, the political complements the economic as, together, different forms of the same fundamental class antagonism. However, the political complements the economic only in a mediated form as a moment moving within the proper motion of class antagonism. The state is not a state in capitalist society, but rather a moment of the class antagonism of capital and labour (see Holloway/Picciotto 1977). The understanding of the political is thus an analysis of the unity-in-separation of different forms assumed by the class antagonism and of the process of the working of this antagonism.

The thesis of the primacy of class antagonism over the forms assumed by the class relation rejects structuralist and fordist arguments as sociological studies of different aspects which do not aim at

seeing them as modes of existence of the presence of labour within capital. Contrary to the debates introduced above, the notion of the primacy of class antagonism effectively says that structures do not exist. Of course in a sense they *do* exist, but they exist only as modes of existence of class antagonism and hence as social process, and not only as social process but as historical results of the working of class antagonism and hence as historical premises for class struggle. As such, structures exist as things *qua* reification of human relations. Historically achieved structures of the capitalist state (see Negri 1988 on the Keynesian welfare state) are structures imposed upon capital and the state through the historical development of class struggle which compelled the state to reconstruct the way in which labour is contained within the context of the expanded reproduction of value.

The conceptual understanding of the actual historical process of capitalist social reality needs to be conceptualised within the context of valorisation, that is, of abstract labour in action. This conceptualisation, in turn, inverts the historical precondition of capitalism into an historical result and precondition of class antagonism – ‘Human anatomy contains a key to the anatomy of the ape’ (Marx 1973; see also Psychopedis 1988). The precondition is the historical becoming of the presence of labour within capital which is then converted into the premise of capitalist social reality, a premise which, in turn, exists as precondition of capital’s historical process. The constant and dynamic effort of capital to restructure its control over labour is the precondition of the stability of capitalism, a stability that is based on the reproduction of the historical premise of the capital labour class relation. The continuity of the presence of labour within the concept of capital exists only as practical and historical discontinuity (see Bonfeld 1987c; Negri 1984).

The apparent fragmentation between the political and economic appears as a relation of things (‘structures’) and is thus part of the fetishisation of bourgeois society (see Holloway 1980; and Holloway’s contribution to volume 2). This fetishisation of social reality makes it necessary to theorise the inner connection of society – but ‘all science would be superfluous if the outward appearance and the essence of things directly coincided’ (Marx 1966, p. 817). However, it is these fetishisms which are taken as the starting point in structural ‘Marxism’, including the debate on Fordism: ‘although the internal relationships are concealed, they are understandable to the popular mind’ (see *ibid*). To accept social reality as a whole, without insisting on the antagonism which composes it and which processes it, is ‘to

not grasp [distinct moments] in their unity. As if this rupture had made its way not from reality into the textbooks, but rather from the textbooks into reality, as if the task were the dialectic balancing of concepts, and not the grasping of real relations’ (Marx 1973, p. 90). The ‘abstract materialism’ of structuralism and its resurrection in the debate on (post-)Fordism not only reproduces the fetishised forms by way of thinking; it also does not move within the object of its thinking and does not risk the assertion of reality through abstraction, an abstraction which is well within that reality and which exists in practice.

Social Constitution and the Form of the Capitalist State

The historical constitution of abstract labour as the generality of the social relation of capitalist reproduction *presupposes* the historical constitution of the state. The first chapters of *Capital* presuppose the existence of the state as an historical process and premise for the reality of the law of value. The dismantling of feudal¹⁰ restraint is an historical process that establishes social conditions which constitute the reality of value production: the free individual bound by legal relations instead of relations of direct coercion, territorially homogeneous markets, money with a political title (see Marx 1973, 1983), the political protection of the right of property and the provision of infrastructural means within which the law of value can unfold. This formal, but nevertheless real, determination of the state comprises an historical development in which the state arrogated to itself particular functions.¹¹ The historical development of the state transforms from the political revolutionising of personal relations of domination into the political normalisation of bourgeois society. The impartiality of legal standardisation of rights reasserts the liberation from feudal constraints within the proper motion of capitalist social constitution (individual freedom and equality). In capitalism, the constitution of the general conditions within which formal freedom and equality obtain are abstracted in a form distinct from exchange relations and production (see Holloway/Picciotto 1978). The state enforces the norm of social interaction between property owners in a way which safeguards the formal recognition of (property) rights to which each individual is subject. This relation of the state to society implies that private individuals exist as abstract individuals endowed with standardised rights and, as such, treated as abstract

citizens (see Blanke/Jürgens/Kastendiek 1978; Holloway 1980). This treatment complements politically the processing of class as wage labour. This reassertion of the right of property 'denies the existence of class' (see Gunn 1987a). The form-determined function of the state is something real and as such provides legitimacy for the state (see Agnoli 1975). These functions cannot be provided by the conscious decision of the community since the community exists only in the inverted form of the private individual in a social context characteristic of commodity production.

However, behind the sanction of the right of property lies the doubly free labourer (see Marx 1983, pp. 166, 668) and the concentration of the conditions of the means of social production and subsistence in the hands of capital. Behind formal equality and formal freedom lies social reproduction in the form of capital: value production (that is surplus value production; see Negri 1984). The formal safeguarding of rights inverts into the substantive guarantee of exploitation (see Gunn 1987d) and specifies the state as a moment within the 'context of the valorisation process' (cf. Clarke 1978). The form of the state, as social practice, inverts hence from achieving the instantiation of human rights which, itself, is the right of political emancipation (revolutionising of direct relations of power) to imposing work as the social reality of the right of property which, itself, is a negation of social emancipation. The constitution of social reproduction as reproduction of capital involves the state as a distinct moment of the imposition of value and the organisation of life around imposed work. The form of the state, which attains generality in terms of the harmonies of formal equality and formal freedom as political domination, is hence posited as political organiser of the 'republic of the market': formal freedom and equality as mode of existence of exploitation. The political guarantee of the right of property determines the state as a strong state that imposes the rationality and equality of the right of property over society in the attempt to contain the social antagonism of capital and labour by the force of law.¹² Therefore, the contradictory unity of surplus value production is displaced to the form of the *state* in a way which concentrates the social reality of exploitation in and through the guarantee of formal freedom and formal equality of property rights. The social process of formation and implementation of rights in and through the state mediates exploitation in and through the form of rights of property.

This social determination of the state, as an historical precondition,

reality and process of the social relations of production, characterises the state as an 'illusory community' (cf. Marx/Engels 1958) subsuming particular interest (private production and exploitation) as universal (social reproduction and the republic of the market as human right). The contradictory unity of surplus value production is mediated as social existence in the form of the state as 'external', as 'alienated form of community' (cf. Marx/Engels 1958). This determination of the state in the historical process of capitalist class relations posits, at the same time, its substantive character as imposing law and order: instead of privileges, the state sets rights; instead of relations of will and power, the state sets relations of legality; instead of despotism, the state concentrates coercion as law and order; instead of relations of conflict, the state sets contractual relations of social interaction. The concentration of the universal in the form of the state presupposes the state as 'concentration of bourgeois society' (Marx 1973, p. 108). This constitution of the state involves the displacement of control over the means of production into the form of the state, imposing order in and through legal standardisation of formally equal property owners. The social process of wealth as one of value is thus displaced and constituted politically in the form of the safeguarding of rights, equality and freedom upon which the social reality of the process of value rests.¹³ The 'concentration of the coercive character of bourgeois society in the form of the state' (cf. Agnoli 1986) guarantees and sanctions the right of property for each commodity owner in a form independent from them. The particularisation of the political as distinct from the social implies that the state can only relate to the private individual in a social context through certain general forms, that is monetary or legal means and direct coercion, so as to impose the existence of the private individual as an abstract citizen within the rule of law.¹⁴

Formal freedom and equality figure not as accomplished fact but as a process of class antagonism. Formal freedom and equality constitute the historical presupposition of the state, its historical premise and result. The mode of existence of the state inheres in the historical tendency towards expanded social organisation of social reproduction in terms of law: the elimination of social conflict in and through the instantiation of human rights, that is, law and order control. It is here that the process of surplus value production attains generality in the form of political domination. The dynamic unity of surplus value production does not eliminate the antagonism of capital and labour, but pushes continually each mediation of the contradic-

tory unity of surplus value production to its point of supercession inasmuch as formally equal, but mutually exclusive, property rights (see Marx 1983 on the working day) constitute relations of exchange as relations of political domination, involving the imposition of relations of legality over the class conflict. Therefore, the state exists as the political concentration of social normalisation, organisation and domestication of social conflict in forms conforming to formal rights and the safeguarding of these rights through coercion separated from society and, at the same time, existing within society. The particularisation of the state from society entails specific functions arrogated by the state in the development of capitalism. The historical tendency of 'statification' is presupposed in the substantive abstraction of capital and labour and in the result of the concrete historical moment of the abstract tendency as concrete class struggle. The *legalisation* (as well as political supervision) of the social relations implies at the same time their *statification*, a statification which aims at the development of the social relations of production in politically supervised, legally controlled, non-conflictual forms (see Agnoli 1975; Blanke/Jürgens/Kastendiek 1978). The organisation of social conditions through and in which the process of value exists is perceived here as the state's content as mode of domination, a content which is presupposed in the determination of the state as historical result, reality and process of capitalist social relations. The separation of the political from the social operates within society. Thus the contradiction between form and content: particularisation of the state imposing the generality of formal freedom and formal equality as 'community', the content of which is the 'perpetuation of the slavery of labour' (cf. Marx 1969, p. 33), a perpetuation that comprises the 'sine qua non of the existence of capital' (cf. Marx 1983). The 'autonomised [*verselbständigte*] power of the state' (cf. Marx 1974, p. 882) entails the form-determined content which puts the state right back into the process of value. Hence, the state is constituted as a contradictory unity of form and content (see Clarke 1977), a unit that is impossible to separate inasmuch as, in practice, it constitutes a dialectical continuum.

The social normalisation and pacification of the aspiration of labour in the sphere of social reproduction is beyond the scope of the private contract between capital and labour and the latter's existence for capital as merely a means of valorisation. The social organisation of the reproduction of labour, which seeks to harness the power of the working class as a moment of valorisation, can only

be processed by the state as a distinct moment of the class antagonism between capital and labour, a moment within which the contradictory unity of surplus value production exists as a political relation, complementing the economic. The pacification of class conflict into forms of law and order caused, regarding the regulation of the working day, 'capital at last to be bound by the chains of legal regulation' (Marx 1983, p. 233). The displacement of the contradictory unity of surplus value production (in its mode of existence as formal freedom and equality) to the state specifies the state as a moment of the social relations of production that preserves the conditions of capitals' existence: living labour. This preservation of living labour, both in terms of the existence of the working class and the normalising of the aspiration of the working class within the limits of value, is abstracted from capital as individual capital and conforms to the state's constitution as a mode of existence of the social *relation* of capital and labour. 'The legal chain of regulation' thus exposes capital's general need, as social relation, for living labour opposed to capital in its real existence as individual capital. Capital cannot exist without the state. The form of the state is thus to be seen as a distinct mode of existence of exploitation in that the state internalises in its historic development the preservation of the substance of value (living labour); the state mediates capital's dependence on the reproduction of labour power within the limits of capital. The state attains historical existence in the dialectical process of these functions arrogated by the state. The development of the state needs to be seen as one in which the contradictory unity of surplus value production is processed in a political form, as a moment of the same process of class struggle: social reproduction as, and in and against, domination.

The tendency of the state to arrogate to itself functions of organising labour power (housing, education, skills, health, social reproduction, discipline, living conditions, legal provisions, enforcement of legal rights, organisation of free time), and likewise the processing of the aspiration of the working class within the historical limits of capital and the state, is restricted by the state's own precondition: surplus value production and the domination of capital. The state is a *mode of the existence of labour* in capitalism (see Agnoli 1975). The statist moderation of the 'perpetuation of the power of capital and the slavery of labour' (cf. Marx 1969, p. 33) posits the state, in regard to labour, as an instance of oppression and, at the same time, an instance of its existence in capitalism (see Agnoli 1975). The state

provides 'things we need, but in a form that is oppressive' (cf. London 1980) as it denies and disorganises by use of force, in the name of citizenship, social emancipation in contrast to the political emancipation characteristic of capitalist domination. This contradiction of the state exists not as accomplished fact but as process of class struggle. Therefore, it is not sufficient simply to indicate the class character of the state. Rather, the class character needs to be analysed as a specific form and praxis of class domination (see Holloway 1980; Holloway/Picciotto 1978), and, as such, open to the class struggle itself. The attempt of the state (and capital) to harness class conflict into bourgeois forms of legality and to confine the aspiration of the working class to the limits of the state (and capital) implies not only the legalisation of social relations; it implies also the recognition of the aspiration of the working class and the processing of the latter's aspiration in a way that denies the existence of the working class *as class* by processing its struggle through the forms of abstract citizenship.

The state is thus to be conceived of as the concentration of the coercive character of capitalist society, both as its historical presupposition and its historical premise and result. The historical composition of the state during fascism cannot be seen as an 'exceptional' form of state (Poulantzas 1974); nor can the so-called 're-authoritarianisation' of the state during the crisis of Fordism and the strengthening of the authoritarian character of the state in post-Fordism (Jessop, Hirsch) be seen as a qualitatively new period in capitalism. Rather, the coercive character of the state exists as presupposition, premise and result of the social reproduction of the class antagonism and not as an exceptional form of the state or as a qualitatively new period of capitalist development. The historical determination and composition of the form state as the 'concentrated and organised force of society' (Marx 1983, p. 703) is a process of class conflict, entailing the political attempt to sustain and reassert control over labour. In the face of the difficulty of periodising specific historical forms of capitalist development (see Clarke's contribution to this volume), the attempt to contrast specific forms of political violence to phases of a seemingly civilised use of political power disregards the general character of the form of the capitalist state. The sociology of different types of capitalist modes of production (as in Poulantzas and the debate on (post-)Fordism), entails an essentialisation of specific aspects or functions, arrogated by the state to itself in the course of the class struggle. The question about the authoritarian

character of the state, and its historically concrete role *vis-à-vis* the social, concerns the composition (re/decomposition) of the historical presupposition of the state as premise of the social conflict (see Clarke's contribution to this volume). The republic of the market preemptively stabilising the process of value through corrective repression of the aspirations of labour attains generality in the state's 'preemptive counter-revolution' (Agnoli 1975), that is in the reimposition of the value form over the conditions of life. The 'relative latency of the terrorist use of force' (see Hirsch 1978) involves the imposition of the historical premise of the state's own constitution (that is capitalist domination) against the presence of the real possibility of labour's indiscipline, social unrest and the strength of the working class as manifested in commanding living standards 'incompatible' with accumulation. This use of force entails the safeguarding of social reproduction in the form of capital by maintaining the 'peaceful, civilised, formally legal and democratic form of appearance of bourgeois society' (see Hirsch 1978). The development of the form of the state is neither a reflection of political and ideological changes, nor merely a result of economic crisis, but a mode of motion of the self-contradictory form of the capitalist state in the face of the crisis-ridden development of accumulation and, as such, a process of the constituting power of labour within capital. The limits of capital are, at the same time, limits of the state: the presence of labour within capital. The activities of the state 'are bound and structured by this precondition [the reproduction of the capital relation] of its own existence, by the need to ensure (or attempt to ensure) the continued accumulation of capital' (Holloway/Picciotto 1978, p. 25). This domination does not have to be theorised anew at the level of the state, since the powers the state arrogated during the historical development of capitalism are already 'inserted in a particular society' (Clarke 1978, p. 64) and since it already exists as the historical precondition of social reality as a whole.

Seeing the state as a mode of existence of the presence of labour within capital implies that the state cannot be understood as *agent* of capital. The state cannot provide general conditions suitable to every particular capital beyond the guarantee of the reproduction of the social form of social reproduction, because each capital exists only in relation to each other as a moment of a single process that constitutes it. Social capital exists only as a process of difference-in-unity with the life-cycle of value. For capitalist reproduction to take on the form of overaccumulation and crisis, each individual capital must be

involved as a moment of the social process of value in terms of negation (devaluation) and affirmation (average rate of profit). The state and capital depend on the continuous reproduction of the transformation of value as between particularity and universality (see Reichelt 1978), mediated and composed within the circuit of social capital (see Marx 1978, ch. 1–4). Therefore, one cannot derive the historical development of the state from the specific interests served by particular policies (as for instance implied by Jessop's reference to hegemonic interests of different capital logicians). Rather the form of the state needs to be seen as a mode of existence of the class relation which constitutes and suffuses the circuit of capital. Consequently, the form of the state attains existence as the political mode of existence of the abstract category of labour in action. In turn, this constitution of the state is displaced to the world market as the concentration of the richest concrete development of the constituting power of labour within capital.

The mode of motion of the state within the context of valorisation needs to be seen within the context of the world market if the 'inner connection' between the economic and political is to be understood in its materialist constitution as distinct-in-unity. In the debate on the (post-)fordist state, the world market is perceived as a power that dictates state policies and coerces the state to reconstruct its historical form of existence (see Hirsch/Roth 1986). To be sure, the world market dictates, but its existence is not power as such but the constitution of the contradictory unity of surplus value production. The so-called 'dictates' of the world market are the dictates of the crisis-ridden development of accumulation that obtains only in and through labour. The dictates of the world market amount to the displacement of the class contradiction from the conflict between necessary and surplus labour to the constitution of this same contradiction within the form of the world market. The form of the state is a moment subaltern to the international movement of capital, that is, to the richest possible concrete development of the substantive abstraction of class antagonism (see v. Braunmühl 1976, 1978). The state is constituted within the proper motion of the 'mode of existence of social capital operating internationally' (v. Braunmühl 1978, p. 176). The world market constitutes a mode of existence of the contradictions of social reproduction: global concentration of capitalist accumulation, that is the negation and affirmation of appropriated labour. 'Each national economy can only be conceptualised adequately as a specific international and, at the same time,

integral part of the world market. The national state can only be seen in this dimension' (v. Braunmühl 1976, p. 276; my translation).

The conceptual (and practical) movement of the class antagonism of capital and labour contains a further displacement of the contradictory unity of surplus value production. Money capital, as the ultimate expression of value, expands its mobility into the utmost possible space of the world market. The contradiction involved in the coexistence and sequence of different value forms composed within the process of social capital is the potential autonomisation (*Verselbständigung*) of monetary from productive accumulation concentrated on the world market. This autonomisation involves the displacement of the contradictory unity of the production process (that is labour and valorisation process) to the constitution of this same contradiction in the form of a contradiction between productive and loanable capital (that is, the contradiction 'between the factory and the credit system'; Marazzi 1976, p. 92). This process is mainly constituted through the development of the credit system 'in which money no longer functions as a hoard but as capital, though not in the hands of its proprietors, but rather of other capitalists at whose disposal it is put' (Marx 1978, p. 261). The self-contradictory character of capital assumes an apparently 'independent form' (Marx 1966, p. 382) in interest as a relation between the owner of money capital and the manager of production. This displacement of the contradictory unity of surplus value seemingly eliminates the relation of interest profit to surplus value. However, interest profit exists only as a mode of existence of surplus value. Hence social reality is constituted as a movement of contradiction in and through labour, a movement in which the contradictory unity of surplus value production reasserts itself in $M \dots M^1$ – 'the meaningless form of capital, the perversion and objectification of production relations in their highest degree, the interest-bearing form, the simple form of capital, in which it antecedes its own process of reproduction' (Marx 1966, p. 392). Productive accumulation has to succeed in order for money capital to be sustained, while the failure to turn credit into productive command over labour reasserts, for productive capital, the limits of the market to realise capital profitably in the form of insolvency and bankruptcy. At the same time, the default of productive activity threatens to bring about a collapse of the credit relations, upon which social relations rest. In order to sustain the most elementary, and meaningless, form of capital, labour and productive capital needs to be sacrificed so as to make it possible for banks to absorb

heavy losses without default, while the sacrificing of surplus value production on the altar of money destroys the basis in and through which the meaningless form of capital exists. The units of monetary and productive accumulation reasserts itself in and through their destructive separation. The subordination of the contradictory existence of the production process (labour and valorisation process) to the supremacy of money, displaces, as a form of class struggle, the contradictory existence of the production process into a contradiction between credit and functioning capital. This displacement of the contradictory unity of surplus value production is indifferent in terms of social command as its form of wealth is meaningless in content (use value production); none other than the uncoupling of the valorisation from the labour process (see Marx 1983, p. 48).

Within the crisis-ridden development of accumulation, the development of the capitalist state is processed in immediate form through social unrest and in mediated form through monetary constraints. Basic for the development of the state is the social conflict over the imposition of the value form upon the conditions of life. It is through the power of money as form of value that the imperatives of capitalist social reproduction make themselves felt to the state.¹⁵ The displacement of the antagonism of capital and labour in the form of monetary pressure involves the state because of the state's responsibility for national currency (state as central banker). Seeing the relation between money capital and the state as a relation in which the contradictory unity of surplus value production 'makes itself felt by the state in a mediated form' (Clarke 1978, p. 66), indicates the materialist discontinuity of the real process of class antagonism: erosion of tax base, balance of payment problems, and accumulation of public debt that exists as claim upon a certain proportion of tax revenue (see Clarke 1988a). These pressures indicate the reassertion of the contradictory unity of surplus value production over the form of the capitalist state in and through the abstract average of the money power of capital. In order to understand the working of the money power of capital, one has to descend 'from the monetary image of crisis to an analysis of the crisis of social relations, from the crisis of circulation to the crisis of the relation between necessary and surplus labour' (Negri 1984, p. 25). The antagonistic tendency of the class struggle is concentrated in the power of money as the incarnation of value in which the substance of its own existence is seemingly eliminated.

In order to avert collapse of credit, the sacrificing of productive

activity and labour on the altar of money involves, fundamentally, the reimposition of the power of money over the conditions of life.¹⁶ This reimposition involves the state in imposing the generality of social existence (value production) over the social in and through the elementary form of capital (see Clarke 1988a; Marazzi 1976). In this process, the self-contradictory form of the state attains generality as the 'harmonies' last refuge' (cf. Marx 1973, p. 886), harmonies of formal equality and formal freedom upon which the historical constitution of the state rests. The state as the harmonies' last refuge represents thus 'communal interest', imposing the lurid face of equality in the form of money over society. The state attains existence as the collective representative of money in command: the subordination of the conditions of life to monetary scarcity, involving law and order control as its preconditions, premise and result. This development of the state, as represented by monetarism, is presupposed in the substantive abstraction of bourgeois society, a presupposition which now serves as premise for the class struggle (see Marazzi 1976; Clarke 1988a).

Conclusion

This article has aimed to show that the relation between structure and struggle is an internal one. The attempt to understand social reality in its 'proper motion' (cf. Negt 1984) demystifies structures by viewing them as historical forms of existence of class antagonism, and so as forms in and through which class antagonism exists. History is the history of class struggle, as Marx declares in the *Communist Manifesto*; however, as he adds in the *18th Brumaire*, under conditions imposed on human activity through the results of former struggle which serve as a premise, as a new basis for this struggle itself. Consequently, objective laws of capitalism are to be discussed as forms through which and in which class antagonism exists in capitalist societies. In the event, to speak about 'objective laws' implies the fetishistic reification of social relations as relations of things. It is impossible to make a contrast between the laws of capitalist development and class antagonism without falling into precisely the fetishism Marx criticises in 'Capital'.

The disarticulation of structure and struggle (Hirsch) separates what belongs together as inner nature, or as actual and alive. To make a contrast between the unfolding of objective laws and class

struggle is to see the crisis of social reproduction (and its resolution) as an inevitable process of what is seen as a structural disintegration or integration of a corresponding relation between economic and political subsystems. The understanding of struggle as an effect of the unfolding of objective laws of development posits the inevitability of crisis and/or recovery and rejects, by implication, the Marxist understanding of history as one of class struggle. Such reasoning is teleological because crisis is seen as a transitory period in which the unfolding of the objective laws of capitalist development defines the emergence of a new mode of domination appropriate to a new corresponding regime of accumulation. The role of class struggle is strictly limited within this framework (Hirsch).

Conceptualising the capitalist state as a form of social relations, one has to reject Jessop's and Hirsch's notion of the relation of structure and struggle. An understanding of the state as movement of social contradiction rejects a structuralist conceptualisation of different phenomena in terms of 'structural adequacy'. Once the state is no longer seen as the political form of class antagonism, complex historical phenomena can indeed only be 'analysed as a complex resultant of multiple determinations' (Jessop *et al* 1988, p. 53). Once social 'form' is understood otherwise than as 'mode of existence' of the *social* relations of production, one is left with systematising these relations into *economic* relations, while the political relations have to be theorised in relation to the economic as relatively, if not radically (see Jessop 1986), autonomous from the economic. The constitution of social reality, in Jessop, follows the 'independent logics of political and ideological domains', forcing the scientific mind to follow, in descriptive terms, the strategic line of capital in the face of 'various dilemmas, risks, uncertainties and complexities', emergent strategies, trial and error techniques etc. (Jessop *et.al.* 1988, p. 8). Since class relations are reduced to one (strategic) mechanism/cause amongst others (relations in production), the material world of capitalism emerges as a systematic cause of the struggle between different 'capital logicians' determined by (allocation) interests. This understanding rests on seeing social reality as determined by a combination of structural development and (individualised) subjectivity. Once class antagonism ceases to be considered as the primary relation, the social antagonism of capital and labour appears as a pluralism of contesting social forces. The consequence of Jessop's equation of capitalist strategies with class struggle is the dismissal of an understanding of history as the history

of class struggle. Hostile to form analysis, while proclaiming in its favour, Jessop acknowledges merely structural contradictions. The constituting power of labour, as the abstraction of social reality in action, is thereby dismissed. An understanding of contraction internal to domination is pushed into oblivion. Instead one has to embark on an individualistic analysis of effect and result, the ontological depth of which is 'the theoretical capacity to penetrate beneath the actual course of events to more fundamental mechanisms and causal powers which generate these events in specific circumstances' (Jessop *et. al.* 1988, p. 28; see also Bhaskar 1989). Consequently, 'Thatcherism' can be approached best by a 'polytheist' approach (Jessop *et. al.* 1988), because there are many multiple causes and effects and hence 'many Thatcherisms' (cf. Jessop *et. al.* 1988, p. 9). Such a conceptualisation of social reality carries within it the danger that it is in the end tautological: first of all the outward appearance of reality is taken for granted (multiple causes), and then it is in the light of this outward appearance of reality that social development is assessed (see Gunn 1989). The question for Marx was how to understand multiple determinations/causes and effects in their interrelation. To take the outward appearance of reality as the conceptual starting point (multiple causes as in Jessop; disarticulation of structure and struggle as in Hirsch) without insisting on the social relations that constitute social reality runs the risk of finishing up conceptually where the theorising of the critique of political economy starts.

Notes

1. See the selection of articles, with important introductions, by Holloway/Picciotto 1978; Clarke 1991.
2. See also the selection of articles by Bonefeld/Holloway 1991.
3. In Poulantzas (1980), the discussion moves into the direction of Hirsch's approach.
4. On the conceptualisation of the state in terms of the base/superstructure metaphor see Jessop (1982). The widely canvassed version of Marx's base superstructure metaphor in state theory, that is the superstructure arising on the economic base, is not only misleading in view of the state but also regarding Marx's theory itself. The triumph of the base superstructure metaphor in structuralist Marxism was the triumph of, what Marx termed in *Capital* vol. 1, abstract materialism over what I see as the substance of his work (substantive abstraction). However, this triumph constituted the dissolution of both which can be seen in

- Poulantzas's (1980) later work where he attempts to derive the state not from the economic base but from the social relations of production.
5. Jessop's effort to systematise social relations into structural entities concerns also the social relations of production. Jessop sees the social relations of production as being restricted to comprising economic relations. The relations of production are in turn systematised into relations *in* production and relations *of* production (see Jessop 1986, p. 5). The former are said to comprise the working relation between classes within the structural entity of production, that is, the relations between capital and labour in the factory (Jessop 1986). The latter refers to relations of resource allocation and to the 'appropriation of surplus labour in determinate forms' (Jessop 1986, p. 5). Such a view is simply wrong in terms of a Marxist theorising. Jessop seems to suggest an understanding of the social process of value as a mechanism of distributing available labour power between the various branches of production which, in turn, exercise functions in the production process (for a similar view see Althusser 1975, p. 167; 1977, p. 87). Jessop's affirmation of Althusser's misunderstanding of the law of value as a law of the social distribution of labour tells us nothing about the particular social form (that is substantive abstraction) of labour. 'Such a method can only identify static structures, and is forced to pose a qualitative change as a sudden discontinuity, a quantum leap between structures; and not as a process, a qualitatively changing continuum' (Elson 1979, p. 141). Jessop's understanding of the law of value is formal (causal relations) and lacks explanatory power. We are left with a technicist reading of the law of value.
 6. See Gunn 1989 on the status of Marxist categories and the relation between first order and second order theory, both of which, as argued by Gunn, presuppose each other. Therefore, the introduction of 'intermediate' concepts, as in Hirsch and Jessop, distinguishes between 'levels' of analysis which cannot be separated.
 7. According to Marx (1983, p. 141) the global movement of money 'acquires to the full extent the character of the commodity whose bodily form is also the immediate social incarnation of human labour in the abstract'.
 8. In English, the concept of power encompasses quite different meanings which are expressed separately in other languages: *potentia* versus *potestas* or *Vermögen* versus *Macht*. The difference is important as it signals a dialectical continuum of different extremes: While *potentia* (or *Vermögen*) is constituting social activity, *potestas* (or *Macht*) connotes the social making of history founded on a particular fixed dimension of social reality (see Negri 1989, p. 49). As such, when speaking about the 'power' of the working class one has to bear in mind its power as a constituting social activity within capital, a power which is separate,

- although connected as an extreme pole of a dialectical continuum, from the power of making history.
9. The term 'abstraction of' points towards the development from the actual social processes to the social form in which they exist (see Marx 1983; Lukács 1968). The notion of substantive abstraction is identical in meaning with Marx's (1973) notion of the abstract as existing within the concrete and vice versa.
 10. 'Feudalism' is used here in its analytical and popular sense: that is the constitution of social relations in and through personal relations of domination. For a discussion on feudal society and the rise of capitalist social relations see Gerstenberger's contribution to this volume.
 11. Left to their own devices bankers will tend to fuel overaccumulation by overexpanding credit. The historical development of the state arrogated powers to restrain the growth of credit. These powers provide the basis for the state's monetary and financial policies (see Marx 1966 on the 1844 Bank Act).
 12. See Marx on the 'Jewish Question' where he makes it clear that the right of property is not merely one right among others but, rather, the paradigmatic right.
 13. However, while safeguarding the right of property, the state has no power to guarantee the realisation of appropriated labour by capital. The state is a mode of existence of the social relation of capital and labour and, as such, a distinct moment of the process of abstract wealth.
 14. In Liberalism, right is merely seen as an abstraction from, as opposed to an abstraction of, social reality. This is so because the social unity of object and subject is regulated under the universality of bourgeois right, permitting a philosophy of law as a normative philosophy, that is, the instantiation of rights as the highest social concept of human existence.
 15. What follows is an unsystematised conclusion for further research on the problem of the self-contradictory form of the capitalist state in the face of global overaccumulation and the constitution of the circuit of social capital on the basis of credit. At this level, the argument criticises, by implication, fordist and structuralist theories that discuss those problems in disarticulation from class antagonism.
 16. See Clarke 1988a on the crisis of Keynesianism and the rise of monetarism as involving just such a reimposition of the power of money.

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4

The Global Accumulation of Capital and the Periodisation of the Capitalist State Form

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The Problem of Periodisation

The periodisation of the capitalist mode of production is an attempt to find a middle way between empiricism, which stresses historical contingency in order to legitimate a political opportunism, and reductionism, which stresses the unchanging laws of motion of the capitalist mode of production in order to legitimate a dogmatic fundamentalism. The 'periodisation' of the capitalist mode of production is supposed to provide a way of defining 'intermediate structures' which determine the regularities and systematic features pertaining in a particular historical epoch so as to provide scientific foundations for a political strategy which can engage with the current conjuncture.

The basis of the various periodisations which have been proposed over the years has been the periodisation of the dominant forms of accumulation, but the primary purpose of such periodisations has been to relate the changing forms of accumulation to changing forms of the state and of the political class struggle. However the simplistic conceptions of the state on which the dominant periodisations have been based have undermined their theoretical coherence, their empirical applicability, and the political validity of their conclusions. This is as true of the recent periodisations proposed by 'regulation theory' and the 'social structures of accumulation' approach as it was of the orthodox theory of state monopoly capitalism, all of which have rested on a simple functionalist theory of the state. This reduces

the activity of the state to an expression of the functional needs of accumulation, expressed in the interests of capital, and presumes that the state can, at least in principle, meet those needs by intervening to resolve the contradictions of capitalist accumulation. This narrow conception of the state is associated with an inadequate theorisation of the inherent contradictions of accumulation, which underlies the presumption that the state can indeed resolve those contradictions.

The aim of this paper is to ask whether a more adequate theorisation of the contradictory form of accumulation, and a more sophisticated theorisation of the capitalist state, can provide the basis for a more adequate periodisation of the capitalist mode of production and of the capitalist state form. The starting point of my attempt is the state debate of the 1970s, which appears at first sight to offer a fruitful way forward, but which failed to provide an adequate account of the contradictions inherent in capitalist accumulation. On the basis of an alternative account of the relationship between the state and the contradictory form of capitalist accumulation I will then outline what appears to be a theoretically coherent and empirically plausible periodisation of the capitalist state form. Finally, I will submit the proposed periodisation to a more critical review, concluding that the substantive weaknesses of the periodisation reflect theoretical and methodological errors inherent in the enterprise itself.¹

Overaccumulation, Class Struggle and the State

The state debate of the 1970s tried to develop an analysis which was simultaneously logical and historical, which might have been expected to lead to a periodisation of the state. The attempt never really got off the ground, primarily because it proved impossible to find a coherent principle on which to base such periodisation. Joachim Hirsch proposed a periodisation of the capitalist state form whose phases were related to the mobilisation of different counter-tendencies to the tendency for the rate of profit to fall, but he never elaborated this approach.² Holloway and Picciotto, in keeping with their emphasis on the primacy of the class struggle, outlined three stages in the development of the capitalist state form related to the relationship between capital and the labour process from an initial external relationship, through the phase of absolute surplus value

production to the phase of production of relative surplus value. Although this could be interpreted as a periodisation, with superficial similarities to that of Aglietta, Holloway and Picciotto did not use it as such, but rather as the basis of an historical explanation of the progressive development of different aspects of the capitalist state form which continue to coexist as moments of the developed form of the capitalist state.³ Such debate as there was over the periodisation of the capitalist state form did not get very far, becoming bogged down over the issue of the character of the absolutist state.⁴ Hirsch later took up the functionalist periodisation of the 'regulation approach' as the basis of his 'reformulation' of state theory. While Hirsch's work had the merit of integrating a more sophisticated theory of the state into the regulation approach, it did nothing to remedy the theoretical and historical inadequacies of the latter.⁵

In this paper I want to sketch out an alternative approach to the periodisation of the capitalist state form based on an alternative characterisation of the contradictions inherent in the accumulation of capital. My starting point is the argument that the driving force of accumulation, imposed on individual capitals by the pressure of competition, is the tendency for capital to develop the productive forces without limit. The response of capitalists to competition is not, as bourgeois economists would have us believe, tamely to adjust production to the limits of the market, but is to seek out new markets by commercial expansion and by displacing backward forms of production, and to reduce costs by lengthening the working day, forcing down wages, intensifying labour and, above all, by transforming methods of production. The constant tendency to develop the productive forces underlies the tendency for capital, from its earliest stages, to develop the world market and to generalise capitalist social relations of production on a global scale. However the tendency to develop the productive forces without regard to the limit of the market also underlies the tendency to the global overaccumulation and uneven development of capital, as the development of social production confronts the limits of its capitalist form as production for profit. Although the tendency to the overaccumulation of capital appears in its most dramatic form with the emergence of a generalised crisis of overproduction, it is not only a feature of such dramatic crises, but also of the everyday reality of accumulation, as the pressure of competition leads to an intensification of class struggle, the devaluation of backward capitals, the destruction of productive capacity and the displacement of labour.

The relationship of the state to the contradictory form of over-accumulation is not established directly, but is mediated by the form of the state. The class character of the capitalist state is defined by the separation of the state from civil society, and the corresponding subordination of state and civil society to the rule of money and the law. While the subordination of the state to money defines the economic form through which an overaccumulation crisis appears to the state, and sets limits to the powers of the state in response to such a crisis, it does not determine the specific political form of the state, through which the contradictory tendencies of accumulation are mediated politically, nor the specific responses of the state in the face of a crisis. The political form of the state is determined by the class struggle, and most particularly by the struggles of the working class which arise as the working class confronts the subordination of social production to capital as a barrier to its own physical and social reproduction.

Although the state is constituted politically on a national basis, its class character is not defined in national terms, the capitalist law of property and contract transcending national legal systems, and world money transcending national currencies. Thus the subordination of the state to the rule of money and the law confines the state within limits imposed by the contradictory form of the accumulation of capital on a world scale. However the political stabilisation of the state has to be achieved on a national basis, which presupposes, in general, that the state is able to secure the expanded reproduction of domestic productive capital. On the one hand, this is the only basis on which the relative surplus population can be absorbed, and so the physical and social reproduction of the working class reconciled with its subordination to capital. On the other hand, it is the only basis on which the state can secure its revenues, and so meet increasing demands on its resources.

The result is that, in the most general terms, the contradiction inherent in capitalist accumulation appears to the state in the form of the barriers to the sustained accumulation of domestic productive capital presented by the overaccumulation of capital on a world scale. Although the state cannot resolve the contradictions inherent in capitalist accumulation, it can contain the political impact of those contradictions to the extent that it is able to secure the integration of the accumulation of domestic productive capital into the accumulation of capital on a world scale, and so provide a basis on which to secure the political integration of the working class. The limits on the ability

of the state to achieve this are not defined only by the form of the state as a national state, but more fundamentally by the form of the international state system, and corresponding modes on integration of global accumulation, of which it is a part. The periodisation of modes of integration of global accumulation correspondingly underpins the periodisation of forms of the capitalist state.

All this is very abstract, but I think it provides a basis for a much more concrete analysis and periodisation of the capitalist state form. Although the idea of the overaccumulation of capital outlined above is abstract, it provides the basis for a periodisation because the tendency to the overaccumulation and uneven development of capital defines not only quantitative relationships, summed up in the movement of the rate of profit, but also qualitative relationships, in the changing forms of the sectoral and geographical unevenness of accumulation and in the changing forms of class struggle to which overaccumulation has given rise.

The bulk of the paper will outline a provisional periodisation into four and a half stages, with the transition from one to another being determined primarily by the form and development of the class struggle in the face of a crisis of overaccumulation. However at the end of the paper I want to muddy the waters by suggesting that the crisis of Keynesianism and the rise of monetarism indicates that this periodisation is spurious, and that it conceals some more fundamental continuities. But for now the stages are as follows:

Mercantilism

This defines the typical form of the eighteenth century state, based on the global expansion of commercial capital. The overaccumulation of commercial capital led to increasing international competition, costly commercial and colonial wars, and the penetration of capital into production, which undermined the global integration of accumulation and the economic, political and ideological foundations of the mercantilist state form, while providing the basis for the transition to the next stage.

Liberalism

The liberalisation of the state in the first half on the nineteenth century was based primarily on an international division of labour between the intensive accumulation of capital in British manufacture and the extensive accumulation of capital in agriculture elsewhere. Although the liberal state form was never able to contain the struggle

of the emerging working class, so that economic liberalism was by no means necessarily accompanied by political liberalism, *ad hoc* expedients of repression and reform sustained the liberal form of the state until the global overaccumulation crisis of the 1870s.

Imperialism

Imperialism and social reform emerged as the state sought to sustain domestic accumulation, and accommodate the organised working class, through the more or less active regulation of international trade and investment. The result of such efforts was the politicisation of international competition on a national basis, and the rise of militarism culminating in global war and revolution.

Social Democracy

The inter-war period saw a vain attempt to restore liberalism, which only led to a revival of imperialism and militarism. It also saw the emergence of the elements of the social democratic form of the state, which was systematically developed in the post-war reconstruction period, where the sustained accumulation of capital on a world scale, within the framework of a liberalisation of international trade and payments, made it possible to contain the class struggle on the basis of the generalisation of industrial relations and social reform. The attempt to contain the growing class struggle by sustaining accumulation through expansionary fiscal and monetary policies provoked an inflationary crisis, and stimulated the development of new forms of class struggle directed not at capital but at the state.

Monetarism

Reasserts the subordination of the state and civil society to the money power of global capital. However it is an open question whether monetarism represents a new phase in the periodisation of the capitalist state, or merely a moment in the crisis of the social democratic form of the state, as the inter-war period marked the crisis of the imperialist form of the state.

Let us examine this periodisation more closely.

The Crisis of Mercantilism and the Rise of the Modern State

The growth of commercial capitalism provided the basis for the emergence of the mercantilist state form. The feudal state had been

no more than the organised power of the feudal landed class, the sovereign's revenues deriving from feudal rents and feudal dues, the authority of the state being coterminous with the feudal authority of the sovereign. The growth of trade in the middle ages provided the sovereign and the landed class with new sources of revenue, and so underlay the first stages in the separation of the state from civil society. However, this separation provoked long drawn-out class and political struggles, which focussed on the form of the state.

By the eighteenth century commercial capital had largely freed itself from its subordination to feudal landed property, while commercial activity extended far beyond the luxury goods and military supplies of the middle ages. Although production was increasingly subordinated to capital, the relationship remained an external one, and the capitalist penetration of production was limited. While the generalisation of commodity production was associated with a steady development of the forces of production, commercial profits still depended primarily on the exploitation of monopoly powers, conferred and enforced by the state, rather than on the production of surplus value. While domestic trade merely redistributed the surplus product of landowners and commodity producers, foreign trade provided the opportunity for appropriating the surplus product of foreign producers.

The mercantilist state form was the outcome of the attempt to resolve the class struggles unleashed by the accumulation of commercial capital, seeking to ensure that monopoly powers were exploited at the expense of foreigners. Despite the formal separation of the state from civil society, public finance and administration was achieved primarily through the public endorsement of private powers and privileges. The state fostered the development of foreign commerce by aggressive commercial and colonial policies, while seeking to contain its impact on domestic production and employment by maintaining an apparatus of protective and restrictive legislation, and sustaining the authority of the landed class over the mass of the population.

The overaccumulation of commercial capital underlay growing competition, which appeared in the form of commercial and colonial wars, and a growing burden of taxation and public debt. Pressure on profitability underlay the penetration of production by capital, in the attempt to develop new sources of profit, which eroded the established forms of authority. The result was an intensification of the class struggle, whose political focus was the parasitism and corruption of the state, which came to a head most dramatically in the American

and French Revolutions, but equally underlay the rise of popular radicalism in Europe in the first half of the nineteenth century.

The penetration of capital into production undermined the mercantilist state form, and laid the foundations for the emergence of a new form of the state, in which the accumulation of capital would be based on the penetration of capital into production and the development of the world market through trade liberalisation. This required the radical separation of the state from civil society by dismantling the apparatus of mercantilist regulation to subordinate the accumulation of capital to the disinterested rule of money and the law. This was achieved in England through the quiet revolution in government from Pitt to Gladstone, in Continental Europe through the reconstitution of the state in the wake of the 1848 revolutions, and in the USA in the period after the Civil War.

The Liberal State Form

The condition for the emergence of the liberal state form was the development of an international division of labour which was essentially complementary rather than competitive, based on the penetration of capital into production on a global scale, fostered by commercial expansionism and trade liberalisation in the second quarter of the nineteenth century, followed by the development of the railways in the third quarter of the century. The rapid development of the productive forces in British manufacturing stimulated the overaccumulation of manufacturing capital in relation to supplies of raw material and outlets for the product, which erupted in periodic crises. However, capital was able to overcome the resulting barriers to accumulation on the basis of the extensive development of agriculture on a world scale, on the one hand, and the destruction of petty commodity producers, on the other. Thus periodic crises only prepared the way for renewed accumulation, primarily by devaluing commercial capital and destroying petty producers.

The complementary accumulation of capital in agriculture and manufacturing undermined mercantilist forms of regulation on a global scale, and generalised the class struggles which underlay the emergence of the liberal state form. However the unfettered accumulation of capital and the perfection of the liberal state form unleashed new waves of struggle. The popular radicalism of displaced petty producers tended to follow the course of the cycle, augmented

in periods of crisis by the struggles of the emerging working class. While the state responded to disorder by the repressive enforcement of the rule of law, popular resistance and the development of working class organisation checked the attempt of the state to subordinate the mass of the population to the money power of capital, and underlay the continued relief of distress, the reproduction of the social power of the landed class, the beginnings of protective industrial legislation, and the faltering recognition of limited trades union rights for the working class. Nevertheless, while the accumulation of domestic productive capital absorbed the relative surplus population and healthy profits ameliorated the class struggle over the production of surplus value, such remedies could appear as *ad hoc* and exceptional responses to the frictional problems of transition and periodic crises.

The world crisis of 1873 marked the limits of this form of global accumulation, which appeared in the collapse of a world promotional boom, centred on the railways. This was not followed, as previous such crises had been, by a renewed expansionary wave, but led to the emergence of generalised overproduction and the sectoral and geographical dislocation of accumulation. The crisis appeared to capital in the form of intensified international competition, pressure on profitability, the devaluation of capital and the destruction of productive capacity. The crisis appeared to the working class in the form of an attempt of employers to intensify labour and force down money wages, and widespread redundancy and unemployment. The crisis appeared to the state in the form of a growing fiscal, financial and monetary crisis as declining revenues disrupted the public finances, and the dislocation of accumulation disrupted domestic and international payments, and in the form of growing popular unrest, which could only be intensified by the attempt to resolve the economic crisis, within the framework of free trade and the gold standard, by orthodox deflationary means. Thus the crisis of overaccumulation precipitated a crisis of the state, and unleashed a new wave of class struggles over the form of the state, the outcome of which was the emergence of the 'imperialist' state form.⁶

The Imperialist State Form

While the emerging socialist movement called for the socialisation of production, and romantic conservatism called for a resurrection of

pre-capitalist forms of regulation, the state responded to the crisis within the limits of its capitalist form, through which the state and civil society alike were subordinated to the power of capital, which had been perfected in the liberal phase. The separation of the state from civil society, and its subordination to the rule of money and the law, had been institutionalised in the form of the independence of the judiciary and the central bank, the formal subordination of the executive to the legislative branch of government, the rationalisation of the system of public accounting and finance, and the constitutional principles of the balanced budget and the gold standard. The constitutional limits of the liberal state form correspondingly confined the political response of the state to the crisis within the limits of capital.

The state responded to the challenge of the organised working class, within the limits of its form, by attempting to institutionalise and reinforce sectional divisions by providing limited recognition for trades unions within an emerging 'industrial relations' framework, and by introducing limited social reform, while reconstituting the working class politically on a national basis through the extension of the franchise. The condition for the success of such a project was the sustained accumulation of domestic productive capital, through which to absorb the relative surplus population, to keep down the costs of social reform, and to institutionalise the system of industrial relations. Protectionism and imperialism provided the means by which the state simultaneously sought to resolve the immediate fiscal, financial and monetary pressures, to secure the national identification of the working class, and to secure the renewed accumulation of domestic productive capital by removing the barriers to accumulation presented by limited supplies of means of production and subsistence, on the one hand, and the limited outlets for the surplus product, on the other.

Imperialism and protectionism provided the basis on which global accumulation was sustained through the 1880s, and accelerated to new heights from the 1890s. Tariffs presented only a limited barrier to global accumulation as protectionism was held in check by Britain's continued commitment to free trade and its ability to manage an international payments system in which massive capital flows financed the trade imbalances associated with the uneven sectoral and geographical accumulation of capital. Thus advanced manufacturing capital, particularly in Germany and the United States, was able to find outlets for its surplus product on world markets,

while booming demand for food and raw materials stimulated the rapid penetration of capital into agriculture and the renewed expansion of the railways and shipping, which provided British capital with outlets for its traditional products, and for the investment of its surplus capital. Thus the early stages of the boom were based on a renewed complementarity in the international division of labour, mediated by an increasingly complex system of international trade and payments. However as the boom gathered pace it stimulated the overaccumulation of capital to a hitherto unprecedented degree, and growing international competition and domestic conflict undermined tendencies towards liberalisation.

The imperialist state form politicised growing competitive pressure as nation states attempted to sustain the accumulation of domestic productive capital by the increasing use of diplomatic, political and military weapons to open up world markets as sources of supply and outlets for the surplus product. International pressures increasingly focussed on Britain's intentions, British command of the seas and the global dominance of British financial capital giving the British state the potential to inflict untold damage on its competitors, and above all on Germany, when the looming crisis struck. In the face of growing signs that the boom had run its course tension mounted, culminating in inter-imperialist war.

The Contradictions of Imperialism and the Emergence of the Social Democratic State Form

The inter-war period saw the failure of the attempt to resolve the contradictions of imperialism by reconstructing the liberal world order. Free trade and the gold standard were seen as the means of subordinating the nation state to the global accumulation of capital and the global power of money. This would thereby prevent the rise of economic nationalism, which had underlain the descent into war, and check the revolutionary challenge of the working class that had grown out of popular resistance to the costs of imperialist war, and which had acquired an increasingly anti-capitalist form as a result of the suspension of the separation of the state from civil society imposed by the needs of war. However, the reconstruction of the liberal state form could not overcome the contradictions inherent in the tendency for accumulation to take the form of overaccumulation and crisis.

Trade and monetary liberalisation was facilitated by massive capital movements, particular from the United States to Europe, which stimulated recovery from the post-war recession. The revolutionary challenge of the working class was contained, outside Russia, by repression, while the class struggle was contained by the emerging systems of industrial relations, social reform and the franchise, which had been extended in the face of the popular pressures of the war and immediate post-war period. The boom of the 1920s intensified the overaccumulation and uneven development of capital, which was a legacy of the pre-war period that had only been reinforced by war, culminating in the crash of 1929 and the ensuing depression.

The immediate response of the state to the fiscal, financial and monetary pressures imposed by the crash was to pursue restrictive fiscal and monetary policies, to bring accumulation back within the limits of the market. However the extent of the overaccumulation of capital revealed by the crash was such that restrictive policies, far from restoring the conditions for renewed accumulation, set up a deflationary spiral which only intensified the crisis, and threatened an escalation of the class struggle. The outcome of such pressures was the return to protectionist and imperialist policies, through which the reintegration of accumulation was achieved within relatively closed blocks. In Germany and Italy the comprehensive defeat of the working class provided the political basis on which protectionism was complemented by extensive state intervention in the restructuring of domestic productive capital and the political integration of the working class into corporatist apparatuses of a militaristic nationalism. Elsewhere the continued political weight of the working class was such that capital and the state largely resisted such corporatist developments, until growing inter-imperialist tensions culminated once more in war. Outside the fascist powers the political integration of the working class in the face of depression and war was achieved by the further *ad hoc* development of the systems of industrial relations, social reform and the franchise, although the scope for such integration tended to be limited by fiscal constraints and the constraints of profitability.

The reconstruction of the world economy and the international state system in the wake of the second world war was based on similar principles to those which guided reconstruction after the first war. The lessons of the inter-war period had also been learned. Political stabilisation depended on the systematic social and political

integration of the working class through industrial relations, social reform and the franchise. The condition for such integration was the sustained accumulation of domestic productive capital, within the context of the sustained accumulation of capital on a world scale. However the free international movement of money, capital and commodities would not on their own overcome the barriers to accumulation presented by the overaccumulation and uneven development of capital, which had in the past led to economic crises, economic nationalism, fascism and socialism. The condition for such liberalisation was a planned reconstruction effort to overcome the immediate barriers presented by the uneven development of the forces of production which was the legacy of war, and the development of a system of international credit which could overcome the limitations of the gold standard by financing imbalances of international payments, so averting the need for national governments to resort either to deflation or to protection in the face of sustained payments deficits. Within such a framework national governments could pursue expansionary domestic policies, free from external constraints.

Far from overcoming the tendency to the overaccumulation and uneven development of capital, the Keynesianism of the post-war boom gave such a tendency free reign, accommodating the overaccumulation of capital by an explosion of domestic and international credit. As the overaccumulation of capital confronted the barrier of the market from the 1960s international competition eroded profitability, productive investment began to fall, and the class struggle intensified as employers sought to hold down wages and intensify labour, and as they closed plant and laid off workers. The systematic development of social democratic forms of working class integration had institutionalised a generalised expectation of rising living standards, adequate welfare benefits, and guaranteed employment, which compelled the state to sustain accumulation by fiscal and monetary expansionism, the result of which was only to intensify the overaccumulation and uneven development of capital and to push capital into ever more speculative and inflationary channels, intensifying the inevitable crisis.

The Crisis of Keynesianism and the Rise of Monetarism

The Keynesian welfare state accommodated the aspirations of the working class at the cost of growing inflationary pressure and a

growing burden of public expenditure. The crisis of Keynesianism appeared as such modes of integration confronted the limits of inflation and the fiscal crisis of the state. However the outcome of the crisis was not a growing class polarisation, and a revolutionary confrontation of the working class with the capitalist state. Rather it was an intensification of the divisions within the working class institutionalised within the social democratic state form, the eventual outcome of which was the demobilisation and demoralisation of the working class. The emerging forces of the New Right, on the other hand, were able to tap growing popular resentment at the alienated forms of capitalist state power, which came to a head over the issues of inflation and taxation, which the monetarism of the New Right articulated in terms of the relationship between money and the state. The neo-liberal programme of the New Right sought to subordinate the state and civil society alike to the unfettered rule of world money.

The neo-liberal programme of monetarism was to reconstruct the liberal state form of the nineteenth century. The fact that the New Right has presided over continuing increases in state expenditure, has strengthened the power of the state and expanded its repressive apparatuses, appears to belie its liberal rhetoric. However the fact that there have not been fundamental changes in the functions of the state should not conceal the fact that neo-liberalism has sought to impose fundamental changes in its form, and in particular to secure the systematic subordination of the state and civil society to the money power of capital by subordinating political and social relations to the rule of money and the law.

The conditions for the relative success of the monetarist project were the defeat of the organised working class in the struggles precipitated by the crisis of Keynesianism, on the one hand, and the world boom of the mid-1980s, unleashed by global liberalisation and sustained by an explosion of international credit. However these conditions are ephemeral. Nineteenth-century liberalism was able to secure the sustained accumulation of global capital essentially because of the complementarity of the international division of labour. Since 1873 attempts to overcome the contradictions of accumulation, mediated politically by the capitalist state form, through liberalisation (in the 1890s, 1920s and 1950s) have soon come to grief as liberalisation has stimulated the renewed overaccumulation and uneven development of capital, which has appeared in the form of growing international competition, culminating in global crisis. The instability following the crash of 1987 has made it clear

that the neo-liberal project of the 1980s is condemned to a similar fate.

The outcome of the coming crisis is by no means predictable, since the unfolding of the crisis is not determined by an economic logic, but by the development of the class struggle, nationally and on a global scale. In 1914 overaccumulation led to inter-imperialist war before the crisis could strike. In 1929 the crisis led to depression, the formation of imperialist blocks, and inter-imperialist war. In the late 1960s such a development was averted as the crisis was postponed and depression staved off by inflationary means, the restructuring of capital and the working class taking place within the framework of stagflation, culminating in the sharp recession of the early 1980s, which paved the way for the recent boom.

The current boom may be sustained for a while longer by the continued accumulation of credit, although the longer it is sustained, and the greater the accumulation of fictitious capital on which it rests, the greater the dangers of a catastrophic crisis and a devastating depression. In the event of such a crisis, the only means of staving off such a depression will be strategies of state-sponsored national and international reconstruction, with the opening up of the Soviet block to capitalist penetration providing the most mouth-watering opportunities for the requisite global restructuring of accumulation. However such a global restructuring is also likely to unleash powerful national-chauvinist and imperialist forces as it politicises the international competitive struggle, threatening to lead to the formation of competing international blocks.

A Critical Conclusion

The crisis of Keynesianism and the rise of monetarism raises doubts about the periodisation outlined above. It is difficult to see the project of neo-liberalism as that of constituting a form of 'post-Keynesian' or 'Post-Fordist' state. Nor is it any longer possible to see neo-liberalism as an aberration, to be followed by a resumption of Keynesian normality, or as a transitional phase, to be followed by some new 'post-modern' form of state. If neo-liberalism is a throw-back to the nineteenth century, the only alternative on the political horizon is likely to lead to a resurgence of economic nationalism and inter-imperialist conflict which equally harks back to the nineteenth century.

In this light it seems more sensible to interpret the above periodisation rather differently. In essence it conflates three levels of analysis. First, at the most abstract level, the class character of the capitalist state is defined, in every stage of its existence, by its liberal form, based on the separation of the state from civil society, and their subordination to the power of money.⁷ This is correspondingly the most fundamental level of the class struggle over the form of the state. A crisis in the state form arises when the working class challenge to the power of capital extends to a challenge to the constitutional authority of the state in its relation to civil society.

Secondly, there is a progressive tendency underlying the development of the capitalist state form through every stage of its existence, as the state responds to the challenge of the working class within the limits of its liberal form. The contradictory development of the social relations of capitalist production and reproduction underlies the changing forms of class struggle which in turn underlie the tendency to the socialisation of the reproduction of the working class, in the alienated form of the systems of industrial relations, social welfare and social administration, leading to a progressive accretion of state functions and growth in state expenditure.

Thirdly, there is a typology of modes of integration of global accumulation: liberal, imperialist and Keynesian, which define the forms of capitalist competition on a world scale, and so structure the relationships between particular capitals. However it is not clear that this defines a necessary succession of stages, nor a progressive growth in the state intervention, nor even that the typology is clear-cut, imperialism and Keynesianism both being dimensions of liberalism in crisis as the political priorities of nation states come into conflict with the global power of money, and lead to a restructuring of the global relationship between money and the state, within the limits of the liberal state form.

Fourthly, we could add a typology of modes of state intervention in the domestic regulation of accumulation, which structure domestic competition: fiscal incentives, the direction of investment, the direction of labour, which structures relationships between capitals in the accumulation of domestic productive capital, within the limits of the liberal state form. Intervention in regulating the relations between domestic productive capitals is again essentially an aspect of liberalism in crisis, and does not have a necessary progressive tendency. The form and extent of such intervention is determined primarily by the balance of class forces.

Where does this leave us? My purpose in this paper is not to present answers, but to raise questions for discussion. The most general conclusion would seem to be that changing forms of class struggle and changing forms of the state are the result of a range of cross-cutting historical tendencies, which implies that history cannot be neatly packaged into structurally distinct periods. This is not to say that different historical epochs are not distinct, nor that there are progressive tendencies in play, but it is to say that the distinctiveness of an epoch is defined at a number of levels. The basis of comparison of successive epochs is the permanence of their contradictory foundations, in the contradictory form of the social relations of capitalist production. The progressive relationship between successive epochs is determined by the progressive development of the forces and relations of production. The distinctive characteristics of particular epochs are defined, on this common foundation, primarily by the balance of forces in the class struggle, and secondarily by contingent and particularistic factors. The result is that the capitalist mode of production can only be grasped as a complex totality. However this is not the complexity of relations of structural interdependence, it is the complexity of an historical process, a process of class struggle which develops on the basis of contradictory historical foundations. Periodisation does not solve the problem which gave rise to it, that of getting beyond the static fetishism of a simple 'essentialist' structuralism, because it merely proliferates structures which remain, each in their turn, equally static and fetishistic. Far from providing a middle way between a fatalistic essentialism and a political opportunism, the periodisation of the capitalist mode of production can only embrace historical specificity in the mutually exclusive forms of historical contingency and structural inevitability, either of which serve to legitimate a political opportunism in the name alternatively of the openness or the determinism of the conjuncture, and both of which cut the present off from the past, and so prevent us from learning the lessons of history.

Notes

1. Lest the reader should feel that this approach is fraudulent, in proposing a periodisation only to knock it down, I would reply that the order of presentation here reflects the order of research. I have presented the conclusions of that research more fully in my *Keynesianism, Monetarism*

- and *the Crisis of the State*, (Aldershot, Edward Elgar, 1988), which began as an attempt to develop a periodisation of the kind presented here.
2. Joachim Hirsch, 'Towards a Materialist Theory of the State' in John Holloway and Sol Picciotto (eds), *State and Capital*, (London, Edward Arnold, 1978).
 3. John Holloway and Sol Picciotto, 'Capital, Crisis and the State', *Capital and Class*, no. 2 (1977).
 4. The absolutist state is a stumbling block for any structuralist theory of the state, for it appears to be a capitalist form of the state which predates capitalism, in that it plays an essential role in establishing the external conditions for the reproduction of a capitalist mode of production which does not exist.
 5. I have criticised the regulation approach at some length elsewhere: Simon Clarke, 'Overaccumulation, Class Struggle and the Regulation Approach', *Capital and Class*, no. 36 (1988). Werner Bonefeld has criticised Hirsch's reformulation of state theory in 'Reformulation of State Theory', *Capital and Class*, no. 33 (1987).
 6. Although the immediate crisis was less acute in Britain, its impact was essentially the same as elsewhere.
 7. 'The middle classes being powerful by money only . . . must merge all feudalistic privileges, all political monopolies of past ages, in the one great privilege and monopoly of *money*. The political dominion of the middle classes is, therefore, of an essentially *liberal* appearance'. Marx and Engels, *Collected Works*, vol. 6 p. 28. (London, Lawrence and Wishart, 1975).

5

The Bourgeois State Form Revisited

HEIDE GERSTENBERGER

On Classes, Interests and Social Discourse

State analysis has not loomed large in the traditions of Marxist theory. There seemed to be no need for it, as long as the political experience of socialists could be summed up in the description of the state as an instrument of oppression in the hands of the ruling class(es), and as long as many socialists pinned their hopes on the good use to which they would turn state power once workers (and possibly even women) would have a say in politics. It was not until the institutionalisation of equal political rights for most (though never all) of the population in developed capitalist societies, and in historical conditions which appeared to prove the possibility of overcoming the crises of capitalism, that the theoretical need of analysing the structural limits of 'politics' was felt.

Ever since, Marxists have, in various ways, reverted to the analytical notion which Marx took over from Hegel, that is, the separation of the state from civil society. Having recognised this to be one of the basic characteristics of those societies in which capitalist forms of exploitation are dominant, Marxists labelled the historical evolution of this separation retrospectively a historical necessity, arising out of the development of 'capitalism'. This interpretation is incorporated in the notion of 'bourgeois revolution' which – until very recently – seemed to be one of the cornerstones of Marxist historiography.

I think that I am probably not very far off the mark in supposing that most of those who engage in Marxist state analysis take it for granted that the historical model of 'bourgeois revolutions', which has

been spelled out in (for example) the *Communist Manifesto*, is historically more or less correct. Moreover, even were this model found to be somewhat deficient, this would in no case have any bearing on the analysis of the dynamics of class antagonism in established capitalist societies. In what follows I will try to convince my hypothetical colleagues that both of these views should be abandoned. This is because historical materialist state analysis will not be able to transcend the theoretical limitation inherent in the structuralist conceptions of modes of production or social formations as long as classes of capitalist societies are assumed to have somehow been constituted by 'capitalism' and as long as the 'bourgeois revolution' is taken to be the result of a certain level of 'capitalist development'. It is the other way round: capitalism is the result of historical processes in the course of which capitalist class relations were constituted and made dominant.

In his theory of primitive accumulation, Marx endeavoured to analyse the structural conditions of this process. This theoretical project remains valid even though his analysis of the historical development in England has in the meantime been shown to be in many ways erroneous. There are vast differences in the historical processes which led to the dominance of capitalist class relations in those societies in which capitalism developed indigenously. This is even more true of those societies where capitalism was introduced by colonial or imperialistic forms of domination. One has also got to be clear that Marx restricted his historical sketch to explaining the accumulation of money on the one hand and the dispossessing of producers from their means of reproduction on the other. That is not to be confounded with the historical analysis of the development of social groups whose social practice actually gave form to capitalist social relations. The material conditions of reproduction, that is, the possession or non-possession of the means of production, while constituting class relations, do not constitute the historical form of social struggles.

The needs that people conceive of having are not 'effects' of their material positions: they contain an assessment of such positions, and this assessment, that is the view that individuals hold of God, the world, and their own place in it, is the result of social intercourse. The constitution of interests is not the outcome of exploitative relations, but of the public discourse about these relations.

The notion of interests has not much analytical value if unhistorically defined as the motivation for action (resulting from material

conditions of reproduction). Instead I would propose to confine the use of the notion of interests to the following structural – and hence historical – preconditions. The first of these is the process of individualisation. In pre-bourgeois societies, this was brought about by the transformation of family structures. Whereas for the upper echelons of 'society', the lineage persisted for a long time as the dominant unit executing strategies of appropriation and social advance, the nuclear family of peasants had early been turned into the focus of exploitation (without becoming coterminous with household). Only through the dissolution of the strategical unit of lineage, or rather through its integration into the rationalised system of clientage, that is, the net of personal connections in which privileges were acquired and safeguarded, and through fighting off feudal forms of exploitation, could persons perceive themselves as individuals, not only in the sense of the bearers of rights and obligations but also as the fountains of desires, needs and plans. These processes of individualisation are also historical preconditions for persons to become able to conceive of themselves as members of a social class.

Secondly, the use of the notion of interests should be restricted to the analysis of the causes of *social practice*. This implies that the category involves a certain degree of abstraction from the very personal (private) shade of needs. This abstraction is the result of social activities engaged in by persons who perceive of themselves as individuals. The abstraction is contained and produced in actions, language, gestures, as well as in their institutionalised and materialised preconditions. Class relations are thus never merely 'economic' relations, they are political and cultural relations as well.

If the interests of those who gained the lead in the struggle against the pre-bourgeois forms of domination were not – as is often assumed – defined by some pre-sentiment of what would structurally be necessary for capitalism, but were constituted instead by the social discourse in these very societies, then the pre-bourgeois processes of social formation have to be seen as constitutive elements of the 'bourgeois state'.

The analytical concept to be explained in this article stresses the fact that the bourgeois state form arose out of struggles against those forms of domination which had become generalised in the form of estates. The constitution of estates is taken to be one of the elements of a process which transformed feudal societies into societies of the structural type of *Ancien Régime*. The forms that these processes

assumed, although, most generally, characteristic of all pre-bourgeois societies (that is, societies in which capitalism developed indigenously), nevertheless differed widely. These dissimilarities were caused by social dynamics which cannot be explained in terms of class struggle. The specific historical form that the generalisation of personal domination assumed in societies of the *Ancien-Régime* type did, on the other hand, constitute the most decisive structural preconditions for struggles against precisely this form of domination. The concrete historical conditions for the constitution and the reproduction of estates were, in other words, a structural precondition for the historical processes in which personal forms of domination were transformed into an impersonal power: the bourgeois state. What's more, the concrete historical conditions which were imprinted into the constitution of capitalist class relations have not simply been worn off by the impact of capitalism. There is, of course, no separate history of any tradition, cultural hegemony, institution, racial or sexual division. These forms of social discourse are reproduced (and sometimes re-constituted) through social practice – or not. In Marxist state analysis, this kind of analytical concept is most often used as a device for fleshing out with historical facts the structural outlines derived from an a-historically conceived mode of exploitation. But the development of the bourgeois state form is not just a process which took off once capitalism was developed. Instead it is the historical result of struggles in pre-bourgeois societies and the historical *pre-condition* for the possibility of capitalist forms of exploitation becoming dominant. Spelling out this analytical concept requires reverting to the notion of feudal domination and developing the general characteristics of the domination form of *Ancien Régime*. I will conclude by suggesting that the analytical notion of the bourgeois state should not be considered to be synonymous with the analytical notion of the capitalist state.

On the Historical Specificity of the Dynamic Forces of Social Change

This sort of 'historising' materialist analysis is, of course, incompatible with any sort of metaphysics about a pre-determined path of history. While Marxists have nowadays got used to concurring with the critique of determinism, many of them, nevertheless, continue to analyse historical developments as though the actions of humans had

always been guided by that economic rationality which has become a forceful determinant of social behaviour ever since the human capacity to labour was turned into a commodity and the conditions of material reproduction were thereby subjugated to the competitive structure of the market. The historical form of capitalism has enabled social scientists retrospectively to analyse the structures of material reproduction in pre-capitalist societies *as though* these existed in a separate sphere and had dynamics of their own. While helping us to identify (some of) the conditions for crises of material reproduction in these societies, this approach should not be confounded with an analysis of the conditions which shaped the actual behaviour of men and women, old and young in these societies. As long as domination and religion are not conceived of as social practices which in pre-capitalist societies could organise (and not only influence) material production, the analysis of the historical constitution of the separate existence of the sphere of economics is doomed to failure before its start, because 'the economic' is assumed to have been separate all along. The very term 'extra-economic coercion' which, following Marx, is used to describe the feudal mode of exploitation, is an expression of this a-historical conception which has been inherent in so much of historical materialism.¹

Since these conceptions have been found wanting when applied to the analysis of concrete historical processes, the path has been opened for the recognition that the last remnants of any general historical 'law' must be smashed: the assumption that in all societies in which class relations can be found class struggle constitutes the decisive dynamic element. Wherever class relations form an element of the social forms of reproduction, there exists a history of class struggles. Yet that does not mean that the history of these societies can be adequately explained in terms of class struggle.

The notion of *class*, as used here, does not refer to social groups but to *contradictory social relations* which exist between those who produce and those who appropriate 'surplus', defined as outcome of the exercise of power and the resistance to it. I do not take it to be analytically helpful to include in the notion of class those *competitive relations* which exist between those who divide surplus amongst themselves. If this is accepted, then the explanation of the dynamics of pre-bourgeois societies in terms of a class struggle between the aristocracy and the bourgeoisie is ruled out once and for all.

Class relations (though not: relations between classes) were structural elements of pre-bourgeois societies (and of many of the other

pre-capitalist societies as well). But they did not constitute the dynamics of these societies in the same way as in capitalist societies. This is not to say that, in capitalist societies, classes have developed into social groups which constitute the collective actors of social struggles. But the elimination of (most) forms of personal domination and the commodification of the capacity to labour have turned class relations into the fundamental condition for social change. Thus the argument that, in pre-capitalist societies, collective practice was most often not structured according to class relations would, on its own, not be sufficient to cast doubt on the theoretical validity of the conception that class struggle has to be seen as equally determining the historical dynamics of all societies with class forms of exploitation. But the critique of this conception derives from the hypothesis that the dynamics of social change in pre-bourgeois societies was decisively structured by the competition over the means of domination (and hence appropriation). If – as is the custom amongst Marxists – all forms of appropriation in pre-bourgeois societies are subsumed to the analytical concept of class relations, then the revolutionary transformation of the very dynamics of social change, which is brought about by the transition to capitalism, cannot be analytically conceived of, let alone explained. In order to analyse this change, it is necessary – albeit briefly – to take account of those elements of pre-bourgeois societies which constituted the difference in the dynamics of social change.

On Feudal Forms of Domination

In feudal 'societies', war was not only a social form of existence but also a regular form of appropriation. Marxists tend to deal with feudal warfare as though it was a favourite pastime of feudal lords (Perry Anderson and Alain Guerreau being rare exceptions).² The Marxist critique of analytical conceptions which explain feudalism almost exclusively in terms of a system of vassalage has tended to throw the baby out with the bath-water by interpreting the feudal forms of domination more or less exclusively in terms of the class relations between landlords and peasants. Typical of this line of argument is the explanation of the centralisation of personal domination as the result of class struggles. The strengthening of the 'feudal state'³ (that is, the generalised personal power of princes and kings) is thereby conceived of as the by-product of the crisis of the

feudal mode of production. The fact that existing monarchical power was used to suppress social unrest seems to be taken as sufficient proof of such causality.

Against this sort of reasoning I would insist that it is by no means of secondary importance that the centralisation of military power (which alone transformed the claim to generalised monarchical or princely power into the possibility of really exerting jurisdiction, fiscal appropriation etc.) was mainly brought about by the belligerent social practice of winning honour and riches, trying to get hold of the labour of somebody else's peasants or somebody else's dominating powers. This regular form of feudal exploitation, which was preferably, though never exclusively, practised outside one's own range of domination, might be characterised as an extra-class form of appropriation. (This characterisation limits the notion of class to social practices which are regularised by custom so that the sheer use of force becomes a means of upholding or changing them.)

There was a specific dynamics inherent in the competitive conditions of 'extra-class' appropriation. The development of weapons and – more importantly – of new (social!) forms of warfare, which not only lessened the military importance of the single knightly fighter but also made the use of great numbers of foot-soldiers indispensable, were structural preconditions for the success of centralising strategies.

The competitive structure of the 'extra-class' forms of appropriation should not be analytically equated with competition amongst capitalists (as Comninel implies)⁴ because not only is its dynamics differently constituted but – even more importantly – its outcome was accidental (contingent) in relation to the class-form of exploitation. Of course, the extent of exploitation set material limits to the military power any lord could singly command or any prince could unite, but the results of warfare were, nevertheless, functionally unrelated to the non-military forms of feudal appropriation. They were, however – and thence derives the theoretical importance of the argument – important to the internal distribution of the means of domination.⁵ To illustrate this I suggest considering one single result of warfare: the appropriation of the – already vast – powers of domination of Anglo-Saxon (and Danish) kings by William (the Conqueror). Due to this conquest, the Norman-Angevinian kings could appropriate, defend and enlarge centralised personal domination, thereby limiting their vassals' dominating powers (almost) to the direct exploitation of peasant labour. The domination of English (Norman) landlords,

in other words, was (as compared to other feudal 'societies') nearly reduced to 'economic' means of coercion.

The difference between the mode of domination of the English manor and the '*seigneurie banale*' (which was more typical of the feudal forms of direct exploitation on the Continent) was caused by the difference in the relationship between direct exploiters and overlords.⁶ This did not – at least initially – necessarily change the conditions of life for peasants. But in the long run, the difference in the conditions for competition over status amongst the free and noble did lead to differences in the forms and the possible results of peasant struggle. Just to highlight one aspect: in so far as the relationship amongst feudal lords was fiscalised and regulated (that is rationalised), this was conducive to the rationalisation of direct exploitation; hence to the formation of the *Ancien-Régime* type of domination.

On *Ancien-Régime* Forms of Domination

As has become evident from the foregoing, I propose the notion of an *Ancien-Régime* type of society. The very restricted taxonomy⁷ of modes of production, formerly prevalent in Marxism, has long been under attack. But there still prevails that analytical practice which assumes the feudal forms of exploitation to have persisted up until their replacement by capitalism. The impressive changes in the organisation of the coercive powers, unfortunately described as 'absolutism', are either taken to have evolved from the competition between an old and a new ruling class, or else they are conceived of as the defensive bulwark of feudal-class rule which was forced by its financial dependence to foster capitalism, thereby destroying its own class base. This interpretation of absolutism, which has been spelt out by Perry Anderson,⁸ contains a 'political' theory of transition. The very re-organisation of feudal domination is taken as the reason for its final demise. Anderson suggests an 'intervening' historical formation that is restricted to the sphere of 'the state', while preserving the notion that, in the period of absolutism, the 'nobility' and the 'bourgeoisie' were a feudal or capitalist class respectively. Others, by contrast, have made analytical suggestions as to how to deal with the fact that 'feudalism', though in itself a very broad analytical concept, loses its analytical value once it is supposed to comprise those structural changes which (western) feudal 'societies'

underwent in the period which non-Marxists usually call the beginning of 'modern society'.

Some of these suggestions are easy to criticise: they either mistake the monetarisation of personal domination for its abolition (Sweezy) or the development of merchant capital for capitalism (Wallerstein). Herbert Gintis and Samuel Bowles, by contrast, believe a different point to be decisive.⁹ They propose the analytical notion of a 'State Commercial Social Formation' (which historically, would roughly correspond to Anderson's absolutism). In these societies – neither feudal nor capitalist – the state was, according to Gintis and Bowles, transformed from a means of indirect exploitation – as in feudalism – into one of direct exploitation. The strengthening of the state was brought about by those 'elites' who partook in the material results of state extraction. This dispossessed the landlords of their traditional means of ensuring their dominance. The 'state' is thus not only conceived of as something other than the mere reflection of the change in social modes of exploitation. As will become evident below, I concur with Gintis and Bowles in the structural relevance of centralised exploitation. This agreement does not extend, however, to the fundamental structuralism of their concept. 'State' and 'economy' are conceived of as structural instances which exist in feudalism, in state commercialism, and in capitalism, the only difference being the *relation* between these spheres.¹⁰ This a-historical mode of analysis is also inherent in the terms 'commercial classes' and 'landed classes' unless the authors take account of the fact that, in the historical period which they propose to analyse as State Commercial Social Formation, there were, after all, nobles and non-nobles. The estates did *not* coincide with class boundaries (as Perry Anderson, following Marxist theoretical tradition, assumes). Instead, the divergence between social status and source of income constituted in itself part of the dynamics of social change and cannot therefore be neglected in any analysis of pre-bourgeois societies.

It is Nicos Poulantzas' theory of the articulation of different modes of production in one social formation to which many of those Marxists are greatly indebted who have tackled historical realities which neither fit into the analytical notion of feudalism nor into that of capitalism. Poulantzas' analytical concept opens up the possibility of coming to terms with those results of historical research which simply cannot be made to fit into the succession of 'modes of production'.

Outstanding examples of studies which interpret concrete historical

processes in terms of the articulation of simultaneously coexisting modes of production are Régine Robin's analysis of the state of the *Ancien Régime* in France and John E. Martin's 'Feudalism to Capitalism'.¹¹ The Poulantzasian concept, however, does not solve the problem, because not only does it assume 'capitalism' to have been somehow inherent in feudalism;¹² moreover it forces historians to go in search of human actors who, in the middle of non-capitalist social discourse, acted as though their social values and ambitions had been formed in the context of capitalist societies. The opposition of pre-bourgeois forms of domination has to be explained in terms of the crises inherent in these very historical forms. The *pas de deux* of modes of production, which has become a favourite amongst Marxist anthropologists and historians, offers but slight amendments to structural determinism.

George C. Comninel, too, in his Marxist critique of the Marxist historiography dealing with the French Revolution, arrives at the analytical notion of a society which was neither feudal nor capitalist. The intervening mode of exploitation, which Comninel terms 'bourgeois society', is characterised by the fact that the state directly exploited peasants. According to Comninel, the French Revolution was a struggle amongst property owners over access to this form of exploitation. This was aggravated by class struggles between peasants and landowners. He supposes this bourgeois form of exploitation to have persisted until the political was finally separated from the economic in 1871 and capitalist forms of exploitation took the place of state extraction. Comninel's analytical concept is especially noteworthy in that it does not conceive of 'bourgeois society' as a formation intervening in all formerly feudal societies in which indigenous development towards capitalism occurred. He expressly denies this with regard to England, and it is this stress on vast structural differences in the paths of development which, in my opinion, distinguishes his contribution to the debate on transition, reopened by Robert Brenner.¹³ Comninel emphasises the fact that, in England, an increasingly important 'economic' mode of surplus appropriation had developed, and that appropriation by 'the state' was not a dominant trait of the structures of material reproduction. Notwithstanding my far-reaching concurrence with Comninel's analysis, especially with regard to the structural differences in the process of transformation, I propose the notion of *Ancien Régime* as an expression of the characteristics of all pre-bourgeois capitalist societies with generalised and rationalised forms of personal domination.

Also, my own suggestion to differentiate between bourgeois and non-bourgeois capitalist societies differs from his concept of bourgeois society.

As in societies which can be characterised as 'feudal', so in societies of the *Ancien-Régime* type, the form of motion is the exercise of *personal* domination. As used here, the term dominance always comprises appropriation. Against those Marxist who insist that one has to choose between analysing historical developments either in terms of modes of domination or in terms of modes of production, reserving the badge of honour of Marxism for those who decide on the latter, I would hold that the historical dynamics of pre-capitalist societies cannot sufficiently be grasped by means of any mode-of-production concept. In pre-bourgeois societies, appropriation is not practised outside the realm of personal domination; class struggles do not occur as such, but as struggles over the exercise of personal domination, over its forms and its range (the latter including the extent of exploitation); neither is there any economic sphere separated off from personal domination, nor any impersonal structure of domination. 'The crown', using its prerogative, is still the property of a person, just as seigneurial jurisdiction is in the possession of its owner (irrespective of whether he or she is noble). Despite the existence of conditions which made it wise for queens and kings not to bend it, the law of the kingdom had not yet been emancipated from the range of monarchical power. It is therefore only anachronistically that the institutions and the personnel through which monarchical (princely) power was exercised can be termed 'state'. Given the frequent misunderstanding that arises out of this analytical imprecision, I would suggest refraining from the habit altogether.

What distinguishes the structural preconditions for social change in societies of the *Ancien-Régime* type from feudal 'societies' is the integration of personal domination in the materialised structures of the market on the one hand and the generalisation (and thereby territorialisation) of princely or monarchical power on the other. Although regulated by custom, law and the religious sanction of symbolic powers, the actual (!) content of social relations in feudalism was defined by the extent of the (military) force anybody could possibly command. This direct structural relevance of the actual of potential 'trial by battle'¹⁴ of any given right was – in societies which I term *Ancien Régime* – replaced by the generalisation of centralised personal domination.

Independent of the extent to which governmental strategies could actually be enforced, the generalisation of centralised personal domination transformed the power of the lesser possessors of personal domination. The 'nobility' was only constituted as an estate of the realm by the rank-defining powers of the crown. Furthermore, the very forms of 'private' personal powers of domination (including appropriation) were also transformed into elements of generalised forms of personal domination. (Exaggerating for the sake of clarity we might call this a transformation of autonomy into privilege, or less drastically, the transformation of the possession of domination into a property). If landowners in eighteenth century France administered (what was left of) seigneurial jurisdiction and extracted 'feudal' dues, these were, therefore, no longer 'feudal' forms of domination.¹⁵ The conditions for the exercise of personal domination had changed due to their integration into the institutionalised forms of generalised domination. One of the effects of this change becomes apparent in peasants' riots against direct exploitation by the owner of the land and *banus* turning into criminal offences against the law of the kingdom (principality or province). The centralisation of coercive powers was – historically – not brought about as a means of sanctioning class forms of exploitation. The need to repress revolt, while provoking the (regional) unification of the powers of landlords, did not result in a stable structure of a centralised agency of class rule being developed. Yet once constituted (out of belligerent appropriation and the competition over the possession of domination), the coercive powers of personal domination were sanctioned by centralised means of government. These developments changed the safeguarding of the autonomy (liberty) of personal domination into the demand for representation, that is, the participation in decisions over the content and forms of generalised personal domination.

The generalisation of monarchical (princely) domination was a process of regularisation – and thereby rationalisation – of its practices. But neither did it thereby lose its personal character nor was the practice of appropriation separated from that of domination. On the contrary, the participation in either the appropriating powers of centralised domination or in the material results of their exercise was a main feature of the material reproduction of elevated social rank in the *Ancien Régime*. This participation assumed a wide variety of forms. They ranged from gifts and sinecures for the favourites at court, monopolies granted to trading companies, the acquisition,

inheritance or use (*bene placida*) of a delegated office, and the exemption from tax to the privileges of guild masters.¹⁶ True, those who were already mighty and noble usually secured the most profitable offices for members and friends of their own families. Yet the material benefits which individuals drew out of the alienation of parts of centralised domination (in the form of office property or in the form of privileges which excluded or restricted economic competition) were by no means a preserve of the nobility. It was the 'property-owners' (to use Comminel's term for the economically ruling class of the *Ancien Régime*) who either partook or aspired to partake in the appropriating powers of centralised domination.

There are two aspects which – even on the very abstract level of reasoning to which this paper must necessarily be restricted – have to be mentioned as a safeguard against erroneous conclusions. The first relates to the fact that, as long as the *Ancien Régime* lasted, wealth as such did not define social status. Wealth was usually a precondition and often (but neither everywhere nor always) an attribute of elevated rank. Yet the members of higher estates, though unable to prevent the advent of new families into their ranks, did at least succeed in defining certain sources of wealth as incompatible with noble status. (The rigidity of this exclusion strategy was not dependent on having been turned into law). Services for the crown were taken to be means of elevating or ensuring one's social status. Offices, therefore, were investments in social status. They might and did appear desirable despite the fact that gains to be expected elsewhere may have been higher. Status rationality is not identical with economic rationality. It is therefore incorrect (or at least insufficient) to view the distribution of the spoils of centralised exploitation as the predominant function of 'the state' in societies of the *Ancien-Régime* type. It is equally incorrect to explain the increase in numbers of government officials in terms of 'growing state functions'. During Colbert's chancellorship, for instance, regulations of commerce and production abound, and scores of new offices were created. True, these secured social ascent, and possibly income, for individuals as well as reducing the debts of the crown (through the sale of offices and privileges). They did not, however, produce that reality of 'Colbertism' which has long been taken for granted in books on 'mercantilism'.¹⁷ In the same way, the increase in members serving in Commissions of Peace, which England witnessed in the second half of the sixteenth century, is chiefly an expression of the fact that a greater number of families could aspire to the status of

Gentry (appointment to the Commissions of Peace proving the success of such aspirations).¹⁸

The second aspect which has to be taken into account in theorising about the 'absolutist state' is the fact that the exercise of official power was bent to serve the special interests of those wielding these powers. Regular pay was rare, and only in exceptional cases was it considered to be the only legitimate use to be made of the appropriating powers of an office. This meant that the administration of the powers conferred upon office-holders could be structured so as to maximise fees, or else the owners of office property could choose actually not to make use of its power potential to delegate their official chores to low-paid clerks whom they themselves appointed. If strategies to rise in status coincided with the strategy to enlarge the powers of the crown, the servants of a queen or king functioned as 'instruments' of these strategies. They never did so to the extent suggested by the use of the term 'absolutist state'. Even if, at certain times and amongst certain groups of office-holders, industrious and even zealous individuals were to be found, the personnel of central domination in societies of the *Ancien-Régime* type was no bureaucracy.¹⁹

The insistence on the analytical relevance of this – often neglected – aspect of the *Ancien-Régime* forms of domination does not contradict the emphasis on the structural relevance which has to be attributed to both the generalisation and intensification of monarchical (princely) power. This is because in spite of all its internal contradictions, organisational limitations and, above all, its dependence on the support of locally dominant families and office-holders, the impact of centralised domination came to be effective enough to provoke a generalisation of demands and resistance (interests) regarding its religious policy, the waging of war, taxation policies, the granting of monopolies, the regulation of (non-agrarian) production and so forth. 'Politics' throughout the *Ancien Régime* was a more or less local affair, but local politics were conditioned by the relation of local to central government. Moreover, the rare instances of generalised public debate (the main exception being struggles over religious practices) are no indication of local discourse being unrelated to the generalised forms of monarchical (princely) domination.²⁰

The relevance of this argument will be explained by reference to Anthony Giddens' critique of historical materialism.²¹ Giddens has repeatedly emphasised that there were two dynamics conflated in the

historical constitution of modern societies: the development of national states and that of capitalism. According to Giddens, there is no structural necessity for capitalism to be organised in the form of the nation state. The latter's constitutions, he insists, were not a by-product of capitalist development but the result of belligerent competition, which pre-dated capitalism. Giddens is quite right. Marxists have, on the whole, not taken sufficient (if any) account of the fact that capitalism developed in societies which were integrated by the exercise of a territorialised ('national') form of domination. That, however, does not prove the hypothesis to be correct that the development of capitalism and of the nation state should be conceived of as independent from each other. This is because the very form of a generalised and territorialised domination was a structural precondition for the possibility of capitalist forms of exploitation becoming dominant. (Capitalism did *not* develop out of feudalism but out of *Ancien-Régime*-type structures). The struggle for the private right to use one's own property at liberty (even if this implied dominating those persons who contracted to sell their capacity to labour) developed in societies in which the emancipation of 'the economic' from the sphere of domination could be effected through the expropriation of individual possessors of already generalised forms of domination. In order to become structurally dominant the capitalist form of production required exemption from an already established monopoly of domination. This process should not be conceived of as some kind of economic mushrooming, one capitalist leading to more capitalists.

The generalisation of personal domination (growth of nation states) evolved from belligerent strife for honour, the grace of God, for riches and for land (the order of relevance usually – but not always – being the reverse). Historians of governmental practices have long argued that, up until the nineteenth century, any effective reorganisation of fiscal and administrative practices was most often provoked by the 'needs' of war. Yet, here again, we come across relevant structural changes which marked off societies of the *Ancien-Régime*-type from feudal 'societies'. These changes can be summed up as the territorialisation and confessionalisation of generalised personal domination. The two processes were interrelated. It was in the course of those devastating international wars – yet again attempts at the forceful unification of religious practices in order to secure domination (or at least political influence) – that the concept of the reciprocal acceptance of sovereignty evolved.

The *Ancien Régime* is the historical epoch of the reformation. For the development of generalised personal domination, the structural change summed up in this term is equally important as the difficulties which landlords encountered in practising feudal forms of appropriation. This is because it was the combination of the generalised interests of those profiting from centralised appropriation (or hoping to do so in the future) and from the guarantee of private means of appropriation with the confessionalisation of generalised power which *reconstituted* (and thereby strengthened) the generalised domination ('state'). When the monopoly over the means of grace, which the church had been able to set up in the course of feudalism, was divided into confessionally separate monopolies, this, rather than secularising political discourse, constituted the separate sphere of religion. The domination over religious practices was no longer the main form of cultural (and, in feudalism, even social) integration. In the course of those wars which, in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, were fought in the name of religion and in the endeavours of puritan 'Saints' forcefully to establish an order of society according to the commands of God, practice of belief lost its capacity to stabilise social discourse. Not only during the *Ancien Régime* but also in the historical epoch of bourgeois societies has political discourse often and intensely been embedded in the language of religion. The church, however, no longer defined, but rather legitimised social values and politics. The public practice of religion developed into an attribute of respectability. Former practices of stabilisation being shaken, the owners of generalised domination were not only forced to try really to govern the country; their domination then also developed into the form of motion for the constitution of morality. Not only was the demand for freedom of belief historically the first claim to a private sphere to be exempt from generalised domination; but the very generalisation of monarchical powers, that is the constitution of a 'totality' of society through regulation, is, historically, the result of processes by which the sacral elements of any form of personal domination were transformed into a relation between the sphere of worldly domination and the sphere of religion. Both these processes, the generalisation of personal domination and the secularisation which was inherent in the process of confessionalisation, were structural preconditions for the bourgeois state form to become historically possible.

It is, of course, possible to integrate into the analytical concept of feudalism the generalisation, rationalisation and secularisation as

well as the transformation of exploitative powers into privileges: in short, the structural elements of *Ancien-Régime* type societies. The content of this concept would then have to be reduced to a productive system which is characterised by the use of extra-economic coercion, societies of the *Ancien-Régime* type then being described, just as William Beik suggests, 'as a whole set of interlocking relationships and cultural themes deriving from this "core" system of production'.²² My own proposition differs from that of Beik and most other Marxists not because I deny that the relationships which characterised societies of the *Ancien-Régime* type 'derived' from the 'core' of feudal production. Rather I would insist that the transformation of feudalism into capitalism can only be explained if we take into account that it was not just any structurally possible (!) development of feudalism but a very *specific* set of interlocking relationships which made the transformation historically possible. If we want to grasp the structural preconditions for this very specific historical development, the recourse to dynamics inherent in forms of 'extra-economic coercion' is theoretically insufficient. Once this is accepted the use of a special term by which to characterise those very specific forms of domination which were the structural preconditions for capitalistic and bourgeois forms of social relations to develop seems to suggest itself. It is, however, neither the term *Ancien Régime*, nor, indeed, any kind of terminological differentiation which is indispensable but only the realisation that there is not much 'theory' left if the transition to capitalism and bourgeois society is 'explained' as the outcome of a structural dynamics which is inherent in social relations in which extra-economic coercion is used for the extraction of 'surplus'.

On Bourgeois Revolutions

The bourgeois revolution was the expropriation of personal domination, be it monarchical power, seigniorial jurisdiction, noble privilege or guild masters' power. In the process, domination was being impersonalised. It is this constitution of the state as an impersonal – and therefore public – power which constitutes the separation of the political from the economic.²³

The generalised means of public powers can, of course, be used for private appropriation. They can also come under the political *influence* of single persons. If this happens – as it did, for the first time, under Napoleon I – then these persons are more powerful than

any 'absolutist' monarch could ever have been. This is because the powers they have at their command are now really instrumental to their political strategies.²⁴ Bourgeois revolutions constituted bureaucracies and national armies and replaced vested (or legally sanctioned) personal interests in the practice of generalised means of power by the need to legitimate politics.

Historically, the separation of the political from the economic is the elimination of the – either inherited or acquired – personal ('private') possession of generalised means of domination (including appropriation). Through the elimination of estates (the – more or less – institutionalised form of the generalisation of personal domination), class relations were – so to speak – structurally set free. Class struggle thus came to be the form of motion of society.

The processes in which societies of the *Ancien Régime* type were revolutionised into bourgeois forms of society were *not* caused by a certain level of capitalist development. Neither did this revolutionary transformation necessarily quicken the pace of capitalisation. (The traditional Marxist assumption that the processes by which the political and the economic were separated coincided with the capitalisation of the mode of exploitation resulted from the a-historical reduction of pre-bourgeois societies to modes of production). The structural possibility of bourgeois revolutions arose out of crises of the *Ancien Régime* which were inherent in its *special* forms of domination: in the appropriating character of privileges, in the extent of centralised appropriation (which in itself constituted an alternative to the development of other forms of appropriation), in the possibilities of social advancement and the forms in which exclusion from privileges was practised.²⁵ In the course of the struggles over the extent and the forms of both direct exploitation and of centralised domination, 'private' (fractured) personal domination was – during the *Ancien Régime* – being developed into: property plus privilege.

The bourgeois state form is the result of social struggles in which non-privileged property owners were able eventually to secure the lead. They dispossessed those who belonged to the privileged estate of their privileges but – on the whole – not of their property. If those who were exploited made property itself the target of collective (revolutionary) practice they, quite understandably, tended to overlook the differences between privileged and non-privileged property owners.

It was, in other words, the generalisation of personal domination in the form of privileges – the possession of which was sanctioned by

centralised domination – which provoked the claim to equal rights. The concept of natural equality arose out of the domination form of societies of the *Ancien-Régime* type. The concept was politically transformed and concretised into the demand to eliminate property (including 'vested interests') in centralised domination. The extent of private participation in centralised appropriation and the forms in which the privileged estates were constituted and reproduced in the course of the *Ancien Régime* developed into decisive preconditions for the political forms in which the elimination of personal forms of domination could be achieved. The concrete structures of the generalisation of personal domination were the result both of belligerent competition over domination during feudalism and of the struggles which structured admission into the ranks of privileged estates. This implies that, contrary to Robert Brenner's assumptions, the concrete forms in which the generalisation of personal domination developed have to be interpreted not so much as the *result* of struggles over direct exploitation but rather as one of the most decisive conditions under which such struggles had to be fought.

The dissimilar forms in which the generalisation of personal domination came to be structured were important in that they produced or excluded the historical possibility of a more or less gradual process of eliminating privilege occurring once the centralised form of personal domination had been transformed into impersonal power. If the 'bourgeois revolution' was achieved through a process of forced reform, the economic, cultural as well as political hegemony of those groups which had occupied the ranks of the social hierarchy in societies of the *Ancien-Régime* type could persist long after the capitalist form of exploitation had become dominant. Such persistence conditioned the constitution of interests and social struggles as well as the development of 'bourgeois' state power.²⁶ If this can be demonstrated in concrete historical analysis – as I think it well can be – then Marxist analysis has to dare really to develop into *historical* materialism. This would have to take into account that structuration processes which had – to a considerable extent – been moulded by extra-class forms of appropriation came to be part of those conditions under which capitalist class relations were developed.

I must here refrain from any attempt to describe, let alone explain, those structural differences in the domination form of the *Ancien Régime* which came to be preconditions for the political forms in which personal domination was to be abolished. Instead I shall, by way of conclusion, point to those elements of historical specificity

which are common features of those capitalist states that developed out of societies of the structural type of *Ancien Régime*.

On the Historical Specificity of the Bourgeois State Form

In his analysis of primitive accumulation, Marx developed two structural preconditions of capitalism: a class of persons who were dispossessed of the means for their material reproduction and free to sell their capacity to labour, and a class of persons who had already appropriated the means of production or, due to the wealth they had accumulated, were able to do so. Even on the most abstract level, and leaving aside the cultural transformations required to turn poor men and women into capitalist labourers, and rich men into capitalist entrepreneurs, we have to add one more structural precondition: the separation of the economic from the political. Capitalist forms of exploitation, though able to come into existence, cannot become dominant under conditions in which this separation is not achieved. This is because capitalist production requires a fundamental contradiction: in capitalist societies, the state is the institutionalised form of public general domination. The most fundamental form of domination, however, which is inherent in capitalist societies, is excluded from the domination of the state.²⁷ The private right to use one's own property includes the right to those forms of domination over persons (!) which are inherent in the organisation of the labour process. Law regulates – some of – the conditions under which the capacity to labour can be contracted away, and it usually does set *limits* to the freedom of its usage, but – as long as capitalist forms of production are dominant – this fact remains: the capacity to labour can only profitably be made use of if persons selling it as a commodity are coerced into labouring willingly and diligently, without being consulted about their wishes and bereft of their freedom of choice concerning internal changes of the place of their labour. As this domination is exercised during precisely that period in which the dominated persons are not in legal possession of their own capacity to labour, having sold it as a commodity, this new historical form of private domination is not taken to be an exception from the public character of domination: that is, the political.

In societies of the *Ancien-Régime* type, the freedom to use one's own property, though not yet achieved, was already very far developed. One of its forms was – paradoxically – that of privilege.

Privileges could be means of restricting the prerogative of regulating the non-agrarian productive process of circulation, thereby turning these into the domain of private decision.

In those capitalist societies which developed out of societies of the *Ancien-Régime* type, the separation of the political from the economic was brought about through the abolition of personal domination. Henceforth, the use of public authority for private gains was labelled corruption.²⁸ It was the historical specificity of the domination forms of the *Ancien Régime* which made the claim to legal and political equality a structural precondition for capitalist exploitation to become dominant. This claim formed a necessary element in the practical and theoretical critique of privileges.

Outside this historical context, equal rights of citizens do not form a functional necessity of capitalist exploitation.²⁹ The dynamics inherent in the bourgeois revolution is not an element of any structuralist 'capitalist mode of exploitation'. There exists no dynamics of capitalist class relations which in itself would necessarily dissolve political inequalities based on wealth, religion, race or gender. Only collective social practice can turn the abolition of such inequalities into a functional necessity of the reproduction of capitalist class relations. In those capitalist societies which – through processes that can be summed up in the notion of 'bourgeois revolution' – developed out of societies of the *Ancien-Régime* type, there prevailed a kind of social discourse which had been dominated not only by processes of individualisation and of the privatisation of religion, but also by the claim to legal and political equality for a long time. This discourse formed the interests of people who, according to narrowly conceived class analysis, should, first of all, have aspired to more meat instead of rights.³⁰

Today, both the constitutional forms of bourgeois states and that legal definition of private subjects which was the historical product of societies of the *Ancien-Régime* type, as well as the claim to political equality are to be found in capitalist societies all over the world. It would, nevertheless, be erroneous to assume that the content and the forms of social discourses which developed in the course of bourgeois revolutions had thereby also been transplanted.³¹ The profitable usage of commodified labour does not – as such – generate any need for importing these traditions; and cultural imperialism, devastating though it certainly is, does not simply erode the processes of historical social formation in those societies in which there was no indigenous development towards capitalism.

This consideration leads to the following hypothesis; notwithstanding the marked and long-lasting differences among societies that conform to the structural notion of *Ancien Régime*, the conditions for the constitution of interests in capitalist societies that developed through the revolutionary transformation of societies of the *Ancien-Régime* type were – taken together – quite different from those obtaining in societies in which capitalism was implanted by colonial/imperialistic domination. (Only in relation to this major difference can the latter be summed up under the heading of ‘state in dependent societies’). In order to further the theoretical project of historical materialism, I would therefore propose to reserve the notion of ‘bourgeois state form’ to those societies which evolved from societies of the structural type of *Ancien Régime* (or, in other words, out of pre-bourgeois forms of society). They are capitalist societies which are characterised by certain elements of interest-constituting dynamics that cannot be derived from any general logic of capitalist class relations.

Implications for Form Analysis

Since structuralist notions, be they those of the so-called derivation debate or those of Poulantzasian models of interpretation, have come under critique, Marxists have become used to stressing the necessity of combining historical with logical analysis. This essay is intended to demonstrate the shortcomings of any analytical conception which presupposes the possibility of conceiving of logical analysis as separate from historical analysis and hence of any possibility of ‘combining’ both forms of analysis. Such presuppositions result in transforming specific historical into general forms of modes of production or else explaining them in terms of specific combinations of different modes of production. Form analysis which does not eliminate social practice from materialist analysis can only be conceived of as the analysis of historical processes of social formation. I do not think it possible to lay down generally valid rules of just how much ‘history’ has to be integrated into Marxist form analysis. The critical measure would always have to be the possibility of recognising those historical prejudices which lead us to define the result of very specific processes of social formation as general forms of a mode of production, thereby transforming materialist analysis into philosophy of history.

Notes

1. Maurice Godelier, ‘The ideal and the real’ in Raphael Samuel & Gareth Stedman Jones (eds.), *Culture, Ideology and Politics* (London Routledge & Kegan Paul 1983), pp. 12–37.
2. Perry Anderson, *Lineages of the Absolutist State* (London New Left Books 1974); Alain Guerreau, *Le Féodalisme* (Paris 1980).
3. I use quotation marks either to point to common erroneous or else to the intentionally anachronistic use of an expression.
4. George C. Comminel, *Rethinking the French Revolution* (London Verso, 1987). For Comminel competition in the ruling class itself is an element of all forms of exploitation. Though this is correct, it omits the fundamental differences in the conditions for competition amongst exploiters.
5. The hypotheses put forward in this article are based on an extensive comparative historical analysis of the development of domination forms in England and France, and the elaboration of the theoretical concept which here can only be very briefly explained. For the extensive development of arguments as well as for further bibliographical references refer to: Heide Gerstenberger, *Die subjektlose Gewalt. Theorie der Entstehung bürgerlicher Staatsgewalt* (Münster Westfälisches Dampfboot, 1990).
6. This difference has been discussed by Marc Bloch, *La société féodale* (1939) (Paris 1968), 3rd Book, Chap. 2, as well as by Frederick Pollock & Frederic Maitland, *The History of English Law before the time of Edward I*, 2nd ed. (Cambridge, 1898), Vol. I, esp pp. 66–235.
7. The term has been used by Laclau; Ernesto Laclau, ‘The Specificity of the Political’ in *Economy and Society*, No. 1 (1975); again in Ernesto Laclau, *Politics and Ideology in Marxist Theory* (London, 1977), pp. 51–79.
8. See Note no. 2.
9. Herbert Gintis & Samuel Bowles ‘State and Class in European Feudalism’ in Charles Bright and Susan Harding (eds.), *Statemaking and Social Movements* (University of Michigan Press 1984), pp. 19–51.
10. The best critique of these theoretical conceptions that I know of is Etienne Balibar’s critique of his own former theoretical structuralism. Etienne Balibar in Urs Jaeggi and Axel Honneth, (eds.), *Theorien des Historischen Materialismus* (Suhrkamp, 1977), pp. 293–343, translated from: *Cinq études du matérialisme historique* (Paris, 1974), pp. 205–245.
11. Régine Robin, ‘La nature de l’état à la fin de l’ancien régime: Formation sociale, Etat et Transition’ in *Dialectiques*, vol. 1–2, pp. 31–54; John E. Martin, *Feudalism to Capitalism. Peasant and Landlord in English Agrarian Development* (Macmillan, 1983).
12. For a very good critique of Poulantzasian analysis see G. C. Comminel (1987), Part 4.

13. Robert Brenner, 'Agrarian Class Structure and Economic Development in Pre-Industrial Europe' in *Past & Present* no. 70 (1976) pp. 30-75; Robert Brenner, 'Agrarian Class Structure and Economic Development in Pre-Industrial Europe: The Agrarian Roots of European Capitalism' in *Past & Present* no. 97 (1982), pp. 16-113.
14. The term is used in the figurative sense. Trial by battle was a form of deciding a law suit (in England, it persisted formally until 1819). Here it is used to imply that questions of legitimacy (of domination) were – in the end – decided by means of war and feud.
15. The statement implies a critique of the orthodox Marxist interpretation (for which Soboul's work became the most influential), because this was in search of 'feudalism' in pre-revolutionary France and took the revolutionary language ('abolition of feudalism') to be proof of the dominance of feudal forms of exploitation.
16. It might be useful to mention the theoretical content of this enumeration. It is not purported to be complete but to point to the fact that many forms of appropriation which were practised by 'burghers' and other non-nobles in the epoch of feudalism and of the *Ancien Régime* were part and parcel of the dominating systems of appropriation and not structurally contradictory elements. The critique of these forms of appropriation (which made profitable use of one's own or somebody else's dominating powers) was not led by those who had got hold of a monopoly or of high office but of those who lost hope that they might ever do so.
17. On the critique of the concept of Colbertism as description of government policy: Fernand Braudel and Ernest Labrousse (eds.), *Histoire Economique et Sociale de la France*, vol. II (Paris: Presses Univ. de France, 1970). (Pierre Goubert, 'Le "Tragique" XVII^e Siècle', pp. 351-9).
18. Norma Landau, *The Justices of the Peace 1679-1760* (University of California Press, 1984), part II.
19. For a thorough analysis of the differences between office-holding and bureaucracy see George E. Aylmer, 'From Office-Holding to Civil Service: the Genesis of Modern Bureaucracy' in *Transactions of the Royal Historical Society*, vol. 30 (1980), pp. 91-108.
20. The analytical concept of interpreting local history (in this historical epoch) in terms of the relation between local and central politics is very convincingly spelled out as a critique of 'localism' in historical research by: David Harry Sacks, 'The Corporate Town and the English State: Bristol's Little Business' 1625-1641' in *Past & Present* no. 110 (1986), pp. 69-75.
21. Anthony Giddens, *A Contemporary Critique of Historical Materialism*, (London, Macmillan, 1981), Chapter 8; Anthony Giddens, *The Nation-State and Violence*, (London, Polity Press, 1985), passim.

22. William Beik, *Absolutism and Society in Seventeenth Century France* (Cambridge Univ. Press, 1985), p. 30.
23. The notion of 'bourgeois revolution' loses its analytical value if it is assumed that the structural revolution had to occur in the form of the 'drama' of revolutionary events (1641, 1789). It should be used to specify the structural transformation which revolutionised societies of the *Ancien Régime* into bourgeois societies, leaving it to concrete analysis to spell out how much of this revolutionary change occurred at any given date.
24. Max Weber's analysis of the instrumentality of bureaucracies has been and needs to be criticised. This critique, however, does not contradict that – as compared to office-holding – bureaucracies are much more instrumental. For the critique of the concept of instrumentality see Heide Gerstenberger, 'Alltagsforschung und Faschismustheorie' in Heide Gerstenberger & Dorothea Schmidt (eds.), *Normalität oder Normalisierung?* (Münster Westfälisches Dampfboot, 1987), pp. 35-49; For the difference to office-holding see note 23; for an example of concrete processes of transformation see J.F. Bosher, *French Finances 1770-1795: From Business to Bureaucracy*, (Cambridge, 1970).
25. I do not think it possible to be more precise on the general level of reasoning, because the forms of domination (the conditions for the reproduction of and admission into elevated rank) and the impact that they had on the organisation of production were quite different. This also constituted different conditions for structural crises. For comparative analysis of England and France see Heide Gerstenberger, (note 5 above).
26. More than anywhere else this holds true for England.
27. There are personal forms of domination inherent in male dominance. They are, however, not to be explained as structural preconditions for capitalist exploitation.
28. One of the forms in which the bourgeois revolution was achieved in England was the strategy to label vested interests in state appropriating powers 'corruption', see W.D. Rubinstein, 'The End of "Old Corruption" in Britain 1780-1860' in *Past & Present* no. 101 (1983), pp. 55-86.
29. This summarises my critique of the theoretical project to derive the state form from the general structure of capitalism. On the so-called 'Ableitungsdebatte', see John Holloway & Sol Picciotto (eds.), *State and Capital: A German Debate* (London, 1978).
30. For a critique of these conceptions see Gareth Stedman Jones, *Language of Class* (Cambridge Univ. Press, 1983) esp. pp. 90-8.
31. Implicit in this argument is a general critique of Rey's theoretical conception. Rey 'defines' social groups (for example, appropriating old men in tribal societies) in terms of classes which fit into Marx's

explanatory model of primitive accumulation and thinks he can explain the transition in England by making use of the Poulantzian concept of social formation. Pierre Philippe Rey, *Les alliances des classes*, (Paris, 1978).

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