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THE CAMERA OBSCURA OF CONSCIOUSNESS

A CRITIQUE OF THE SUBJECT/OBJECT-ARTICULATION IN MARXISM<sup>1</sup>

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## PART I

### Chapter 1

#### WHY ANALYZE PHILOSOPHICAL PATTERNS OF ARTICULATION IN MARXISM?

The most important work which Marxists must perform is, together with the building of the new, the clarifying of the old. The assertion that the treatment of the old is accomplished in the fact that we go on is reprehensible.

Peter Weiss, *The Aesthetics of Resistance*

The current world crisis, which is, in fact a configuration of different crises, each of them already dangerous in itself, has not failed to affect Marxism. Under the pressure of qualitatively new problems many previously powerful articulations have shriveled or fallen apart. Such crises have occurred repeatedly for as long as »Marxism« has existed. The present crisis was provoked by an overlaying of sets of problems, each of which gives by itself ample cause for second thoughts. In the West, the scientific-technical revolution undermined in multiple ways the classical culture of the industrial worker in which the political culture of Marxist socialism had its roots. The classically envisioned »subject« of social transformation appears to be losing its reality.

On the other hand, the countries under communist governance have violently shaken many previous certitudes. There is to date not a single accepted Marxist analysis of these newer social formations »which the 'classical Marxist thinkers' did not predict« (Lombardo-Radice 1983, 70). To the unpredicted phenomena belong economic crises which would plague countries with such differing political constitution as Rumania, Poland and Yugoslavia.

The global dangers of atomic war and of ecological destruction compound the pressure of the problems with which Marxism is confronted.

»Crisis« of Marxism takes on, in this situation, two different meanings. On the one hand it expresses the decline, indeed disintegration of previous political and intellectual cultures. On the other hand, many perceive it as a challenge. A new constellation of questions requires the development of new answers and methods.

The moment at which a »crisis« is detected is often in fact the moment at which it ceases to be ignored or suppressed. That is to say, it represents an opportunity as well. Once the »frightful power of habit« (Lenin) is shaken, the possibility of restructuring increases. One should not be fooled by fashion. The times of the *problematiques* articulated by Marx and the attempts at their solution has just begun.

Richard Löwenthal, an influential advisor to the directorate of the German Social-Democratic Party, found himself 1983 moved to prophesy the imminent death of Marxism. His argumentation deserves exhibition, partially because it contains a grain of truth unintended by the author. Marx, he says, is the founder of a »this-worldly religion«. Other-worldly religions promise a paradise in the Hereafter; their claims cannot be tested in *this* world. The »this-worldly religion« is different. Its promise can be tested. Hence, it is short-lived (see Löwenthal 1983, 131f.). He overlooks the mainpoint, however.

The project which Marx called »scientific socialism« articulates a whole array of problems and social movements. The fundamental *need* to which this project answers is that of a conscious and systematic shaping of society, above all of the »metabolism with nature« (*Stoffwechsel mit der Natur*) or production, with all of its ecological implications, and of »social metabolism« (*gesellschaftlicher Stoffwechsel*) or distribution. This problem presents itself today as an imperative of global proportions; the demand for a »new economic order« is one of the forms in which this necessity is being articulated.

Our generation experiences not only global dangers which for the first time threaten to destroy the human race. Ours is also one of the first generations for which »humanity« is something more than merely a humanistic idea. The media of our times are literally global. The artificial satellites which circle our globe represent the all-encompassing reach of the forces of production, just as the intercontinental missiles represent the all-encompassing reach of the forces of destruction. The political structures limp along behind the technical and military ones. They are weak, but they do exist. »Humanity« gradually becomes concrete as a project born of necessity. Catastrophes are its trail-blazers. The elements of a »world order« of which governments and international organisms are capable must allow for a multiform polycentrism. And what is more, they must develop a capacity for a »language« which is not only international but also intercultural and inter-systemic.

The new kind of universalism which is needed must be based in a respect for specificities. Lacking a universalism of this sort, a momentary politics which

brackets out points of conflict or addresses them with empty phrases, most often presides in international institutions. The *Frankfurter Allgemeine*, leading newspaper of the West-German *haute bourgeoisie*, describes as follows what it conceives to be the task of the western representatives at the United Nations:

[They] must scrutinize every text which comes out of the photocopy machine or off of the house press. They must examine every proposed resolution with a magnifying glass and, as the case may be, either water it down to the point of meaninglessness or »kill« it altogether -- often with a new proposal which serves only as a basis for maneuvering and which makes possible the withdrawal of both. (FAZ, 29.11.83, 1, Editorial by E.-O. Maetzke)

The result is »a threshing of grainless straw«, according to the same article. If we bracket out the antagonisms, in this case between the western industrial countries and the developing countries, which are sometimes expressed in this form at such assemblies, and which lead to an exchange of empty chatter, there remains nonetheless the positive problem: In which »language« can problems be globally articulated without their regional aspects being annulled? Every analysis, every diagnosis of a crisis, is only one moment of a hermeneutic circle. Each diagnosis is linked to a prognosis. Every articulation of a problem receives its meaning from a social project. The supply of social projects, which are at once on the crest of the wave of contemporary problems and fit for intercultural articulation is not great. There are essentially two groups of projects. The one group counts on the guidance of the »invisible hand« (A. Smith), which emerges from the market relations of private business and engenders a quasi-planning without a plan. This, at any rate, is the language of the manifest texts. Such models, which praise the spontaneity of the market based on private property, are without a doubt the paradigm of the »market interests«, as Max Weber calls them, i.e. of those interested who, to the disadvantage of others, reap the greatest profits from the mere fluctuations of market relations. It is clear that, in international exchange, the laws of the market always work to the advantage of the technologically advanced economies. The other group of projects counts on the »visible hand« of social planning. There are many variants. The role of state and market vary as well as the forms of planning, which range from self-management models to state planning commissions. But the basic idea is the same: conscious, systematic shaping and development of the economy on a scientific level. It is not hard to identify those who have an interest in this second sort of project: on the one hand it is the inner-socially exploited and

the marginalized, on the other hand, viewed internationally, it is the less developed societies, which can only proceed along a self-determined path of development by this means. In all societies, those forces of science and culture which can find realization only under such conditions have an interest in this second order of projects; finally, the forces of ecology -- because ecology requires planned economy, even if a planned economy is not automatically ecological.

Wherever the necessity of a conscious shaping of social relations is determinant, the Marxian project enters the game. Humanity has produced no other project which can compete, at the level of the analysis of social relations in the perspective of their conscious shaping in the general interest, with that of Marx. That this claim will surely provoke hefty objections lies in the nature of the disputes, which are conducted as »ideological struggle«. And the threatened private interests quite understandably arm themselves in defence. But this is not the whole truth. The other part of the truth forces us to critically reassess Marxism. It is incumbent upon those who are convinced that the Marxian project makes an irreplaceable contribution to the articulation of contemporary world problems to critically reinterpret it. In many respects this applies more for the different traditions and formations of Marxism than to Marx himself. This fact prompts many critical intellectuals »to view Marx as independent of Marxism, to read and interpret him, without dragging along the burden of the tradition« (Cerutti 1983, 231). This orientation must be objected to on two counts, however. First of all, this tradition, though it so often binds the necessary new reading of Marx today, is not only a negative burden, which could be profitably cast off, but also a cargo which is in need of re-evaluation as sorely as is the work of Marx. Secondly, we read Marx not as an end in itself, but because we need his preparatory work for the practical goals of the present and the future. In short, the practical turning to Marx is itself »Marxism«, and Cerutti's turn against Marxism means, in the end-effect: Marxism is Dead -- Long Live Marxism!

The purpose of the following study is not apologetic. The guiding idea is the following: Precisely those who are convinced of the importance of the work of Marx and of his followers for articulation and possible solution of contemporary problems must critically approach the inner barriers, by which the different formations of Marxism involuntarily obstructed its universal use. How can the inner barriers and stupidities be articulated? How can Marx and Marxism be reinterpreted from the standpoint of present necessities? This mode of questioning is not fashionable at the moment-but has, as a result, that much more future.

Speaking with Stuart Hall, one could say of this study as well:

»If, according to the fashionable canon, all that is left, in the light of the devastatingly advanced, cleverer, and cogent critiques, is the labour of the perpetual ›deconstruction‹, this essay is devoted to a little modest work of ›reconstruction‹ -- without, I hope, being too defaced by ritual orthodoxy.« (1983, 65)

From the outset we make a significant restriction, without paying homage to the rhetorical topos of false modesty: The political *problematiques* of Marxism are here bracketed out. This investigation does not intervene on the political level. It intervenes on the level of the articulation models which underlie concrete analyses and projects. In short, the interest of this study is the paradigms of articulation of *problematiques*. This is without a doubt a level whose status, particularly from the standpoint of historical materialism, is problematical. Doesn't the very approach presume that this level -- the level of articulation-models -- holds a basis-position in relation to economics and politics? If one assumes that such paradigms of articulation are enclosed in »cultures« or »civilizations«, doesn't the very approach imply a »culturalist turn«? Or, does it not insert itself, by addressing linguistically conditioned articulations, into the »linguistic turn«? Yes and no. Yes, because here, compared to other (not all) traditions of Marxism, a heavier accent is given to the cultural and the discursive. No, for two reasons. First, because the turn here is critical: it is the purpose of this study to overcome certain cultural and discursive tendencies toward inertia. Second, because these tendencies are analysed as *effects* of social structures. For these reasons the subject here under study has only relative self-sufficiency. Were we to follow a mechanistic and spatial interpretation of the basis-superstructure-schema, we could locate it on neither plane. The status of our subject was prethought by Marx in structures like the *resultant law* or the *regulating result* (see Haug 1973, 157); these are to be understood as effects of certain relations (and processes within these relations) -- effects which themselves function as points of origin and as »laws« governing further results. The dialectical tradition within Marxism is acquainted with this idea.

By »inner barriers« of Marxism we mean the paradigmatic articulation-models in certain traditions which inhibit an articulation of contemporary problems. Among them is an unconsciously euro-centric way of looking at things, which is often coupled with an inadequately critical understanding of Hegel. We should perhaps in this context recall to mind that Hegel treats as »natural qualities« of »races« the (in his view self-evident and

justified) fact that »it will be the lot of the European Spirit to dominate the world« (Hegel, *Encyclopedia*, §393, footnote). These sorts of eurocratic visions mint a false universalism, a fictitious enlightenment, which is in reality only the spontaneous imperialism of bourgeois reason, developed first in Europe, then in the USA. And this bourgeois reason, as valuable as the heritage it has provided indeed is, is at the same time unwittingly marked by the unreflected structure of the centralist authoritarian state on a private-capitalist base. What one might call the *unconscious of bourgeois consciousness* will concern us for a time in the following study. For two reasons: First, because it continues to persist. And as long as it does, Althusser's provocative formulation -- »the specific form of unconsciousness which we call consciousness« -- will apply (Althusser 1965). Second, because it has, in changed form, reappeared and become influential in Marxism. A whole bundle of inhibiting dispositions of Marxism finds nourishment and solidification here -- even among Marxist formations and directions which are otherwise opposed to one another. For this reason we begin in the following once again at the point at which Marx intervened in philosophy. One hundred years after his death, for the record: Marx's offensive against philosophy has thus far failed. The old institutions and its forms of thought have shown themselves as yet to be the stronger. Not only because of inertia and a tenacity which was an effect of the material interests of the ideologists, but also because the attack on philosophy discovered that it needed its questionable protection of its adversary if it was to survive the winter. If we take up once more this Marxian attack on philosophy, which was first put forth consistently in *The German Ideology* (1845/46), then we do so in a different constellation and with different expectations.

The question is not a »repealing« or »end« of philosophy. We are concerned rather with an intervention *in* philosophy which requires a *turn*, which at once one-ups the *linguistic turn* in radicality and subsumes it: the turn toward the social installation, the dispositive which generates certain patterns of meaning which themselves function as the unquestioned, self-evident preconditions of philosophical (and other intellectual) discourses.

We are interested in the barriers which emerge from the philosophical dispositive because we must overcome them: the false universalism which ignores the dialectics of universality and specificity; the binary basic pattern which articulates itself in the logic of complementary opposites such as inside/outside, essence/appearance, being/consciousness, subject/object. Common to both; false universalism and its binary code is centrism, a thinking in terms of *one* center with

peripheries. This formation is accompanied by a thinking in *one* pre-given *homogeneous* substance. Development is conceived of correspondingly as uni-linear. The result is a false universalism which only knows different stages. *Unity* can be conceived of within this paradigm only as unity from above, under the absolute rule of a center. Differences must be transformed to oppositions or are reduced to mere differences in appearance.

Such patterns of the articulation of thinking obstruct our *thinking* of articulations. At stake are theory and practice of the social organization (which is the decisive level of articulation). The point is the bringing together, the aggregation of different areas of practice, their powers and logics. A blockage of the capacity for »differential articulation« (see Laclau 1983) can be imposed by an unfavorable relationship of forces which appears to allow no other choice than a policy of repressive centralizing unity. This was the case in the early history of the Soviet Union which faced deadly threats from foreign interventions, finally and above all, from German fascism and its military assault. However, the inevitable reactions to these threats had to have a blocking effect on a project like *Scientific Socialism* which had to comprehend such differing logics as economics, politics, science and culture(s) while at the same time unchaining their productivity. The qualifier »scientific« seemed to degenerate in this syntagma to the status of an occupied territory of legitimation. »Science of legitimation«, Oscar Negt will call Soviet Marxism-Leninism. Science under these conditions was as privileged as deprived. But because a rhetoric of »scientificness« spread over the whole administrative, state-authoritarian system, it could appear at first glance that science were not the prisoner, but rather the prison. This led many critical spirits to turn away from the »scientific«, which they found to be compromised in the syntagma with »Socialism«. They overlooked that decisive forces for critique and change of stale conditions can come from science and that anyway there can be no project of socialization at the level of modern productive forces which does not combine the forces of labour and of culture with those of science. Science is only one element among others in this combination, but it is as indispensable as the others. What must be criticized is the primarily rhetorical use of science together with the disregarding of its inner logic, not, however, scientifically as such. For example, it is »unscientific« to subdue non-scientific practices by the rules of science (or more precisely: of a certain understanding of science). The disrespect for the particular logic of the cultural, respectively the cultural specificities, is likewise »unscientific«. But critique of the absolutizing of a certain basic paradigm is scientific. In short, criticism of certain conceptions and social uses of science can find its best allies in science itself. Of

course, propaganda speaks another language, and various lines of invested power and colonialization cross and interfere with each other in the institutions of science. This seduces critics time and again to throw out the baby with the bath water. Even a Tonio Negri perceives Marx as »a prisoner of a rigid model of science« (1983, 10). This model hinders you, Negri writes in a fictional letter to Marx, in applying your intelligence »to the paradigm of your own knowledge«. From the right wing of Social Democracy declares Maurice Duverger:

Nul ne prend plus au sérieux l'idée d'un 'socialisme scientifique' tel que le comprennent ceux qui usent encore d'un terme se référant à un concept de science maintenant rejeté sans appel. (Duverger 1983, 2)

This is contradicted by the French socialist Didier Motchane (1983, 10). Approvingly he quotes Robert Fossaert, who writes in the introduction of his voluminous study *La société*: »A marriage between socialism and social science has once again become conceivable«. Similar to our undertaking, Fossaert wants to reconstruct the intervention of Marx, not in the illusion of thereby discovering *the truth* about our present society, but indeed »to reencounter at their common origin the strands, which have since dramatically intermingled, of socialism and social theory«. But this interwovenness of socialism and sociology interests *us*, because we want to untie the entanglement of Marxism in its own spontaneous ideologies. We are aiming at a mode of thinking which can respect different logics without suspending their connection, the whole. We have to think *one world, the universe*, but we can only think it as in itself irreducibly differentiated, as a multiverse.

This sounds paradoxical only as long as we persist in an undialectical view. To promote the thinking of such contradictions as productive contradictions is one motive of this study. It is concerned with the development of an appropriate mode of thought for a poliocentric world and for societies which represent within themselves respective specific »multiverses«.

Models of articulation are certainly not the things that determine politics. What is more likely is that the dominant politics imprints thinking with its corresponding articulation-models -- but it does so at the cost of splitting thought into »Official« and »Critical Theory«. Thought patterns and politics are moments of an elastic social whole which reproduces itself within them. Its transformation will surely not be achieved by a mere alteration of thinking. What can thereby be changed, however, is the way in which transformation is conceived, together with the articulation of crises, needs and necessities. This is the political character of an

investigation which brackets out politics. It is undertaken on a level which one could call metaphilosophy with Henri Lefebvre (1965), who did not shrink from the conflicts into which his refusal to leave Marx »behind« thrust him, even with his marxist comrades. It is no different today. But in the long run it is of no use to deceive oneself. A century after Marx's death Marxism is in need of reform. The necessary changes include that it learn to comprehend and to accept the dialectics of specificity and universality which has reproduced itself within it. »But a Marxism which is to be in all places and at all times *singular* must, on a global scale, necessarily be a plural Marxism. Does this mean the end of a generality (universality), of all unity for Marxism?« (Sève 1983) On the contrary, we feel -- as does Sève -- that this »multiplication« of Marxism, which is a result of the fact that it »leads an ever more self-sufficient life on all continents..., is not the symptom of a malignant illness, but is instead the guarantee of a robust health. « (ibid.) More precisely: this *can* be, and the thought of Marx will play its vital role in the articulation and solution of the burning world problems of today *if* this lesson is learned.

The following essay wishes to join the ranks of those contributions which support such a multi-vocal, international movement of Marxist renaissance.

## PART II

MARX'S INTERVENTION INTO THE PHILOSOPHY OF  
CONSCIOUSNESS

To shut the doors and windows of the consciousness for a while; to remain undisturbed by the noise and struggle, produced by our underworld of serviceable organs while working for and against each other; some *tabula rasa* of consciousness, in order to get space for something New again, above all for the nobler functions and functionaries, for ruling, anticipating...  
Nietzsche, *Genealogy of Morals* (SW 5, 291)

If in all ideology human beings and their relations appear upside-down as in a *camera obscura*, this phenomenon arises just as much from their historical life-process as the inversion of objects on the retina does from their physical life-process.

Marx, *The German Ideology*

## INTRODUCTORY NOTE

The *camera obscura* appears in *The German Ideology* as a topographical metaphor, and is usually interpreted to be an image for necessarily false consciousness. The fact that it represents a constellation of social relations and practices goes unnoticed. And that this »installation« has to do with the generating of the imagination -- no less real because imaginary -- that one is deducing social practice from supreme principles, is usually overlooked. For Marx, the *camera obscura* stands for the space which is conceded to intellectual work in what he calls the »idealistic superstructure« (*Germ. Ideol.*). And it also represents functions and effects of the intellectual work thusly integrated into the system of class domination.

In this topographical and comparative metaphor of the *camera obscura* an originary impulse of Marxist thought is inscribed. Its rearticulation will be attempted on the following pages. To do so, we shall at first establish the

theoretical context of our metaphor. Then we go back into the history of »Consciousness«.

## CHAPTER 2

THE PARADIGMATIC REVOLUTION IN *THE GERMAN IDEOLOGY*

The formulating of a question is its solution.

Marx, *Zur Judenfrage*

The »first document, in which the ingenious kernel of the new world-view comes to expression« (Engels 1888, MEW 21, 264), are the *Theses on Feuerbach* of 1845. They belong to that sort of phenomena which become more and more meaningful with increasing distance. Scribbled in a notebook between shopping lists and household bills, they are embedded in testimonies to daily life. The beginning astonishes, if pre-opinions don't prevent its being noticed. It commences with a critique of »all previous materialism«. This is followed by a respectful critique of idealism. What is here at stake? The critique is not directed at particular answers, but at the question itself. It is directed at a basic form in which, philosophically, questions and answers are articulated. The critique focuses on an arrangement whereby a contemplating subject is opposed to objects of contemplation (*Anschauung*). Or, in the original words, the critique focuses on an installation, in which »reality... (is) conceived only in the form of the *object, or of contemplation*, but not as *sensuous human activity, practice*, not subjectively« (CW 5,3). The idealism is located by Marx on the same terrain as materialism. Idealism places the accent on the spiritual subject. »Hence, in contradistinction to materialism, the active side was set forth abstractly by idealism -- which, of course, does not know real, sensuous activity as such.« (CW 5, 3) Thus, the first thesis begins with a radical change of terrain. The change is not only that practice should be conceived materialistically, but consists also in an altered relationship between thought and practice, involving the becoming-practical of materialism itself. Hints concerning the way in which Marx explains Feuerbach's mode of posing the question are given in the theses 6, 7, and 9.

The highest point reached by contemplative materialism, that is, materialism which does not comprehend sensuousness as practical activity, .is the contemplation of single individuals and of [bourgeois] civil society. (Thesis 9; CW 5, 5)

The dominant basic form of the isolated individual in all societies based on private property is that of the *private individual*. In a flash of sudden understanding Marx

sees the crucial significance of Feuerbach's inability to differentiate between individuality and a social privacy which is based on the exclusivity of private property. Because Feuerbach spontaneously thinks in the privacy-form, human essence »can be regarded only as 'species', as an inner, mute general character which unites the many individuals in a natural way« (CW 5, 4). As a »Feuerbachian« (Engels, MEW 21, 272), Marx as well had emphatically used the concept »species«, shortly before writing the *Theses*. Now it becomes clear to him, that this concept is symptomatic for a whole constellation. ( ) The »ensemble of social relations« will be, from now on, the terrain on which the questions -- and their modes of being posed -- can be understood. But how does Marx understand the question of »all previous« materialism and idealism in respect to this new terrain? The answer is provided by a topographical metaphor in the first section of the *German Ideology*. As an allegory for the social dispositive of the traditional *basic question of all philosophy* the *camera obscura* appears there. Let us proceed to its visitation.

The first chapter of *The German Ideology* is titled: »Feuerbach -- Opposition of the Materialist and Idealist Outlooks«. The first sub-section, in which our metaphor is to be found, has the heading: »Ideology in General, German Ideology in Particular«. The section begins with a specification of the terrain of the approaches, Marx is confronted with:

German criticism has, right up to its latest efforts, never left the terrain of philosophy. (CW 5, 28)

The point is to trans-pose the question; no longer to persist in posing questions within the »general-philosophical presuppositions« nor to provide other answers, be they ever so critical, on this ground, but rather

to inquire into the connections of German philosophy with German reality, the connection of its criticism with its own material surroundings. (MEW 3, 18; CW 5, 30)<sup>2</sup>

The very next sentence already starts with the exposition of the historical materialist conception. Proceeding from natural conditions, a whole set of fundamental social-scientific and historical concepts is displayed: production/reproduction, mode of production/mode of life, forms of intercourse

<sup>2</sup> In quoting we sometimes had to change the English translation offered in the *Works*, where it betrays the German original. In the above quoted passage, for instance, the translation of the *Works* reads twice »their" where we have put »its". The reader may note the complete transformation of meaning by this substitution. W.F.H.

(Verkehrsformen), productive forces, division of labour, separation and antagonism of town and country etc., property forms, forms of social articulation, classes, relations of production, the state (see CW 5, pp 30-35). The comprehensive question addresses the *articulation* (Gliederung) :

Empirical observation must in each separate instance bring out empirically, and without any mystification and speculation, the connection of the social and political articulation with production. (MEW 3, 25; CW 5, 35)

After this first sketch of the new conception of society and history Marx returns to philosophy and »ideology in general«. Their connection with the economic, social and political articulation forms one of the new objects of knowledge.

The new objects of knowledge cannot be thought about in the old concepts. The »abstractions ..., which we use in contradistinction to ideology« (MEW 3, 27; CW 5, 37) can no longer be those of ideology itself, nor those of philosophical ideology. *Consciousness* (Bewusstsein) is one such category. To sever being and consciousness and to fix them one against the other is an essential element of the ideological dispositive of philosophy. These are here instead taken out of a posture of mutual opposition and linked in *the practical activity of the people*.

Consciousness can never be anything else than conscious being, and the being of humans is their actual life-process. (MEW 3, 26; CW 5, 36)

When reading this passage one should not even for a moment forget that Marx is here intervening into a given philosophical discourse which he tries to interrupt. He does not choose his terms according to his own delights, but rather seizes the concepts of the philosophical discourse in order to criticize, to rebuild -- or better: trans-construct -- and to explain -- not, however, to interpret -- these categories. The statements we quote are work-acts. That which is to be changed is not from the outset already different; the object of criticism remains an articulation in its critique.

It is not consciousness that determines life, but life that determines consciousness. (27; 37)

This inversion in the articulation of the categories shows how Marx approaches the formation of new concepts. The inversion is not, to be sure, a trick of formal dialectics. One recognizes in the negated clause, which proceeds from

consciousness, a structural representative of the philosophical ideology.

For the first manner of approach the starting-point is consciousness taken as the living individual; for the second... it is the real living individuals themselves and consciousness is considered solely as their consciousness. (27; 37)

As we shall see in the next chapter, consciousness has indeed been a basic category of bourgeois philosophy since the 17th century. The attempt to merely trans-articulate it is not enough. It is insufficient so long as it appears arbitrary, and is therefore not convincing either. Above all else it doesn't comply with the demands of the new approach, the blueprint of which is at stake in the context. The critique of the consciousness discourse must be self-applicable. Let us bring to mind its manner of proceeding:

This manner of approach is not devoid of premises. It starts out from the real premises. [...] Its premises are the humans, not in any fantastic isolation and fixity, but in their actual, empirically perceptible process of development under definite conditions. (27; 37)

The »practical process of development« (27; 37) under »specific conditions«, as the object of knowledge, avoids, from the starting point of questioning, both the positivistic reduction of empiricism and the speculative construction of the subject.

As soon as this active life process is analysed, history ceases to be a collection of dead facts, as it is with the empiricists (who are themselves still abstract), or an imaginary action of imaginary subjects, as with the idealists. (27; 37)

To direct our questions to »the active life-process« under »specific conditions« is to break with both the consciousness discourse and with »self-sufficient« philosophy.

Empty phrases about consciousness end, and real knowledge has to take their place. When the reality is analysed, self-sufficient philosophy [die selbständige Philosophie] loses its medium of existence. (27; 37)

The consequence of all this is that the consciousness discourse is not simply to be rejected but instead to be understood as a product and integral part of the social life-process. Because, what is claimed to be true of consciousness in general must apply also to philosophical consciousness and its concept of consciousness.

Philosophical consciousness, too, must be understood as »conscious being«, which is to say in terms of the social life process.

The production of the ideas, representations, of consciousness, is at first directly interwoven with the material activity and the material intercourse of the people, language of real life. [...] To mental [geistig] production as expressed in the language of the politics, laws, morality, religion, metaphysics, etc., of a people, the same applies. (26; 36)

Can the speculative »fog formations« (26; 36) which de-realise life, also be understood as *language of real life*? For it is pointless to criticize speculation speculatively. The de-realising representations must be explicable as manifestations as practical reality or real social life under specific conditions and in particular forms.

Quite in opposition to German philosophy which descends from heaven to earth, we ascend from earth to heaven. That is to say... we set out from the real, active people\*, and reconstruct as well, proceeding from their real life-process, the development of the ideological reflexes and echoes of this life-process. (26; 36)

Embedded in these thoughts, we find the allegory.

If in all ideology people and their relations appear upside-down as in a *camera obscura*, this phenomenon arises just as much from their historical life-process as the inversion of objects on the retina does from their physical life-process. (26;36)

What does this image mean? It has incorrectly been read as a critique only of idealism. It is, however, clearly intended to stand for »all ideology«. And whatever: may be decrypted under its allegoric features -- at any rate, »all previous materialism (including that of Feuerbach)« (1. Thesis, MEW 3, 5) is in the party? A second mode of reading considers the image to represent the omni-historical unavoidability of the ideological. This interpretation may argue that the intended meaning of the *camera obscura* is doubly determined:

... appear upside-down as in a *camera obscura* ...

... as the inversion of objects on the retina ...

The physical »camera obscura« in the biological organisation of the human senses

-- in the eye -- appears to stand for something non-annullable. The eye, this dominant orientating sense, is for Feuerbach the emblem of the theoretical (visuality/opticality) capacity per se and stands for the relentless image-ness (Bildhaftigkeit) of our conceptions. Does it mean here the omni-historicity of the *imaginary*, and if so, the imaginary relation of the individuals to their conditions of life, to be understood as what Althusser calls the ideological in general? The further context by no means permits this conception to be mistaken for that intended by Marx. We shall demonstrate this with two textual elements: first, we follow the Marxian reconstruction of the object of the philosophical consciousness discourse. Secondly, we investigate the determination of the context of the image element, »appear up-side down«.

The autonomization of »consciousness« is conceived by Marx in connection with the »division of material and mental work«. The divisional character of the division of labor assumes a new structural significance in the severance of material and mental labour.

Division of labour only becomes truly such from the moment when a division of material and mental labour appears. (44-45)

in the margins of the manuscript Marx adds:

The first form of ideologists, *priests*, is coincident (45). The context shows an even more comprehensive constellation, a net of interdependent developments. To this belong: private property (46), the opposition between particular interests and their contradiction of »the common interest of all individuals« (46), the »classes already implied by the division of labour« (46) and finally the state as »independent form« (46) of the collective interest which has been divorced from particular interests »as an illusory community« (46) which determines the form of future class struggles, Marx understands the dissolution of the consciousness discourse within this complex constellation. Within it the division of labour takes on a new dimension: the division between material and mental labour. This is no mere expansion but a qualitatively new structuring.

From this moment onwards consciousness can really flatter itself that it is something other than consciousness of existing practice, that it really represents something without representing something real; from now on consciousness is in a position to emancipate itself from the world and to proceed to the formation of »pure« theory, theology, philosophy,

morality, etc. (45)

Consciousness now represents something in a double sense. It assumes its function with »illusory community«. In the relations between division of labour, class domination and state is inscribed the necessity of every ruling class »to represent a particular interest as general or the 'general interest' as ruling« (61).

The division of labour [...] manifests itself also in the ruling class as the division of mental and material labour, so that inside this class one part appears as the thinkers of the class (its active, conceptive ideologists, who make the formation of the illusions of the class about itself their chief source of livelihood), while the others' attitude to these ideas and illusions is more passive and receptive, because they are in reality the active members of this class and have less time to make up illusions and ideas about themselves. « (59-60)

If one abstracts the »world conditions« (60) which are the source of these thoughts and the form of their production, the impression arises that these thoughts themselves rule, and not class interests (61). And because »social power« (48) can only be maintained by a class in that it gives to its own interest »the form of universality« (60), i.e. a principled form of thought, this »illusion« or »imagination« (ibid.) is part of the reality of political domination, is *real-imaginary* -- no less real than, as a whole, the »practical intervention and restraint« (47) of the struggles between social interests »by the illusory 'general' interest in the form of the state« (47).

This brief sketch shows Marx's answer to our two questions. The autonomization (*Verselbständigung*) of consciousness is made possible by the dispositive of social domination. The standing-upside-down, however, means that the ruling mode of thought is not developed out of the social relations, but that the form of the latter is derived from the former. The most disparate regional ideologies offer their specific variant of this illusion of rule-by-thought (or by the head).

Now one can go back again to the producers of 'the concept', to the theorists, ideologists and philosophers, and one comes then to the conclusion that the philosophers, the thinkers as such, have at all times been dominant in history: a conclusion, as we see, already expressed by Hegel [...] the hegemony of the spirit... (CW 5, 61-2)

This passage is followed by an analysis of single operative steps which are necessary to the coherent elaboration of a ideology of history of this sort. We pursue this no further at the moment, but take instead Marx's suggestion that the historical idealism of the historians (which, particularly in Germany, had dominated the field

must be explained from its connection with the illusion of ideologists in general, e.g., the illusions of the jurists, politicians (including practical statesmen), from the dogmatic dreamings and distortions of these fellows; this is explained perfectly easily from their practical position in life, their job, and the division of labour. (62)

In short, it is also true of the consciousness of the ideologists themselves that it is nothing other than their conscious being, their real life process (see *CW* 5, 36). Marx, at any rate, attributes it to »their practical position in life, their job«. To this belongs, depending upon the respective organizational form of the order, the real prescriptivity of mental constructs. A fragmentary outline at the end of the chapter »I. Feuerbach« allows us to make our interpretation more definite:

*Why the ideologists turn everything upside-down.* [...] Jurists, politicians (statesmen in general), moralists, clerics.

We limit ourselves to those aspects which clarify non-metaphorically what is meant by this turning-upside-down:

Religion is from the outset *consciousness of the transcendental* arising from the *real Having-To*<sup>3</sup> [aus dem wirklichen Müssen]. (MEW 3, 540; cf. *CW* 5, 93)

The role of *repression* with regard to the state, law, morality, etc. (MEW 3, 539; *CW* 5, 92)

The relations are, in jurisprudence, politics, etc. -- within consciousness transformed into concepts. (MEW 3, 539; cf. *CW* 5, 92) the judge, for example, applies the code, he therefore regards legislation as the real, driving force. (MEW 3, 539; cf. *CW* 5, 92)

... because they are not beyond these relations, the concepts

are, in their heads, fixed concepts. (Ibid.)

<sup>3</sup> In *CW* 5, 93, this important formulation is mis-translated as »...arising from *actually existing forces*».

We complete this collection of arguments with the correspondent sketch of the functional mode of moral ideology, which is to be found in the chapter on Stirner:

... the conditions of existence of the ruling class (as determined by the preceding development of production), ideally expressed in law, morality, etc., to which [conditions] the ideologists of that class more or less consciously give a sort of theoretical independence; they can be conceived by separate individuals of that class as vocation, etc., and are held up as a standard of life to the individuals of the oppressed class, [...] It is to be noted here, as in general with ideologists, that they inevitably put the thing upside-down and regard their ideology both as the creative force and as the aim of all social relations, whereas it is only an expression and symptom of these relations. (CW 5, 419-20)

The majority of interpretations has up until this time drawn upon linguistic material such as »only an expression« (see above), »ideological reflexes and echoes« (36), »illusion«, »phantoms in the brains« (as CW 5, p. 36, translate *Nebelbildungen*; better would be »fog formations«). These -- and similar -- elements are normally interpreted as components of a discourse of (false) consciousness. This inverts the sense of the text in its entirety, turning it into its opposite. Its real sense is, stated briefly: reconstruction of the detached and autonomized consciousness as »language of real life« in specific social-political relations. This blueprint should under no circumstances be transmuted back into a theory of consciousness. It is a theory of socialization-from-above (*Vergesellschaftung von oben*, societalization-from-above). »Repression« and »real Having-To«, prescriptive "life-norm" and legal judgement -- these are elements of real practices of domination. Ideologists are ideologists by virtue of their positioning within the structure of domination.

The camera obscura is for Marx, then, by no means an image for an omni-historical topsy-turviness of consciousness, but stands for practice-spaces and -forms which must be conceived in the context of the complex structure of the division of labor, class antagonism and the state.

If Marx demanded that the philosophical form be addressed in terms of its position in the articulated structure of society and its connection with other instances and practices, then the material presented here shows how Marx conceived of the posing and answering of the question. When he grasps concrete ideological phenomena as a *symptom* (see above), then as a symptom of this

installation which remains in the dark because it is self-obscuring. The *camera obscura* stands precisely for the installation which disappears in its self-produced tenebrosity, showing only the ideological image. As soon as the gaze is no longer fascinated by -- and therefore fastened upon -- the inner image of the camera obscura but is directed, from the side, at the entire installation, the empty phrases of consciousness may disappear and real, positive knowledge may take their place. This is not a normative imposition, as adherents of the false - consciousness - discourse will be wont to content (see our chapter on „Euchner's Marx«), but empirical analysis. Marx uses the image of the *camera obscura* in order to mark a change of terrain: To leave the dark chamber of ideology means for him to enter a new terrain of investigation, with not only new objects of analysis but also, and mainly, a new relation between theorizing investigation and other social practices, with particular accent on the practices of production and those of what could be termed the *making of the social*. The old terrain was, so to speak, inside of the camera obscura; and as contradistinct as the opinions of idealists and materialists in other ways indeed were, both remained within ideology. The new object is the arrangement, wherein their questions-and-answers were arranged, itself. Marx discovers the social unconscious of the consciousness discourse and the reality of this unconscious. The interest which guides the analysis of this structure is the interest in its restructuring.

## CHAPTER 3

## THE PHILOSOPHY OF CONSCIOUSNESS REVISITED IN ITS HISTORY

The intellect ..., which can be likened to a spherical mirror hung in a room, because it captures the images of all things.

J.A.Comenius, *Didactia magna* (about 1640)

Communication between cultures foreign to one another can run into almost unsolvable difficulties. The attempt to understand texts from previous epochs in our »own« society is often confronted with even grater ones. The linguistic material may be identical or similar but the sense totally different. Objects, indeed whole spheres of our reality, whose certainty we so take for granted that they seem to be as inevitable as natural phenomena, are suddenly deprived of articulation. This is the case, for example, with what we call »sexuality«. What appears to us spontaneously a homogeneous meaning reveals itself, if we look back a few generations or even into ancient times, to be distributed over several fields of meaning, and there is no equivalent term. We discover, then, that what we imagined to be a primordial and universal unity is in fact socio-historically constituted -- a contraction or condensation of heterogeneous material. And we discover also that we »understand« a concept only within the context of the societal articulation. *Consciousness* is no exception.

Expressions which later, in the ascendant phase of bourgeois society, were to become vehicles of the modern meaning »consciousness« fluctuate initially between »science« and »conscience« (*Wissen* and *Gewissen*).

»The modern concept of consciousness is generally considered to have been constituted by Descartes: it is determined essentially therein, that it is severed from the concept of conscience-and becomes the central anthropological category.« (*Hist. Wörterbuch der Philosophie* 1, 1971, p.890)

## a. Descartes

Descartes, however, does not yet employ uniform terminology; there is no such term as »consciousness« in the center. And yet, the most important of his writings can be read as founding texts of the consciousness discourse. What we observed with Marx -- that he is still wrestling with traditional modes of thinking, is true of Descartes as well. *The Discours de la méthode* and the *Meditationes de prima philosophia*

are real initiations into later »consciousness«. These texts, written in the first person, are like reports of the rebuilding of the philosophical discourse, inviting to enter into a new discursive order. The famous »methodical doubt« had the function of clearing, through expulsion, an empty space which was then to be occupied by consciousness. A whole motley array of examples are assembled to illustrate sensory delusions: the dream, hallucination, the itching in an amputated leg. An all-powerful God is invoked to help make the point.

The scene of action is significant: We are shown into a private library; in the fireplace a burning log; Descartes is looking at a sheet of paper. Two little experiments are performed in this place, in order to ease the initiating procedure along. They have the advantage of allowing us, who are peering, so to speak, from the side into the theater, to observe the initiation in its making.

The first act bears some characteristics which are analogous to a working process. Descartes takes a piece of bee-wax, determines its colour and shape, smells the aroma of honey, taps the object with his finger. Then he brings it close to the flame. The colour changes, the shape flows, the object becomes hot and is no longer resonant when tapped. Descartes wants to sever all relations which the single senses had enjoyed with the object, to introduce a radical incompetence of the sensuous. We are supposed to retain nothing but an abstraction: that which remains is »nothing other than something extended, flexible, changeable« (Meditation II.11-12). Bringing the »extension« to domination he forms from this abstraction the basic category of the world of physical bodies: *res extensa*, »extended substance«. The judging instance, however, is substantialized as well and outfitted with primacy: *res cogitans*, »thinking substance«, later to be called »consciousness«. Of immediate certainty to the thinking I is its own -- mental -- activity. A sketchy God is introduced as a guarantee that the representations of the Inner, turned towards itself, do grasp something external. All human reality, however, is divided between inside and outside, between consciousness and corporality. The constitution of the modern consciousness discourse is radically dualistic.

A second act: Scene of the action is again the interior; particularly significant here is a window which faces the street; outside people pass.

But what do I see except hats and garments under which machines may be concealed...

The example is supposed to bring to recognition that it is only our judgement

which prompts us to »see« humans out there. We take note: Descartes does not leave his study in order to investigate that which happens »out there«, in the »outside world«; and at least in this last example the window between him and the outside world is at once a (filtering) inlet and a separating pane. We recognize the installation of the *camera obscura*.

Descartes superposes a whole series of similar examples. These could not be more heterogeneous, but their structures are identical. All culminate in a dual world-view. The example of the amputee who is plagued by hallucinatory itching in a part of the body which had long since been removed must be superimposed upon the example of the study and the deceptive world beyond the window. That which was amputated -- the location of the hallucinatory sense response -- is the outside world. The other »place«, from which one looks »outside« and which is called into question by the deceptions which come from »out there« or wherever, is, at least, not amputated; it is the precondition for both illusion and dis-illusion: the *intérieur*. The Inner, vacated with elaborate and cunning exertions, sustained by a security apparatus of exclusion and inclusion, will be filled by the atmosphere of consciousness; its occupant will be the »I«. Later this occupant will be given the official alias, »Subject«.

The »intérieur« is multiply determined. It was a touch-and-go adventure until Descartes was finally able to withdraw to the four walls of his study, to take and keep his place at the desk. He had been born into the civil-service aristocracy, a wealthy family. He was integrated from the outset into a societal sphere in which one was, in principle, always »in society«; privacy and intimacy were not yet -- at least not for aristocracy and peasantry -- institutionalized. In order to escape from this permanent accessibility which left him forever bothered by his peers and greatly inhibited the possibility of research and writing, Descartes steals away, gives no forwarding address -- and Paris is a big place. Nonetheless he is found by an acquaintance who runs into his servant in the city, threatening him with a dagger because he suspects he has murdered his master -- in short, forces the servant to reveal the secret hide-away. The solitary seclusion of the private, scholar gives way once again to »society«. Descartes finally emigrates not only from one country to another, but from one social form to another: from feudal absolutism into bourgeois society. From his new domicile he writes to a friend who understood his problem well and who had also attempted to flee »society« in the »country«. Descartes recommends Amsterdam, in the country, he writes, comfort is lacking and one has no defence against neighbourly intrusions.

... instead in this large city..., in as much as there is no one here beside me who is not involved in trade, everyone is so very preoccupied with his own advantage that I could live my whole life here without ever being sought out by anyone. I go walking every day amidst the tumult of an enormous population with as much freedom and peace as you would in your country lanes, and regard the people I see no differently than the trees one encounters in your woods... Even the sound of their business interrupts my day-dreams no more than would the babbling of some brook. (5 May, 1631, Letter to Balzac)

That is to say, the invisible walls of privacy have closed around Descartes; he gazes out their windows at society as he would under other conditions at nature. A new epochal arrangement of inner world and outer world is thereby drafted.

## b. Spinoza

After the effort of introducing the consciousness discourse has once been carried out, the new dispositive is described from the standpoint of the results, a finished theoretical edifice. Spinoza enters to take up this task. He describes Descartes's new foundation of philosophy with the stringency of an axiomatically constructed system, *more geometrico*. What in Descartes's writings presents itself as the result of an adventurous process of initiation, narrated by an I, is here laid down as pre-given in the first definitions. The very first definition establishes the aggregate of *all that is in us* or *that of which we are im-mediately conscious*. The forming of this set is, however, still expressed by a verb: *complector omne id...*, »I subsume (or why not: »I aggregate«) all of this under the concept of thinking«. As the traces of the act of constitution are still visible, so the dispersing multifariousness of that which is here (still newly) condensed:

*ita omnes voluntatis, intellectus, imaginationis, et sensuum operationes sunt cogitationes*

All actions (»operations«) of the will, of intellect, of imagination and of the senses are included in the new unity. Finally, a *constitutive exclusion* is declared. This declaration explains why, in the definition, that which is *in us* is determined as »im-mediately conscious«:

I have added »im-mediately« in order to exclude that [*ad excludenda ea*] which from these [i.e. these instances condensed above] follows, as the intentional movement has thinking as its basis [*pro principio* -- which also means »as its beginning«] but is not itself thought.

We see that the determinants which Marx outlined in the 'Theses on Feuerbach' are already constitutively present in the birth notices of the philosophical consciousness discourse: the exclusion of activity, practice; the individual inclusion; the perspective from the inside towards the outside. Spinoza introduces, toward the end of the introductory definitions, two concepts of substances: »The substance in which thought is inherent [*cui inest cogitatio*] is called mind [*mens*]«. And: The substance which is the im-mEDIATE subject of extension... is called body [*corpus*]«. With the Spirit, *Geist* -- for this is how *mens* will be translated -- the most distinguished, though meanwhile somewhat outdated, Proteus of the philosophical discourse comes on stage.

## c) Kant

The first paragraph (§ 1) of Kant's *Anthropology* deals with consciousness, and to begin with this subject appears to be the most natural thing in the world. The paragraph is the first in the context of *Book I* which -- with the same matter-of-factness -- investigates the »cognitive capacity« (*Erkenntnisvermögen*). The human being finds itself here on its head, upside down. Work is silenced from the beginning. Consciousness constitutes the human as such -- or: *man*, i.e. the humans taken in the masculine, singular, for this is the way in which we are articulated in Kant's discourse. That man »can have the idea of the I elevates him infinitely above all else on earth [...] By virtue of this he is a *person*... «. The meaning of I/person is determined by a complementary aggregate: »*Things*, such as un-reasonable animals, with whom one can do as one pleases «. The I of consciousness is thus from the outset in a position of Subject in front of objects of arbitrary utilization. Here a trace of the political and judicial overdetermination of the consciousness discourse shows itself: the bourgeois private Subject is the vehicle of personal rights and disposes over things. And things, as we know, are everything which is not Person.

Here, however, candid Kant is troubled by an unconscious inkling that if the bourgeois citizen is, to be sure, a human, the human is not necessarily a bourgeois citizen. If the »I« is constitutive for the human, how does one explain the fact that there are cultures which do not express »this I-ness with a particular word«? They must »*think* it anyway«, Kant reassures himself. But children, too, learn to say »I« relatively late; initially they speak -- after having learned to speak -- of themselves in the third person. »The explanation of this phenomenon will be rather difficult for the anthropologist«, Kant notes. The conclusion of the first paragraph prompts us to infer that the unity of the concept of *object*, too, is the result of a peculiar process of constitution. Early childhood is still »the time .. of mere dispersed perceptions, not yet unified under the concept of object «.

The second paragraph (§ 2) of the scientific theory of Man is about *egoism*. The »loved self« and its expressions are the ever-present and fundamental tendency, »and egoism proceeds relentlessly«. (Kant hopes for a certain correction of this tendency through world-citizenship and its »pluralism«.) The subsequent paragraphs will deal with the intentional control of mental activities such as attentiveness and abstraction (*Hinsehen/Wegsehen*); self-observation, »which produces the material for a self-observer's diary and easily leads to fanaticism and madness«, bringing with it

»confusion of the head«, »terrorism«, »emotional illness«, »insane asylum«, etc. ; the necessary »art of semblance« (*Kunst des Scheinens*), and of dissimulation, so to speak the theatrical elements of the presentation of self in everyday life; unconscious imaginations; finally, the senses, etc. -- Work will be mentioned, very incidentally and marginally, in *Book II*, which deals with pleasure and displeasure. Work emerges as »the best way to enjoy ones life«. This is only seemingly in dissent with Adam Smith's depletion of work as repulsion, and of non-work as attraction. The repulsion serves as a contrast to attraction. Work is the negative whose negation brings forward the positive. »Because it is a tedious activity (in itself unpleasant and enjoyable only through success) which for precisely this reason renders »the peace which comes from the mere disappearance of extended tedium a perceptible pleasure«...

#### d. Hegel

Hegel's *Phenomenology of Mind* begins with „consciousness«, »I« and »object« in the same air of self-evidence as Kant. But he brings movement into the arrangement and the arrangement into motion. The opening word is »knowledge«; its im-mediate form, »sensuous certainty«, is the first object of scrutiny. The investigation introduces its object as the Subject of an exertion. This Subject produces *experiences* by virtue of which it develops; or rather: the experiences induce it to follow a set program and to build up, step by step, the world of Mind or Spirit to the point of its philosophical identity in the form of absolute knowledge. The True is the General. Medium of the General is »speech, which displays the Godly nature of im-mediate inverting the opinion, of turning it into something else and thereby preventing its speaking at all«, as one reads at the end of the first section. Consciousness engenders in language the totality of the world of Mind. Thereby the dispositive of the consciousness discourse is at once presupposed, reproduced and sublated, but in the form of speculation. What's speculative here is precisely the mode of overcoming the boundaries of consciousness which remains within them.

The whole realm of ideological powers is thus speculatively reproduced in thought. This reproduction is however not conceived as a reproduction in thought which attempts to comprehend something which is not itself thought. Instead, thought, or the Mind, creates this world literally from itself and thereby itself as this world. Or Mind brings out itself in an alien form and opposes itself by its own alienation. In order to reproduce in thought the real powers of subjugation, to derive them as external authorities above and over thought out of thought itself, i.e. to let them consist of thought, Hegel introduces the theory of necessary *alienation*. It

is »alienation of personality«. It is necessary because the dynamics of that which Kant introduced to us as the spontaneous and infinitely agitating egoism of consciousness is becoming dangerous:

for the im-mediate Self, without alienation, and standing for itself, is without substance and is the play of those raging elements; its substance is, therefore, its relinquishing [Entäußerung] itself, and the relinquishing is the substance or the powers, which order and thereby preserve themselves as a world. (B. The Self-Alienated Mind; the Formation [Bildung])

Mind »thus creates for itself not only one world, but a dual, separated and opposed one«. Mind doubles itself as the Great Spirit of the World, as the power of powers on the one hand, and the little spirit of individual consciousness -- the point of departure -- on the other. In this speculating form -- with its phantom exits into the mirror -- the real occurrence indicates itself. From the conceded interior of the »thinker« the exterior, which constitutes and concedes this interior and which is first and foremost an Above, has been re-founded in the medium of thought. That the intellect -- with the intellectual behind it -- should appoint itself Subject of »spiritual powers, which order and thereby preserve themselves as a world«, is not merely illusory. It effectively positions itself as the (little) subject, as Althusser would say, of this ideological order, we break off at this point in order to observe the materialist intervention.

#### *e. Feuerbach*

Where is the rupture between Feuerbach and his philosophical predecessors located? Are there lines of continuity in spite of this rupture?

To begin with, Feuerbach perceives clearly -- up to a certain point -- the Cartesian reconstruction of philosophy:

The beginning of Cartesian philosophy, the abstraction from sensuousness, from matter, is the beginning of the new speculative philosophy. (*Grundsätze*, § 10)

But Feuerbach sees only the abstraction from sensuousness/ objectivity. The astonishing thing is that he should begin, not significantly differently from Kant, with consciousness as the »essential difference between humans and animals«. Thus starts the first chapter of *The Essence of Christianity*. »Consciousness« is here in fact

even more closely related to intellectual work than was the case with his predecessors, in as much as it is strictly defined »by a capacity for science«. This capacity -- *theory* -- is celebrated in *the eye*, both as organ and as a metaphorical image.

The eye is of a heavenly nature. Hence man rises above the earth only with the eye; thus theory begins with the gaze towards heaven. (*Essence*, § 1)

Only man has pure, intellectual, disinterested joys... -- only man celebrates theoretical eye-feasts... (ibid.)

»Heavens away from *those* philosophers who pluck their *eyes* from their head in order to be able to think better«, Feuerbach opts for the realism of the senses, i.e. for sensualism. His philosophy

produces thought from its opposite, from material, from the essence, from the senses; it first behaves sensuously toward its object, i.e. passively, receptively, before determining it conceptually... (*Essence*, Preface to 2nd ed.)

Is this really so many heavens away from the modern philosophical dispositive? The structural arrangement is the same. Practice is excluded. What takes place is contemplation, and the scene of this theoretical action is the same as the previous one: the study of the privately isolated individual. Only the interpretive discourse which accompanies the activity in the basic installation is different. Perhaps we shouldn't have said »only«, because the change in this discourse was the step which preceded the abandonment of that installation. Nonetheless, the installation remains the same and determines the same basic articulations.

With respect to religion Feuerbach inherits his paradigm of criticism from the philosophical consciousness discourse. The Hegel-critic thereby speaks in the same patterns as Hegel. The point of origin is »man« as abstracted, isolated individual, *inner-dwelling subject*, so to speak. From within, »man« projects »his essence« onto heaven.

... man objectifies in religion his own secret essence. (*Essence*, § 3)

... he posits God as an essence contradistinct to himself. (Ibid.)

Man has objectified himself without recognizing the object as his own

essence... (§ 2)

The first source and substance of -the religious objectifi-cation is the consciousness.

Consciousness is self-confirmation, self-affirmation, self-love...

Consciousness is the characteristic mark of a perfect being. (§ 1)

Herewith we have collected the catch-words for the Marxian intervention. A mere continuation, no matter how »critical«, of this discursive structure, was out of the question. A radical change of terrain was needed. The societal dispositive of the consciousness discourse had to be analyzed from the perspective of its transformation. The inner/outer-world installation had to be abandoned. It was by no means sufficient to declare oneself a sensualist or materialist while reremaining within this order, it was necessary to grasp the philosophical inferior in its connection with the societal dispositive which -- within the context of domination -- conceded intellectual work and furnished it with real-imaginary functions of societalization while at the same time excluding it from society and lifting it up, above society, into the Ivory Tower.

## Chapter 4

### *Elements of the New Articulation in Marx's Analysis of Work*

Empty phrases about consciousness end, and real knowledge has to take their place.

K. Marx, *The German Ideology* (CW , V, 37)

The consciousness discourse articulates all things by means of its binary code. The well chiseled, carefully extrapolated building blocks of its conceptual edifice are scattered about the marxist construction site. Marx uses them in a dual way: in their immanence -- against the thought-less-ness of his opponents on their own field -- and in negation, as elements of de- and re-construction. The artistry of their fabrication, however, and the persistence of the structures of domination into which they fit, prompt later followers of Marx to build with them again, to erect old structures with new content. Before we turn to specific instances of such thought, we wish to observe how the scientist Marx proceeds in *Das Kapital* at those points at which he finds the discursive field occupied and articulated by

instances of the consciousness discourse. In the first thesis on Feuerbach he presents the rupture with all previous materialism and idealism as a turning toward activity, toward practice (and -- this would be worthy of an investigation all its own -- as subversion of the subject/object schema; for he demands that reality not be conceived in the form of the object but »subjectively«) Let us examine, as a case in point, what happens to the binary codification of the consciousness discourse in Marx 's analysis of labour. Does Marx conceive of labour in the categories of subject/object, the product as objectification? -- Labour and production are studied as differentiated processes. The instances within these processes render the binary code nonsensical. »Productive activity"

is determined by its aim, mode of operation, subject, means, and result.  
(*Capital I*, 49)

Decisive here are means and mode of Operation. How was it put in *The German Ideology* in allusion to philosophy from Descartes to Feuerbach?

Men can be distinguished from animals by consciousness, by religion or anything else you like. They themselves begin to distinguish themselves from animals as soon as they begin to produce their means of subsistence, a step which is conditioned by their physical organization.  
(CW 5, 31)

In *Capital* the description is more exact:

He opposes himself to Nature as one of her own forces, setting in motion arms and legs, head and hands, the natural forces of his body, in order to appropriate Nature's productions in a form adapted to his own wants. (*Capital I*, 173)

Now, are these »natural forces« subject or object, inner or outer? But the problem doesn't end there. The real power to act on the part of those who work depends, on the one hand, on their sociality, on the other upon the discovery of the regularity of nature and the invention of tools. We encounter nature at the outset both in the workers and in their objects.

[Man] can work only as Nature does, that is by changing the form of matter. Nay more, in this work of changing the form he is constantly helped by natural forces. (*Capital I*, 50)

The inter-effects of natural forces and therewith the possibility of intentionally transforming natural material must be discovered. »To discover the various uses of things is the work of history« (*Capital I*, 43). That which is discovered exists independent of its discovery; it becomes useful by virtue of its inclusion in the productive structure. Every useful product is thus based in manifold respects upon »a material substratum [...] which is furnished by Nature without the help of man « (*Capital I*, 50): The different materials and their mutual effects, which result in the desired modification.

It is, then, organized natural power which is exerted upon the object. If the »subject« is to be at all capable of labour, i.e. if it is to be productive, then this capacity is decisive. We have here to do with

... a thing, or a complex of things, which the labourer interposes between himself and the object of his labour, and which serves as the conductor of his activity. (*Capital I*, 174)

If »subject-ness« (*Subjekthaftigkeit*) is to mean any capacity of action of a »subject« at all, it reveals itself on this terrain to be decisively determined by this »shoved-in-between« complex of things and the ability to handle it. Are these objects part of the »subject«? The binary code becomes a procrustean bed. Marx thinks in other categories: Interventions into the order of natural forces, modification of natural material. The *Objekt* (which unfortunately becomes »subject« in english translation) of labour is counterposed to the productive arrangement of man and instruments of labour. The product is not conceived as an objectification of the subject. The usefulness of the product is natural power which is *discovered* and tapped by means of modification.

One may object that Marx himself uses the term *objectification*. Let us observe how he does so. The useable product of labour is articulated by Marx as follows:

Labour has incorporated itself with its subject (*Gegenstand*): the former is materialized, the latter transformed. (*Capital I*, 176)

Or, closer to the German original:

The labor has joined with its object. The labor is objectified, and the object is elaborated.

First of all we note: If labor is objectified in the product, this product is by no

means reducible to objectified labor. Marx calls it elaborated (natural) object (*verarbeiteter [Natur-]Gegenstand*). The category »elaboration« (or processing) does not induce us to think from the inside to the outside as does the category »objectification« (or »objectivation«). In stating that labor has »objectified itself« , Marx is using language subversively. He undermines the discourse of »objectification«. It is not the »exteriorization« of an »inner« but a labor activity -- i.e. a purposeful mobilization of the natural forces of human corporality, »arms and legs, head and hand« , which apply instruments of labor to the material of labor -- was necessary in order to transform the latter. No transsubstantiation took place, but a transformation or elaboration of natural material which required labor. The transformation isn't even the direct effect of work but an effect of the instruments of labor which it applies. The instrumental effect is the form in which the work performed is noticeable. It is the the form in which work passes from the mode of agitation into the mode of being, as Marx, once again intervening subversively into the language of philosophy, says (cf. *Capital I*, 176).

"Value« is quite a different matter. Here Marx employs a number of charged metaphors in order to represent the transition of the abstract labor from the mode of agitation to the mode of being, from »living« to »dead« labor: cristalization, coagulation, incorporation, materialization and -- objectification. Many interpreters of *Capital* have forgotten that this occurs in the context of a *critique*, which declares it to be an alienated or »insane« (*verrückt*, which has, however, the double meaning of »mad« and »dislocated«) way of articulating the portion of labor which a product requires of the total available social labor (measured in time) as the inherent property of a thing: i.e. as »its value«. This is the form in which private production on the level of societal division of labor -- i.e. commodity production -- regulates itself via the market. Planless as it is, private commodity production regulates itself retroactively through the effects of market processes, tumbling from one imbalance to another. This structure inscribes a single product, and later the means of production and the labor-force, with its social character. Marx, then, does not criticize »false Objectivation« as such, but a system which expresses its relations in the form of such objectivation. Marx doesn't conceptualize things within the inside/outside-scheme. He doesn't conceive of them from an inside towards an outside, nor from subject to object, neither from being to consciousness nor from essence to appearance, whatever certain ways to speak seem to indicate. What he conceptualizes in the hard core of his theoretical thought is the ensemble of societal relations and the specific formations in which the relations articulate themselves.

## PART III

## THE SUBJECT/OBJECT-ARTICULATION IN MARXISM

*The Hegelian Construction of Phenomenology*

1. Self-consciousness instead of the human individual. Subject-Object.
2. The *differences* between things unimportant, because the substance conceived of as self-differentiation...
3. The overcoming of alienation identified with the overcoming of objectivity (*Gegenständlichkeit*).
4. Your overcoming of the represented object... identified with the... real activity...

Marx (1845), (MEW 3, 536)

*Chapter 5: The Lukács Paradigm**1. Going Back to the Nodal Moment Following 1917*

Is it today legitimate, and is it at all useful, to deal critically once more with Georg Lukács' essay, 'What is orthodox Marxism?«? Indeed, with the original version (published in 1919 in *Taktik und Ethik*)? Particularly considering the fact that Lukács himself later (in 1967, in the preface to volume two of his collected works) distanced himself from aspects of his work during this early period? Our point here is not to criticize Lukács once again. There are texts in which historical tendencies find articulation in a way which not only secures their long-term historical efficacy but also provides an exemplary document for the critical self-evaluation of these tendencies (and of their often imperceptible metamorphoses). The essay in which Lukács attempts to answer the question as to the correct Marxist position is such a text. »An imposing, world-historical transition was struggling in that period for its

theoretical expression« he writes in 1967, looking back. »Even if a theory does not, to be sure, bring to expression the objective essence of the great crisis, but rather merely a typical attitude toward its fundamental problems, it attains nonetheless historically a certain significance. This was the case, as I believe, with *History and Class Consciousness*« (Lukács *Werke* 2, 27 f.).

As we learned from Marx, the questions help to pre-decide the answers. On what foundation is a question posed? From what theoretical arrangement does it emerge? The question as to *orthodox Marxism*, which afflicted the Marxist discussions of those times, was posed by Kautsky. This is curious, for Lukács turned against Kautsky in the period of the Soviets. Kautsky, canonizing a formulation of the late Engels, introduced as well the central catch-word which Lukács employed to scan his answer to the question as to Marxist orthodoxy: method. It is worthy of reflection that precisely this question and its answer represents one of the elements which Lukács in 1967 expressly refrains from criticizing. He writes of *History and Class Consciousness*: »The introductory comments to the first essay already provide a definition of orthodoxy in Marxism which, according to my present convictions, is not only objectively correct, but today -- on the threshold of a renaissance of Marxism -- could have a considerable significance. I mean the following observations: (...) 'Orthodoxy in questions of Marxism refers exclusively to the method.'« (ibid., 28)<sup>4</sup> The self-criticism is directed at the *way in which* the answer is articulated, not at the question and answer as such. On the first version of the essay on orthodoxy Lukács writes in 1967 that he had »revised« it for *History and Class Consciousness* (1923), »but by no means in its fundamental orientation« (ibid., 14). We see that he criticizes neither the question as to »orthodoxy« nor its »method« and expressly confirms the »fundamental orientation ,, of the early version of 1919. In the following we shall not be concerned with the development of Lukács's conceptions as such. We are dealing here with a text -- as Lukács himself says -- which represents a ,,typical«, »representative« articulation which proved to be efficacious in Marxism of this century because several generations of intellectuals believed that it spoke their language. And we have selected precisely this text because question, answer and mode of argumentation here show clearly elements which, though perhaps not explicitly, continue to be influential in various currents. We select the early version because it is short and clear -- shorter and clearer than the version of 1923 -- and because it is more vulnerable, less concealed, and more naively formulated. This text has the fire of the period immediately following the Russian Revolution, which for Lukács and countless others opened, for the first time, »a perspective for the

future in reality itself« (ibid., 13). It is a text without diplomacy and without political pragmatism. Lukács characterizes his and his friends' situations thus: »Enthusiasm attempted -- somehow -- to replace knowledge and experience« (14). For precisely this reason it was possible to articulate a text, which cristalized in untroubled purity latent possibilities of Marxist discourse. It is like a mirror, into which we -- as long as this history is still ours -- cannot look without becoming frightened. This fright may help us to look at the Marxist discourse in a new and innovating manner.

2. *The Intersection of Hegellanism and Leninism in Lukács's Early Concept of »Orthodox Marxism« (1919)*

G. Lukács is considered to be the classical theorist of recent Marxism. -- W. Euchner, 1983

A passionate struggle, then, over the right doctrine, orthodoxy in Marxism -- and no agreement »as to those theses, whose calling into question precludes the possibility of one's becoming an orthodox Marxist«. This is the starting point. And as others before him and after, Lukács expects deliverance of this indecisiveness by *method*. »Presuming -- but not admitting -- that the development of science should prove all claims of Marx to be false, we could accept without contention this scientific critique in its entirety and nonetheless continue to be Marxists as long as we remain adherents of the Marxian method.« We observe in the meanwhile that herewith a terrain is opened up for scientific critique, while on the other hand a particular position is deemed off-limits for this critique, namely: method. Clearly no development of science is here conceivable which could challenge the »Marxian method«, whatever this term means. And let us finally also take note of the way in which science, in the singular, emerges like an otherworldly instance among the respective moments of irresolvable disputes. That the form of existence of science(s), too, is a multivocal and controversial process (and not a linear one) appears to have gone unnoticed. Be that as it may, once »method' has become the new *fundamentum inconcussum*, all theoretical insecurity is condensed into the question as to the »essence of the method«. With no further clarification, Lukács proceeds: »Every attempt to 'improve', to 'further develop' Marx's method (had) flattened (*verflacht*) Marxism.« The answers follow in staccato, veritable decrees:

1. *The method of Marx is revolutionary dialectics.*

2. *The method (= theoretical method = theory) can only be revolutionary to the extent that it suspends (aufhebt) the distinction between theory and practice.*
3. *I.e., the mere fact of correct thought induces an essential change in the object to which such thought is directed.*
4. *Concepts are not abstractions, but rather living realities, which cause a process of uninterrupted transition..*
5. *Unconditional dominance of totality, of unity of the whole over the abstract isolation of its parts [...]*

This, then, is presented as the »method« or »dialectical method« or »dialectics« of Marx. »To follow it (and not to gnaw around on single words) is orthodox Marxism.« Marx is said to have taken over this method of dialectics from German philosophy, »namely from Hegel«.

Words must be understood as answers, determinations as negations. Here Lukács answers to the discourse of the Second International, negating the conceptions of Bernstein and Kautsky who, in his view, differ only incidentally. What Bernstein does openly, Kautsky does secretly. The discourse which Lukács opposes presents itself to him thus: Insisting on the scientific character of Marxism, it attempts to cast out dialectics as an hegelian legacy. »Science« is thereby understood as that which »builds only upon 'facts' of 'reality'«, and this ""without prejudice"". While Bernstein declares that the final goal is nothing and movement is everything, Kautsky transports the final goal into heaven, whereby on this ordinary earth there remains the same opportunism as in the case of Bernstein.

We leave beside the proclamations of essence with which Lukács counters. What is the problem? What is at stake? On the one hand it is the critique or de-legitimation of the bolshevik revolution by Kautsky, originally the architect and later the representative of the orthodox Marxism of the Second International. On the other hand there is the abandoning, the »betrayal« of the revolution on the part of these same Social Democrats. What Lukács fails to mention is the fact that the arguments of his opponents, down to their very formulations, are constructed with quotations from Marx and Engels. The emphasis upon the scientific, the unprejudiced proceeding from facts, the break with Hegel, a warning against voluntaristic revolutions, etc. This may be the source of Lukács's repeated rejection of litany, allied with the demand that Marxist thought and action must »proceed

from the essence of the method«.

The affirmations of Lukács are negations and are, as such, determined by that which they negate. Later this front and the »interventionist character will fade and, finally, be forgotten altogether. The texts will detach themselves, will react with new contexts. Precisely the desperate and decisive No to the original context to which the position, as opposition, remains bound, appears later to be the pronouncement of a mysterious intuition of essence. Such is the fate of all topical texts whose effects persist beyond the present. At any rate, the No to Kautsky remained on the terrain which Kautsky had determined: the question as to Marxist orthodoxy. What sort of concrete accomplishments were to be expected of correct Marxist doctrine, thereby presumed to be given as such? What was it needed for? We investigate in the following the way in which this performance aspect of Lukács's dialectics-method is articulated.

The categories with which Lukács articulates the accomplishments of the dialectic or the demands thereupon cluster around the *steering or guidance of our action: counsel, decision, making-acceptable the necessity of revolutionary action*. The sentence, taken in itself, is surrealistic: »Facts can never guide a meaningful action.« Its positive inversion is no less so: »Only dialectics is capable of this.« The place from which Lukács wishes to oust the »facts« and replace them with the »dialectic« is that of the political-social agents. One would expect to find in this place the names of organizations or their leadership. »Without dialectics we would stand helpless »in a labyrinth [...] of facts which could not be put in an order, and we would fruitlessly entreat the facts to guide our actions.« In the Kautsky-discourse the »final goal was *totally inadequate to guide (the) actions in a revolutionary way*.« We observe in amazement an estranging dis-location: The places of the agents who act (or decide or lead) are occupied by abstractions. The desire to steer or to be steered is directed at the position which they assume. By means of its abstract occupation by intangible subjects the steering called for becomes itself mythic. At the core here is the capacity of action of the socialist movement and of its organizations, its leaderships, their difficulties in analyzing the specific situations, the development of strategies, the nonending controversies about them, etc. Lukács conceives the alleviation of the problems of helplessness, indecisiveness and lack of leadership *philosophical*. He un-names the real agents and their problems. He is at work on a myth. And in this myth the messianic-revolutionary character finally shifts over to the pro-totalitarian.

The impetus is to say No to the falling asunder of final goal and movement.

Lukács articulates this No by simply claiming the opposite: »The essence of the dialectical [...] method lies therein, *that there is no essential difference between movement and final goal.*« The difference is nonetheless there. How can it be declared to be non-essential? The answer »is given by *totality*, allied with messianic utopia. First the declaration: »Every moment of the normal worker's movement, every wage-raise [...] is hence a revolutionary act ...«. Why? Because of the dialectical law that every quantitative increase »turns abruptly, at a certain point, into a qualitative difference«. This declaration of Being-Revolutionary through the law of the dialectic is followed by the Becoming-Revolutionary through commitment to this »law«. »*These single moments can become revolutionary acts only in the unity of the dialectical method.* « This unity must *be produced*, and it is produced *as consciousness, or as conscious viewing »from the standpoint of totality*«.

Constructed philosophically, the revolution becomes nothing other than the abrupt turn of quantity into quality. Relations are »ripe« when this turn becomes possible. But the determination of this »ripeness« remains as mystical as one can imagine: »For the possibility of revolution, the 'ripeness' of relations is, for the revolution, nothing other than the moment of this dialectical turn. « Unfortunately, one is not able to calculate it with the same certainty »with which one can calculate, in astronomy, the reappearance of a comet«. But »one« can make this moment possible through »consciousness«: »*This moment can, in its dialectical given-ness, only then swing from possibility into reality when the workers' movement is conscious of the fact that, for it, theory and practice as well as movement and final goal form a unity.* « In conclusion Lukács expounds upon this *unity* as a precept of »*unconditional dominance of totality, of the unity of the whole over the abstract isolation of the parts...* « which stems from »the theory of the Hegelian concrete concept«. Lukács adds to this apotheosis of totality a short interpretation of the section on method in Marx's »Einleitung« of 1857 (see MEW 13, 631-633). He totally overlooks the fact that this text is one which breaks with Hegel, which rejects the presumed identity of concept and reality, and that there the necessity of building abstractions for the purpose of reproducing the articulated whole in thought is stressed. Where Marx speaks of the chaotic idea of the whole, to which the cognitive urge initially aspires, Lukács reads: »The true point from which to proceed is, therefore, the perfect whole, concrete totality ..."»

It is as though consciousness were the liquid fuel and the actual element of history. In it totality produces itself as the arduously conceived unity of moments from the final goal. Thus, as the concluding figure in this configuration, *decision* emerges: »*For the decision precedes the fact.* « -- Certainly, the discourse against which

Lukács legitimately defended the revolution of 1917 conducts the talk about »facts« in the frame of a »real politics« (Realpolitik) which refuses revolution. Instead of contesting thereby this use of facts and of realism, Lukács relinquishes both to the other side and founds the myth of Revolution Against the Facts. In these categories he articulates Leninist politics as well -- as thought Lenin, -- in his analysis of imperialism and in his orientation toward the possibility of breaking the weakest link in the chain of imperialism, did not build on facts. In short, his defense is undertaken on the territory occupied by the offensive, whose logic he simply inverts. And he does it all in the mode of philosophy. The identity of theory and practice is conceived as identity of subject and object. However, this identical subject-object is spirit (Geist). Something exceedingly odd in this argumentation -- that all of the theses of Marx but not his method should undergo the scrutiny of »science ' -- thus finds its clarification. »Method« is the name for the decision in favor of a consciousness of totality, for the subjugation of all and everything under its *unconditional dominance*. This could be called »method« because it was believed that from this subjugation there would arise counsel, guidance, the right way enabling the revolution to swing over from the possible to the real. Questions as to how differing forces could be brought together and questions as to democracy did not, however, pose themselves in this way. And the left-radical myth announces here quite another swinging-over: to the unconditional unity and totality of so-called Stalinism. Many others might confirm Wilfried Gottschalch's statement on his reading of Lukács in the early sixties: »We misunderstood Georg Lukács back in those days. Because *History and Class Consciousness* was banned we read it as an antistalinist work ...« (Gottschalch 1983, 2f.). It is, however, »still today the most influential document of neo-Marxism« (Euchner 1983, 145).

### 3. A Critique of Lukács' Later Self-Criticism

The text of 1919 studied in the previous section was to become, in revised form, the opening text of *History and Class Consciousness* (1923). Lukács, looking back in 1967, praises this text for having treated *alienation* »for the first time since Marx as the central question of the revolutionary critique of capitalism« (Werke 2, 24). The mode of treatment, however, remained engrossed »purely in the hegelian spirit«. »Above all, its last philosophical foundation consisted of the identical subject-object which comes to realization in the historical process.« (24) To inscribe the proletariat in the place of this identical subject-object was to »over-hegel Hegel«. It is useful to observe precisely just *where* Lukács retrospectively locates the error and how he articulates its critique. He expressly does *not* find it in the unconditional dominance

which he had attributed to *totality*. On the contrary, he praises himself openly for having, back then, »placed it again in that central position which it had always had in the works of Marx« (22). He views as an »Hegelian exaggeration« his having placed »totality« in opposition to the primacy of the economic. The basic error which Lukács sees in retrospect has to do with the subject-object: the mode of thinking *objectivation/object-ification* (*Objektivierung/Vergegenständlichung*), namely their equation with alienation and reification (*Verdinglichung*). When he was appointed, in 1930, to the Marx-Engels Institute in Moscow, he was able to read Marx's *Economic-Philosophical Manuscripts* (1844), whose transcription had already been completed (see MEW Erg.-Bd. 1, 465-588). Lukács recalls in 1967 the »overwhelming impression« which »the words of Marx about object-ivity (*Gegenständlichkeit*) as the primary material characteristic of all things and relations [made] on me« (38). Object-ivity as the primary material characteristic! Thus speaketh the author of an ontology of social being. Isn't it in fact Feuerbach who addresses him through the words of Marx? But be that as it may, the »fundamental and serious error« which leaped to his attention in 1930 consisted in the equating of alienation and objectification. The cessation of alienation had until that point spontaneously appeared to him to be at the same time the cessation of objectification (26). The error had followed the arrangement of the Hegelian discourse (see chapter VI B of *Phänomenologie des Geistes*: »The Spirit Alienated from Itself; Education«). Here, it is Mind (*Geist*) which externalizes, objectifies itself. Lukács, who now sees the »serious error« of equating alienation and objectification, stops his critique abruptly after expressing this thought; he does not pursue the logic of »objectification« into the discourse on the *Subjekt*, where it is really at home. The unobject-ive agent which objectifies itself ought actually to contradict his ontology in the sixties, which now only knows contradictory »things and relations«. To think this thought through would be to reject altogether the category of objectification. But no, Lukács retains it. He neutralizes it only with respect to alienation and other valuational questions. Certainly, as such, objectification is value-free (*wertfrei*): »The Right is as much an objectification as the Wrong, emancipation as much as enslavement« (26). »Objectification« is granted the status of an anthropological fundamental-category. »For objectification is in fact a non-sublatable (*nicht aufhebbare*) mode of expression in the social life of people. When one takes into consideration that every objectivation in practice -- and so, above all, work itself -- is an objectification, that every human mode of expression -- and language too -- objectifies human thoughts and feelings, etc., it becomes evident that we have here to do with a general human form of intercourse between humans« (26). This assertion has the structure of a pseudo-proof by virtue of

repetition of that which is to be proved. First, the claim: »Objectification is [...] non-sublable human life-manifestation." Then, the repetition (in itself tautological as well) of the claim, in the form of articulating every manifestation of life with the category »objectification«: »When one takes into consideration that every objectivation [...] is an objectification and that all practice, work and expression are subsumed within it, then it becomes evident, that objectification/objectivation is an anthropological basic-category.« Leaving aside the surprising discovery »that every objectivation [...] is objectification«, which boils down to the fact that the expressions are synonymous, there remains nonetheless the following argument: If one interprets all practice, work as well as expression, to be objectification (objectivation), then one elevates this category to the status of an anthropological basic-category. If. Our initial purpose, however, was to test *whether* we should do this. Would it not be appropriate to first subject this category -- which had once been allied with a »serious error« -- to rigorous criticism before answering the question of whether it should be vaulted to the status of a basic category (or be allowed to maintain -this status)?

## Chapter 6

### *The Falling together of Consciousness and Reality in Korsch (1923)*

My teacher is very impatient. He wants everything or nothing. Often I think: To such a demand the world will like to answer: nothing.

Brecht, *Marxist Studies*, GW 20, 66

#### 6.1 *The Belated Revolutionary*

*History and Class Consciousness* appeared »during the writing« of Karl Korsch's *Marxism and Philosophy* (1923a, 71). In an epilogue Korsch agreed »in principal gladly« to Lukács' arguments, »which in many ways concern the questions arisen in this essay« (ibid). In the second edition from 1930 Korsch suppresses this after-word because, as he notes, he couldn't maintain the »declaration of agreement« (1930, 34).<sup>4</sup> The additional Preface from 1930 is almost as long as the original text, which it interprets in a way that shifts the accentuations. The political conjuncture has changed totally in these seven years. While Korsch in 1923 turns as an organized communist with Lenin against the Social Democrats, 1930 an unorganized Marxist defends himself mainly against the »Leninism« which after Lenin's death had been constituted and become obligatory in the Communist International. One of the basic ideas from 1923 was the dialectical rejection of that 'naïve realism' which opposes being and consciousness while letting the consciousness receive as a passive inside world the image of the outside world.

»With this, as it appeared to me then, for every Marxist self-evident[...] critique [...] I had, without being aware of it, attacked just the main point of that peculiar 'philosophical' *Weltanschauung* which then as the actual fundament of the new orthodox doctrine of the so-called Marxism-Leninism would be propagated and spread from Moscow over the whole communist world of the West.« (1930, 53)

<sup>4</sup> This is not the only omission in the presumably „unchanged“ re-edition. Missing is also footnote 1: »This treatise forms the first section of a broader project: Historical-logical investigations on the question of the materialistic dialectics.« (1923a, 2) This title corresponds to the fact that Korsch's essay shows a special interest for Engels' review of *A Contribution to the Critique of Political Economy* from 1859, where this expression is coined.

However, this was not the only unconscious element of his 1923 project. What he intended then was inscribed in an unsustainable way into a historical constellation which Korsch then still believed to be revolutionary though it had in reality already brought the final defeat of the revolution in the West. Italy was already fascist. In Germany a last rearing of the revolutionary forces in 1923 could at first illusions. The communist Korsch became minister of Justice of the leftist coalition government in Thuringia. The leadership of the COMINTERN pressed for an armed uprising. Die action became »quickly liquidated« by the government, and with it the revolutionary post-war era (see Vranicki 1972, 510). Amidst the fading away of the revolutionary tide Korsch's essay stuck to the revolutionary gesture. Among those ideas of his text which retain an ongoing impact is the postulate of self-application: Marxism may not refrain from understanding itself in Marxist terms, that is, to analyze in historical-materialistic ways the context in which it forms itself and is effective. Is Korsch able to reflect his own being conditioned in this way? As it happens mostly in historical actions, the meaning of his intervention seems to evade him. Some of his contradictions he registers in his fore-word from 1930. His essay has, as he notes, been well received from bourgeois authors because of his admission of spiritual realities (1930, 31), mainly of Philosophy; and yet, his essay contained the proclamation of the total smashing [...] of these spiritual realities and of their material basis by the at once material and spiritual [...] action of the revolutionary class (ibid). Furthermore Korsch had proclaimed the total unity of theory and practice, the rejection even of an only relative independence of theory, hence of every fixation of a method as such, apart from the concrete historical movement. He became, however, as Perry Anderson in his essay on *Western Marxism* remarks, protagonist of a movement which represented in every respect the direct opposite of what he had proclaimed.: ##

## 6.2 *The Totality as Magic Guaranty of Revolution*

## CHAPTER 7

### EUCHNER'S MARX

Why, one must ask, did Marx fall into this precarious thought-construction?

W. Euchner, 1983, 102

#### *7.1 De-Construction of a Representation of Marx*

The hegelianizing reading of Marx is a major power in academic Marxism, particularly among philosophers. This is no wonder. The social installation and form of philosophizing thrusts those who work within it toward certain sorts of questions and objects of study. The position within the social structure determines, so to speak, the modality in which questions are posed. The institution of the philosophizing spirit transforms, by its own momentum, its object into something mental. It rips it out of history in order to immerse it in the history of mind. So it goes with Marx as well. His mode of approach, which no longer simply emerged from philosophy but also called it into question, is time and again reeled back in by philosophers, transformed back into a philosophical motif and as such traced back to other philosophical ideas. What seems more natural than to interpret Marx through Hegel as soon as one has brought him back into the lap of philosophy? This sort of maintenance of the monument makes of the New in Marx the Unthinkable, his Unheard-Of becomes an Overheard.

In the following we wish to exhibit one such Marx-image. It will tell us something about his »imag-ination«. The object is a new book on Marx. The author, Walter Euchner, who comes from the I. Fetscher camp, was involved in the discussions of the sixties-generation of students who studied Critical Theory. His book is an apt object for our demonstration because it is both well done and representative of a particular approach.

#### *7.2 Inclusion in the Philosophical Thought-Edifice*

The questions are set back. The sphere, into which Euchner's Marx is re-stored

with no second thoughts is that of philosophy. That philosophy is for Marx an *ideological* form, one corridor of the larger *camera obscura* of the ideological in general - the »religious sphere dissolved into thoughts« (MEW 26.1, 22) -- is ignored. »Marxism itself as a thought-edifice which has become classical« (Euchner, 157) is awarded in return the privileges of the classics. Marxism is inscribed in the temple of »great philosophies, in which -- notwithstanding errors in single instances -- thought can find orientation«. A Marxism thus abstracted from its necessities and practices, from its social movement, is granted, as compensation for this amputation, immunity. Crisis of Marxism? No! Our monument »is as little in crisis as are the other great philosophies«. The immunity corresponds on the other hand to a proportionally intensified onslaught against every Marxism which breaks out of this closed asylum of thought. Freely, Euchner does not conduct -- this onslaught, which he vaguely describes as an inappropriate way to treat a -- *tradition of thought*.« The much-heard talk of the crisis of Marxism is only applicable to the attempt to address contemporary political and social problems solely with the repertory of the Marxist tradition of thought.« (156) For the philosopher, everything becomes philosophy. What's bad about -this is the repressive fiction of a holistic tradition of thought -- as though it weren't in fact a diverse and controversial theoretical culture, aligned with social movements and inscribed into the most widely differing areas of knowledge, and for which the use of the singular practically amounts to a misunderstanding. But the plural form in which Marxism exists -- even the talk of Marxisms, which G. Haupt finds to be appropriate, since the time at which Marxism became the dominant direction of the internationals, where all directions reproduced themselves as Marxist -- is not attainable by Euchner's thought-edifice. This edifice becomes thereby all the more exclusive.

Let us observe this game of inclusion/exclusion for a moment. This Marxism -- cut off from the vital problems which it addresses, from the struggles into which it intervenes, and placed as a thought-edifice into the architectural exhibition of great philosophies -- can thereby be eurocentrically occupied. All of these great philosophies whose ranks Marxism now joins, »belong to the culture in which they emerged and will endure with it as long as it continues to exist« (157). This sentence concludes Euchner's book and excludes everything which does not belong to the Western European/German culture of the 19th century. And he excludes most of those who contradict the exclusion. Mao Tse-Tung a Marxist? »One has good reason« -- though the reason goes unnamed -- »to doubt whether the official political thought in the Peoples Republic of China can be called 'Marxism'« (144). Thus the plurality of Marxist variations in the contemporary

world is mentioned only in quotation marks (and in few lines). The extra-European Marxisms have »absorbed particularities of their peoples and of the respective givens, which are surely far removed from West Europe«. Who would object to this statement? But what unaware European hybris comes to expression in this one: »if those liberation movements insist upon being 'marxist' then presumably because for the intellectuals of the oppressed strata of these peoples 'Marxism' symbolizes the uncompromising struggle for liberation from class domination and colonial exploitation«. Euchner implies, without however stating it point blank, that this reclamation of Marxism on the part of those liberation movements is a misuse, or at the very least a misunderstanding, of Marxism. He lends to this exclusion of the Third World from Marxism and the European *inclusion* the appearance of legitimization on the part of Marx. »Marx himself had insisted that he had not cast a philosophical 'world key' for history, but rather described the path of Western Europe out of the lap of the feudal economic order«. But the semblance deceives. The sense of the statement of Marx here alluded to by Euchner (MEW 19, 108) is precisely the opposite of that presumed. Marx was concerned with the liberation of multi-form research, adapted to the differing »historical mileus« -- and with the nurturing of regional and nationally specific strategies of their alteration.

One must take a look at the third and last section of the book in order to comprehend the extent and intent of the in- and ex-elusion. One could quilt a small world-history of Marxism with the names *not* included in the index. Mariátegui, Cabral, Ho Chi Minh: one seeks these names, symbolic for Latin America, Africa and Asia, in vain. But even as concerns European Marxisms, Euchner's depletion excludes whole currents. Kardelj and Togliatti, Henri Lefebvre and Iljenkow, Mandel and Sánchez Vásquez, Lucien Sève and Predrag Vranitzki. And of German Marxisms mention is made of neither Abendroth nor Kofler, Harich nor Holzkamp, not even of Brecht -- though Benjamin is once mentioned (as having belonged to the Frankfurt School -- itself, furthermore, an unacceptable »inclusion«). Therewith the buzzword has been dropped: For Euchner, Marxism exists only as Neo-Marxism, and Neo-Marxism essentially as the Frankfurt School -- which, to be sure, is treated in its most minute differentiations.

But why shouldn't Frankfurt Neo-Marxism grant itself the same liberties taken by Marxism-Leninism? The different currents service their representations and retouch their histories. They exclude one another and show themselves to be therein related in spite of all differences.

### 7.3 Objectification (*Vergegenständlichung*)

»Critique of the political economy«, ... i.e.  
re-translation and reduction of the false  
objectivity...«  
L.Coletti 1977, 54

But let us move on to the specificity of Euchner's representation of Marx. It is a specificity common to many works by other authors. It presents Marx through a hegelianizing filter. This filter is a categorical grid which is largely identical to that which we observed in Lukács. *Expression* and *objectification* are articulating concepts in which particularly many relations run together. *Subject/object*, *surface/depth*, *essence/appearance*, *false/correct consciousness* name nodal points of the network of articulations. The last of these category-pairs provides the slogan under which Euchner interprets Marx's topos, the *camera obscura*.

For Marx, the *camera obscura*, this darkened room -- which permits light to enter only through a tiny opening with the effect that an inverted but accurate image of the »outer world« is projected onto the opposite wall -- as metaphor for the societal dispositive of all ideology (see MEW 3, 26). Let us look at Euchner's commentary on this passage:

He who claims that »in all of ideology people and their relations appear upside-down, as in a *camera obscura*« must have a conception of the real state of these relations. (64f)

Our author detects behind Marx's formulations normative ideas, prescriptive conceptions which are incompatible with the scientific claim of Marx. Euchner does not see that the context gives the *camera obscura* the function of serving as a stenographic image for an extensive theoretical sketch. A complex and multidimensional social *dispositif* is demonstrated there: the interdependent unfolding of the division of labor, class antagonism and the state. The *camera obscura* stands for the ideological forms which provide space for specific practices in this structure. Euchner fails to see that this is a #inocle# of scientific analysis and theoretical reconstruction of a whole bundle of phenomena. He sees it as a wishful image elevated to norm. He must view it in this way because he sees the whole model -- how strong patterns of interpretation can be! -- as a mere exposition of the objectification idea.

The central meaning of the dialectical objectification, alienation-,

inversion- and reification-configuration for Marxist thought resides  
foremost in its -- hidden -- normative function. (64)

In short, he makes the *camera obscura* an emanation of thought, the critique of which Marx summarized in this image. The interior with its fluid medium »consciousness« is for Euchner's Marx the true space; its occupant, the subject, is both personified freedom and the real productive force of history, who ex-creates a world out of itself into the objective, *objectivations*. In them, the subjective objectifies itself with the inverted result that its own creations begin to live on their own, and oppose themselves objectively-independently to the subject. And therewith we find ourselves at the core of *alienation*; How does Euchner's Marx conceive of it?

The state, law and other ideological powers -- how does he understand them? In *The German Ideology* they are still often formulated in hegelianizig concepts. Euchner interprets them back into the *objectivations of Spirit*. For Marx there are two contradictory -- at least heterogeneous -- articulations *across from* (*gegenüber*) and *above* (*über*) (see MEW 3, 33). »Across from« the »subject« stands the »object« of the »objectification«; »over« social beings there arises the institution of domination, the state. Euchner allows the »over« to fade in deference to the »across from«. The ideological powers, above all the state, appear to Euchner's Marx as »solidified patterns of social interaction« which lead to »domination of people by other people« (64). As though the state first led to this, instead of (as with the non-Euchnerian Marx) coming into existence precisely as an institution of domination. And as though the state emerged interactionally as a gradual rigidification of interactional patterns. The state as the form in which class antagonisms are carried out -- as the institution and compromise of domination as well as its regulation -- is disarticulated in Euchner's version. Symbolic expressions emanating from »subjects«, establishing themselves between them and finally leading to domination of some of them by others -- this is how Euchner's Marx sees the origin of the state. Marx's and Engels's conceptions of ideological forms and powers play no role in Euchner's interpretation. Totally displacing the Marxian *problématique*, he sees »alienation [...] through the superstructures«, yes even „the problem of determinant superstructures«. Correspondingly he attributes to Marx as perspective and objective the »reclamation of the superstructures« (127). Since for Marx the proletariat represents the subject in outstanding form, the socio-structural objectivations are also to a particular degree its alienating object. »The dialectical method«, Euchner writes, understanding it to mean the objectification idea, »enables Marx to depict the *whole sequence of structures* which constitute *the capitalistic*

*mode of production* and its contiguous forms of *society* and *state* as anti-world to the proletariat« (102). The whole sequence of structures of the capitalistic mode of production (however we are to understand that) is taken for a *totality*. It expresses a single basic essence, which is the alienation of a finally fundamental human essence. »The signature of the capitalistic mode of production is capital, which Marx, as we shall see, conceives in the form of a configuration of dialectical logic, as 'totality' « (77). Let us observe how Euchner's Marx thinks this totality in its economic basis-structure.

#### 7.4 Surface

There is also a problem about »appearance« and »surface« as terms. Appearances may connote something which is »false«: surface forms do not seem to run as deep as »deep structures«. These linguistic connotations have the unfortunate effect of making us rank the different moments in terms of their being more/less real, more/less important.  
Stuart Hall 1983, 74

Only superficial people don't like the surface.  
Oscar Wilde

Euchner's Marx gazes deep. The classical political economists »necessarily became entangled in contradictions, according to Marx, because they limited their investigations to those economic phenomena which become invisible on the 'surface' of bourgeois society.« Before and without the help of Euchner, Marx saw just the opposite:

Once for all may I here state, that by classical Political Economy, I understand that economy which, since the time of W. Petty, has investigated the real relations of production in bourgeois society, in contradistinction to vulgar economy, which deals with appearances only. (*Capital* 1, 85, fn.)

Inside/outside, surface/depth, kernel/hull, etc., are topographical metaphors by means of which Marx articulates constellations of theoretical problems. A careful reading reveals always a conceptual content which is no longer purely metaphorical.

What, for example, can »surface« mean within the framework of social-scientific *problématiques*? For Euchner, the definition of »social surface« presents no problem:

The surface consists of phenomena which are perceived in a superficial observation of the socio-economic relations of a bourgeois society. (8)

That which is perceptible to superficial observation is the surface. Fine. But what does it mean to observe a society »superficially«? We find an excellent example in the fourth chapter of *Capital*, where a first conception of capital is developed by means of an analysis of the value form of the money-commodity-money circulation. After doing this, Marx provides a transition to the next chapter, in which the analysis of the production of surplus value will be undertaken:

The consumption of labour-power is completed, as in the case of every other commodity, outside the limits of the market or of the sphere of circulation. Accompanied by Mr. Moneybags and by the possessor of labour-power, we therefore take leave for a time of this noisy sphere, where everything takes place on the surface and in view of all men, and follow them both into the hidden abode of production, on whose threshold there stares us in the face »No admittance except on business«. (*Capital I*, 172)

Here one can see that »surface« is no fundamental category but rather a *topos*, a providing of emphasis by means of an image. It achieves its meaning *from* the context, it doesn't establish the meaning *of* the context. »Surface« is a realm of social life »accessible to all eyes«. Nor should »concealed«, in the following clause -- this opposite to »generally accessible« -- be substantialized to »concealedness« as such. For the capitalist plant is not closed to *all* eyes. It is by no means closed to those who work there although they, too, in accordance with their hierarchical position and (non) competence may be excluded from much of that which occurs there. *Entrance only for Employees / Entrance for the Public* is, at any rate, the determinant opposition here; this determines the meaning of *concealed/superficial*. Every sociologist who has attempted to gain entry to a plant for research purposes is aware of the problem. For Euchner, this manner of reading is prosaic. He needs a concealed essential substance, a real Invisible. As so often in the case of interpretations, the text materials employed are reassuringly well-known -- and yet the meaning shifts:

In contrast to the classical political economists, Marx is concerned with

revealing the »kernel form«, the »essence« of the capitalistic mode of production which comes to expression in the superficial phenomena and »in the last instance« determines them. (84)

As customary and thus »correct« as this sentence may sound, virtually nothing it asserts is accurate. Let us return to our former example once again. There Marx analyzed the form of circulation -- that is, in the words of Euchner, a »superficial phenomenon« -- of capital and from it reconstructed the limitlessness of the valorization-drive, in order to then turn to capitalistic production (which is at once production *by* and *of* capital). What would be here the essence, where could it be found? Would the value-form »capital« be a mere »form of appearance« (*Erscheinungsform*)? Determined by an essence, if only »in the last instance«? Mere expression of a subject? But where and what, then, would this essence be? It would be as redundant as it would be meaningless to declare the capital-form to be a »form of appearance« of the capital relation.

Let us leave Euchner for a moment and take a look at Marx. It is true that he often articulates the *problematiques* in the old philosophical code of essence/appearance. But we must, first of all, remember that Marx turns more and more away from this pattern of articulation; secondly, that the scientific paradigm which he develops in *The Critique of Political Economy* has fundamentally transcended the old philosophical schema, even though it is often articulated in the old language. Euchner is victim (and co-culprit) of a widespread pattern of thinking. In the following we wish to grasp this pattern of thought *in flagranti*. We observe it on the example of interpretations of two methodologically central passages of Marx's theory. Let us watch how it works, which views it produces, which discourse and which silence.

### 7.5 Backhaus

Euchner sketches a world history of Marxism. If, in the Western world, all roads lead to Rome, in this historical sketch they lead to -- Frankfurt. ++ « »

»At the present time an intense international discussion is taking place among young Marxists. Among the most important results is the answering of particular philosophic questions, for example, the »logic of capital« by H. G. Backhaus and H. Reichelt or the Marxist conception of nature by Alfred Schmidt« (155f).

In order to complete the picture of this »international discussion« in contemporary Marxism, Euchner mentions the debate concerning the »reconstruction of the state«, the threads of which come together at the same showplace. For Euchner this debate yields the proof, »that the Marxian method is ill-suited to explain the functioning of political institutions«. The name Poulantzas is mentioned, but only in order to name him as supposed witness to this failure of the Marxist method. Because of its failure, Poulantzas has supposedly »fallen back onto structuralist ways of argumentation«. After contemporary Marxism has been exhaustively presented in this manner, the saga ends on the following note:

»Some contemporary Marxists admit openly that Marxism offers no answers to many current questions of burning importance: the policy of arms escalations, the power blocs, the ecology problem, to name a few. « (156)

It would be more correct to openly admit that Euchner does not mention the Marxist contributions to these problems -- quite probably he is not familiar with them. His pronouncement of the ill-suitability of Marxism to reflect on politics, ecology, the threat of war, etc. is true of the methodological paradigm, which is the only one he knows. With the model of the self-expressing and possibly self-alienating being (*Wesen*) can neither economy, culture and ideology nor their contradictory inter-relationships be understood. Euchner accuses Marx of this failing. He can do this, because he sees Marx through Backhaus' glasses, as it were -- and this pair of glasses reflects above all Backhaus himself. The thought which Euchner takes from Backhaus, helps him to reveal the »totality« of capital from »essence« to ideological »expression« in one sweeping motion. Rather, he has his Marx play this scene of revelation -- and finally mildly reproves him for his failure in reality. The essence of alienation thus revealed is abstract labor. It is considered the ruling category and even the true, if invisible life substance of society.

»Since the capitalist mode of production is understood by Marx to be a system whose only purpose is the production of value and surplus value it can be said that abstract labor... (is) the ^ruling category' of society or ^societal objectivity in an absolute sense'.« (Euchner 1983,101; quote in the quotation: Backhaus 1969, 146)

We check the text he quotes. What we find there is, however, different. Has Backhaus -- as Marx before him -- been duplicated into an Euchnerian and a non-Euchnerian? The passage he cites does not mention abstract labor as a »ruling

category«, and what is supposed to represent »for Marx societal objectivity in an absolute sense« (Backhaus 1969, 146) is not abstract labor, but rather the »abstract objectivity of value« (*abstrakte Wertgegenständlichkeit*) (ibid), whatever that might be. Finally, the non-Euchnerian Backhaus must be praised for moving the *value form analysis* to the center of epistemological examinations of Marx' economic criticism as early as the 1960's. Backhaus had seen how justified Marx' indication was (*Capital* I, p. 85, fn.) that the value form analysis most clearly shows the rupture between Marx and classical political economy. Euchner would have difficulty following this, since the value form is something which moves about in the circulation and, according to his criteria, an analysis would be taken in by a surface phenomenon.

That which ideally predestines Backhaus to be misunderstood by Euchner is his Hegelianizing scheme of interpretation. This scheme causes Backhaus to give preference not to *Capital* but to preliminary versions. For the same reason he disregards the *Annotations to A. Wagners Textbook of political Economy* (1879/1880; see MEW 19, 355-383), which Althusser very rightly called attention to. Other commentaries or revisions of *Capital* by Marx do not fare better. Backhaus acts like a restorer who devotes him/herself to reestablishing earlier layers. This might be okey with an old painting; here, however, it is done at the cost of more mature work. When interpreting a particular text, Euchner will (as many others) always choose from the different possible starting points (f.i. metaphors, figures weighted with tradition, etc.) that which appears most compatible with the Hegelianizing interpretation.

Let us give an example of this. Before Marx proceeds to »production of surplus value« he first analyzes the »general formula for capital, as it appears prima facie within the sphere of circulation« (*Capital* I, p.153). What the formula shows, Marx describes with the expression »automatic subject« (ibid., 169). Backhaus misses the subversive connotations and treats »subject« with old philosophical earnest.

»Value is for Marx therefore not an immobile substance, but rather a subject unfolding itself in self-differentiation. « (Backhaus 1969, 146)

Let us consider a second example of interpretation, which occurs together with the first, the »ghostly object-ivity« of value. This term is found in the first chapter of *Capital* where Marx, after dealing briefly with the use-value of commodities, analyses the exchange-value. He proceeds from a formula, namely the equation for exchange of a commodity with certain quantities of other commodities. In that

different things are set equal, one abstracts from the differences. Therefore, »the exchange of commodities is evidently an act characterised by a total abstraction from use-value (*Capital I*, p.45). Marx now describes, in a passage remarkable for its literary quality, this disregard of use-value and thereby of »all sensory properties« of the commodity. The image of the congelation and the figure from the tradition of popular superstitions, the »ghost«, attempt to express the paradoxical result of the imagination of something invisible:

»Nothing remains of them except this ghostly object-ivity, a mere congelation of homogenous human labor... « (*Capital*, p. 46)

This is not the language of theoretical categories, if one disregards the term labor. Theoretical language however, is used in the next sentence and fixes the result:

»All that these things now tell us is that human labor-power has been expended in their production, that human labor is accumulated in them «. (p. 46)

As exchange-values, the commodities represent labor. Backhaus now takes the »ghostly object-ivity« out of this context and interprets it as the (un)true subject-object of bourgeois society, »at the same time subjective and objective« (Backhaus 1969, 146).

With »subject« and »subject-object« the elements are now complete, out of which the metaphysical novel of capital logic arises. That substance, which is subject, as the Hegelianizing scheme by bracketing out human endeavors wants it to be, doubles itself constantly, finally in economy and ideology. The condensed table of contents of the novel could read as follows: the commodity duplicates itself in commodity and money, money duplicates itself in money and -- the state. The examples are well-suited to show what far-reaching methodic and indeed theoretical implications are brought along with Hegelianizing patterns of interpretation. From the above follows namely, as with Lukács, that the fetish-character of the commodity is seen as the paradigm of ideology. The value form analysis »inaugurates the criticism of ideology« (Backhaus 1969, 146). Here »is based the primacy of the sphere of production in relation to the sphere of circulation and therewith (!) the primacy of the relations of production in relation to the 'superstructure'« (ibid.). In short, through his Hegelianizing pattern of interpretation, Backhaus is seduced to an (as Marx said of Franklin) »economistically one-sided« (MEW 13, 42) view, in this case of the relations of

production.

Astonishingly, the relations of production are conceived of here under abstraction from the *value forms*. For, when the sphere of production is thus set prior to the sphere of circulation -- or is even set as a base under it -- then a reduction of the relations of production to the sphere of production takes place. In reality, the value forms, which as such are »at home« in the circulation sphere, penetrate the production and above all the joining of means of production and labor force. That which *forms* the joining of wage labor and capital as these relations of production are precisely the *value forms*. Backhaus who seemed to know this a few pages earlier, forgets it, in order to conceive of the sphere of circulation as the first »superstructure« over the »sphere of production«. We shall see how Euchner follows him.

#### 7.6 Abstract Labor and the Value-form Analysis

Our study intends to dis-entangle and is therefore necessarily *entangled*. Backhaus was Euchner's crown witness for his Marx. We follow how Euchner approvingly *transforms* that which is given by Backhaus. The *abstract labor* »founds [...] the substance on which society lives« (101). We sense already: it is the subject-object of the objectivity of value, the »phantom-like« congealed labor, on which Euchner's society lives. »To live« is nothing more than a peculiar metaphor here. Only a phantom, if anything, lives on a phantom-like congelation. Necessary to a more-than-merely ghostly life would be concrete useful work, which processes natural material. Euchner repeats that suppression of nature which Marx already fought against. Marx begins his very important *Critique of the Gotha Program* (1875) by insisting on the central meaning of *nature* as »the primary source of all means and objects of labor« (MEW 19, 15). He insists further that the counterpart of the suppression of nature is »the attribution of supernatural creative power to work« (ibid). *Capital*, too, begins with this recognition: »Labor is therefore not the only the source of the use-values it produces...« (*Capital* I, 50) The labor which loses status here is concrete useful labor. The matter becomes even more absurd, if one believes oneself to be capable of living on abstract labor. Euchner seems to sense that objections will come. We are concerned here with »a substance which obviously, taken by itself, can be thought of as purely abstract and undifferentiated« (Euchner 1983,110). It is no wonder that abstract labor is abstract. The wonder consists of its incarnation to a source of nourishment. Euchner has the

transsubstantiation of abstract labor happen in the following way:

»It first-becomes concrete, when it 'manifests itself' as exchange-value in the concrete use-value of the bodily form of the commodities.« (Euchner 101)

Abstract labor appears in use-value? Somehow we sense: this formulation, which, strictly speaking, is nonsensical, could possibly receive meaning as a misunderstanding echo of a formulation of Marx that, with the »expression of value«, »concrete labor becomes the form under which its opposite, abstract human labour, manifests itself« (*Capital I*, 64). We have no choice but to follow this thought and consult Marx's *analysis of the value-form*.

### 7.61 On the Non-Euchnerian Marxian Value-form Analysis

Marx devotes the third section of the first chapter of *Capital* to the analysis of the value-form. This section has paradigmatic meaning. The concluding section of this first chapter, however, has become more famous: *The fetish character of the commodity and the secret thereof*. Backhaus says of this fetish chapter that it »can only be understood as an autonomous part of the third section, when one considers the content« (Backhaus 1969,132).

The object to be examined is *the value-form or the exchange-value*.

Marx introduces the object of analysis by means of a small experiment, which we should help conduct. We should try to express the value of a commodity. We discover thereby that it is senseless to attempt to express the »value« of a commodity using the commodity itself.

Spontaneously and daily we articulate question -- and -- answer in terms of money. Scientific theory dare not fail to analyze money, must first of all pose questions about the *money-form*. Marx is the first to pose this question in a scientific, systematic way. He poses it *genetically* i.e. as program for the reconstruction of the origin of this form.

The value-form is the form in which question-and-answer is played in respect to the exchange relation of commodities. Thus it is also the form of communication or argumentation about the magnitude of values, bargaining etc. The simplest possible form of articulating the question as to the value of a

commodity and of formulating answers to this question sets up a relationship between one commodity and another: so much of the one commodity is worth so much of the other. This form of articulation is the first object of analysis of the Marx's *value-form analysis*. The problem is posed paradigmatically. If it can be solved, the analysis of more complex forms, including the money form, will be easier.

This first object of examination according to Marx is *not*, as is sometimes claimed, a pure thing of thought. The »elementary or accidental form of value« (*Capital I* p. 55), as Marx calls it ( $x \text{ commodity } A = y \text{ commodity } B$ ) represents a sort of archaeological basic form within the »development of the commodity form«:

Every product of labor is, in all states of society, a use-value; but it is only at a definite historical epoch in a society's development that such a product becomes a commodity, viz., at the epoch when the labor spent on the production of a useful article becomes expressed as one of the objective qualities of that article, i.e. as its value. It therefore follows that the elementary value-form is also the primitive form under which a product of labor appears historically as a commodity and that the gradual transformation of such products into commodities, proceeds *pari passu* with the development of the value-form. (*Capital I* p.67).

Freely, the elementary value-form »occurs practically only in the first beginning, when the products of labor are converted into commodities by accidental and occasional exchanges« (*Capital I*, p. 71).

The next more complex object of examination is the *expanded form of value*. This form consists therein that the value of a commodity is expressed consecutively in a series of other commodities. This form »comes into actual existence as soon as a particular product of labor [...] is [...] habitually exchanged for various other commodities« (*Capital I*, p.71). When a commodity expresses its value in the series of all other commodities, this relation of expression can be turned around. With this, the world of commodities has found a general »Language« for expressing value. This is the *general form of value*, precursor to the money form. Now one commodity appears vis-à-vis all others, that is, all others place the commodity in the position of the common or *general equivalent*. If each commodity expresses its value in this general equivalent, it confronts the other commodities with a complete expression of value, acts hence as exchange-value vis-à-vis other exchange values. »By this form, commodities are, for the first time, effectively brought into relation with one another as values ...« (*Capital I*, 71). This sentence has often been taken to

mean that the simpler forms did not appear in history and would therefore indicate solely theoretical elements of construction without historical content. This misunderstanding contains a grain of truth. It is a fact that Marx does not proceed along the lines of economic history in the case of the value-form analysis. In a theoretically strict manner, he reconstructs a genetic relation. The first step is the form analysis of the expression of value. In order to fix different formal positions and the functions of the separate elements in his thought, Marx introduces a series of neologisms: relative value form, equivalent form, etc. The commodity whose value is expressed by the relation to the second commodity is in the relative value form. The second commodity functions as an equivalent or, because of its position, is in the equivalent form. Marx discovers three relations of representation in this form. The value of the first commodity is represented by (Marx: »appears as«) this second commodity, as it is usable, touchable, visible.

In short: value appears as use-value. Since Marx had shown in the first sub-section that use-value and value express heterogeneous relationships and therefore must be kept analytically strictly separate (which is contrary to the common-sense understanding of the matter) he identifies this striking contradiction as the first peculiarity of the equivalent form. The second peculiarity repeats the same contradiction on the level of labor, thus drawing together the results of the second sub-section with the observations concerning the elementary value form: If one wants to express the value of a commodity, it is the expended »abstract labor« which is expressed in the inverted form of »value«. What corresponds to this on the other side of the value expression, in the case of »commodity B«, which in its sensuous-concrete form expresses the value of »commodity A«, is the concrete-useful labor which has produced this sensuous-concrete form. Marx therefore records a second contradiction, which is analogous to the first: «... that concrete labour becomes the form under which its opposite, abstract human labour manifests itself» (*Capital I*, p. 64). Or: In the value expression examined the concrete labor which produces use-value B represents *implicitly* the abstract labor which produces the value A.

We shall now turn to the Euchnerian Marx in order to see how these connections appear to him.

### 7.62 Value-Form Analysis According to Euchner

We have heard Euchner say that abstract labor appears »as exchange-value in the concrete use-values of the commodities« (101). We now see how bits out of Marx' value-form analysis reappear here in adulterated form. Euchner throws the two »peculiarities« together. If we call to mind the »logic« of his basic idea, it will become clear that the two levels of contradiction are drawn together into one in his eyes. That which we have up to now noted as his »logic« can be summarized as follows: A hidden substantial essence which is at the same time subject, manifests itself in a way which can be called appearance or expression. Let us try to observe this logic at »work«.

The analysis of the value form with the goal of genetically reconstructing the money form appears thus in Euchner:

»The transition, developed by Marx as a dialectical relation, from the value form of commodities to their money form« -- it should read: *from the elementary form to the monetary form*, for the money form is a value form as well -- »is based on the insight that a singular (einzige) commodity« -- he means: *single* commodity, for »singular (einzige, = one only) commodity« would be a nonsensical term -- »taken alone cannot express the value embodied in it. Value is not a concrete property of the commodity« -- here he means: *sensuous-concrete*, for the value belongs to the *concretum* 'commodity' -- »but rather an expression of the invisible state of affairs of being... the product of abstract labor.« (Euchner 1983, p.87)

Euchner mistakes „concrete« for »visible«. In order to reconstruct the »commodity«, »the simplest economic concretum« (Marx, MEW 19, 369) conceptually, I must integrate »value« and »use-value« in a particular way. From the viewpoint of an analysis of the commodity, it is nonsensical to conceive of the category of value as an abstract property and the category of use-value as a concrete one. They are both essential elements of the Concrete. When one considers the goal of conceptually reproducing the Concrete as »Integration of many determinations«, as »thought concretum« (*Gedankenkonkretes*, cf. MEW 13, 632 f.), then the use-value is, in respect to the »commodity«, no more concrete than value.

Though not a concrete determinant of a commodity for Euchner, value is »the expression of the invisible circumstance of being the product of [...] abstract labor«. Value is by no means simply labor congealed in the product, but rather: expression of the circumstance, that value is the product of abstract labor. Is it then

the product of abstract labor after all? But what now? Is it the product of abstract labor or the expression of the circumstance of being a product (and so forth)? And as to the „circumstance« -- is it invisible? Do we not, as Marx says, »see at a glance« the constant „form change« of labor, i.e. that labor power or potential labor »in accordance with the varying demand« (*Capital I*, 51) sometimes assumes this, sometimes the other concrete form? What is invisible is not the circumstances of the framework but rather »abstract labor«, because this abstraction by definition should exclude all observable useful determinations. Even here, however, Euchner is not consistent. In the heat of battle, he forgets the »invisibility«. Marx attempts, he says, »in a strictly scientific manner to show that capitalism necessarily condemns the workers to abstract labor unfit for humans« (86). But no one will claim that just because wage labor can be unfit for humans it is invisible. In short, the abstraction has turned into an empiric category. When he thereby describes the abstraction as something »invisible«, it becomes speculative mystification, subjectified substance. Correspondingly, he mystifies the value-form analysis. If he were to understand the societal order, the *dispositif* of production which is private and based on the division of labor as the framework, all of his single interpretations could be corrected. The speculative basic pattern distributes them to their proper places and keeps them there.

After Euchner has explained that it is impossible for a commodity to have its expression of value in itself and has given the invisibility of abstract labor as a reason, which shows the necessity of using another commodity as equivalent, he moves on to -- the impossibility of the exchange relation of two commodities.

The Marxian value-form analysis is supposed to show that value is inherent in commodities, but that they cannot be exchanged directly, but rather mediated through money. Indeed, money is a *necessary* middle step in the exchange process (88)

Shortly before, he had explained:

The exchange value of a commodity can only express itself in the material form of the other commodities, its (the first commodity's) use-value. (Euchner, 87)

This formulation, though incorrect -- for exchange value is already the form of expression of value, not that which expresses itself -- all the same less mystifying than that which was quoted above. If the value of a commodity can be expressed in

another commodity (and vice-versa), why couldn't the two commodities be exchanged »directly, one for the other« (88)? And why do we need an extensive analysis, if all that results in the end is that which »everyone knows, if he knows nothing else« (*Capital I*, p.54 ): that in our society commodity-exchange is usually »mediated through money« (Euchner, 88). Very probably Euchner misunderstood Marx' statement that only through the general value form „do the commodities enter into relation with each other as values« (*Capital I*, p. 71, see the preceding section) as meaning that they could only now be exchanged at all. And if that were not enough, he has mistaken the general equivalent for money.

Why such misunderstandings? Because they fit so easily into the scheme. In order not to have his circles of speculation disturbed, Euchner must at any cost suppress the knowledge that the value-form analysis is both this and at the same time a reconstruction of its genetic connection. Since he cannot claim the exchange of one commodity for another commodity to be an invisible act, which itself expresses the invisibility of abstract labor and only »manifests itself« in the usual buying and selling, he simply declares the exchange to be impossible: the Marxian analysis of the value form and his theoretical reconstruction of its genetic succession, on the other hand, is declared to be a mere »thought experiment with which he wants to develop the money form of the commodity « (Euchner, 87). We now understand the peculiarly veiled formulation further above where he speaks of

»the transition from the value form of the commodities to their money form, developed by Marx as a dialectical relation... « (Euchner,87)

»Transition« here does not mean a real transition from one historical form of the practice of exchange to another, nor does he mean the theoretical reconstruction of such a transition. By »transition« is meant really only that claimed by the opponents of dialectic: a swinging from thought to thought. The concern at hand is »only" one of »dialectic«. The transitions from the elementary to the complex value forms are not really transitions, but only »dialectic relations«. Or: the only relation which exists here is one of commodity and money and the rest is -- a thought experiment, a dialectical thought experiment, of course. It is no wonder that his work teems with Invisibilities.

The mesh in which Euchner's interpretation is caught is that of the Hegelianizing pattern of articulation. This Hegelianism needs part of its hidden – invisible essence with its reversed forms of manifestation. Whereas Marx translated elements of this thought forwards, in this case a large-scale translation in reverse is

going on. Backhaus, who rightly placed the value-form analysis in the center of the stage, has placed it there in a way which now makes it disappear for good, as through a trap door. Whereas Marx postulates the expression of value as a practical necessity for exchange, it is for Backhaus only a manifestation to which everyday consciousness falls prey.

»For the reader it is incomprehensible that [...] value, ...cannot be expressed at all, but only 'manifests' itself in reversed form, as the 'relation' of two use-values.« (Backhaus 1969,131)

Here we can see how the Hegelianizing pattern of articulation renders the Marxian analysis incomprehensible for its readers.

### *7.7 The World-Egg Concept and the Bursting of Objectivity*

Speculative totality develops out of the speculative foundation as if by itself. At the beginning there was the commodity. Through a series of doublings we arrive at the state, at the superstructure.

»In that the use-value, to the extent that it is a commodity, is doubled in exchange-value and commodity, the first instance of the oppression of the workers is brought about, since exchange-value production is abstract i.e. alienated labor. Thus the overpowering of the proletariat is begun through superstructures which arise from the processes of doubling of social labor. They multiply through the production of relative surplus value and repeat themselves in the social and political institutions of bourgeois society«. (Euchner 1983,102 f.)

As we can see, Euchner provides his Marx with a true world formula. It is a prime example of what Mats Dahlkvist has called World-Egg thinking. The commodity-egg, speculatively fertilized, hatches after a series of doubling processes into a richly articulated totality. First the use-value doubles itself as commodity and exchange-value: this is the *abra*, which doubles itself as *abracadabra*. Before the proletariat even exists -- for the commodity has not yet doubled itself in commodity and money as money not yet in money and capital, and this not yet in capital and wage labor -- its overpowering is already being wrought through superstructures which magnify themselves through the production of relative surplus value and *repeat* themselves in the aggregate of institutions of the bourgeois

society. The whole diversity of institutions, agencies, powers, forms of societal life has been explained in one fell swoop. And it has very definitely been »explained«:

//100/ »The capitalist economy including its political and ideological superstructure follow the imperative of valorization.« (Euchner,101)

Vigorous language! Hegelianizing thought drives its totality to a vision of a totalitarianism of capital. The *greed* for profit turns into the *imperative* of creating surplus value, the parody of acategorical moralizing of capitalist enrichment. The church as well as the family, the university, literature and art follow this imperative. There is no plurality of spaces and logics, no countermovements, oppositions, non-concurrences. Whereas the market is supposed to be determined by the relations of production only »in the last instance«, such forbearance does not apply to cultural, ideological or political life. Everything consists of objectified abstract labor.

With this, however, the way is paved for the big change. The world-egg has finally doubled itself in a large empty shell. It will burst like a soap bubble and will take all objectivity with it. Everything consists of objectified abstract labor. The ghostly objec-ivity of value is the paradigm of objectivity. And thus everything that exists in this fashion is worthy of perishing. The dissolution of the superstructures in an absolute sense is the perspective of this Marx -- or should we rather say Marx Brother? It is at any rate true that, already in the midst of capitalism, its ideological veil is seized by the general process of doubling -- and rips.

//101/ This veil will not last. The self-negating tendencies of capitalism will tear it apart. (Euchner, 80)

To begin with, though, it's going to tear apart the Euchnerian Marx. For he is being filled with all this speculative thin air only in order to make him burst. It's all not to be taken too seriously.

//102/ *Chapter 7*

## ON THE SUBJECT/OBJECT ARTICULATION OF THE RELATIONS OF HUMANS AND NATURE

As the twentieth century draws to a close, the urgency of the ecological problems has become a global question of survival. Marxism, as every other social and

political project, must open itself up to the question of whether it is capable of addressing and positing solutions for problems in this area. If one investigates the suitability of the different patterns of thought for the articulation of ecological problems one quickly runs into the blocking effect of the subject/object paradigm once again. Let us demonstrate this *problematique* using as an example a text-book from the German Democratic Republic.

How should one define nature? A »definition« in the sense of a delimitation of nature would clearly be senseless, since there is nothing which surrounds it. Thus, if we must have a definition, it is *we* who surround ourselves with *it*. But where do we draw the line between ourselves and the Other, nature? Do we belong as organisms to nature? But if, as the young Marx commented, the development of our five senses constitutes a world history, is this developmental history to be attributed in part or in whole to nature? Or is it enough to follow Vico, as did Marx in *Capital*, and to say that »human history differs from natural history in this, that we have made the former but not the latter?« (*Capital I*, 352, footnote 2). Is it then only a coincidence when Marx in the preface to the same book writes that he »views the evolution of the economic formation of society as a process of natural history« (*Capital I*, 21)? Would //103/ then this »making« in the sense of fabricating alteration of »nature«, be the Archimedean point? In this case, the »ensemble of social relations«; also of its media and instruments -- hence of language and the ensemble of apparatuses as well -- would be the differentiating New, »constructed« by natural being man between himself and the rest of nature. But is the development of this constructed »between« itself natural history? Sève, Holzkamp, Schurig have prompted fruitful investigation of this question. The theoretical questions of the determination of »nature« are anything but answered.

We now direct our questioning gaze to the aforementioned text-book. While attempting to determine how precisely »nature« is there differentiated, we encounter an old friend: the consciousness discourse. Following a general introduction, the first substantial section is titled: »The Relation Between Nature and Society as a Problem of Philosophy and of Historical Conceptualization« (87ff). Alfred Kosing, author of this section, defines nature within the framework of a theory of »two realms of the unified material world«. Nature is that »realm which develops unconsciously, existing only as *object*« (88). The »realm« of social man, on the other hand, »exists not only as object, but at the same time subjectively, as *subject*, which makes of the remainder of the material world an object of activity« (88). The *conscious subject* man stands across from the *unconscious*

*object* nature. Or, humans *make nature* in that they make of the whole material world with the exception of themselves a mere-object of their activity, in short, they dominate it. One could now become involved in all kinds of hair//104/splittings. If everything which is mere-object belongs to nature, does a typewriter belong to nature? And so on. But we are here interested in something else. We're interested in the role of »consciousness«, the »subject«, the binary code and the status of nature.

Consciousness is the pivotal point, the center of this thought-world. For it is consciousness which delimits itself with surrounding nature. One must change one's perspective in order to do away with the false naturalness of this point of view. From the point of view of *labor* we would, as we have already seen, differentiate in other ways. We would encounter a non-binary basic structure. The effective forces would be those of nature. It would be meaningless to define nature by exclusion from labor. Labor fits itself into nature. At the most, the master defines himself through exclusion from labor.

Exclusion from consciousness, on the other hand, is as evident as is the view from the *intérieur* into the »outside world«: e-vident, in the sense of the latin, ex-videre (to look out). This evidence is the unconscious of consciousness; not its understanding of self, but self-understood »truth«. »Consciousness« as something fixed for itself is like that spherical mirror, suspended in a room, with which Comenius, a contemporary of Descartes and Hobbes, compares understanding. It's not a bad image. In that the surface of the globe reflects to the observer the image of himself and of his environment, it appears -- at least to children, who do not yet understand this mirror-effect -- as though the image at the center of the ball //105/ were visible because its glass wall is transparent.

In a ball made of glass sat the sorcerer's bonny lass...

But the inside of the reflecting ball is in truth empty and hollow. The images come from outside. Moreover, they circulate in the same outside to which the mirroring sphere, the room with its windows, the viewer and everything else belong. »The Whole is the True« -- this holds for the installation, not for its inner effects.

The *subject* is precisely because of its abstractness well suited to our spontaneously imagining all kinds of concrete things about it. The subjective is, so to speak, the principal component of activity, the active instance or focal point of activity. But that is not enough. Concrete activity points to articulations. Using the example of use-value-creating labor we sketched the general historical and abstract

model of its »elementary factors« (*Capital I*, p. 174; »éléments simples« in the translation by Roy and Marx) and of the relations of these elements. Marx articulates consciousness from the standpoint of labor, not labor from the standpoint of consciousness. Freely, every articulation which issues from consciousness is least accessible to consciousness itself. »Subject« appears to be the responsible summary of »consciousness«. It is not so much the computer center in the system of activities as the decision-making responsibility in the *center*.

Kosing correspondingly makes humans the subjects of their history. More precisely, he lets Marx do it for him, quoting him as follows:

//106/ ...Humans [...] are -- as Marx expresses it -- »the actors and authors of their own history«.

Finally the sentence »humans make their own history« is explained. They *write* it like an author of stories writes tales. And an actor is »someone who demonstrates, exhibits, shows something, particularly at a fair« (Wahrig, 1967). History as exhibition, man as its exhibitor? This is supposed to be the conception of Marx, who warned us against viewing history as »imagined action taken by imagined subjects, as with the idealists« (MEW 3,27)? Is this author-actor anything but the *imaginary subject of an imaginary life*? Let's once again go back to Marx in order to prevent our being overcome by the imposing pomp of quotation. The passage in question was taken from the *Misère de la Philosophie*, the polemic against Proudhon of 1846/47 (MEW 4, 135). The context intends a radical critique of a theoretical mode of production which has the ring of a prefiguration of the hegelianizing Marx-reading. For Proudhon attempts nothing other than that which the hegelianizing approach contends of Marx: to achieve a critique of political economy by *applying* the dialectic-paradigm of Hegelian logic. Marx begins the section on method with a critique of the concept »logical order and its articulation in reason« (MEW 4, 126) or »logical succession« (131). The concept stands for a certain discursive organization of the *presentation* of a theory or its object of study. The object is thereby transformed into a »logical«, mental object, so that one can seek in »reason«, in »thought« also the »order« »in which he presents to us the economic categories« (134).

//107/ When Mr. Proudhon spoke of the *sequence in intellect*, the *logical succession of the categories*, he explained positively that he did not want to present *history in the order of time*, by which he means the historical succession in which the categories have *revealed* themselves. (MEW 4,

134)

In an act of parody Marx takes up Proudhon's procedure. In doing so he does not so much mime the fool as fool the mime. The central concern is how reason manages to produce a logical sequence of this sort apart from the real »historical development of the relations of production«.

If we had the unabashedness of Mr. Proudhon in Hegelian matters, we would say: It differentiates itself in itself from itself. What is that intended to mean? Since impersonal reason outside of itself has neither ground on which to stand nor an object with which it can combine, it sees itself forced to do a somersault and to pose, to oppose and to compose itself -- position, opposition, composition. In Greek we would say thesis, antithesis, synthesis. For those who don't know the Hegelian language, let's follow with the consecrated formula; affirmation, negation, negation of the negation... it is the language of this pure reason, severed from the individual. In the place of the common individual and his common manner of speaking and thinking, we have merely this common manner by itself, without the individual. (MEW 4, 127)

This, then, is the satirical framework from which Kosing extracted his author/actor-subject. Whereas for the »logical« presentation history becomes something like a story without an author, a played role without an actor, a common sort of common individual but without the individual, Marx reverses this ordering. Such a turning around of Proudhon's inversion is served up to us by Kosing as Marx's conception of history. That was the *argumentum ex auctoritate* with which he justified the delimitation between his consciousness-subject and »nature«.

//108/ The *binary code*, which we investigated in the *camera obscura* of consciousness, accomplishes the rest. From the standpoint of the Inside, everything which doesn't inhabit its space falls »outside« it. Thus inner-world and outer-world are complementary quantities. What, then, is nature? Nature is »the whole world, [...] except society« (Hahn 1976, 89). And since society = all of the world except for nature, thus nature + society = all of the world or »matter«. But we can't win the whole thing back quite so simply as that. After first having separated and then having opposed to one another these separate realms it is understandable enough that their re-linking should pose a problem. The productive forces are supposed to provide the solution:

... on the basis of productive forces which increase from social formation to social formation... (develop) ever closer bonds which link nature and society. (Hahn 1976, 92)

of course these bonds are understood to be one-sided. They bind nature.

The *status of nature* is the *mere-object*; the object here represents the nature-form as such. There appear to be really only subjects and objects, as in the first paragraph of Kant's *Anthropology*. And the whole development of the »bonds which link nature and society« culminates therein, that »man. [...] attains increasing domination over nature« (92)

The ecological set of problems makes tangible the lunacy of this sort of imaginary domination over an imaginary mere-object »nature«. But Marx and Engels already knew better. The earth, Marx wrote, »is the great laboratory« of our life //109/ process, and at the same time the »location, the *basis* of community« (*Grundrisse* 376). And Engels, after having characterized man as the animal who dominates nature, warns:

Let us not flatter ourselves too abundantly with our human victory over nature. For every such victory it takes revenge. Each has initially, to be sure, the effects with which we had reckoned, but in the second and third instance it has different, unforeseen effects... (MEW 20, 452)

Engels then introduces a few ecological catastrophies as the result of shortsighted exploitation of nature, and concludes:

»In this way we are reminded at every turn that we do not by any means control nature as a conqueror rules over a foreign people, as someone who stands outside nature -- but that we belong to it with flesh and blood and brain and that we stand in its midst and that our whole domination of it consists therein, that we can recognize and correctly apply its laws better than all other creatures. « (MEW 20, 453)

Kosing's definition of nature defines a standpoint »outside of nature«. His subject determines itself as that which stands outside nature and rules over it, or wants to, like a conqueror over a foreign people. Kosing's formulations show in an exemplary fashion how anti-ecological the subject-object articulation is in its effects.

## //110/ Part IV PERSPECTIVES

//111/ *Chapter 8*

## BEYOND THE SUBJECT/OBJECT PARADIGM

The Marxist method must therefore be applied to Marxism, which today can really not be viewed as a clearly defined theory, but on the contrary must be examined as a complex network of differing and often in central questions contradictory tendencies.

L. Lombardo-Radice 1983, 71

*1. False Fronts*

Critique calls for anti-critique. What are its arguments? How to avoid that old scenes are once again re-enacted and divert attention from the matter at hand? For example, the scenario could call for an attack on Hegel which appears to be an attack on dialectics itself. All the merits of the dialectic can then be mobilized for the defense of Hegelianism. Or one can proclaim a Hegelian monopoly on indispensable strategies of thought, like the comprehension of a total context, by postulating that the Hegelian concept of »totality« is the only approach to holistic thinking. One can accuse the critique of subject-object articulation of trying to eliminate the active human being to the benefit of structures, etc. Even the epithets are available. Is not everyone who criticizes Hegelianism a positivist?

Our critique of Hegel does not seek a break with the dialectic. On the contrary. We want to open the dialectical up to view. And the critique of Hegel's thinking-in-totality seeks to develop the possibility of getting serious about thinking the structured whole rather than thinking in a »totalitarian« and reductionist manner. Critique of the subject-//112/object model seeks the emancipation of the elements which are contained in the model. Behind the character-masks of the subject are individuals, whose ability for social action is openly and without the mysticism of higher powers at the center of our concern. And finally, as we could see in the *Grundlagen* (Hahn 1976), it is not just isolatable things or even a world of things, onto which the character-mask of the »object« is affixed, but the comprehensive reality, nature itself.

Scenarios of false antagonism also lie in wait for us on the other side of the spectrum of Marxist formations, where »politics« rather than »philosophy« is the central concern. Is not one who criticizes the fusion type of homogenous unity

against *every* unity? Does not criticism of economism eliminate the economic? To attack the reductionism of class -- is that not a betrayal of class interest? Etc. Will it be impossible to avoid participation in these pseudo-discussions? There are enough real problems which are burning and unclarified. To be sure, the political aspects of the present study restrict themselves to the problem of the articulation of questions which lie beyond the common consciousness. At this level we must put up with two »political« objections. The fact is that the sharpest controversies in Marxism, not to mention bitter animosities, express themselves in varying formulations of the subject-object schema. In short: we have dealt with this form of articulation as if it were a unitary formation. And secondly: as we dismantled the »orthodox Marxism« of Lukács, did. we, //113/ finally, at the same time disarticulate the question of the specific identity of Marxism?

## 2. *The Question of Orthodoxy*

»The word ›unyielding‹ is a signal which allows Right-Thinking People to recognize each other.« -- Marx, Kritik des Gothaer Programms

On the first objection: It is true that opposing philosophical »parties« articulate themselves on this ground, which itself is attacked by opposing »parties«. Or: The political fronts seem at first glance to run crosswise to those on the level of the discursive connection which we are investigating. Political directions cannot be recognized solely through the structuring use of the categories subject and object or consciousness. A look at the individual status and the standard connections of each category indicates these directions. On the one side is the discourse, characterized by the pitiless necessity of objective law with an added »subjective factor«. And on the other side is the opponent of this objectivism. He envisions a condition (or he attributes it to Marx as the image of communism), »in which no relationships or powers exist independent of humans« (Schmidt 1968, 57). That is the vision of the »kingdom of man«, in which the person is the absolute king, without however having the wise modesty of the king in the *Petit Prince*, who maintains his authority by ordering //114/ only those things which are already happening. No, here the subject violates its own borders, and consciousness becomes sole lord. »Finally consciousness shall take command over Being« (Schmidt 1968, 57). *Les extrêmes se touchent*. The mute installation is the same, from which such varied discourses ring forth. In objectivism the inner world is presumed to be controlled by the outer world; in subjectivism the tables are turned. The scale is tipped first to the one side,

then to the other, but it remains the same scale. This is not intended to belittle the interests which throw themselves on the one side or the other. According to Bourdieu every philosophical text -- like every single *institutional discourse* -- comprises »un compromis entre un intérêt expressif et une censure constituée par la structure même du champ dans lequel se produit et circule le discours« (Bourdieu 1982, 167). Our investigation is concerned above all with -this »field«; the analysis of the »expressive interests« remain in the background. But the expressive interests articulate themselves in various fields. And within an institutionalized field there is competition between patterns of articulation. The overall context is interwoven, and what appears as antagonism at one level can re-unify at another level. These facts justify examining the logic of a pattern of articulation individually, although the concrete significance of that which is articulated is not purely individual.

The subject-object articulation experienced its first classical flowering in the philosophy of German idealism. Already //115/ at this point the positions clashed harshly. Hegel could have formulated his critique of Kant similarly to our critique of the entire direction. Kant locked away the subject of knowledge in the camera obscura of a self-fixated consciousness which only has self-formed impressions of the outside world, to which, in its concrete reality, it has no access. Consciousness at this level »does not yet know that the thing *in itself* is identical to the Spirit and is only released to an apparently complete independence through a self-division of the Spirit. That this is so, is only known to *those of us* who have progressed to the *Idea of the Spirit*« (Hegel, *Encyclopedia*, § 141, footnote). Hegel's Spirit thus claims to be »non-contradictory« (§ 440, addendum). It comprehends not just everything human, but everything -- period.

It (i.e., the Spirit) is confident that It will find Itself in the world, that the world must be, that, as Adam says of Eve, she is flesh of my flesh, so does It have to search in the world for reason of its own reason. Reason has yielded to us as the unity of the subjective and the objective, of the non-contingently existing conception and of reality.

Hegel, *Enzyklopädie* § 440, addendum

It can be seen here, how the sublation of dualism remains on its terrain. If dualism was the frying pan, then this, its sublation, is fire. Or, the negation of an evil can represent a new evil. Moreover, even Kant's reason imposed its subjective laws on reality. The inner/outer paradigm disposes in the final analysis over nothing more than the inner as *fundamentum inconcussum*, as which the founder of the

consciousness discourse viewed the activity //116/ of consciousness. The instance, out of which the sublation of the division for Hegel emerges, continues to be determined by the division. It therefore participates in the general effects of the *camera obscura* of all ideology.

### 3. *The Question of the Specificity of Marxism*

The second objection concerns the Marxist identity. What does our critique of Lukács's conception of Marxist orthodoxy mean for the question of the identity of Marxism? First we should take notice of the fact that the question of orthodoxy and the question of identity do not necessarily coincide. And then we should clarify in which patterns of articulation the question of identity can be posed and which of them is useful for our purposes. The question of orthodoxy prejudices the answer in a decisive respect. It assumes, namely, that the answer is to be found at the level of »doxy« at all. It thus fixates doctrine as such. But it thereby lands in a paradigm like that which Marx and Engels criticized, for example in Proudhon and Dühring. This question poses itself in the good old camera obscura, except that it is now determined to expand this to an ideological fortress. There is a space in which doctrines, a whole architecture of doctrines, exist for their own sake. This space is an institute with prescriptive competence. From here the authorized interpretations are sent into the wide world, there to resolve conflicts or to be *applied* in any situation. Of course, this space is imaginary but nonetheless real. The attempt to institutionalize a doctrinal Marxism *with guarantees*, to preserve the //117/ doctrine of the classics, leads with certainty away from the original impulse of the classics. The project of orthodoxy as such falls back into the logic of the old ideological powers with their holy texts, exegetes and rituals, falls away from the Marxist critique into the ranks of that which Marx criticized. The »-doxy« form of Marxism goes back to Kautsky. Its fate should give us pause for thought. It was not accidental that this orthodoxy has failed to perform the historical tasks. And it remained for the revisionists to develop fundamental insight into the bad contradictions of the orthodox program. Orthodox Marxism becomes of necessity para-dox Marxism. Marxists like Lenin and Luxemburg did not fit into the framework of orthodoxy. They could only function as heretics.

In short, the question of his own orthodoxy, which Lukács articulated with his subject-object discourse, is, as a question, outside of Marxism; seen from a Marxist standpoint, it is a genuine non-question. It is perhaps possible to elevate

Marxism as a »doxy«, understood as a dogma or a prescriptive structure, to a state philosophy, but at the same time it is pushed back into the ranks of the ideologies. With regard to the ideological form there is a reappearance of the old philosophy which Marx and Engels subjected to such radical criticism. It is a latent restoration in contradiction to the manifest text. To reject this does not mean -- as the apologists for this ideological form polemically maintain -- the abandonment of all philosophy. For this is the next false front which is set up. Does not our critique of a certain ideological form and articulation of philosophy amount to an attempt to »destroy« it? Not so, if one understands under philo//118/sophy not only the institutional discourse with its ideological legitimacy as described by Bourdieu. What we call philosophy is: the thinking of context, of movement and of liberation. And that cannot happen without turning against the ideological form of philosophy. That which is presently possible and necessary in terms of the thinking of context and of the liberation movement is released by following the turn taken by Marx. This however is far from an abandonment of all philosophy. The relocation in a prescriptive structure leads back to a new camera obscura. This room has its eternity, its First Principles, its genealogy, its idealistic verticality. Among the effects of this situation is the imagination of a closed systematic unity. This »unity«, fitted out with the form and prerogatives of a First Philosophy, maintains the opposite of that which it purports to know: *division*. It may talk of »dialectic«, but its form is metaphysical. And its form is in the final analysis its content. Because this type of unity is a generator of division, it should no longer be permitted, »that the theses which Marx represented in his development be turned into a militant and closed theory, which can only be accepted or rejected a totality of 'political directives'.« (Lombardo Radice 1983, 64). But the other extreme of ·this prescriptive or directive dogmatism, the dialectical subject-object-philosophy of Marxist provenance -- was it not merely the option for another, less responsible, position within the structure of power? Did it not amount to merely another positioning of the camera obscura in the social structure of dominance?

//119/ What a self-swindle it was to equate the dialectic with the »dialectic of subject and object«. The real dialectic of subject and object is the dialectic of the social dispositive in which the elements of social life are disposed over in these forms and therein called to order.

The identity of Marxism must be embodied in theories and methods, and it cannot be defined in them. The paradox disappears (although the contradiction does not) as soon as we attempt to think the dialectic of Marxism. Because I have

already outlined this simple and, in the long run, irrefusable thought in other connections\*, I will only touch upon it briefly here. A dialectical theory of Marxism must be cognisant of a vast interplay of instances whose logics are inabrogably different. The decisive accent lies on the practical necessity or necessities of Marxism. Where its formations ossify against practical necessity, they must fall sooner or later, but not before becoming new kinds of prisons. The framework of the »doctrine« is not itself doctrine. Doctrine, methods, points of view must be conceived in the framework of conditions, necessities, dangers and hopes, within which Marxism made its appearance as the most consequential and inclusive workers' liberation movement and as the project of social solidarity and ecological balance. Only a *dialectical* Marxism is capable of encompassing on a world-wide basis the dialectic of universality and specificity.

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\* See e.g. »Learning Dialectics of Marxism«, in: *Rethinking Marx*.

Anderson, Perry, *Considerations on Western Marxism*, London: NLB 1976