A SEMIOTIC READING OF *THE GERMAN IDEOLOGY* OF KARL MARX

Dissertation submitted to Jawaharlal Nehru University
in partial fulfilment of the requirements
for the award of the Degree of

MASTER OF PHILSOPHY

Rajesh Chandra

Centre of Linguistics and English
School of Languages
Jawaharlal Nehru University
New Delhi-110067 (India)
1998

CENTRE OF LINGUISTICS & ENGLISH
SCHOOL OF LANGUAGES
जवाहरलाल नेहरु विश्वविद्यालय
JAWAHARLAL NEHRU UNIVERSITY
NEW DELHI - 110067 INDIA

CERTIFICATE

This is to certify that the dissertation entitled **A Semiotic Reading of *The German Ideology* of Karl Marx** submitted by **Rajesh Chandra** in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the award of the Degree of Master of Philosophy of this University, has not been previously submitted for any other degree of this or any other University. This is an original work.

We recommend that this dissertation may be placed before the examiners for evaluation.

Professor H.C. NARANG
Chairperson
CHAIRPERSON
CLE/SL/JNU

Professor H.S. Gill
Supervisor

Gram : JAYENU Tel. : 6107676, 6167557/Ext. 2231 Telex : 031-73167 JNU IN Fax : 91-011-6165886

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

This dissertation is a result of my association with various writings of Karl Marx over a period of two years. During these years, I have immensely benefitted from my discussions with my supervisor, Professor H.S. Gill, although I wish I could have incorporated all that I have learned from his class lectures but for the constraint of space. I am indebted to him.

I have also benefitted from the lectures of Dr. Franson D. Manjali on various topics of linguistics and human sciences. I would like to thank him.

From my friend Parvinder, encouragement through the year and necessary help at critical moments helped complete the work on time. I also express my thanks to Irfan for his critical comments.

The constant encouragement and moral backing I receive from my sister Kalplata keep me involved with my work.

Rajesh Chandra

RAJESH CHANDRA

CONTENTS

CHAPTER - I

INTRODUCTION

The German Ideology (1845) epitomizes the ideas of Karl Marx, and his associate Friedrich Engels. It is a significant text constituting the Marxist discourse. The bulk of it consists of detailed line by line polemics against the writing of some of his contemporaries. The first part of the work is mainly concerned with Feuerbach. However, Marx sets out his own views at length and in doing so provides one of his earliest formulations of materialism, revolution and communism. Part II of *The German Ideology*, following a short excursion against Bauer, is entirely devoted to an attack on Max Stirner. A major part of the book is taken up by a detailed line by line critique of Stirner's book *The Ego and His Own.* The last section of *The German Ideology* concerns the 'true' socialists.

An appropriate way of reading Marx would be a reading undertaken in terms of the Marxist dialectic. Generally, the absence of the Marxist dialectic in the attempts of reading Marx results in the failure to locate the internal unity of the thought in a given text. In other words, the non-Marxist way of reading a text fails to grasp the 'problematic' and its rapport with the ideological field with its corresponding problems and social structure. A close reading of *The German Ideology* is an endeavour to reach to that problematic.

My analysis of *The German Ideology* would be therefore, an attempt towards historical criticism. I shall try to explore the reality of the objects gathered by Marx as he experienced them in the real world, and the significance he imposed upon them. A strong current of positivism is perceptible in this method of reading Marx, i.e. taking a journey from ideas to reality and finding the rapport of the internal unity of the thought with the concrete real world. However, a semiotic reading of a text transcends the simple exercise of a positivist criticism. The metonymy of the narrative is constituted by specific arrangement of syntactic structures. However, the discourse is independent of the specific syntactic structures. In other words, meaning in its whole is not the simple sum of individual parts i.e. syntactic units or sentences. The concept goes forth and back on the linearity constituted by the syntactic units. So, we have a complex metonymic structure. However, it is at the metaphoric level where the real analysis of the text takes place.

Karl Heinrich Marx came from a bourgeois background, from a professional family in a small town. He was born in 1818. His father was a lawyer in Trier, a very ancient Rheinland city and centre of the Mosel wine-growing districts. Capitalist industry, the big city, and the industrial bourgeoisie were yet to appear in Germany. Karl Marx emerged from high school imbued with the ideals of the age: 'to sacrifice oneself for humanity'. It was to remain his fundamental ideal throughout his life. Like other young middle class intellectuals his choice of university studies was influenced both by family expectations and by the social and political climate of the time.

Hence when he entered the University of Bonn in 1838, he initially embarked on legal studies. But he soon gave this up for philosophy. Philosophy was not a rather marginal academic field of study, as it tends to be today. It was preeminent in the Germany of the time. And the kind of philosophy that was predominant was characteristically German, i.e. idealism. The centrality of the power of ideas, or as Hegel reified it, the idea - was the centrepiece in this conception of the world.

Hegel had died five years before Marx began his studies in Berlin (where he had been sent by his father who was dissatisfied with his son's performance at Bonn where he had spent a lot of time drinking and writing poetry). But Hegel's ideas still dominated the thinking of the younger generation. Marx himself was, he declared, a Hegelian. In Hegel's thinking, the progress of humanity was seen in terms of the gradual refinement and 'realization' of the uniquely human capacity to understand not only the natural world of which human beings were a part, but also to understand the principles which underlay the development of both the natural world and of society. No other species possessed this ability, which made it possible for humanity to organize social life rationally.

Hegel's great predecessor, Kant had distinguished between the world as it 'really' is and the category we use to order and understand that world. He assumed these categories to be eternal properties of the human mind. But Hegel argued that there was no separate real world 'out there', beyond and quite apart from our mental categories. World, rather, can only be known through

our mental activity. And the concepts we use to make sense of the world are constantly changing. They are historical, not fixed categories. Knowledge was relative, not absolute. The model was summed up in the famous image borrowed from logic in which the thesis i.e. the initial statement or positive proposition always contained elements which give rise to radical reformulation of the proposition, and eventually to negative counter propositions i.e. antithesis. This final stage is reached when a new synthesis occurs i.e. the 'negation of the negation' -- which overcomes both thesis and antithesis by putting in their place a synthesis which is superior to and subsumes both. The successive stages in the emergence and mutation of Mind -- the human spirit -- began with perception of the immediate situation around the thinker, then progressed to consciousness of the self; and finally, with the full flowering of Reason, permitted understanding of the world as a whole, its laws of motion, and of the place of humanity in that world. In the dialectical movement of history, the higher forms of thought eventually won out. But Hegel's intellectual daring was now circumscribed by his social commitments, as he was the Professor of Philosophy at the University of Berlin and virtual official philosopher of the Prussian State. Evolution was declared to have already reached it's highest stage -- usually seen as a society now dominated by Reason which usually meant, in reality, a society run by a class or stratum of professionals, not on the basis of 'value-judgement' but on the basis of purely 'objective' considerations. The elite was seen as qualified for the task because it had been rationally selected via some kind of 'meritocratic' performance

believed to reflect brainpower, rather than by virtue of older and now invalid bases of traditional rule, such as birth, property qualifications or religious authority. Contradiction, as an intrinsic property of everything, now ceased to be the driving force of change once people in power applied Reason to the running of the world. But the students who listened to Hegelian lectures in Berlin did not see Prussia in the same light. The 'Young Hegelians' led by the people like Bruno Bauer, now developed a radical version of the master's ideas. Bauer was soon dismissed from his Berlin University post because of his radicalism, thereby terminating also Marx's hopes of becoming a university teacher, despite the doctorate he obtained in 1841. Hence, though idealism was the dominant mode of philosophical discourse when Marx came to Berlin, it did not entirely monopolize philosophical debate. Materialism, which Marx studied for his Ph.D. in the writings of ancient philosophers, Democritus and Epicurus, had been revived during Marx's student years particularly by people like Feuerbach, and idealist philosophy in its 'new Hegelian' form had itself became quite radical.

Marx was becoming involved in socialist ideas and movements and ultimately he was forced to leave Germany for France as a result of his political activities. In France he turned to journalism for a living writing for a paper *Rhineland Times*. In Paris he lived amidst the radicals in exile from many countries and French socialists of every variety. The most important person he met in Paris was Friedrich Engels who was managing a cotton mill in Manchester. Engels introduced Marx to the industrial scene and to working

class political activity during a visit to England in 1845. The first important outcome after this friendship was however *The Germany Ideology* where Marx gave a strong convincing criticism of existing idealist and materialist philosophy.

Before going into the analysis of *The German Ideology* it is pertinent to consider the meaning of the term ideology. At the time when Destutt de Tracy coined the word *ideologie* in 1796, he and his friends had meant by it 'the science of ideas'. They were hopeful that this science of ideas would lead to institutional reforms, beginning with a sweeping reform of the schools of France. The *ideologistes* for a time enjoyed a key policy making position in the Deuxieme Classe (moral and political sciences) of the Institut National. It was their fate, unfortunately, to clash with the purposes and the initiatives of Napoleon Bonaparte. As a centre for sober thinking, the Deuxieme Classe could not be tolerated. Napoleon therefore proceeded to abolish it in the course of reorganizing the Institute (1802-1803). He dismissed its members as impractical visionaries and persecuted them with ridicule, allegedly under the name of *ideologues.*

Ironically, Marx adopted the Napoleonic fashion of using 'ideology' with suggestions of contempt, though Marx did not think, ideologies were impractical. However, like the *ideologistes* and unlike Napoleon, Marx was a sincere enemy of mystification, and he revived, at the heart of his theory of ideology, a theme congenial to the *ideologistes.* Condorcet, one of the *ideologistes'* friends and chief heroes, had taught that mystification about

nature and society originates with specialized intellectuals -- priests playing a leading part among them -- and that it is foisted on other men in the interest of an oppressive social class. Marx's theory of ideology elaborates this theme with the distinctive addition that as mystification is a social phenomenon with institutional causes, it requires an institutional remedy. Only time and economic development can furnish the cure.

Today the term `ideology' has a whole range of meanings. This variety of meaning is indicated by some definitions of ideology currently in circulation[1]:

a) the process of production of meanings, signs and values in social life;

b) a body of ideas characteristic of a particular social group or class;

c) ideas which help to legitimate a dominant political power;

d) false ideas which help to legitimate a dominant political power;

e) systematically distorted communication;

f) that which offers a position for a subject;

g) forms of thought motivated by social interests;

h) identity thinking;

i) socially necessary illusion;

j) the conjuncture of discourse and power;

---

1 Norman Burnbaum, 'The Sociological Study of Ideology 1940-1960', *Current Sociology*, Vol.9, 1960.

k) the medium in which conscious social actions make sense of their world;

l) action-oriented sets of beliefs;

m) the confusion of linguistic and phenomenal reality;

n) semiotic closure;

o) the indispensable medium in which individuals tire out relations to a social structure;

p) the process whereby social life is converted to a natural reality.

There are several points to be noted about this list. First, not all of these formulations are compatible with one another. If, for example, ideology means any set of beliefs motivated by social interests, then it cannot simply signify the dominant forms of thought in a society. Others of these definitions may be mutually compatible, but with some new implications. If ideology is both illusion and the medium in which social actions make sense of their world, then this tells us something rather depressing about our routine modes of sense-making. Secondly, it can be noted that some of these formulations are pejorative, others ambiguously so, and some not pejorative at all. On several of these definitions, nobody would claim that their own thinking was ideological. Ideology is in this sense what the other person has. Some of these definitions, however, are neutral in this respect; for example, 'a body of ideas characteristic of a particular social group or class'. And to this extent one might well term

one's own views ideological without any implication that they were false or chimerical.

Thirdly, it can be noted that some of these formulations involve epistemological questions -- questions concerned with our knowledge of the world -- while others are silent on this score. Some of them involve a sense of not seeing reality properly, whereas a definition like `action-oriented sets of beliefs' leaves this issue open. This distinction is an important bone of contention in the theory of ideology, and reflects a dissonance between two of the mainstream traditions we find inscribed within the term. Roughly speaking, one central lineage, from Hegel and Marx to George Lukacs and some later Marxist thinkers have been much preoccupied with ideas of true and false cognition, with ideology as illusion, distortion and mystification. An alternative tradition of thought has been less epistemological than sociological, concerned more with the function of ideas within social life than with their reality or unreality. The Marxist heritage has itself straddled these two intellectual currents to a large extent.

The belief that ideology is a schematic, inflexible way of seeing the world, as against some more modest, piecemeal, pragmatic wisdom, was elevated in the post-war period from a piece of popular wisdom to an elaborate sociological theory.[2] For the American political theorists Edward Shils, ideologies are explicit, closed, resistant to innovation, promulgated with a great

[2] Daniel Bell, *The End of Ideology*, Glencoe, 1960.

deal of affectivity and require total adherence from their devotees.[3] What this came down to was that the Soviet Union was in the grip of ideology while the United States saw things as they really were.

An interesting feature of this `end-of-ideology' notion is that it tends to view ideology in two quite contradictory ways, as at once blindly irrational and excessively rationalistic. On the one hand, ideologies are passionate, rhetorical, impelled by some benighted pseudo-religious faith. On the other hand, they are arid conceptual systems, which seek to reconstruct society from the ground up in accordance with some bloodless blueprint. As Alwin Gouldner sardonically encapsulates these ambivalences, ideology is `the mind-inflaming realm of the doctrinaire, the dogmatic, the impassioned, the dehumanizing, the false, the irrational, and, of course, the "extremist" consciousness'.[4] From the standpoint of an empiricist social engineering, ideologies have at once too much heart and too little, and so can be condemned in the same breath as lurid fantasy and straitjacketing dogma. They attract, in other words, the ambiguous response traditionally accorded to intellectuals, who are scorned for their visionary dreaming at the very moment they are being censured for their clinical remoteness from common affections. It is a choice irony that in seeking to replace an impassioned fanaticism with an austerely technocratic approach to social problems, the end-of-ideology theorists unwittingly re-enact the gesture

---

3 Edward Shils, 'The Concept and Function of Ideology', *International Encyclopaedia of the Social Sciences*, Vol.7, 1968.

4 Alwin Gouldner, *The Dialectic of Ideology and Technology*, London, 1976, p.4.

of those who invented the term `ideology' in the first place, ideologues of the French Enlightenment.

The term ideology seems to make reference not only to belief systems, but also to questions of power. The most common view in this regard is to claim that ideology has to do with legitimating the power of a dominant social group or class. According to John B. Thompson to study ideology is to study the ways in which meaning (or signification) serves to sustain relations of domination.[5] This is probably the single most widely accepted definition of ideology. The process of legitimation would seem to involve at least six different strategies. A dominant power may legitimate itself by promoting beliefs and values congenial to it; naturalizing and universalizing such beliefs so as to render them self-evident and apparently inevitable; denigrating ideas which might challenge it; excluding rival forms of thought, perhaps by some unspoken but systematic logic; and obscuring social reality in ways convenient to itself. Such `mystification', as it is commonly known, frequently takes the form of masking or suppressing social conflicts, from which arise the conception of ideology as an imaginary resolution of real contradiction. In any actual ideological formation, all six of these strategies are likely to interact in complex ways.

There are, however, at least two major difficulties with this otherwise persuasive definition of ideology. First, not every body of belief which people commonly term ideological is associated with a dominant political power. The

---

5 John B. Thompson, *Studies in the Theory of Ideology*, Cambridge 1984, p.4.

political left, in particular, tends almost instinctively to think of such dominant modes when it considers the topic of ideology. But then it becomes difficult to define the beliefs of the Levellers, Diggers, Nardoniks and Suffragettes, which were certainly not the governing value systems of their days. Following this logic it can be said that socialism and feminism become non-ideological when in political opposition but ideological when they come to power. Noticeably, according to the right-wing political theorist Kenneth Minogue, all ideologies are politically oppositional, sterile totalizing schemes as opposed to the ruling practical wisdom. `Ideologies can be specified in terms of a shared hostility to modernity: to liberalism in politics, individualism in moral practice, and the market in economics'.[6] On this view, supporters of socialism are ideological whereas defenders of capitalism are not.

The political philosopher Martin Seliger defines ideology as `sets of ideas by which men posit, explain and justify ends and means of organised social action, and specifically political action, irrespective of whether such action aims to preserve, amend, uproot or rebuild a given social order'.[7] On this formation, it would make perfect sense to speak of `socialist ideology', as it would not if ideology meant just ruling belief systems, and as it would not, at least for a socialist, if ideology referred to illusion, mystification and false consciousness. However, this definition broadens the concept of ideology to the point where it might become politically ineffective. This is also the second problem with the ideology as legitimation thesis, one which concerns the nature

---

6 Kenneth Minogue, *Alien Powers*, London 1985, p.4.

7 M. Seliger, *Ideology and Politics*, London 1976, p.11.

of power itself. Michel Foucault views that power is not something confined to armies and parliaments. It is, rather, a pervasive, intangible network of forces, which weaves itself into our slightest gestures and most intimate utterances.[8] On this theory, to limit the idea of power to its more obvious political manifestations would itself be an ideological move, obscuring the complex diffuseness of its operations. Thinking of power as imparting our personal relations and routine activities is a clear political gain, as feminists, for instance recognized quickly. But it carries with it a problem for the meaning of ideology. For, if there are no values and beliefs bound up with power, then the term ideology threatens to expand to vanishing point. If power is omnipresent, then the word ideology ceases to single out anything in particular and becomes wholly uninformative.

Faithful to this logic, Foucault and his followers gradually abandon the concept of ideology altogether, replacing it with the wider term 'discourse'. But this may be to relinquish too quickly a useful distinction. The force of the term ideology lies in its capacity to discriminate between those power struggles, which are central to a whole form of social life, and those which are not. Those radicals who hold that 'everything is ideological' or 'everything is political' seem not to realize that they are in danger of cutting the ground from beneath their own feet. Such slogans may effectively challenge an excessively narrow definition of politics and ideology, one convenient for a ruling power intent on depoliticizing whole sectors of social life. But to stretch these terms to the point where they become coextensive with everything is simply to empty

---

[8] Michel Foucault, *Discipline and Punish: The Birth of the Prison*, New York 1977.

them of force, which is equally congenial to the ruling order. It is perfectly possible to agree with Nietzsche and Foucault that power is everywhere, provided for certain practical purposes a distinction has been made between more and less central instances of it.

It is suggested that ideology is a matter of 'discourse' rather than 'language'.[9] Ideology concerns the actual uses of language between particular human subjects for the production of specific effects. It cannot be decided whether a statement is ideological or not by inspecting it in isolation from its discursive context as it cannot be decided in this way whether a piece of writing is a work of literary art. Ideology is less a matter of the inherent linguistic properties for a pronouncement than a question of who is saying what to whom for what purposes. This is not to deny that there are particular ideological 'idioms'. The language of fascism, for example, tends to have its own peculiar lexicon. But what is primarily ideological about these terms is the power-interests they serve and the political effects they generate. The general point, then, is that exactly the same piece of language may be ideological in one context and not in another. Ideology is a function of the relation of an utterance to its social context.

The arguments delineated so far, however, do not cast much light on the epistemological issues involved in the theory of ideology -- for example, on the question whether ideology can be usefully viewed as 'false consciousness'. Nowadays this is a fairly unpopular notion of ideology. For a number of

---

[9] Emile Beneviste, *Problems in General Linguistics*, Miami, 1971.

reasons. For one thing, epistemology itself is at the moment somewhat out of fashion, and the assumption that some of our ideas 'match' or 'correspond to' the way things are, while others do not, is felt by some to be a naïve, discreditable theory of knowledge. For another thing, the idea of false consciousness can be taken as implying the possibility of some unequivocally correct way of viewing the world, which is today under deep suspicion. Moreover, the belief that a minority of theorists monopolize a scientifically grounded knowledge of how society is, while the rest blunder around in some fog of false consciousness, does not particularly endear itself to the democratic sensibility. A novel version of this elitism has arisen in the work of the philosopher Richard Rorty, in whose ideal society the intellectuals will be 'ironists', practising a suitably cavalier, laid back attitude to their own beliefs, while the masses, for whom such self-ironizing might prove too subversive a weapon, will continue to salute the flag and take life seriously.[10]

In this situation, it seems simpler to some theorists of ideology to drop the epistemological issue altogether, following instead a more political or sociological sense of ideology as the medium in which men and women fight out their social and political battles at the level of signs, meanings and representations. Even as orthodox a Marxist as Alex Callinicos suggests scrapping the epistemological elements in Marx's own theory of ideology.[11] Göran Therborn is equally emphatic that ideas of false and true consciousness

10 Richard Rorty, *Contingency, Iron and Solidarity*, Cambridge, 1989.
11 Alex Callinicos, *Marxism and Philosophy*, Oxford, 1985, p. 134.

should be rejected 'explicitly and decisively, once and for all'.[12] Martin Seliger wants to discard this negative or pejorative meaning of ideology altogether,[13] while Rosalind Coward and John Ellis, writing in a period when the 'false consciousness' thesis was at the height of its unpopularity, peremptorily dismiss the idea as 'ludicrous'.[14]

To argue for a 'political' rather than 'epistemological' definition of ideology is not of course to claim that politics and ideology are identical. One way of distinguishing them is to suggest that politics refers to the power by which social orders are sustained or challenged, whereas ideology denotes the ways in which the power get caught up in the realm of signification. This won't quite do, however, since politics has its own sort of signification, which need not necessarily be ideological. To state that there is a parliamentary democracy in India is a political pronouncement. It becomes ideological only when it begins to involve beliefs -- when for example, it carries the rider 'and a good thing too'. Since this usually only need to be said when there are people around who consider it a bad thing, we can suggest that ideology concerns less signification than conflicts within the fold of signification.

One reason why the 'false consciousness' view of ideology seems unconvincing has to do with what might be called the moderate rationality of human beings in general. Aristotle held that there was an element of truth in most beliefs, and though this century has witnessed enough pathological

---

12 Goran Therborn, *The Ideology of Power and the Power of Ideology*, London, 1980, p. 5.
13 Martin Seliger, *Ideology and Politics*, *Op. cit.*
14 Rosalind Coward and John Ellis, *Language and Materialism*, London, 1977, p. 90.

irrationalisms in the politics to be nervous of any too sanguine trust in some robust human rationality, it is surely hard to credit that whole masses of human beings would hold over some extensive historical period ideas and beliefs which are simply nonsensical. Deeply persistent beliefs have to be supported to some extent, however meagerly, by the world our practical activity discloses to us. To believe that immense number of people would live and sometimes die in the name of ideas, which were absolutely vacuous and absurd, is to take up an unpleasantly demeaning attitudes towards ordinary men and women. It is a typically conservative estimate of human beings to see them as sunk in irrational prejudice, incapable of reasoning coherently. It seems more radical attitude which holds that while we may indeed be afflicted by all sorts of mystification, some of which might even be endemic to the mind itself, we nevertheless have some capacity for making sense of our world in a moderately cogent way.

It follows from this view that if we come across body of magical or mythological or religious doctrine to which many people have committed themselves, we can often be reasonably sure that there is something in it. What that something is may not be what the exponents of such creeds believe it to be. But it is unlikely to be a mere nonsense either. Simply on account of the pervasiveness and durability of such doctrines, we can generally assume that they encode, in however mystified way, genuine needs and desires.

Here, it becomes relevant to consider the widely influential theory of ideology proposed by the French Marxist philosopher Louis Althusser. For

Althusser, one can speak of descriptions or representations of the world as being either true or false. But ideology is not for him at root a matter of such descriptions at all, and criteria of truth and falsehood are thus largely irrelevant to it. Ideology for Althusser does represent. But what it represents is the way one 'lives' ones relations to society as a whole, which cannot be said to be question of truth or falsehood. Ideology for Althusser is a particular organization of signifying practices which goes to constitute human beings as social subjects, and which produces the lived relations by which such subjects are connected to the dominant relations of production in a society. As a term, it covers all the political modalities of such relations, from identification with the dominant power to an oppositional stance towards it. Althusser thus adopts a broader sense of ideology. There is a shift from a 'cognitive' to an 'affective' theory of ideology, which is not necessarily to deny that ideology contains certain cognitive elements, or to reduce it to the merely 'subjective'. It is certainly subjective in the sense of being subject-centred. Its utterances are to be deciphered as expressive of a speaker's attitudes or lived relations to the world. But it is not a question of mere private whim.

For Marx, the existence of an ideology expresses a condition of alienation affecting society as a whole. As Hegel taught, men in such a society mistake their own creations -- objectified Mind -- for independent external realities, and the intellectual reorientation needed to correct the mistake waits on large-scale historical processes. Society will recover its health and sense of integrity only when the events of economic life visibly embody the rationally

coordinated purposes of society and its members. For Marx, though not for Hegel, this happy condition comes about when even the modern state has been superseded by a radical classless democracy.

The differentiation and alienation of brain-workers from hand-workers is a necessary condition for the existence of an ideology, and hence no ideology would ever have originated if the division of labour -- the alienation of man from man -- had not taken this direction, which Marx supposed it did very early.

CHAPTER-II

MARX AND THE YOUNG HEGELIANS

In a letter to his father of November 10, 1837, nineteen years old Marx recounted the circumstances of his entry into the Berlin circle of Young Hegelians. He wrote that he had been ill, but during his illness, he had acquainted himself with Hegel from beginning to end, and most of his disciples as well. As he writes 'I became connected with a Doctor's Club, to which some instructors and my most intimate friend in Berlin, Dr. Rutenberg, belong. In arguments many a conflicting opinion was voiced and I was more and more chained to the current world philosophy [Hegelianism] from which I had thought to escape.'

This 'Doctor's Club' -- which soon became 'Free Ones' -- was but one of the many informal groups that flourished in Berlin, clubs which accorded their like-minded participants a forum to criticize the continuing reactionary policies of King Freidrich Wilhelm III.

In the Doctor's Club, Marx was witness to and participant in the earliest expressions of Young Hegelianism. As an identifiable philosophical movement, Young Hegelianism endured for less than two decades, from 1830 to 1848. It first appeared in Feuerbach's not so well known treatise, *Gedanken über Tod und Unsterblichkeit,* and it made its last coherent expression in Karl Schmidt's *Das Verstandestum und das Individuum.* This last work appeared anonymously in 1846, and caused as little concern as Feuerbach's introductory

work. Thus, Young Hegelianism existed between two politically eventful poles, being born in the revolutionary year of 1830, and dying in the revolution of 1848. In 1830, all that were to become the central figures of the Young Hegelian School were young. At 28, Arnold Ruge was their senior member, Ludwig Feuerbach was 26, Max Stirner 24, David Strauss 22, Bruno Bauer 21. The rest, August von Cieszkowski, Karl Schimdt and Edgar, the brothers of Bruno Bauer and Karl Marx, were yet children. Of these, only the youngest members - as communists - would survive 1848 with some measure of social idealism. The older members, as their biographies indicate, found whatever solace they could in a pragmatic pessimism. Marx's association with this movement would last almost until its dissolution in the later 1840s. He was a representative member of the school. Young Hegelian drew his inspiration from Hegel, and other members of the school. Marx's crucial encounters were first with Bauer and then, after leaving Berlin, Feuerbach. From one he learned to value the critical function of the intellects from the other to value human goals over divine plans.

It has generally been agreed that David Friedrich Strauss' (1808-1874) *Life of Jesus Critically Examined* was not only the first major work of what was to become known as 'Young Hegelianism', but that it might well be considered as the most influential of all those that were to follow. The intellectuals of that time not only perceived the *Life* as destroying the possibility of any rapprochement between philosophy and biblical theology, but

4)

as also setting the rational state against the Christian governments of Metternich's Europe.

In essence, the *Life* defended the thesis that the miraculous biblical narratives regarding Jesus were ultimately grounded in a shared mythic consciousness of their authors. A consciousness so excited by messianic expectations that it set a series of totally unhistorical supernatural episodes about the natural historical personage of Jesus. This thesis, which Strauss developed by a brilliant recourse to other biblical and theological authorities, was cast into the matrix of Hegelian dialectic. This alone could have caused sufficient embarrassment to the conservative and Christian 'right wing' Hegelians (as Strauss first labeled them). But he went beyond the limits of official toleration when he declared that 'from its onset, my critique of the life of Jesus stands in profound relationship to the philosophy of Hegel'. With this, the orthodox and pious believers who clustered around the thrones of Europe were now convinced of what they had always suspected -- that Hegelianism was an atheistic philosophy bent upon the overthrow of civil order. The subsequent course of Young Hegelianism gave them no further reason to doubt their judgement.

Strauss, who wrote the *Life* while just a twenty-seven years old instructor of Tübingen University, was immediately cast into irrevocable notoriety. From 1835, the publication date of the first volume of the *Life*, until his death, he was never permitted to occupy another teaching post. Though some of his later works, such as his last, *The Old Faith and the New* (1872), were often to evoke

loud acclaim or damnation they could not surpass the height of influence and scandal once reached by *Life*. His subsequent career, passed in prolific theological and biographical studies, and marked by occasional political activity, exercised no deep effect on either German history or its culture.

In 1835, thus, Strauss' *Life of Jesus* recast Hegelianism into a radically new role -- that of an unorthodox and critical philosophy. Three years later, August von Cieszkowski's (1814-1894) *Prolegomena to Historiography* completely reoriented Hegelianism, transforming it from a doctrine considered to be merely retrospective and theoretical into a programme of fundamental social change. Prior to the *Prolegomena*, Hegelian categories had been exercised upon the analysis of the historical past. But this work revealed that it was possible to apply Hegelianism to the interpretation and construction of future history. The *Prolegomena* marked the change from important theory to world-revolutionizing praxis, from philosophical contemplation to social action. It became a seminal work upon which later Young Hegelians -- such as Karl Marx and Moses Hess -- and later political activists -- such as Alexander Herzen -- were to develop their plans for the rationalization of the real.

Cieszkowski envisioned his task to be the correction of two fundamental mistakes in Hegelianism -- its undialectical articulation of the moments of world history, and its disregard for the future. In place of the unseemly four-fold passage of world history set out by Hegel -- the Oriental, Greek, Roman and Christian-Germanic -- Cieszkowski proposes a proper triadic paradigm: Antiquity, Christianity, and the Future. These three moments were

dialectically entailed, with the feeling of antiquity passing into the antithesis of Christian thought, and then both fusing into a future of praxis -- of activity incorporating both the ancient feeling of beauty with the wisdom of Christianity.

Here, just as in the case of all Young Hegelians, Cieszkowski sought to carry forth what he considered to be veridical principle of Hegelianism. Cieszkowski, with the respect and leisure granted to him by virtue of being a Polish nobleman, soon turned from philosophical interests to matters more literary and political. He never suffered the social and financial difficulties, which beset all his contemporaries. In 1838, he moved to Paris, and there associated with a number of French political radicals, such as J.P. Psoudhon and V. Considerant, and even encountered Karl Marx -- a meeting that left both apparently unimpressed. In Paris, he wrote *Da crédit et de la circulation* (1839), a treatise on monetary reform, and *De la pairie et de l' aristocratic moderne* (1844) on legislative reform. In 1842, he wrote *Goth und Palingenesis* as a rebuttal of Karl L. Michelet's views regarding Divine personality and personal immorality, but soon joined Michelet in establishing the Berlin *Philosophische Gesellschaft* -- a pro-Hegelian society that endured into the 1890s. In 1818, Cieszkowski returned to Prussia to defend Polish political interests. But by the 1860s, tiring of politics, he retired in Prussian Poland to devote himself to what he considered to be his greatest work, *Our Father*, a series of volumes -- left unfinished at his death -- which sought to prove that the Lord's prayer was actually but concealed prophecy that foretold

of a future age of harmony and love among men. At his death, he was mourned as one of Poland's most honored personages.

In 1853, almost two decades after the emergence -- and shortly after the collapse -- of Young Hegelianism, Karl Rosenkranz, a leading figure among the 'centre' Hegelians, recalled that among the so-called "Free-Ones" in Berlin, Bruno Bauer (1809-1882) was undoubtedly the most important, in character as well as in culture and talent. During the late 1830s and early 1840s, Bauer was recognized as the leader of the Berlin circle. His powerful effect upon the course of the Young Hegelian movement was grounded not only in his intelligent grasp of Hegelianism, but in his extraordinarily attractive personality. Unlike Strauss or Cieszkowski -- or later, Feuerbach -- who could influence others only through their writing -- Bauer faced his audience directly. Among the many noisy groups that gathered in Weinstuben and Cagis, Bauer was a popular source of a new Hegelianism, which questioned both Church and State. A critical Hegelianism, which obsessed the minds of many transient and obscure publicists and ideologues who then, peopled the subterranean liberal world of pre-revolutionary Berlin. He not only exercised a personal and powerful influence upon such now well known revolutionaries as Marx, Engles, and Stirner -- but upon such lesser figures as Adolph Rutenberg, or his brother Edgar, and Karl Schmidt.

Only a few of the Young Hegelians can claim a longer or more distinguished relationship to Hegelian thought than Bauer. Bauer, along with Stirner and Feuerbach, were among the very few who had heard lectures of

Hegel. Only Bauer was invited to be the first champion of orthodox Hegelianism against Strauss's *Life of Jesus*. This invitation was soon followed by another -- to contribute his edited class-notes toward the publication of Hegel's *Collected Works*. Marheineke, in his preface to the 1842 edition of Hegel's *Lectures on the Philosophy of Religion*, praised Bauer, his 'young friend' for his 'insight, learning, speculative talent, and tact'. Certainly, with the possible exception of Feuerbach -- no Young Hegelian had a firmer understanding of Hegel's philosophy of religion than Bauer and it was his interpretation of this important side of Hegelian philosophy that he communicated to his followers. Bauer interpreted Hegel's religious thought as but an exaltation of human self-consciousness, an apotheosis of self-reflection, in which the individual self-consciousness discovered itself to be infinite in nature and completely uninhibited in its critical reflections. In short, the 'Critic' was God.

Another well known Young Hegelian Arnold Ruge (1802-1880) was the devoted publicity manager of Young Hegelianism. From the time he was a student within the well-known liberal *Burschenschafsen* until his death in exile, Ruge remained the brave and tireless champion of humanism -- a humanism, which he conceived, could only take root in the rich philosophical soul of German culture. Unlike so many of the Young Hegelians -- such as Stirner or Schmidt, who looked upon their roles with some irony, or Bauer and Strauss, who finally gave up the ghost of liberalism -- Ruge remained serious about

advancing the grand causes of reason and freedom, causes which he understood to be the true content of Hegelianism.

In the words of William Brazill, Ruge 'wrote on religion, art, literature, philosophy, and politics; he was a journalist and essayist; he was a teacher; he was a leader of a philosophical party; he was a politician. He could not be described as a specialist, he did not believe in professionalism. He believed, rather, that his *Weltanschauung* provided the key to understanding all phases of life'. This 'Weltanschauung' rested directly upon his conviction that Hegelianism had ensured that advance of history was also an advance of truth and freedom. In Heine's words, Ruge was 'the grim doorkeeper of Hegelian philosophy'. For him being a philosopher meant not only to know the good, but to will it.

Ruge's first test came early in his life. In 1824 he was imprisoned for five years for having engaged in forbidden political activity while yet a student at Jena. The five years were spent in an intensive study of Hegel. In 1837, he joined with another Young Hegelian, Theodor Echtermeyer to establish the *Hallische Tahrbücher.* It soon became the central organ of Young Hegelian propaganda, and for a generation of German liberals it served as the only bridge between philosophical theory and political and social activism. In 1841, the journal was suppressed in Prussia, but Ruge took its editorial offices to the more liberal climate of Dresden, where it re-appeared under a new title, the *Deutsche Tahrbücher.* It lost none of its humanistic fire, and continued to provide a platform for Young Hegelian themes and writers, themes which

continually provoked the authorities of both Church and State, and writers whose unrestrained atheistic and revolutionary sentiments could not be ignored. In 1843, Ruge joined with the ex-editor of the suppressed *Rheinische Zeitung*, Karl Marx, to establish a new journal, the *Deutsch-Französische, Tahrbücher*. Paris, the home of the journal, proved liberal enough, but the journal attracted little attention, and Marx and Ruge parted in anger after it had made its first and final appearance in February of 1844.

With this final blow -- the collapse of his optimistic plans to form an 'alliance of German and French liberals', Ruge retreated despondently to Switzerland. But 1848 revolutions revived his political optimism, and he returned to Germany to establish yet one more liberal journal, *Die Reform*. But the sorry collapse of the German revolution and the subsequent suppression of *Die Reform* finally ended his active career. He joined the ranks of exiles, both liberal and conservative that found cold refuge in London, far from Bismarck's 'real politik'. There, until his death, Ruge's voice was heard only in muted and ignored writings, which passively followed the course of European political history.

Among the Young Hegelians, Edgar Bauer (1820-1886) was the most anarchistic politically, with proposals for violence based on his view of Hegelianism which often exceeded those of his Berlin contemporary, Michael Bakunin. It is possible to discern, in the early writings if Edgar Bauer, the theoretical justification of political terrorism.

Just as his brother Bruno Bauer, Edgar began his academic career as a theology student. However, he soon turned to the study of history, and left the university to become a political writer. He also supplemented his small income acting as a proofreader in the small publishing house of his brother Egbert. The widely argued dismissal of Bruno from his Professorship at Bonn in March of 1842 (a governmentally provoked dismissal bearing heavily upon the relationship of academic freedom to political and religious criticism) caused Edgar to come into immediate conflict with the Prussian authorities. His first essay on the matter, *Bruno Bauer and his Enemies*, which appeared late in 1842, ensured that he would become a particular object of suspicion among the conservatives who gathered about the throne of Friedrich Wilhelm III. The work was filled with imprudently revolutionary sentiments, as the Berlin intelligentsias were of the opinion that Bauer's dismissal from Bonn would mark the onset of a general revolution.

In 1844, Edgar Bauer published his most audacious work, *Critique's Quarrel with Church and State*. It not only detailed the embarrassing history of his brother's dismissal from Bonn, but went on to propose a revolution. The work was immediately confiscated and Edgar was accused of violating Prussian censorship laws. The reactionary government moved inexorably to convict him. In 1846 he began a four-year sentence at Magdeburg Prison, one specially prepared for the imprisonment of dissidents. Reasons for the severity of the sentence were summed up by the court. The author was sentenced for insulting the religious community and the Royal Majesty, for empty and

groundless slander and mockery of the civil law and state directives with the intent to excite discontent against the government. After the imprisonment, Edgar's life was spent in much the same way as the lives of most of the Young Hegelians after 1848 -- in disillusioned liberalism, a cynical conservatism, and poverty.

Johenn Cuspar Schmidt, better known as Max Stirner (1806-1856) was another prominent Young Hegelian. Although a compassionable participant within the circle of 'Free Ones', Stirner yet found them just as deserving of criticism as the defenders of ossified church and conservative state. As a matter of fact, 'criticism' seems too mild a term to apply to Stirner's major work, *The Ego and His Own.* It appeared in the winter of 1844. None was spared from its brilliant and vitriolic criticism, not the apparent revolutionaries and atheists of the time, nor the leader of the Berlin Young Hegelians, Bruno Bauer, nor Feuerbach, nor even the one-time editor of the radical *Rheinische Zeitung*, Karl Marx. Stirner turned on all, for he understood the 'new radicalism' to be in essence nothing more than the 'old orthodoxy'. The emerging Humanisms and Socialisms of his age being nothing more than the recurrence of the ancient delusions of religion. Stirner proposed a simple solution - the individual ego must be made conscious of its power over its own ideas. Ideas, once freed from the power of the individual mind by the perversion of that mind, were transformed into 'Ideals' which then turned upon their maker Stirner's 'egoism' is but another name for a radically assertive self-consciousness that rejects self-generated slavery.

Stirner, along with Bauer and Feuerbach, shared the rare honor of having heard Hegel's lectures. But unlike them he did not gain an early recognition, and what recognition he finally did gain -- with *The Ego and His Own* -- was soon lost in the general shipwreck of Young Hegelianism. Nevertheless, this singular, and most stylistically and thematically striking of all their literature, retained a small but constant readership. Stirner died in abject poverty.

Unlike the major representatives of Young Hegelianism, Moses Hess (1812-1875) never shared the strictures of German academic life. Having little experience with either Gymnasium or University, he was a self-taught person. He was self-taught and free from the fixed and often stifling academic world of his day which allowed Hess to develop his eclectic originality of thought

Hess's first book, *The Holy History of Mankind* was published anonymously -- by 'a disciple of Spinoza' -- in 1837. This slender book attracted little notice, although it was later acknowledged as being the first socialist treatise written in German for Germans. It set both the tone and perspective for the rest of Hess's socialistic treatises -- a tone charged with a heated concern for social justice, and a perspective fixed upon an ideal future of human equality. This essentially programmatic first work was followed, in 1841, by a more popular effort, *The European Triarchy*, which immediately established his reputation among the Young Hegelians. In it, he expressly joined Cieszkowski in criticizing the passivity and retrospective character of 'right-wing' Hegelianism, and proposed a revolutionary 'Philosophy of Action'

which would generate a communist society. In the same year, Hess was also successful in founding the *Rheinische Zeitung* and first encountered Karl Marx. From that time, until Marx in *The Communist Manifesto* broke doctrinally with Hess's 'True Socialism', they worked in concert and shared a common view as to the needs of their age. This sharing is clearly evident if we compare Marx's 1844 essay, *On the Jewish Question* with Hess's essay - of the same year - *On the Essence of Money.*

None of the German intellectuals could deny that Hess' *Philosophy of Action* had exercised a powerful role in transforming Hegelian theory into a program of radical social action. Later in 1844, Hess obtained a press copy of Stirner's *The Ego and His Own.* He read it, and then sent it along to his friend Engels, who read it and passed it along to Marx. It was not until 1846 that Marx and Engels -- along with some help from Hess -- had time to prepare an exhaustive rejection of 'Saint Max' and other Young Hegelians in *The German Ideology.*

The last significant, and the most obscure participant in the Young Hegelian movement was Karl Schmidt (1819-1864). His exhaustive criticism of Stirner, *The Realm of the Understanding and the Individual* came in 1846. *The Realm of the Understanding* is a critical *tour de force* in which Schmidt, who well knew and was well known by the Young Hegelians, pulverized every remaining positive position within the movement, and thus was consciously left with only the immediate world of commonplace practice as a field of activity.

In 1841, Schmidt began his career as a theology student at the University of Halle. And like many young theologians of his time, soon fell under the spell of Strauss's *Life of Jesus*. In 1844, Schmidt left Halle to study at the University of Berlin. Schmidt soon joined Bruno Bauer's Berlin circle, and then pursued the path of Young Hegelianism to what he perceived to be its pathetic yet logical conclusion. To Schmidt, the valid course of Hegelianism seemed inexorably to lead into a desert of egoism.

In sum, *The Realm of the Understanding* is the chronicle of Schmidt's dialectical path, which began with Strauss, Hegel and terminated beyond Stirner, in the arid emptiness of the most abstract individualism.

Once having an overall view of philosophical thought, Schmidt methodically proceeded to gain a moderate but secure reputation as an educationist. In 1862, he finally secured this reputation with the publication of a four-volume *History of Pedagogy*. For this, he was spared the obscurity and poverty which dogged the later lives of most of the Young Hegelians, and died in surroundings of moderate success -- just after being appointed as school inspector and director of teachers' education at Gotha.

Among the Young Hegelians, none -- with the exception of Karl Marx -- has attracted more public attention than Ludwig Feuerbach (1804-1872). In his own time, Feuerbach was the most popular of them. This was because of his striking defense of an unqualified humanism as found in his major work, *The Essence of Christianity*. Marx, who for a time was a disciple of Feuerbach, voiced the opinion of the majority of young German intellectuals when he

asserted in his *Paris Manuscripts of 1844* that 'Feuerbach is the only one who has a serious and critical relationship to the Hegelian dialectic, the only one who has made genuine discoveries in this area. In general, he has truly overcome the old philosophy'.

Feuerbach's philosophy is a radical humanism, which posits the absolute priority of actual human experience, of the directly apprehended world of nature and society in which man lives. On the other hand it denies the relevance of either traditional speculative philosophy -- exemplified in Hegelianism -- or religion. Modern philosophy is, to Feuerbach, but an esoteric rational restoration of those commonplace and perverse religious notions that would degrade actual human life for the sake of illusory ideals -- a God and a Heaven set over and against man and his sensuous earth.

Feuerbach's humanism -- later ridiculed by Stirner as a 'pious atheism' -- can be detected as early as 1830, with his work *Thoughts Concerning Death and Immortality*. This work established Feuerbach as the first of the Young Hegelians. In it, the young philosopher denied both personal immortality and the transcendence of God. In 1839, with the publication of *Towards a Critique of Hegelian Philosophy* Feuerbach established himself publicly a member of the 'Hegelian Left'. By the publication of *The Essence of Christianity*, in 1841, he assumed a paramount role in the movement. In 1843, his *Provisional Theses for the Reformation of Philosophy* set the stage for an apparently brilliant program of philosophical renewal and recovery -- in humanistic terms -- of the power and promise of original Hegelianism.

The Essence of Christianity theologically concluded what Strauss had doctrinally initiated, the absolute reduction of God to Man, the transformation of theology into anthropology. Henceforth, theological issues would be translated into human issues, and theological criticism would be replaced by social criticism.

CHAPTER-III

THE GERMAN IDEOLOGY: THE CONCEPT OF IDEOLOGY

Ideology originally meant the scientific study of human ideas. Fairly soon the object took over from the approach, and the word rapidly came to mean system of ideas themselves. An ideologist was then less someone who analyzed ideas than someone who expounded them was. An ideologist was initially a philosopher intent on revealing the material basis of our thought. The last thing he believed was that ideas were mysterious things in themselves, quite independent of external conditioning. 'Ideology' was an attempt to put ideas back in their place, as the products of certain mental and physiological laws. However, to carry through this project meant lavishing a good deal of attraction on the realm of human consciousness

It seems ironic to recall that ideology began life precisely as a science, as a rational enquiry into the laws governing the formation and development of ideas, because ideology in our own times has sometimes been sharply counterposed to science. However, its roots lie deep in the Enlightenment dream of a world entirely transparent to reason, free of the prejudice, superstition and obscurantism of the ancient regime. To be an 'ideologist' i.e. a clinical analyst of the nature of consciousness was to be a critic of 'ideology', in the sense of the dogmatic, irrational belief systems of traditional society. But this critique of ideology was in fact an ideology all of itself. Firstly, the early ideologues of the eighteenth century France drew heavily on John

Locke's empiricist philosophy in their war against metaphysics. They insisted that human ideas were derived from sensations rather than from some innate or transcendental source. And such empiricism, with its image of individuals as passive and discrete, was itself deeply bound up with bourgeois ideological assumptions. Secondly, the appeal to a disinterested nature, science and reason, as opposed to religion, tradition and political authority, simply marked the power interests, which these noble notions secretly served. We might risk the paradox, then, that ideology was born as a thoroughly ideological critique of ideology. In illuminating the obscurantism of the old order, it cast upon society a dazzling light, which blinded men and women to the murky sources of this clarity.

The aim of the Enlightenment ideologues, as spokesmen for the revolutionary bourgeoisie of eighteenth-century Europe, was to reconstruct society from the ground up on a rational basis. They inveighed fearlessly against a social order which fed the people on religious superstition in order to buttress its own brutally absolutist power. They dreamt of a future in which the dignity of men and women, as creatures able to survive without opiate and illusion, would be cherished. Their case, however, contained one crippling contradiction. For if they held on the one hand that individuals were the determined products of their environment, they insisted on the other hand that they could rise above such lowly determinants by the power of education. Once the laws of human consciousness were laid bare to scientific inspection, that consciousness could be transformed in the direction of human happiness

by a systematic pedagogical project. But what would be the determinants of that project? If all consciousness is materially conditioned, must not this apply also to the apparently free, disinterested notions which would enlighten the masses out of autocracy into freedom?

The ideologues could offer no solution to this quandary. But they persevered nonetheless in their pursuit of the essence of mind. That scientific reason should penetrate to the inmost recesses of the human psyche seems not only theoretically logical but politically essential. For social institutions can be rationally transformed only on the basis of the most exact knowledge of human nature. Justice and happiness lie in the adaptation of such institutions to these unchanging laws, rather than in the arbitrary forcing of human nature into 'artificial' social forms. Ideology, in short, becomes a programme of social engineering, which will remake our social environment, thus alter our sensations, and so change our ideas. Such is the well-meaning fantasy of the great Enlightenment ideologists, of Holbach, Condillac, Helvetius, Joseph Priestly, Wilham Godwin and Samuel Coleridge.[1]

The career of Antoine Destutt de Tracy, the inventor of the term 'ideology', is a fascinating story. Born an aristocrat, he deserted his own class to become one of the most combative spokesmen of the revolutionary French bourgeoisie. He fought as a soldier during the French revolution and was imprisoned during the Terror. In fact, he first formulated the concept of a science of ideas in his prison cell. The notion of ideology was thus brought to

---

[1] Basil Willey, *The Eighteenth Century Background*, London 1940.

birth in thoroughly ideological conditions. Ideology belonged to a rational politics, in contrast to the irrationalist barbarism of the Terror. If men and women were truly to govern themselves, then the laws of their nature must first be patiently scrutinized. What was needed, Tracy declared, was a 'Newton of the science of thought', and he himself was a clear candidate for the post.

With the revolution still at its height, Tracy became a prominent member of the *Institut Nationale*. It was an elite group of scientists and philosophers who constituted the theoretical wing of the social reconstruction of France. He worked in the Institute's Moral and Political Sciences division, in the Section of Analysis of Sensation and Ideas, and was engaged in creating for the *ecoles centrales* of the civil service a new programme of national education, which would take the science of ideas as its basis. Napoleon was at first delighted by the Institute, proud to be an honorary member, and invited Tracy to join him as a soldier in his Egyptian campaign.

Tracy's fortunes, however, were soon on the wane. As Napoleon began to renege on revolutionary idealism, the ideologues rapidly became his *bête noir*, and the concept of ideology itself entered the field of ideological struggle. It stood now for political liberalism and republicanism, in conflict with Bonapartist authoritarianism. Napoleon claimed to have invented the derogatory term 'ideologue' himself, as a way of denoting the men of the Institute from scientists and savants to sectarians and subversives. Tracy and his kind, so he complained, were 'windbags' and dreamers -- a dangerous class of men who struck at the roots of political authority and brutally deprived men

and women of their consolatory fictions. Soon, he was seeing ideologues under every bed, and even blamed them for his defeat in Russia. He closed down the Moral and Political Sciences Section of the Institut Nationale in 1802, and its members were assigned instead to teach history and poetry. One year before, Tracy had begun publishing his *Project d'elements d'ideologie,* in what can only have been a calculated act of defiance of the new milieu of religious reaction. 'Ideology' is simply the theoretical expression of pervasive strategy of social reconstruction, in which Tracy himself was a key functionary. His fight to retain ideology in the *ecoles centrales* failed, however, and it was replaced as a discipline by military instruction.

In 1812, in the wake of his Russian debacle, Napoleon rounded upon the ideologues in the following famous speech:

'It is the doctrine of the ideologues -- to this diffuse metaphysics, which in a contrived manner seeks to find the primary causes and on this foundation would erect the legislation of peoples, instead of adapting the laws to a knowledge of the human heart and of the lessons of history -- to which one must attribute all the misfortunes which have befallen our beloved France'.[2]

In a notable irony, Napoleon contemptuously brackets the ideologues with the very metaphysicians they were out to discredit. That there is some truth in his accusation seems clear. Tracy and his colleagues, true to their rationalist creed, ascribed a foundational role to ideas in social life, and thought a politics could be deduced from a priori principles. If they waged war on the

---

2 Quoted in Naeess et al. *Democracy, Ideology and Objectivity*, p. 151.

metaphysical idealism, which viewed ideas as spiritual entities, they were at one with its belief that ideas were the basis upon which all else rested. But Napoleon's irritation strikes a note, which was to resound throughout the modern period -- the impatience of the political pragmatist with the radical intellectual, who would dare to theorize the social formation as a whole. The ideologues's commitment to a 'global' analysis of society was inseparable from their revolutionary politics, and at loggerheads with Bonaparte's mystificatory talk of the 'human heart'. In other terms, it is the eternal enmity between humanist and social scientist -- an early instance of Roland Barthes's dictum that 'system is the enemy of Man".' If Napoleon denounced the ideologues it was because they were the sworn foes of ideology, intent on demystifying the sentimental illusions and maundering religiosity with which he hoped to legitimate his dictatorial rule.

In the teeth of Bonaparte's displeasure, Tracy continued work on a second volume of his *Elements*, and snatched time to work on a *Grammar*. His approach to language was too abstract and analytical for Napoleon's taste, enraging the latter still further. Tracy insisted on raising questions of the origins and functions of Language, while Napoleon favoured the study of language through the teaching of the French literary classics. Once more, 'theorist' and 'humanist' were locked in combat, in a philological dispute which encoded a political antagonism between radical and reactionary. The final volume of Tracy's work was devoted to the science of economics. Tracy believed that economic interests were the final determinants of social life. But

he found in their interests a recalcitrance, which threatened to undermine his rationalist politics. The final volume of the *Elements* thus presses up against a material limit which it will be left to Marx to cross; and the tone of the conclusion is accordingly defeatist. In turning his eyes to the economic realm, Tracy has been forced to confront the radical 'irrationality' of social motivations in class-society, the rootedness of thought in selfish interests. The concept of ideology is beginning to strain towards its later pejorative meaning; and Tracy himself acknowledges that reason must take more account of feeling, character and experience. A month after finishing the work, he wrote an article defending suicide.

Late in his life, Tracy published a work on love, which was devoured by his admiring disciple Stendhal. Tracy spoke up for the complete freedom of young women to select their own marriage partners. He pleaded the cause for unmarried mothers and championed sexual liberty. However, his proto-feminism had its limit. Women were to be fully educated but not allowed the vote.

Marx described Destutt de Tracy as a light among the vulgar economists, though he attacked him in both *The German Ideology* and *Capital*, dubbing him a 'cold-blooded bourgeois-doctrinaire' in the latter work. Emmet Kennedy, in his study of Tracy, makes the perceptive point that the only volume of his treatise on ideology that Marx probably read is the one devoted to economics, and that the appearance of this work of bourgeois political economy as part of a general science of ideology might have firmed up in

Marx's mind the connection between the two. In other words, it might have helped to shift Marx from his view of ideology as mere abstract ideas to his sense of it as political apologia.

The emergence of the concept of ideology, therefore, is no mere chapter in the history of ideas. On the contrary, it has the most intimate relation to revolutionary struggle. It figures from the outset as a theoretical weapon of class warfare. The kernel of Napoleon's criticism of the ideologues is that there is something irrational about excessive rationalism. In his eyes, these thinkers have passed through their enquiry into the laws of reason to the point where they have become marooned within their own sealed systems, as divorced from practical reality as a psychotic. So it is that the term ideology gradually shifts from denoting a skeptical scientific materialism to signifying a sphere of abstract, disconnected ideas. And it is this meaning of the word, which will then be taken up by Marx and Engels.

Karl Marx's theory of ideology is probably best seen as part of his more general theory of alienation, expounded in the *Economic and Philosophical Manuscripts* (1844) and elsewhere.[3] In certain social conditions, Marx argues, human powers, products and processes escape from the control of human subjects and come to assume an apparently autonomous existence. Estranged in this way from their agents, such phenomena then come to exert an imperious power over them, so that men and women submit to what are in fact products of their own activity as though they are an alien force. The concept of

3. H. Lefebvra, *The Sociology of Marx*, London, 1963, ch.3.

alienation is thus closely linked to that of 'reification' - for if social phenomena cease to be recognizable as the outcome of human projects, it is understandable to perceive them as material things, and thus to accept their existence as inevitable.

The theory of ideology embodied in Marx and Engels's *The German Ideology* (1946) is characterized by this general logic of inversion and alienation. If human powers and institutions can undergo this process, then so can consciousness itself. Consciousness is in fact bound up with social practice. But for the German idealist philosophers whom Marx and Engels have in their sights, it becomes separated from these practices, fetishized to a thing in itself, and so, by a process of inversion, can be misunderstood as the very source and ground of historical life. If ideas are grasped as autonomous entities, then this helps to naturalize and dehistoricize them. And this for the early Marx is the secret of all ideology -

'Men are the producers of their conceptions, ideas, etc. -- real, active men, as they are conditioned by a definite development of their productive forces and of the intercourse corresponding to these, up to its furthest forms. Consciousness can never be anything else than conscious existence, and the existence of men is their actual life-process. If in all ideology men and their circumstances 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.

In direct contrast to German philosophy, which descends from heaven to earth, here we ascend from earth to heaven. This is to say, we do not set out from what men say, imagine, conceive, nor from men as narrated, thought of, imagined, conceived, in order to arrive at men in the flesh. We set out from real, active men, and on the basis of their real life-process we demonstrate the development of the ideological reflexes and echoes of this life-process....Life is not determined by consciousness, but consciousness by life'.[4]

In the philosophy of Neo-Hegelians, Marx observes a further distortion of Hegelian notion of the primacy of absolute spirit. He claims that the fallacies of contemporary thinking were due to the fact that the entire German criticism was confined to the realm of philosophy and that further to a definite philosophical system, that of Hegel. The philosophical premises of the German criticism itself, were never examined. The dependence on Hegel prevented the later critics from attempting a comprehensive criticism of the Hegelian system despite their claims of advancement beyond Hegel. Marx says, 'their polemics against Hegel and against one another are confined to this -- each extracts one side of the Hegelian system and turns this against the whole system as well as against the sides extracted by others'.[5]

Central to the Young Hegelian philosophical criticism from Strauss to Stirner was the criticism of religious conceptions. The critics started from real religion and actual theology. Their advance consisted in subsuming the allegedly dominant metaphysical, political, judicial, moral and other

---

4 Marx and Engels, *The German Ideology*, London, 1965, p. 47.
5 Ibid., p.40.

conceptions under the class of religious on theological conceptions; and similarly in pronouncing political, judicial, moral consciousness as religious or theological, and the political, judicial, moral man -- "man" in the last resort -- as religious. The dominance of religion was taken for granted. Gradually every dominant relationship was pronounced a religious relationship and transformed into a cult, a cult of law, a cult of state, etc. Thus Marx says, 'The old Hegelians had comprehended everything as soon as it was reduced to an Hegelian logical category. The Young Hegelians criticized everything by attributing to it religious conceptions or by pronouncing it a theological matter. The Young Hegelians are in agreement with the old Hegelians in their belief in the rule of religion, of concepts, of a universal principle in the existing world. Only, the one party attacks this dominion as usurpation, while the other extols it as legitimate'.[6]

For the Young Hegelians, conceptions, thoughts, ideas and all the products of unconsciousness were important to which they attributed an independent existence. Consequently, their target of attack was primarily these illusions of consciousness. Since according to them the relationships of men, all their doings, their chains and their limitations were product of their consciousness, the Young Hegelians logically put to men the moral postulate of exchanging their present consciousness for human, critical or egoistic consciousness, and thus of removing their limitations. This demand to change consciousness amounted to a demand to interpret reality in another way i.e. to recognize it by means of another interpretation. Thus, according to Marx the

---

6 Ibid., p. 41.

Young Hegelian ideologists were the staunchest conservatives, their allegedly 'world-shattering' statements notwithstanding. As some of them had found the correct expression for their activity when they declared they were fighting against the "phrases". Marx observes that to these phrases they themselves were opposing other phrases, and they were in no way combating the real existing world when they were merely combating the phrases of this world. The only result that this philosophical criticism could achieve was a few elucidations of Christianity from the point of view of religious history. All the rest of their assertions were only further embellishments of their claim to have furnished, in these unimportant elucidations, discoveries of universal importance. According to Marx the basic failure of these philosophies was their inability to enquire into the connection of German philosophy with German reality, the relation of their criticism to their own material surroundings.

Marx proposes his own premises, which he claims, are not arbitrary ones. They are not dogmas but real premises from which abstractions can be made in the imagination. They are the real individuals. Their activity and the material conditions under which they live, (both those which they find already existing and those produced by their activity). Thus it is the men endeavouring in this world to transcend the given conditionings, which constitute the basic premises for Marx. These premises can be verified in a purely empirical way. He says, 'the first premise of all human history is, of course, the existence of living human individuals'. Thus the first fact to be established is the physical

organization of these individuals and their consequent relation to the rest of nature. The writing of history must always set out from these natural bases and their modification in the course of history through the action of men.

By producing their means of subsistence, men indirectly produce their actual material life. The way in which men produce their means of subsistence depends first of all on the nature of the actual means of subsistence they find in existence and have to reproduce.[7] However, this mode of production is not simply the production of the physical existence of the individuals. Rather it is a definite form of activity of these individuals, a definite form of expressing their life, a definite mode of life on their part. Marx says, 'as individuals express their life, they are'. What they are, therefore, coincides with what they produce and how they produce. The nature of individuals thus depends on the material conditions determining their production.

The basic components of the mode of production are the productive forces. A change in the productive force brings about corresponding change in the production relation. Since mode of production comprises the productive forces and the production relation, this would mean a corresponding change in the mode of production. The expression of life basically emanates from the mode of production. So the change in the mode of production essentially leads to change in men's conceptions, ideas, beliefs, and philosophy. So, the history of the societies is nothing but the successive modes of production. The development of productive forces of a society is shown most explicitly by the

---

7 Ibid., p.42.

degree to which the division of labour has been carried. Each new productive force, insofar as it is not merely a quantitative extension of productive forces already known, (for instance, bringing into cultivation of fresh land), causes a further division of labour. The various stages of development in the division of labour can be equated with different forms of ownership. In other words, the existing stage in the division of labour determines also the relations of individuals to one another with reference to the material, instrument and product of labour. Marx distinguishes three such forms of ownership in history -- tribal ownership, ancient communal and state ownership and feudal ownership.

The tribal ownership corresponds to the underdeveloped stage of production. At this stage, people live by hunting and fishing, by rearing beasts, or in advance phase agriculture. In the latter case, it presupposes a great mass of uncultivated stretches of land. The division of labour is at this stage still very elementary and is confined to a further extension of natural division of labour existing in the family. The social structure is, therefore, limited to an extension of the family. Below the patriarchal family chieftains are the members of the tribe and finally there are slaves. However, slavery latent in this stage only develops gradually with the increase of population, the growth of wants, and with the extension of external relations.

The ancient communal and state ownership proceeds especially from the union of the several tribes into a city by agreement or by conquest. It is still accompanied by slavery. Besides communal ownership, we also find movable

and later immovable private property developing. But they were subordinate to communal ownership. The citizens held power over their labouring slaves only in their community. And on this account alone, therefore, they were bound to the form of communal ownership. The division of labour became more developed. We already find the antagonism of town and country.

The last centuries of the declining Roman Empire and its conquest by the barbarians destroyed a number of productive forces. Agriculture had declined, industry had decayed for want of a market, trade had died out or been largely suspended, the rural and urban population had decreased. From the conditions and mode of organization of the conquest determined by them, feudal property developed under the influence of the Germanic military constitution. Like tribal and communal ownership, it is based again on a community. But the directly producing class standing over against it is not, as in the case of ancient community, the slaves, but the small peasantry. This feudal organization was, just as much as the ancient communal ownership, an association against a subjected producing classes. But the form of association and the relation to the direct producers were different because of the different conditions of production.

In this manner, Marx shows how the definite individuals who are productively active in a definite way enter into definite social and political relations. The association of the social and political structure with production can be established empirically. The social structure and the state are continually evolving out of the life process of definite individuals, but of

individuals, not as they may appear in their own or other people's imagination, but as they really are, i.e. as they operate, produce materially, and hence as they work under definite material limits, presuppositions, and conditions independent of their will.

In this manner, the production of ideas, of conceptions, of consciousness is directly interwoven with the material activity and the material intercourse of men, which Marx calls the language of real life. Conceiving, the mental intercourse of men, appears at this stage as the direct efflux of their material behaviour. The same applies to mental production as expressed in the language of politics, laws, morality, religion, metaphysics etc. of the people. Men are the producers of their conceptions, ideas, etc. -- real, active men, as they are conditioned by a definite development of their productive forces and of the intercourse corresponding to these, up to its furthest forms. Conscious can never be anything else than conscious existence, and the existence of men is their actual life process. Life is not determined by consciousness, but consciousness by life. In the first method of approach the starting point is consciousness taken as the living individual. In the second method, which conforms to real life, it is the real living individual themselves. And consciousness is considered solely as their consciousness.

Marx repeatedly emphasizes the premises of this approach. Its premises are men, not in any fantastic isolation and rigidity, but in their actual, empirically perceptible process of development under definite conditions. As soon as this actual life process is described, history ceases to be a collection of

dead facts as it is with the empiricists, or an imagined activity of imagined subjects, as with the idealists. Marx holds that where speculation ends -- in real life -- there real, positive science begins which represents the practical activity, the practical process of development of men. When reality is depicted, philosophy as an independent branch of knowledge loses its medium of existence. At the best its place can only be taken by a summing up of the most general results, abstractions which arises from the observation of the historical development of men. These abstractions have in themselves no value whatsoever. They can only serve to facilitate the arrangements of historical material, to indicate the sequence of its separate strata. Hence, the method of approach provided by Marx has no prior assumption of reality. It seeks to understand reality as reality itself takes significant turns with man's activities and struggle for sustenance.

Marx explores the genesis of the idea of pure spirit as something, which is autonomous, all encompassing and prime motive force in history. He shows that this pure spirit is not transcendental but has bearing on the material life of the people. It takes birth in a particular point of time in history. And above all, for Marx the arrival of pure spirit and its dominance signifies a man suffering from real alienation in this world.

According to Marx consciousness is from the very beginning a social product, and remains so as long as men exist at all. Consciousness is at first merely consciousness concerning the immediate sensuous environment and consciousness of the limited connection with other persons and things outside

the individual who is growing self-conscious. Man's consciousness of the necessity of associating with the individuals around him is the beginning of the consciousness that he is living in society at all. However, it is mere herd consciousness, and at this point, Marx says, man is only distinguished from sheep by the fact that with the sheep consciousness takes the place of instinct or that his instinct is a conscious one. This sheep like or tribal consciousness receives its further development and extension through increased productivity, the increase of needs, and what is fundamental to both of these, the increase of population. With these develops a division of labour. A division of material and mental labour appears. Here, Marx cites the example of the first form of ideologists i.e. priests. From this moment onwards consciousness can really exhibit itself that it is something other than the 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" theology, philosophy, ethics, etc.

Further, the division of labour implies the contradiction between the interest of the separate individual or the individual family and the communal interest of all individuals who have interaction with one another. This communal interest is not imaginary but exists in reality as the mutual interdependence of the individuals among whom the labour is divided. And finally, the division of labour offers us the first example of how, as long as man remains in natural society, that is, as long as a cleavage exists between the

particular and the common interest, as long, therefore, as activity is not voluntarily but naturally divided, man's own deed becomes an alien power opposed to him, which enslaves him instead of being controlled by him. Marx says, as soon as the institution of labour comes into being, each man has a particular, exclusive sphere of activity, which is forced upon him and from which he cannot escape. He is a hunter, a fisherman, a shepherd, or a critic, and must remain so if he does not want to lose his means of livelihood. While in Communist society, Marx claims, where nobody has one exclusive sphere of activity but each can become accomplished in any branch he wishes, society regulates the general production and thus makes it possible for one to do one thing today and another tomorrow. To hunt in the morning, fish in afternoon, rear cattle in the evening, criticize after dinner without ever becoming hunter, fisherman, shepherd or critic. This fixation of social activity, this consolidation of what we ourselves produce into an objective power above us, growing out of our control, thwarting our expectations, bringing to naught our calculations, is according to Marx one of the chief factors in historical development up till now.

Marx is, however, not content with delineating and explaining the genesis of true spirit in the historical arena and its coercive effect on humans. For him the main objective is to combat the 'true' spirit, not in a philosophical or contemplative sense but in the world of reality. His prime endeavour is to overcome the alienation. As this alienation becomes an intolerable power i.e. a power against which men make a revolution, necessarily renders a great mass

of humanity propertyless, and produces at the same time the contradiction of an existing world of wealth.

To combat this situation Marx proposes the necessity of the Communist movement. Communism for Marx is not a state of affairs which is to be established. It is not an ideal to which reality will have to adjust itself. He calls Communism the real movement, which abolishes the present state of things. The conditions of this movement result from the premises in existence. And on this account he differentiates himself from other materialists of his time, especially from Feuerbach. According to Feuerbach the task of philosophy is to encounter man in his situation. Man is endowed with consciousness and seeks to realize its own peculiar essence through specific kinds of relationships with the rest of natures and with other member of its species. Marx observes that Feuerbach's whole deduction with regard to the relation of men to one another gives only so far as to prove that men need and have always have needed one another. He wants to establish the consciousness of this fact, that is to say, like the other theorists, merely to produce a correct consciousness about an existing fact. Whereas, for Marx, it is a question of overthrowing the existing state of things. So, although he appreciates Feuerbach in his endeavour to produce consciousness of the existing fact, but only as a theorist who can go as far as possible without ceasing to be a theorist or philosopher.

Marx claims that for a practical materialist, i.e. the Communist, it is a question of revolutionizing the existing world, of practically attacking and

changing existing things. When occasionally such views are found with Feuerbach they are isolated surmises and have too little influence on his general outlook. Feuerbach's conception of the sensuous world is confined on the one hand to mere contemplation of it, and on the other to mere feeling. He is concerned about 'Man'. For Marx main concern is 'real historical man'.

Hence, in the outlook of Marx we can clearly see the advance over the Enlightenment philosophers. For those thinkers, an 'ideology' would help to dispel errors bred by passion, prejudice and vicious interests, all of which blocked the clear light of reason. This strain of thought passes on to nineteenth century positivism and to Emile Durkheim, in whose *Rules of Sociological Method* (1895) ideology means among other things allowing preconceptions to tamper with our knowledge of real things. Sociology is a 'science of facts', and the scientist must accordingly free himself of the biases and misconceptions of the layperson in order to arrive at a properly dispassionate viewpoint. These ideological habits and pre-dispositions, for Durkheim as for the later French philosopher Gaston Bachelard, are innate to the mind. This positivist current of social thought, true to its Enlightenment forebears, thus delivers us a psychologistic theory of ideology. Marx, by contrast, looks to the historical causes and functions of such false consciousness, and so inaugurates the major modern meaning of the term. He arrives at this view hard on the heels of Ludwig Feuerbach, whose *The Essence of Christianity* (1841) sought for the sources of religious illusion in humanity's actual life conditions, but in a notably dehistoricizing way. Marx was not in fact the first thinker to see

consciousness as socially determined. In different ways, Rousseau, Montesquieu and Condorcet had arrived at this view before them.

If ideas are at the source of historical life, it is possible to imagine that one can change society by combating false ideas with true ones. It is this combination of rationalism and idealism, which Marx is rejecting. For him, social illusions are anchored in real contradictions, so that only by the practical activity of transforming the latter, can the former be abolished. A materialist theory of ideology is thus inseparable from a revolutionary politics. This, however, involves a paradox. The critique of ideology claims at once that certain forms of consciousness are false and that this falsity is somehow structural and necessary to a specific social order. The falsity of the ideas, we might say, is part of the 'truth' of a whole material condition. But the theory, which identifies this falsehood therefore, undercuts itself at a stroke, exposing a situation, which simply as a theory it is powerless to resolve. The critique of ideology, that is to say, is at the same time the critique of the critique of ideology. Moreover, it is not as though ideology critique proposes to put something true in place of the falsity. In one sense, this critique retains something of a rationalist or Enlightenment structure i.e. truth, or theory, will shed light on false conceptions. But it is anti-rationalist in so far as what it then proposes is not a set of true conceptions, but just the thesis that all ideas, true or false, are grounded in practical social activity, and more particularly in the contradictions which that activity generates.

The formulations of Marx in the early part of *The German Ideology* have several other difficulties. He sometimes strongly lean towards mechanical materialism. What distinguishes the humans is that they move in a world of meaning. And these meanings are constitutive of its activities, not secondary to them. Ideas are internal to our social practices, not mere spin-offs from them. Human existence, as Marx recognizes elsewhere, is purposive or 'intentional' existence; and these purposive conceptions from the inner grammar of our practical life, without which it would be mere physical motion. The term 'praxis' has been often used by the Marxist tradition to capture this indissolubility of action and significance. In general, Marx recognize this well enough. But in his zeal to attack the idealists he risks ending up in simply inverting them. He retains the sharp duality between 'consciousness' and 'practical activity' but reverses the causal relations between them. Whereas the Young Hegelians whom he is assailing regard ideas as the essence of material life, Marx just stands this opposition on its head. But the antithesis can always be partly deconstructed, since 'consciousness' figures on both sides of the equation. Certainly there can be no real 'life process without' it.

The problem may spring from the fact that the term 'consciousness' here embodies different meanings. It can mean 'mental life' in general. It can also allude more specifically to particular historical systems of beliefs (religious, judicial, political and so on), which Marx termed 'superstructure' in contrast to the economic 'base'. The term 'consciousness' in the second sense approximates to, as well-articulated structures of doctrine, its opposition to

'practical activity'. In that case such superstructures are indeed estranged from their practical, productive 'base' and the causes of this estrangement where in the very nature of that material activity. However, for all their alienated character such ideological discourses still powerfully condition our real-life practices. Political, religious, sexual and other ideological idioms are part of the way we 'live' our material conditions, not just the bad dream or disposable effluence of the infrastructure. But the case holds even less if we keep to the broader sense of 'consciousness', since without it there would be no distinctly human activity at all. Factory labour is not just a set of material practices plus a set of notions about it. Without certain intention meanings, interpretations, it would not count as factory labour at all.

We can distinguish two rather different cases, which *The German Ideology* appears to conflate. On the one hand, there is a general materialist thesis that idea and material activities are inseparably bound up together, as against the idealist tendency to isolate and privilege the former. On the other hand, there is the historical materialist argument that certain historically specific forms of consciousness become separated out from productive activity, and can best be explained in terms of their functional role in sustaining it. In *The German Ideology* it occasionally appears as though Marx illicitly folds the latter case into the former, viewing 'what men and women actually do' as a kind of 'base', and their ideas about what they do as a sort of 'superstructure'. However, one might add that thinking, writing and imagining are just as much part of the 'real life process' as digging ditches and subverting military juntas.

Further, it can be said that if the phrase 'real life-process' is in this sense very narrow it is also very amorphous, undifferentiatedly spanning the whole of 'sensuous practice'.

At one point in his work, Marx, would seem to conjure a chronological difference out of his distinction between two meanings of 'consciousness', when he remarks that 'the production of ideas, of conceptions, of 'consciousness', is at first directly interwoven with the material activity and the material intercourse of men, the language of real life'.[8] What he wants to explain here is the momentous historical event of the division of mental and manual labour. Once an economic surplus permits a minority of 'professional' thinkers to be released from the exigencies of labour, it becomes possible for 'consciousness' to project itself that it is in fact independent of material reality. From now on', Marx observes 'consciousness is in a position to emancipate itself from the world and to proceed to the formation of 'pure' theory, theology, philosophy, ethics, etc.'[9] So it is as though one epistemological case holds true for societies predating the division of mental and manual labour, while another is appropriate to all subsequent history. In actual terms it seems to convey that the 'practical' consciousness of priests and philosophers will continue to be 'directly inter-woven' with their material activity, even if the theoretical doctrines they produce are loftily aloof from it. The important point, however, is that the schism between ideas and social reality exploded by the text is a dislocation internal to social reality itself in specific historical

---

8 ibid., p. 47.
9 Ibid., p. 52.

conditions. It may be an illusion to believe that ideas are the essence of social life; but it is not an illusion to believe that they are relatively autonomous of it, since this is itself a material fact with particular social determinations. And once this condition has set in, it provides the real material basis for the former ideological error. It is not just that ideas have floated free of social existence. On the contrary, this 'externality' of ideas to the material life process is itself internal to that process.

The German Ideology appears at once to argue that, consciousness is indeed always 'practical' consciousness, so that to view it in any other light is an idealist illusion; and that ideas are secondary to material existence. It therefore needs a kind of imagery, which equivocates between seeing consciousness as indissociable from action, and regarding it as separable and inferior.

For *The German Ideology,* ideological consciousness would seem to involve a double movement of 'inversion' and 'dislocation'. Ideas are assigned priority in social life, and simultaneously disconnected from it. One can easily follow the logic of this dual operation -- to make ideas the source of history is to deny their social determinants, and so to uncouple them from history. But it is not clear that such an inversion need always entail such a dislocation. One could imagine that consciousness was autonomous of material life without necessarily believing that it was its foundation. And one can equally imagine that mind was the essence of all reality without claiming that it was isolated from it. In fact the latter position approximate to that of Hegel himself. To a

question whether ideology essentially consist in seeing ideas as socially determined, or in regarding them as autonomous, an ideologue like de Tracy might be said to hold to the former case, but not to the latter. Marx himself thought the French ideologues were idealists, in so far as they dehistoricized human consciousness and ascribed it a foundational social role. But they are plainly not idealists in the sense of believing that ideas are altogether autonomous. There is a problem, in other words, about how far this model of ideology can be generalized as a paradigm of all false consciousness. Marx is of course examining the *German Ideology*, a particular current of neo-Hegelian idealism, but his formulations have often enough a universalizing flavour about them. In fact, he remarks that what is true of German thought is true of other nations too. The obvious riposte to this is that not all ideologists are idealists. Marx certainly regarded Hobbes, Condillac and Bentham as full-blooded ideologists, yet all three are in some sense materialists. Only in a broad sense of 'idealism', meaning in effect dehistoricizing or presuming some invariably human essence, can they be said to be guilty of the charge. But to dehistoricize is not synonymous with being an idealist, just as, conversely, idealism such as Hegel's is profoundly historical.

'The ideas of the ruling class', *The German Ideology* famously proclaims, 'are in every epoch the ruling ideas, i.e. the class which is the ruling material force of society, is at the same time its ruling intellectual force'.[10] He who dominates material production controls mental production too. But this

[10] Ibid., p.64

political model of ideology does not entirely square with more epistemological conception of it as thought oblivious to its social origin. 'The ruling ideas', the text goes on to comment, 'are nothing more than the ideal expression of the dominant material relationships, the dominant material relationships grasped as ideas'.[11] This would suggest a more 'internal' relation between ideology and material life than one permitted by the 'illusion' model. But elsewhere the work runs both emphases together by speaking of these ruling ideas as 'merely the illusory forms in which the real struggles of the different classes are fought'. However, if these forms encode real struggles, it is difficult to explain them as illusory. They might be explained in the sense that they are purely 'phenomenal' modes concealing ulterior motivations. Nevertheless, this sense of 'illusory' need not be synonymous with 'false'. Appearances, as Lenin reminds us, are after all real enough. There may be a discrepancy between material conflicts and the ideological forms, which express them, but this does not necessarily mean that those forms are either false or 'unreal'.

The text, in other words, hesitates significantly between a political and an epistemological definition of ideology. Ideas may be said to be ideological because they deny their roots in social life with politically oppressive effects. Or they might be ideological for exactly the opposite reason -- that they are the direct expressions of material interests, real instruments of class warfare. It so happens that Marx is confronting a ruling class whose consciousness is heavily 'metaphysical' in character, and since this metaphysics is put to politically dominative uses, the two opposed senses of ideology are at one in the historical

---

[11] *Ibid.*, p.64.

situation *The German Ideology* examines. But there is no reason to suppose that all ruling classes need to inflect their interests in such a speculative style. Later on, in the *Preface* to *A Contribution to Critique of Political Economy* (1859), Marx wrote of 'the legal, political, religious, aesthetic, or philosophic -- in short, ideological forms in which men become conscious of this (economic) conflict and fight it out'. The reference to illusory forms, significantly, has been dropped. There is no particular suggestion that these 'superstructural' modes are in any sense chimerical or fantastic. It is evident that the definition of ideology has also been widened to encompass all 'men', rather than just the governing class. Ideology has now the rather less pejorative sense of the class struggle at the level of ideas, with no necessary implication that these ideas are always false. In fact, in *Theories of Surplus Value*, Marx draws a distinction between what he calls 'the ideological component parts of the ruling class' and the 'free spiritual production of this particular social formation', one instance of the latter being art and poetry.

The *Preface* to *A Contribution to the Critique of Political Economy* lays out the famous Marxist formulation of 'base' and 'superstructure', and seems to locate ideology firmly within the latter -

'In the social production of their life, men enter into definite relations that are inseparable and independent of their will, relations of production that correspond to a definite stage of development of their material productive forces. The sum total of these relations of production constitutes the economic structure of society, the real foundation, on which rises a legal and political

superstructure and to which correspond definite forms of social consciousness. The mode of production of material life conditions the social, political and intellectual life process in general. It is not the consciousness of men that determines their being but on the contrary, their social being that determines their consciousness.[12]

We can assume that 'definite forms of social consciousness' is equivalent to ideology, though the equation is not unproblematic problematic. There could be forms of social consciousness, which were non-ideological, either in the sense of not helping to legitimate class-rule, or in the sense that they were not particularly central to any form of power-struggle. Marxism itself is a form of social consciousness, but whether it is an ideology depends on which meaning of the term one has in mind. For Marx it is specific historical belief systems and 'world views'. In the case of *The German Ideology*, it is rather more plausible to see consciousness in this sense as determined by material practice, rather than consciousness in its wider sense of meanings, values, intentions and the rest. However, it is hard to see how that can be simply 'superstructural', if it is actually internal to material production.

Implicit in the notion of a superstructure, in other words, is the idea of certain institutions, which are estranged from material life and set over against it as a dominative force. Whether such institutions -- law courts, the political state, ideological apparatuses -- could in fact be abolished, or whether such a claim is idly utopian, is not the main point. What is rather at issue is the apparent contradiction between this historical version of the base-

[12] Marx and Engels, *Selected Works*, Vol.1, London, 1962, p.362.

superstructure doctrine, which would see the superstructure as functional for the regulation of class struggle, and the more universal implications of Marx's comment about consciousness and social being. On the former model, ideology has a limited historical life span -- once the contradictions of class society had been surmounted, it would wither away along with the rest of the superstructure. On the latter version, ideology might be taken to mean something like the way the whole of our consciousness is conditioned by material factors. The twin emphases then, point respectively towards the narrower and the broader sense of ideology. But the relationship between them is not exactly clear.

The base-superstructure doctrine has been widely attacked for being static, hierarchical, dualistic and mechanistic, even in those more sophisticated accounts of it in which the superstructure reacts back dialectically to condition the material base. However, it is pertinent here to be clear about what it is not asserting. It is not arguing that parliamentary democracy, or sexual fantasies, are any less real than a steel factory. Churches and cinemas are quite as material as coalmines. It is just that they cannot be the ultimate catalysts of revolutionary social changes. The point of the base-superstructure doctrine lies in the question of determination -- of what 'level' of social life most powerfully and crucially conditions the others, and therefore of what arena of activity would be most relevant to effecting a thoroughgoing social transformation.

To select material production as this crucial determinant is in one sense stating the obvious. There is hardly any doubt that this is what the vast

majority of men and women throughout history have spent their time engaged on. The sheer struggle for material survival and reproduction, in conditions of real or artificially induced scarcity, has tied up enormous resources of human energy. Material production, then, is 'primary' in the sense that it forms the major narrative of history to date. But it is primary also in the sense that without this particular narrative, no other story would ever get off the ground. Such production is the precondition of the whole of our thought. However, the base-superstructure model claims more than just this. It asserts not only that material production is the precondition of our other activities, but that it is the most fundamental determinant of them. 'Superstructure' is a relational term. It designates the way in which certain social institutions act as 'supports' of the dominant social relations. It contextualizes such institutions in a certain way -- to consider them in their functional relation to a ruling social power. However, an institution may behave 'superstructurally' at one point in time, but not at another, or in some of its activities but in others.

In this manner we find that Marx uses the term 'ideology' in at least three contending senses, with no very clear idea of their inter-relations. Ideology can denote illusory or socially disconnected beliefs, which see themselves as the ground of history, and which by distracting men and women from their actual social conditions serve to sustain an oppressive political power. The opposite of this would be an accurate, unbiased knowledge of practical social conditions. Alternatively, ideology can signify those ideas which directly express the material interests of the dominant social class, and

which are useful in promoting its rule. The opposite of this might be either true scientific knowledge, or the consciousness of the non-dominant classes. Finally, ideology can be stretched to encompass all of the conceptual forms in which the class struggle as a whole is fought out, which would presumably include the valid consciousness of politically revolutionary forces. What the opposite of it might be is presumably any conceptual form not currently caught up in such struggle.

Marx's later economic writings, however, come up with another version of ideology. In his chapter on 'The Fetishism of Commodities' in Volume I of *Capital* (1867), Marx argues that in capitalist society the actual social relations between human beings are governed by the apparently autonomous interactions of the commodities they produce -

'A commodity, therefore, is a mysterious thing, simply because in it the social character of men's labour appears to them as an objective character stamped upon the product of that labour; because the relation of the producers to the sum total of their own labour is presented to them as a social relation, existing not between themselves, but between the products of their labour....It is a definite social relation between men, that assumes, in their eyes, the fantastic form of a relation between things. In order...to find an analogy, we must have recourse to the mist-enveloped regions of the religious world. In that world, the productions of the human brains appear as independent beings endowed with life, and entering into relations both with one another and with

the human race. So it is in the world of commodities with the products of men's hands.[13]

The earlier theme of alienation is extended here. Man and woman fashion products, which then come to escape their control and determine their conditions of existence. A fluctuation on the stock exchange can mean unemployment for thousands. By virtue of this 'commodity fetishism', real human relations appear, mystifyingly, as relations between things; and this has several consequences of an ideological kind. First, the real workings of society are thereby veiled. The social character of labour is concealed behind the circulation of commodities, which are no longer recognizable as social products. Secondly, society is fragmented by this commodity logic. It is no longer easy to grasp it as a totality because the atomizing operations of the commodity transmutes the collective activity of social labour into relations between dead, discrete things. And by ceasing to appear as a totality, the capitalist order renders itself less vulnerable to political critique. Finally, the fact that social life is dominated by inanimate entities lends it a spurious air of naturalness and inevitability. Society is no longer perceptible as a human construct, and therefore as humanly alterable.

It is clear, then, that the motif of inversion passes over from Marx's early comments on ideology to his 'mature' work. Several things, however, have decisively altered in transit. To begin with, this curious inversion between human subjects and their conditions of existence is now inherent in social reality itself. It is not simply a question of the distorted perception of

---

[13] Karl Marx, *Capital*, Vol. 1, New York, 1967, p.71.

human beings, who invert the real world in their consciousness and thus imagine that commodities control their lives. Marx is not claiming that under capitalism commodities appear to exercise a tyrannical sway over social relations. He is arguing that they actually do. Ideology is now less a matter of reality becoming inverted in mind, than of the mind reflecting the real inversion. In fact, it is no longer primarily a question of consciousness at all, but is anchored in the day-to-day economic operations of the capitalist system. So, ideology is being transferred from the superstructure to the base, or at least signals some close relation between them. It is a function of the capitalist economy itself, which as Alex Callinicos observes 'produces its own misconception',[14] rather than in the first place a matter of discourses, beliefs and 'superstructural' institutions. We need, then, as Etienne Balibar puts it, 'to think both the real and the imaginary within ideology',[15] rather than conceiving of these realms as simply external to one another.

Elsewhere in *Capital*, Marx argues that there is a disjunction in capitalism between how things actually are and who they present themselves -- between, in Hegelian terms, 'essences' and 'phenomena'. The wage relation, for example, is in reality an unequal, exploitative affair, but it 'naturally' presents itself as an equal, reciprocal exchange of so much money for so much labour. Jorge Larrain summarizes these dislocations in the following words -

---

14 Callinicos, *Marxism and Philosophy*, Oxford, 1985, p.131.

15 Etienne Balibar, 'The Vacillation of Ideology', in C. Nelson and L. Grossberg, ed., *Marxism and Interpretation of Culture*, Urbana and Chicago, 1988, p.168.

'Circulation, for instance, appears as that which is immediately present on the surface of bourgeois society, but its immediate being is pure semblance.... Profit is a phenomenal form of surplus value, which has the virtue of obscuring the real basis of existence. Competition is a phenomenon, which conceals the determination of value by labour-time. The value-relation between commodities disguises a definite social relation between men. The wage-form extinguishes every trace of the division of the working day into necessary labour and surplus labour, and so on.[16]

Hence, all this is not in the first place a question of some misperceiving consciousness. It is rather that there is a kind of dissembling or duplicity built into the very economic structures of capitalism, such that it cannot help presenting itself to consciousness in ways askew to what it actually is. Mystification is an 'objective' fact embedded in the very character of the system. There is an unavoidable structural contradiction between that system's real contents, and the phenomenal forms in which those contents proffer themselves spontaneously to the mind. As Norman Gesas has written, 'There exists, at the interior of capitalism, a kind of internal rupture between the social relations which obtain and the manner they are experienced.[17] And if this is so, their ideology cannot spring in the first instance from the consciousness of a dominant class, still less from some sort of conspiracy. As John Mepham puts

---

16 Jorge Larrain, *The Concept of Ideology*, London, 1979, p. 180.

17 Norman Geras, 'Marxism and the Grifique of Political Economy', in R. Blackburn, ed., *Ideology in the Social Sciences, London, 1972,* p. 286.

the point -- ideology is now not a matter of the bourgeoisie, but of bourgeois society.[18]

In case of commodity fetishism, the mind reflects an inversion in reality itself. There are several theoretical problems about what an 'inversion in reality' could possibly mean. In the case of some other capitalist economic processes, however, the mind reflects a phenomenal form which is itself an inversion of the real. This operation can be broken down into three distinct moments. First, some kind of inversion takes place in the real world. Instead of living labour employing inanimate capital, for example, dead capital controls live labour. Secondly, there is a disjunction or contradiction between this real state of affairs, and the way it 'phenomenally' appears. In the wage contract, the outward form rectifies the inversion, to make the relations between labour and capital seem equal and symmetrical. In a third moment, this phenomenal form is obediently reflected by the mind, and this is how ideological consciousness is bred. It can be noted that whereas in *The German Ideology*, ideology was a matter of not seeing things as they really were, it is a question in *Capital* of reality itself being duplicitous and deceitful. Ideology can thus no longer be unmasked simply by a clear-eyed attention to the real life-process, since that process, rather like the Freudian unconscious, puts out a set of semblance which are somehow structural to it, includes its falsity within its truth. What is needed instead is 'science'. For science, as Marx comments, becomes necessary once essences and appearances fail to coincide. We would

[18] John Mepham, 'The Theory of Ideology' in *Capital Radical Philosophy*, No.2, Summer, 1972.

not require scientific labour if the law of physics were spontaneously apparent to us, inscribed on the bodies of objects around us.

The advantage of this theory of ideology over the one presented in *The German Ideology* seems clear. Whereas ideology in the earlier work appeared as idealist speculation, it is now given a secure grounding in the material practices of bourgeois society. It is no longer wholly reducible to false consciousness. The idea of falsity lingers on in the notion of deceptive appearances, but these are less fictions of mind than structural effects of capitalism. If capitalist reality folds its own falsehood within itself, then this falsehood must be somehow real. And there are ideological effects such as commodity fetishism which are by no means unreal, however much they may involve mystification.

Marx himself never uses the phrase 'false consciousness'. It can be ascribed to his associate Frederick Engels. In a letter to Franz Mehring of 1893, Engels speaks of ideology as a process of false consciousness because 'the real motives impelling (the agent) remain unknown to him, otherwise it would not be an ideological process at all. Hence he imagines false or apparent motives'. Ideology is here in effect rationalization -- a kind of double motivation, in which the surface meaning serves to block from consciousness the subject's true purpose. It is perhaps not surprising that this definition of ideology should have arisen in the age of Freud. As Joe McCarney has argued, the falsehood at stake here is a matter of self-deception, not of getting the

world wrong.[19] There is no reason to suppose that the surface belief necessarily involves empirical falsity, or is in any sense 'unreal'. Engels goes on in his letter to add the familiar rider from *The German Ideology* about 'autonomous' thought. But it is not evident why all those who are deceived about their own motives should be victims of a gullible trust in 'pure thought'. What Engels means is that in the process of rationalization the true motive stands to the apparent one as the 'real life-process' stands to the illusory idea.

Towards the end of the nineteenth century, in the period of the Second International, ideology continues to retain the sense of false consciousness, in contrast to a 'scientific socialism' which has discerned the true laws of historical development. Ideology, according to Engels in *Anti-Duhring*, can be seen as the 'deduction of reality not from itself but from a concept'.[20] Lurking on the edges of this particular definition, however, is a broader sense of ideology as any kind of socially determined thought. For Marx of *The German Ideology*, all thought is socially determined, but ideology is thought which denies this determination, or rather thought so socially determined as to deny its own determinants. But a new current is also stirring in this period, which picks up on the later Marx's sense of ideology as the mental forms within which men and women fight out their social conflicts, and which thus begins to speak boldly of 'socialist ideology'. The revisionist Marxist Eduard Bernstein was the first to dub Marxism itself an ideology, and in *What Is To Be Done* we find Lenin declaring that 'the only choice is -- either bourgeois or socialist

19 Joe McCarney, *The Real World of Ideology*, Brighton, 1980, p. 95.
20 F. Engels, *Anti-Duhring*, Moscow, 1971, p. 135.

ideology'. Socialism, Lenin writes, is 'the ideology of struggle of the proletariat class'. But he does not mean by this that socialism is the spontaneous expression of proletarian consciousness. On the contrary, 'in the class struggle of the proletariat which develops spontaneously, as an elemental force, on the basis of capitalist relations, socialism is introduced by the ideologues'.[21] Ideology, in short, has now become identical with the scientific theory of historical materialism and we are once again reminded of the enlightenment philosophers. The 'ideologist' is no longer one floundering in false consciousness but the exact reverse, the scientific analyst of the fundamental laws of society and its thought formations.

The situation, in short, is now more complex. Ideology would now seem to denote simultaneously false consciousness (Engels), all socially conditioned thought (Plekhanov), the political crusade of socialism (Bernstein and sometimes Lenin) and the scientific theory of socialism (Lenin). They stem in effect from the equivocation as evident in the work of Marx between ideology as illusion, and ideology as the intellectual armoury of a social class. Or, in other words, they reflect a conflict between the epistemological and political meanings of the term. In the second sense of the word, what matters is not the characters of the beliefs in question, but their function and perhaps their origin, and there is thus no reason why these beliefs should necessarily be false in themselves. True conceptions can be put to the service of a dominant power. The falsity of ideology in this context, then, is the 'falsity' of class rule itself. But here, crucially, the term 'false' has shifted ground from its epistemological

[21] V.I. Lenin, *What Is To Be Done*, London, 1958, p. 23.

to its ethical sense. Once this definition is adopted, however, the path is open to extending the term ideology to proletarian class consciousness too, since that is also a matter of deploying ideas for political purposes. And if ideology thus comes to mean any system of doctrines expressive of class interests and serviceable in their realization, there is no reason why it should not be used of Marxism itself.

CHAPTER-IV

THE GERMAN IDEOLOGY: THE CONCEPT OF HISTORY

The concept of history is central to the Marxist discourse. The idea matured gradually in the mind of Marx. It is possible to trace its growth in the essays on the *Hegelian Philosophy of Right* and on the *Jewish Question.* In these essays the proletariat is for the first time identified as the agent destined to change society. It is further developed in *The Holy Family* -- an amalgam of polemical outbursts against the 'critical critics', i.e. the Young Hegelians -- principally the brothers Bauer and Stirner -- interspersed with fragments on the philosophy of history, social criticism of literature, and other topics. However, it is more fully stated, more or less in the same format in *The German Ideology.*

In *The German Ideology* Marx says that as long as man remains in natural society, that is, as long as a cleavage exists between the particular and the common interest, as long, therefore, as activity is not voluntarily, but naturally divided, man's own deed becomes an alien power opposed to him, which enslaves him instead of being controlled by him.

The concept of alienation belongs to a vast and complex problematic, with a long history of its own. Preoccupation with this problematic -- in forms ranging from the Bible to Literary works as well as treatises on Law, Economy and Philosophy -- reflect objective trends of European development, from early period to the age of transition from capitalism to socialism. The most direct

influence on the formation of Marx's concept of alienation was exercised by Feuerbach, Hegel and the English Political Economy.

The central theme of Marx's moral theory is how to realize human freedom. This means that he has to investigate not only the man-made -- i.e. self-imposed -- obstacles to freedom in the given form of society, but also the general question of the nature and limitations of freedom as human freedom. The problem of freedom arises in the form of practical tasks in the course of human development and only later can philosophers make an abstraction out of it. So the real issue is human freedom, not an abstract principle called 'freedom'.

Transcendental ideals -- in the sense in which transcendental means the suppression of inherently human limitations -- have no place in Marx's system. He explains their appearance in earlier philosophical systems as a result of a socially motivated unhistorical assumption of certain absolutes. He rejects the picture on which the transcendental ideal is superimposed, i.e. the conception of man who is by nature egoistic. In Marx's view this kind of superimposition is only possible because we live in an alienated society where man is de facto egoistic. To identify the egoistic (alienated) man of a given historical situation with man in general and thus conclude that man is by nature egoistic is to commit the "ideological fallacy" of unhistorically equating the part (i.e. that which corresponds to a partial interest) with the whole. The outcome is, inevitably, a fictitious man who readily lends himself to this transcendental superimposition.

Thus, a criticism of moral transcendentalism in Marx's view makes sense only if it is coupled with the demolition of the conception according to which "man is by nature egoistic". If this is not accomplished, transcendentalism -- or some other form of ethical dualism -- necessarily appears in the system of the philosopher who is unable to grasp "egoism" historically, in the contradictions of a situation that produces alienated "commodity man". The criticism of transcendentalism must reveal the interdependence of the two-fold distortion, which consists in inventing abstract ideals for man while depriving him not only of all ideality but of all humanness too. It must show that what disappears in this juxtaposition of the realms of "is" and "ought" is precisely the real human being.

This real human being for Marx exists both as actuality (alienated "commodity man") and potentially. And thus we can see that the rejection of transcendentalism and ethical dualism does not carry with it the dismissal of identity without which no moral system worthy of this name is conceivable. This rejection implies, however, that a natural basis must be found for all ideality.

Marx's ontological starting point is that man is a specific part of nature and therefore he cannot be identified with something abstractly spiritual. "A being only considers itself independent when he stands on his own feet; and he only stands on his own feet when he owes his existence to himself " -- writes Marx. The ontological question of existence and its origin is a traditional question of both theology and philosophy. The framework in which Marx

raises it -- i.e. the definition of man as a specific part of nature, as "the self-mediated being of nature" -- radically transforms this question.

When it is formulated in a theological framework assuming a wholly spiritual being as the creator of man, this brings with it a set of moral ideals (and corresponding rules) which aim at liberating man from his "animal nature". Thus human dignity is conceived as the negation of human nature, inspired by the duty towards the being to which man owes his own existence. And since freedom in this framework is divorced, by definition, from anything natural -- nature appears only as an obstacle -- and since man, equally by definition, cannot separate himself from nature, human freedom cannot possibly appear as human, but only in the form of an abstract generality, as a mysterious or fictitious entity. This kind of freedom, obviously, only exists by the grace of the transcendental being.

In Marx's formulation what exists by the grace of another being is not freedom, but the denial of it. Only an 'independent being' can be called a free being, and ties of "owing" necessarily imply dependence, i.e. the negation of freedom. If, however, man 'owes' nature and himself his own existence, he owes nobody anything. In this Marxian sense "owing his existence" simply means, "there is a particular causal relation in virtue of which man is a specific part of nature. Thus 'owing' in the other sense -- the one that carries with it the abstract idea of duty is rejected. And with this rejection the abstract ideals and duties that could be externally imposed on man are excluded from Marx's moral system.

The Marxian "self-mediated being of nature and of man" -- man who is not the animal counterpart of a set of abstract moral ideals -- is by nature neither good, nor evil, neither benevolent nor malevolent; neither altruistic nor egoistic, neither sublime nor a beast, etc., but simply a natural being whose attribute is 'self-mediating'. This means that he can make himself become what he is at any given time in accordance with the prevailing circumstances. Terms like malevolence, egoism, evil, etc. cannot stand on their own, without their positive counterpart. But this is equally true about the positive terms of these pairs of opposites. Therefore, it does not matter which side is assumed by a particular moral philosopher in his definition of human nature as inherently egoistic and malevolent or altruistic and benevolent. He will necessarily end up with a thoroughly dualistic system of philosophy. One cannot avoid this unless one denies that either side of these opposites is inherent in human nature itself.

This does not mean, however, that these opposites are worthless abstractions. For they are not only abstractions but, unlike "free will", also facts of human life as we experience them regularly. If the 'self-mediating' being can turn himself into what he is under determinate circumstances and in accordance with them, and if we find that egoism is just as much a fact of human life as benevolence, then the task is to find out what are the reasons behind man making himself become a being who behaves egoistically. The practical aim of such an investigation is to see in what way the process that results in the creation of egoistic human beings could be reversed. To insist

that man is "by nature" egoistic necessarily implies the rejection of such an aim, whatever the motivation behind this negative attitude might be. To insist, on the other hand, that man is "by nature" benevolent amounts to attributing nothing less than mythical powers to 'evil inferences' -- whether identified with the theological image of "evil" or with the alleged "irrationality of man", etc. in order to be able to account for the morally condemned deeds of men. This latter approach puts its holders, from the outset, in a position of defeat, even if this is not clear to the holders themselves, and even if they veil defeat as victory under the cloak of utopian wishful thinking.

The only way to avoid transcendentalism and dualism (regarded by Marx as abdications of human freedom) is to take man, without prejudicial assumptions, simply as a natural being who is not dyed with any colour by various systems of moral philosophy. This way we can also get rid of the notion of 'original sin' by saying that man never lost his 'innocence' simply because he never had it. Nor was he 'guilty' to start with. Guilt and innocence are relative and historical terms that can only be applied under certain conditions and form a specific point of view, i.e. their assessment is subject to change. Marx derides the theologians who try to explain the origin of evil by fall of man, i.e. in the form of an ahistorical assumption. He also scorns the moral philosophers who do not explain the known characteristics of human behaviour in their historical genesis but simply attribute them to human nature, which means that what they are unable to account for they assume as apriori given and fixed. 'Natural man' could be negatively described in a polemic

against this practice of assumptions as man who has not been misrepresented by moral philosophers. Positively though man must be described in terms of his needs and powers. And both are, equally, subject to change and development. Consequently there can be nothing fixed about him, except what necessarily follows from his determination as a natural being, namely that he is a being with needs -- otherwise he could not be called a natural being - and powers for their gratification without which a natural being could not possibly survive.

The problem of freedom can only be formulated in these contexts, which means that there can be no other than human form of freedom. If we attribute, in religious alienation, absolute freedom to a being, we only project on a metaphysical plane and in an inverted form our own attribute - naturally and socially limited human freedom. In other words, by positing a non-natural being with absolute freedom we blind ourselves to the fact that freedom is rooted in nature. 'Absolute freedom' is the absolute negation of freedom and can only be conceived as absolute chaos. To escape the contradictions involved in the concept of absolute freedom that manifests itself in the form of a strict order, theology either takes refuge in mysticism, or adds further human attributes to the image of the absolute - e.g. goodness and love for man - contradictorily determining thus the being who by definition cannot have determinations without being deprived of his absolute freedom.

The "return from religious alienation" in Marx's view is only possible if we recognize the fictitious character of "absolute freedom" and if we affirm the

specific human limitations, instead of vainly trying to transcend them for the sake of a fiction. Thus if man is a natural being with a multiplicity of needs, human fulfillment - the realization of human freedom - cannot be conceived as an elongation or subjugation of these needs, but only as their properly human gratification. The only proviso is that they must be inherently human needs. On the other hand if man as a part of nature must work "if he is not to die", and thus he is in this respect under the spell of necessity, human freedom cannot be realized by turning one's back on the realities of this situation. Transcendental references will be of no help whatsoever because they only transfer the problem to a different plane, assigning at the same time an inferior status to the 'realm of necessity'. Again, the solution lies in affirming this limitation as the source of human freedom. Productive activity imposed upon man by natural necessity, as the fundamental condition of human survival and development thus becomes identical to human fulfillment, i.e. the realization of human freedom. Fulfillment, by logical necessity, implies limitations, for only that which is limited in some way or ways can be fulfilled. If a philosopher adopts a different view in this regard, he must end up with something like the Kantian notion of fulfillment in a transcendental infinity, i.e. he must end up with a theological structure of morality, whether he wants it or not.

These problems indicate why it was necessary for Marx to introduce strong anti-theological polemics into his assessment of morality. The anti-theological references in Marx's philosophical works cannot be explained by pointing to the unquestionably significant impact of Feuerbach's *Essence of*

Christianity on the radical Young Hegelians. The main reason why Marx had to dedicate so much effort to anti-theological polemics was that if he wanted to describe man as an 'independent being', as the 'self-mediated being of nature and of man", or in other words if he wanted to produce a coherent system of morality, based on a monistic ontology, he could not possibly avoid challenging the dualistic theological picture which is the direct negation of what calls the 'essentiality' and 'universality' of man.

In this manner Marx reaches towards the framework of theory of history which basically emanates from the man's endeavour to overcome the conditionings of nature and his fellow men. The concept of history, however, has strong underpinnings of the Hegelian theory, which recognizes that the history of humanity is a single, non-repetitive process, which obeys discoverable laws. These laws are different from the laws of physics and chemistry, which being unhistorical, record unvarying conjunctions and successions of interconnected phenomena, whenever or wherever these may repeat themselves. They are similar rather to those of geology or botany, which embody the principles in accordance with which a process of continuous change takes place. Each moment of this process is new in the sense that it possesses new characteristics, or new combinations of known characteristics. But unique and unrepeatable though it is, it nevertheless follows from the immediately preceding state in obedience to the same laws. But whereas according to Hegel the single substance in the succession of whose states history consists, is the eternal universal Spirit. The internal conflict of its

elements is made concrete, e.g., in religious conflicts or the wars of national states, each being the embodiment of the self-realizing Idea, which requires a supersensible intuition to perceive. Marx, following Feuerbach denounces this as a piece of mystification on which no knowledge could be founded. For if the world were a metaphysical substance of this type, its behaviour could not be tested by the only reliable method in our power, namely, empirical observation; an account of it could not, therefore, be verified by the methods of any science. The Hegelian can, of course, without fear of refutation attribute anything he wishes to the unobservable activity of an impalpable world-substance, much as the believing Christian or theist attributes it to the activity of God, but only at the cost of explaining nothing, of declaring the answer to be an empirically impenetrable mystery. It is such translation of ordinary questions into less intelligible language that makes the resultant obscurity look like a genuine answer

But the solutions of the 'critical' schools of Bauer, Ruge, Stirner, even Feuerbach, were in principle no better. After having so mercilessly unmasked the defects of their master, they thereupon themselves proceeded to fall into worse illusions - for Bauer's 'spirit of self-criticizing criticism', Ruge's 'progressive human spirit', the 'individual self' and 'its inalienable possessions' apostrophized by Stirner. And even the human being of flesh and blood whose evolution Feuerbach traces, are all generalized abstractions no less empty, no more capable of being appealed to as something beyond the phenomena, as that which causes them. The only possible region in which to

look for the principles of historical motion would be one that is open to scientific, that is empirical, inspection. Marx maintains that since the phenomena to be explained are those of social life, the explanation must in some sense reside in the nature of the social environment, which forms the context in which men spend their lives. In that network of private and public relationships, of which the individuals form the terms, of which they are, as it were, the focal points, the meeting-places of the diverse strands whose totality Hegel called civil society. Hegel had shown his genius in perceiving that its growth was not a smooth progression, arrested by occasional setbacks, as Saint-Simon and his disciple Comte taught, but the product of continual tension between opposing forces which guarantee its unceasing forward movement. The appearance of regular action and reaction is an illusion caused by the fact that now the first, now the second, of the conflicting tendencies makes itself most violently felt. In fact, progress is discontinuous, for the tension when it reaches the critical point, precipitates a cataclysm. The increase in quantity of intensity becomes a change of quality. Rival forces working below the surface grow and accumulate and burst into the open. The impact of their encounter transforms the medium in which it occurs, as Engels was later to say, ice becomes water and water steam, slaves become serfs and serfs free men. All evolution ends in creative revolution in nature and society alike. In nature these forces are physical, chemical, biological, in society they are specifically economic and social.

Hegel had supposed that the forces between which social conflict arise in the modern world were embodied in nations, which represented the development of a specific culture or incarnation of the Idea. Marx, following Saint-Simon and Fourier, and not unaffected perhaps by Sirmondi's theory of crises, replied that these forces were pre-dominantly socio-economic 'I was led', he wrote later, 'to the conclusion that legal relations, as well as forms of state, could, neither be understood by themselves, nor explained by the so-called general progress of the human mind, but that they are rooted in the material conditions of life which Hegel calls...civil society. The anatomy of civil society is to be sought in political economy'. The conflict is always a clash between economically determined classes, a class being defined as a group of persons in a society, whose lives are determined by their position in the productive arrangements which determine the structure of that society. Men act as they do in virtue of the economic relationships in which they in fact stand to the other members of their society, whether they are aware of them or not. The most powerful of these relationships is based, as Saint-Simon had thought, on ownership of the means of subsistence. The most pressing of all needs is the need for survival.

The central Hegelian conception remains at the basis of Marx's thought, though in a renewed terms. History is not the succession of the effects on men of external environment or of their own unalterable constitutions, or even the interplay between these factors, as earlier materialists had supposed. Its essence is the struggle of men to realize their full human potentialities. And,

since they are members of the natural kingdom, man's effort to realize himself fully is a striving to escape from being the plaything of forces that seem at once mysterious, arbitrary and irresistible, that is, to attain to the mastery of them and of himself, which is freedom. Man attains this subjugation of his world not by increase in knowledge obtained by contemplation, as Aristotle had supposed - but by activity - by labour - the conscious moulding by men of their environment and of each other - the first and most essential form of the unity of will and thought and deed, of theory and practice. Labour transforms man's worth and himself too, in the course of its activity. Some needs are more basic than others are - bare survival comes before more sophisticated wants. But man differs from the animals, with which he shares essential physical needs, in possessing the gift of invention. Thereby he alters his own nature at its needs, and escapes from the repetitive cycles of the animals, which remain unaltered, and therefore have no history. The history of society is the history of the inventive labour that alter man, alter his desires, habits, outlook, relationships both to other men and to physical nature, with which man is in perpetual physical and technological metabolism. Among men's inventions - conscious or unconscious - is the division of labour, which arises in primitive society, and vastly increases his productivity, creating wealth beyond his immediate needs. This accumulation in its turn creates the possibility of leisure, and so of culture, but thereby it also brings forth the use of this accumulation - of these hoarded necessities of life - as a means of withholding benefits from others, and so of bullying them, or forcing them to work for the accumulators of wealth, of

coercing, exploiting and thereby of dividing man into classes - into controllers and controlled. This lust is perhaps the most far-reaching of all the unintended results of invention, technical advance and the resultant accumulation of goods. History is the interaction between the lives of the actors, the men engaged in the struggle for attaining self-direction, and the consequence of their activities. Such consequences may be intended or unintended, their effect upon men or their natural environment may be foreseen or not, they may occur in the material sphere, or that of thought or feeling, or at unconscious levels of the lives of men, they may affect only individuals, or take the form of social institutions or movements, but the complex web can only be understood and controlled if the central dynamic factor responsible for the direction of the process is grasped. Hegel, who was the first to see the matter in the illuminating and profound a fashion, found it in the Spirit seeking to understand itself in the institutions - abstract or concrete - which it has itself, at various levels of consciousness, created. Marx accepted this cosmic scheme, but charged Hegel and his disciples with giving a mythical account of the ultimate forces at work - a myth which is itself one of the unintended results of the process of externalizing the work of human personality - that is, of giving the appearance of independent, external objects or forces to what are, in fact, products of human labour. Hegel had spoken of the march of the Objective Spirit. More identified the chief factor with human beings seeking intelligible human ends - no single goal such as pleasure, or knowledge, or security, it salvation beyond the grave, but the harmonious realization of all human powers

in accordance with the principles of reason. In the course of this quest men have transformed themselves. This constant self-transformation which is the heart of all work and all creation, renders absurd the very notion of fixed timeless principles, unalterable universal goals, and an eternal human predicament. The character of the age with which he was dealing was, in Marx's view, determined by class war. The behaviour and outlook of individuals and societies was decisively determined by this factor.

The single operative cause which makes one people different from another, one set of institutions and beliefs opposed to another is according to Marx, the economic environment in which it is set, the relationship of the ruling class of possessors to those whom they exploit, arising from the specific quality of the tension which persists between them. The fundamental spring of action in the life of a man, he believed, is his relationship to the alignment of classes in the economic struggle. The knowledge of this factor would enable anyone to predict successfully a given individual's basic line of behaviour, that individual's actual social position - whether he is outside or inside the ruling class, whether he is placed in a position to which the preservation of the existing order is or is not essential. Once this is known, his particular personal motives and emotions become comparatively irrelevant to the investigation. He may be egoistic or altruistic, generous or mean, clever or stupid, ambitious or modest. His natural qualities will be harnessed by his circumstances to operate in a similar way. According to Marx, it is misleading to speak of 'a natural tendency' or an unalterable 'human nature'. Tendencies might be

classified either in accordance with the subjective feeling which they engender or in accordance with their actual aims, which are socially conditioned. One behaves before one starts to reflect on the reasons for, or the justification of one's behaviour. The majority of the members of a community will act in a similar fashion, whatever the subjective motives for which they will appear to themselves to be acting as they do. This is obscured by the fact that in an attempt to convince them that their acts are determined by reason or by moral or religious beliefs, men have tended to construct elaborate rationalization of their behaviour. Nor are there rationalizations wholly powerless to effect action, for, growing into great institutions like moral codes or religious organizations, they often linger on long after the social pressures have disappeared. Thus these great organized illusions themselves become part of the objective social situation, part of the external world which modifies the behaviour of individuals, functioning in the same way as the invariant factors, climate, soil, physical organism, already function in their interplay with social institutions.

Like Hegel, Marx treats history as a phenomenology. In Hegel the phenomenology of the human spirit is an attempt to show, often with great insight and ingenuity an objective order in the development of human consciousness and in the succession of civilizations that are its concrete embodiment. Influenced by a notion prominent in Renaissance, but reaching back into earlier mystical cosmology, Hegel looked upon the development of mankind as being similar to that of an individual human being. Just as in the

case of a man a particular capacity, or outlook, or way of dealing with reality cannot come into being until and unless other capacities have first become developed - that is, as the essence of the notion of growth or education in the case of individuals - so races, nations, churches, cultures, succeed each other in a fixed order, determined by the growth of the collective faculties of mankind expressed in arts, sciences, civilization as a whole. Pascal had perhaps meant something of this kind when he spoke of humanity as a single, centuries old, being, growing from generation to generation. For Hegel all change is due to the movement of the dialectic that works by a constant logical criticism, that is, struggle against, and final self-destruction of, ways of thought and constructions of reason and ceaseless growth of the human spirit. However, they, embodied in rules or institutions and erroneously taken as final and absolute by a given society or outlook, thereby become obstacles to progress, dying survivals of a logically 'transcended' stage, which by their very one-sidedness breed logical antinomies and contradictions by which by they are exposed and destroyed.

Marx accepted this version of history as a battlefield of incarnate ideas, but translated it into social terms, of the struggle between the classes. For him alienation (for that is what Hegel, following Rousseau and Luther and an earlier Christian tradition, called the perpetual self-divorce of men from unity with nature, with each other, with God, which the struggle for thesis against antithesis entailed) is intrinsic to the social process. As a matter of fact it is the heart of history itself. Alienation occurs when the results of men's acts

contradict their true purposes, when their official values, or the parts they play, misrepresent their real motives needs and goals. This is the case, for example, when something that men have made to respond to human needs (e.g. a system of laws), acquires an independent status of its own, and is seen by men, not as something created by them to satisfy a common social want (which may have disappeared long ago), but as an objective law or institution, possessing eternal impersonal authority in its own right, like the unalterable laws of Nature as conceived by scientists and ordinary men, like God for a believer. For Marx, the capitalist system is precisely this kind of entity, a vast instrument brought into being by intelligible material demands -- a progressive improvement and broadening of life in its own day, that generates its own intellectual moral, religious beliefs, values and forms of life. Whether those who hold them know it or not, such values are simply props to the power of the class whose interests the capitalist system embodies. Nevertheless, they come to be viewed by all sections of society as being objectively valid for all mankind. Thus, for example, industry and capitalist mode of exchange are not timelessly valid institutions, but were generated by the mounting resistance by peasants and artisans to dependence on the blind forces of nature.

Production is a social activity. Any form of co-operative work or division of labour, whatever its origin, creates common interests, not analyzable as the mere sum of the individual aims or interests of the human beings involved. If, as in capitalist society, the product of the total social labour of a society is appropriated by one section of that society for its own

exclusive benefit, as a result of an inexorable historical development, this goes against the 'natural' needs of human society -- against what men, whose essence, as human beings, is to be social, require in order to develop freely and fully. According to Marx, those who accumulate in their hands the means of production, and thereby also its fruits in the form of capital, forcibly deprive the majority of the producers -- the workers -- of what they create. And so they split society into exploiter and exploited. The interests of these classes are opposed. The survival of each class depends on its ability to defeat its adversary in a continuous war, a war that determines all the institutions of that society. In the course of the struggle technological skill develop, the culture of the class-divided society becomes more complex. Its products grow riches, and the needs, which its material progress breeds, is more 'unnatural'. Unnatural, because both the warring classes became 'alienated by the conflict which has replaced co-operation for common ends from the integrated common life and creation, which, according to this theory, is demanded by the social nature of man. The monopoly of the means of production held by a particular group of men enables it to impose its will on the others and to force them to perform tasks alien to their own needs. Thereby the unity of society is destroyed, and the lives of both classes become distorted. The majority -- that is the propertyless proletarians -- now work for the benefit, and according to the ideas of others. The fruit of their labour as well as its instruments are taken from them. Their mode of existence, their ideas and ideals correspond not to their own real predicament but to the aims of their oppressors. Hence their lives rest

on a lie. Their masters, in their turn, whether consciously or not, cannot help seeking to justify their own parasitic existence as being both natural and desirable. In course of this, they generate ideas, values, laws, habits of life, institutions, a complex which Marx sometimes calls 'ideology'. The whole purpose of this is to prop up, explain away, defend, their own privileged, unnatural, and therefore, unjustified, status and power. Such ideologies -- national, religious, economic and so on, are forms of collective self-deception. The victims of the ruling class -- the proletarians and peasants -- imbibe it as part of their normal education, or the general outlook of the unnatural society, and so come to look upon it, and accept it, as objective, just, necessary, a part of the natural order which pseudo-sciences are then created to explain. This, as Rousseau had taught, serves to deepen still further human error, conflict and frustration.

The symptom of alienation is the attribution of the ultimate authority, either to some impersonal power, for example, laws of supply and demand, from which the rationality of capitalism is represented as being logically deducible. Or it can be the attribution of ultimate authority to imaginary persons or forces -- divinities, churches, the mystical person of the king or priest, or interims of other oppressive myths, whereby men, torn from a 'natural' mode of life, seek to explain their unnatural condition to themselves. If men are ever to liberate themselves, they must be taught to see through these myths. The most oppressive all, in Marx's view, is bourgeois economic science, which represents the movement of commodities or of money -- the

process of production, consumption and distribution -- as an impersonal process, similar to those of nature, an unalterable pattern of objective forces before which men can only bow, and which it would be insane to resist. Marx, nevertheless resolved to show that the conception of any given economic or social structure as a part of an unchangeable world order was an illusion brought about by man's alienation from the form of life natural to him - a typical 'mystification', the effects of purely human activities masquerading as a law of nature. It would be removed only by other, equally human activities - the application of 'demystifying' reason and science, ultimately by the weapon of revolution. These activities may themselves be determined by objective laws, but what these laws determine is the activity of human thought and will, and not merely the movement of material bodies, obeying their own inexorable patterns that are independent of human decisions and actions. If, as Marx believed, human choices can affect the course of events, then, even if these choices are themselves ultimately determined and scientifically predictable, such a situation is one in which it is legitimate to call men free, since such choices are not, like the rest of nature, mechanically determined.

Because the historical function of capitalism, and its relation to the interest of a specific class, is not understood, it comes not to enrich but to crush and distort the lives of millions of workers, and indeed of their oppressors too, like anything that is not rationally grasped and therefore, blindly worshipped as a fetish. Money for instance, which played a progressive role in the days of liberation from barter, has now become an absolute object of pursuit and

reverence for its own sake, brutalizing and destroying man whom it was invented to liberate. Men are divorced from the products of their own toil and from the instruments with which they produce. The latter acquire a life and status of their own, and in the name of their survival or improvement, living human beings are oppressed and treated like cattle or saleable commodities. This is true of all institutions, churches, economic systems, forms of government and moral codes, which become more powerful than their inventors are. At the same time, merely to see through or criticize this predicament, which the young Hegelians thought sufficient, will not be able to destroy it according to Marx. To be effective, the weapons with which one fights, among them ideas, must be those called for by the historical situation -- neither those that served a previous period, nor those for which the historical process has not yet called. Men must ask themselves, first and foremost, what stage the class war -- which is the dialectic at work -- has reached, and then act accordingly. This is to be 'concrete' and not timeless, or idealistic or 'abstract'. Alienation -- the substitution of imaginary relations for real relations -- will come to an end only when the final class -- the proletariat -- defeats the bourgeoisie. Then the ideas which this victory will generate, will automatically be those expressive of, and beneficial to, a classless society, that is, all mankind. Neither institutions nor ideas, which rest on falsifying the character of any section of the human race, and so leading to their oppression, will survive. Capitalism, under which the labour of human beings is bought and sold, and the workers are treated merely as sources of labour power, is

plainly a system which distorts the truth about what men are and can be, and seeks to subordinate history to a class interest, and is therefore due to be superseded by the gathering power of its indignant victims which its own victories call into existence. All frustration, for Marx, is the product of alienation -- the barriers and distortions that are created by the inevitable war of classes, and shut out this or that body of men from the harmonious co-operation with one another for which their nature craves.

In *The German Ideology* while examining the claims of the neo-Hegelians Marx also deals with the brothers Bruno and Edgar Bauer. They are represented as sordid peddlers of inferior metaphysical wares, who believe that the mere existence of a fastidious critical elite, raised by its intellectual gifts above the Philistine mob will itself affect the emancipation of such sections of humanity as are worthy of it. This belief in the power of a frigid detachment from the social and economic struggle to effect a transformation of society, is regarded as empty academics, an ostrich-like attitude which will be swept away, like the rest of the world to which it belongs, by the real revolution which could not, it was clear to Marx, now be long in coming. Stirner is treated at greater length. Stirner believed that all programmes, ideals theories as well as political, social and economic order, are so many artificially built prisons for the mind and the spirit, means of curbing the will, of concealing from the individual the existence of his own infinite creative powers, and that all systems must therefore be destroyed, not because they are evil, but because they are systems. Only when this has been achieved, would man, released from

his unnatural fetters become truly master of himself and attain to his full stature as a human being. This doctrine, which had a great influence on Nietzsche and probably on Bakunin, is treated by Marx as a pathological phenomenon, the agonized cry of a persecuted neurotic, belonging to the province of medicine rather than to that of political theory.

Feuerbach is more gently treated. He is held to have written more soberly, and to have made an honest, if crude, attempt to expose the mystification of idealism. Marx declared that while Feuerbach had correctly perceived that men are largely the product of circumstances and education, he had not gone on to see that circumstances are themselves altered by the activity of men, and that the educators themselves are children of their age. Feuerbach's doctrine artificially divides society into two parts -- the masses, which, being helplessly exposed to every influence, must be freed, and the teachers, who contrive somehow to remain immune from the effect of their environment. But the relation of mind and matter, of man and nature, is reciprocal. Feuerbach is praised for showing that in religion men delude themselves by inventing an imaginary world to redress the balance of misery in real life. It is a form of escape, a golden dream, or in a phrase made celebrated by Marx, the opium of the people. The criticism of religion must therefore be anthropological in character, and take the form of exposing and analyzing its secular origins. But Feuerbach is accused of leaving the major task untouched. He sees that religion is the anodyne to soften the pain caused by the contradictions of the material world, but then fails to see that these

contradictions must, in that case, be removed, otherwise they will continue to breed comforting and fatal delusions. The revolution, which alone can do so, must occur not in the super-structure -- the world of thought -- but in its material substratum, the real world of men and things. Philosophy has hitherto treated ideas and beliefs as possessing an intrinsic validity of their own. This has never been true. The real content of a belief is the action in which it is expressed. The real convictions and principles of a man or a society are expressed in their acts, not their words. Belief and act are one. If acts do not correspond to avowed beliefs, the beliefs are lies -- ideologies, conscious or not, to cover the opposite of what they profess.

The so-called 'True Socialists', Grun and Hess have also been elaborately criticized by Marx. It is true that they wrote about the actual situation, but, placing ideals before interests in order of importance, they were equally far removed from a clear view of the facts. They believed correctly that the political inequality, and the general emotional malaise of their generation, were both traceable to economic contradictions, which could only be removed by the total abolition of private property. But they also believed that the technological advance which made this possible was not an end but a means. The action could be justified only by appeal to moral ideals. The use of force, however, noble the purpose for which it was employed, defeated its own end, since it brutalized both parties in the struggle, and made them both incapable of true freedom after the struggle was ones. If men were to be freed, it must be by peaceful and civilized means alone, to be effected as rapidly and

painlessly as possible, before industrialization had spread so widely, as to make a bloody class war inevitable. Indeed, unless this was done, only violence would be left. And this would, in the end, defeat itself, for a society set up by the sword, even if justice initially were on its side, could not fail to develop into a tyranny of the victorious class -- even though it be that of the workers -- over the rest and this would be incompatible with the human equality which true socialism seeks to create. The 'True Socialites' opposed the doctrine of the necessity of open class war on the ground that it blinded the workers to those rights and ideals for the sake of which they fought. Only by treating men as equal from the beginning, by dealing with them as human beings, that is, by renouncing force, and appealing to the sense of human solidarity, of equal justice and the generous sentiments of mankind, could a lasting harmony of interests be obtained. Above all, the burden of the proletariat must not be removed by being shifted onto the shoulders of some other class. Marx, they maintained, merely desired to reverse the roles of the existing classes, to deprive the bourgeoisie of its power only to ruin and enslave it. But this, besides being morally unacceptable, would leave the class war itself in existence and so would fail to reconcile the existing contradiction in the only possible by fusing conflicting interests into one common ideal.

Marx viewed these arguments as baseless. The whole argument, he points out, rests on the premise that men, even capitalists, are amenable to a rational argument, and under suitable conditions will voluntarily give up the power which they have acquired by birth or wealth or ability, for the sake of a

moral principle, to create a better world. To Marx, this was the oldest, most familiar, most outworn of all the rationalist fallacies. He had met it in its worst form in the belief of his own father and his contemporaries that in the end reason and moral goodness were bound to triumph, a theory which was utterly discredited by events during the dark aftermath of the French Revolution. To preach it now, as if one were still living in the eighteenth century, was to be guilty either of boundless stupidity, or of a cowardly escape into mere words, or else of deliberate Utopianism, when what was needed was a scientific examination of the actual situation. Marx was careful to point out that he did not himself fall into the opposite error. He did not simply contradict this thesis about human nature, and say that whereas these theorists assumed man to be fundamentally generous and just, he found him rapacious, self-seeking and incapable of disinterested action. That would have been an hypothesis as subjective and unhistorical as that of his opponents. Each was vitiated by the fallacy that men's act were in the end determined by their moral character, which could be described in comparative isolation from this environment. Marx, true to the method, if not the conclusions, of Hegel, maintained that a man's purposes were made what they were by the social, that is economic, situation in which he was in fact placed whether he knew it or not. Whatever their opinions, a man's actions were inevitably guided by his real interests, by the requirements of his material situation. Most individuals concealed their own dependence on their environment and situation, particularly on their class application, so effectively even from themselves, that they quite sincerely

believed that a change of heart could result in a radically different mode of life. This was according to Marx, the profoundest error made by modern thinkers. It arose partly as a result of Protestant individualism, which, arising as the 'ideological' counterpart of the growth of freedom of trade and production, taught men to believe that the individual held the means for his happiness in his own hands. The faith and energy were sufficient to secure it. Every man had it in his power to attain to spiritual or material well being and for his weakness and misery he ultimately had only himself to blame. Marx maintained, against this, that liberty of action was severely curtailed by the precise position which the agent occupied on the social map. All notions of right and wrong, justice and injustice, altruism and egoism were beside the point, as referring exclusively to the mental states, which, in themselves quite genuine, were never more than symptoms of the actual condition of their owner.

For Marx, to alter the world, one must first understand the material with which one deals. The bourgeoisie which wishes not to alter it, but to preserve the status quo, acts and thinks in terms of concepts, which, being products of a given stage in its development, themselves serve, whatever they pretend to be, as instruments of its temporary preservation. The proletariat, in whose interest it is to alter it, blindly accepts the entire intellectual paraphernalia of middle-class thought, born of middle-class needs and conditions, although there is an utter divergence of interest between the two classes. Phrases about justice or liberty represent something more or less definite when they are uttered by the middle-class liberal, namely, his attitude, however deluded, to his own mode of

life, his actual or desired relation to members of other social classes. But they are empty sounds when repeated by the 'alienated' proletariat, since they describe nothing real in his life, and only betray his muddled state of mind which is the result of the hypnotic power of phrases, which, by confusing issues, not only fail to promote, but hinders and sometime paralyses his power to act. Mutualists, true socialists, mystical anarchists, however, pure their motives, are thus even more dangerous enemies of the proletariat than the bourgeoisie because the latter is at least an open enemy whose words and deeds the workers can be taught to distrust. But these others, who proclaim their solidarity with the workers, and assume that there always exist universal interests of mankind as such, common to all men -- that men have interests independent of, or transcending their class affiliation -- spread darkness in the proletarian camp itself, and thus weaken it for the coming struggle. The workers must be made to understand that the modern industrial system, like the feudal system before it, like every other social system, is, so long the ruling class requires it for its continuance as a class, an iron despotism imposed by the capitalist system of production and distribution, from which no individual, whether he be master or slave, can escape. All visionary dreams of human liberty, of a time when men will be able to develop their natural gifts to their fullest extent, living and crating spontaneously, no longer dependent on others for the freedom to do or think as they will remain an unattainable utopia so long as the fight for control of the means of production continues. It is no longer a struggle strictly for the means of subsistence, for modern inventions

and discoveries have abolished natural scarcity. It is now an artificial scarcity, created by the very struggle for securing new instruments itself, a process which necessarily leads to the centralization of power by the creation of monopolies at one end of the social scale, and the increase of penury and degradation at the other. The war between economically determined groups alone divides men from each other, blinds them to the real facts of their situation, makes them slaves to customs and rules which they dare not question, because they would crumble at the touch of historical explanation. Only one remedy -- the disappearance of the class struggle -- can achieve the abolition of this widening gulf. But the essence of a class is to compete with other classes. Hence, this end can be achieved not only by creating equality between classes -- a utopian conception -- but by the total abolition of classes themselves.

For Marx, no less than for earlier rationalists, man is potentially wise, creative and free. If his character has deteriorated beyond recognition, that is due to the long and brutalizing war in which he and his ancestors, have lived ever since society ceased to be that primitive communism out of which, according to the current anthropology, it has developed. Until this state is reached again, embodying, however, all the conquests, technological and spiritual, which mankind has won in the course of its long wandering, neither peace nor freedom can be obtained. The French Revolution was an attempt to bring this about by altering political forms only -- which was no more than what the bourgeoisie required, since it already possessed the economic reality. And, therefore, all it succeeded in doing was to establish the bourgeoisie in a

dominant position by finally destroying the corrupt remnant of an obsolete feudal regime. This task could not be continued by Napoleon whom no one could suspect of wishing consciously to liberate humanity. Whatever his personal motive for acting as he did, the demands of his historical environment made him an instrument of social change. By his agency, as Hegel perceived, Europe advanced yet another step towards the realization of its destiny.

The gradual freeing of mankind has pursued a definite, irreversible direction. Every new epoch is inaugurated by the liberation of a hitherto oppressed class. Nor can a class, once it has been destroyed, ever return. History does not move backwards, or in cyclical movements. All its conquests are final and irrevocable. Most previous ideal constitutions were worthless because they ignored actual laws of historical development, and substituted in their place the subjective caprice and imagination of the thinker. A knowledge of these laws is essential to effective political action. The ancient world gave way to the medieval, slavery to feudalism, and feudalism to the industrial bourgeoisie. These transitions were not peaceful, but sprang from wars and revolutions, for no established order gives way to its successor without a struggle.

And now only one stratum remains submerged below the level of the rest. One class alone remains enslaved, the landless, propertyless proletariat, created by the advance of technology. The proletariat is on the lowest possible rung of social scale. There is no class below it. By securing its own emancipation the proletariat will therefore emancipate mankind. It has, unlike

other classes, no specific claim, any interests of its own which it does not share with all men as such, for it has been stripped of everything but its bare humanity. Its very destitution causes it to represent human being as such -- what it is entitled to, is the minimum to which all men are entitled. Its right is thus not to fight for the natural rights of a particular section of society, for natural rights are but the ideal aspect of the bourgeois attitude to the sanctity of private property. The only real rights are those conferred by history, the right to act the part which is historically imposed upon one's class. The bourgeoisie, in this sense, has a full right to fight its final battle against the masses. But its task is hopeless. It will necessarily be defeated, as the feudal nobility was defeated in its day. As for the masses, they fight for freedom not because they choose, but because they must. To fight is the condition of their survival. The future belongs to them, and in fighting for it, they, like every rising class, are fighting against a foe doomed to decay, and thereby fighting for the whole of humanity. But whereas all other victories placed in power a class itself doomed to ultimate disappearance, this conflict will be followed by no other, being destined to end the conditions of all struggles, by abolishing classes as such, by dissolving the state itself, hitherto the instrument of a single class, into a free, classless society. The proletariat must be made to understand that no real compromise with the enemy is possible. While it may conclude temporary alliances with him in order to defeat some common adversary, it must ultimately turn against him.

To make this clear, and to educate the masses for their destiny is, according to Marx, the whole duty of a contemporary philosopher. True freedom is attainable once society has been made rational, that is, has overcome the contradictions which breed illusions and distort the understanding of both masters and slaves. But men can work for the free world by discovering the true state of balance of forces, and acting accordingly. The path to freedom thus entails knowledge of historical necessity.

CHAPTER-V

CONCLUSION

After reading *The German Ideology* we can conclude that for Marx matter is the ultimate reality. It exists outside the consciousness. Since matter is the ultimate reality so material needs are the primary needs. Man has first to survive in his physical form. This idea was also proposed by Feuerbach. But in the writings of Feuerbach, there is a dualism of man and his environment. For Marx man lives in active relationship with his environment. He exists by changing his environment. He acts upon the environment and changes it. While doing so he himself gets transformed. His thinking is shaped when he is acting on environment. So this is a dialectical process. Being determines the consciousness. So, ideas and environment both are changing at the same time out of this act of being. Man makes his own history. But he makes it under the constraints of external world. While transforming the latter, he gets himself transformed. Therefore, change is the fundamental characteristic of life. This is the basic perspective of Marx on history.

In the earliest stage, the forces of production were commonly shared and commonly owned. Everyone was related to the productive forces in a similar way. So there was no class division. Productive forces advanced and with the generation of surplus institution of private property i.e. right to control property came forth. Sooner or later ownership of forces of production became

unequally distributed. So, society got divided into two classes, those who owned the forces of production and those who did not. These were the two categories. The transition of ancient society to feudal society gave way to a subsistence economy where exchange was not monetized. However, feudalism generated a power-struggle among the lords, which resulted in the creation of professional army, which survived on the cash wages. Some other fortuitous development e.g. Black Death in England destroyed a sizable number of the labour force. This resulted in the labour shortage. Hereditary ties could no longer be maintained. Lords tried to entice labourers by monetary reward. This led to mobility of labour and cash nexus. This time there was inflow of bullion from Latin America into Europe due to the geographical discoveries. Coinage became possible and monetization was facilitated through this. Traders started accumulating wealth through trade. These traders wanted all barriers of free movement of commodities removed. Further, they wanted free movement of labour. The bourgeoisie as long as they were weak respected themselves to liberal political ideology as it sanctified private-property. Once the bourgeoisie became strong over the monarchy, they overthrew the monarchy, which represented the feudal order. So, the ideological attack on feudalism culminated in the French Revolution.

Once having established the capitalist order, bourgeoisie became a conservative class. In capitalism the production relation is contractual as against hereditary in feudalism. Maximization of profit demanded a rational system. Cash nexus led to the diversification of the trade and universal

medium for quantifying the value of diversified commodities. This cash nexus and over rationalization leads to alienation of man in the capitalist society.

With the development of the institution of private property there develops an unequal access to the forces of production. Those who control the forces of production use it for their own interest excluding the others. This leads to alienation of men from his other fellow being. This is manifested in the division of society in owners and non-owners. The degree of alienation reaches its absolute level in the capitalist society as the control of the capitalists over the productive forces becomes total and relations becomes solely contractual. The old community is uprooted from the village. The contractual relationship rests on the notion of equality and freedom. But in reality this freedom proves illusory. Forces of survival compel the workers to conform to the contracts. There are no permanent bond left. The proletariat is alienated from his fellow being as he is also alienated from the capitalists.

Alienation extends to the organization of production and work. What is to be produced, how it is to be produced is decided by the capitalist, though it is the worker who produces. So workers are alienated from the process of production. In such a situation the only power workers retain is labour power. And he has to part with this power for survival. He has to sell it as commodities for wages. Wages are mere subsistence wages, which enables him only to live and procreate. But man is a creative being. It is the creativity which gives meaning to his life. In his creations man gets self-affirmation. Labour is an end in itself. But in the capitalist society, labour becomes means for

subsistence. Under such circumstances man enslaves another man. He is deprived of the distinctly human need of creating through labour and seeking meaning in that. Thus man is alienated from the true self. This is self-alienation. It extends to the social level. Objectification of labour takes place in the production work. Labour power is turned objects, which are appropriated by the capitalist class. So labour as an act of self-affirmation, in the capitalist society becomes an act of self-destruction. Mere animal existence is kept by enslaving oneself to another. Life is robbed off all meanings. This is the condition when one searches meaning in god. Human qualities are attributed to god. Hence Marx says, 'God is the heart of the heartless'. Religion is the soul of heartless world. It is a cry of anguished creature. Life becomes a prolonged anguish. 'Religion is the opiate of the Masses'. Religion makes the exploitation, suffering more tolerable. It is a false consciousness. It diverts attention from the objective reality. The capitalist order is responsible for this. The capitalist is also alienated in this order. He does not lead a wholesome life. He is involved in the never-ending pursuit of profit. He suffers a state of sickness. So both the proletariat as well as the capitalists are subject to alienation. In this way Marx develops the themes of history and alienation in *The German Ideology*.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

Althusser, L., *For Marx*, London, Allen Lane, The Penguin Press, 1969.

Althusser, L., *Lenin and Philosophy and Other Essays*, London, New Left Books, 1971.

Althusser, L. and Balibar, E., *Reading Capital*, London, New Left Books, 1970.

Bakhtin, Mikhail, *The Dialogical Imagination: Four Essays of M.M. Bakhtin*, Edited by Michael Holquist, Austin: University of Texas Press, 1981.

Barthes, R., *Writing Degree Zero*, London, Cape, 1967.

Barthes, R., *Elements of Semiology*, New York: Hill & Wang, 1967.

Barthes, R., *Mythologies*, London, Cape, 1972.

Barthes, R., *S/Z*, London, Cape, 1975.

Barthes, R., *Image-Music-Text,* New York, Hill & Wang, 1977.

Barthes, R., *Sade, Fourier, Loyola*, London, Cape, 1977.

Barthes, R., *The Pleasure of the Text*, London, Cape, 1976.

Baudrillard, J., *For a Critique of the Political Economy of Sign*, St. Louis, Telos Press, 1981.

Bell, D., *The Cultural Contradictions of Capitalism*, New York, Basic Books, 1976.

Bottomore, T.B. (ed.), *A Dictionary of Marxist Thought*, Oxford, Blackwell, 1983.

Bottomore, T.B. and Rubel, M. (eds.), *Karl Marx: Selected Writings in Sociology and Social Philosophy*, Harmondsworth, Penguin Books, 1961.

Callnicos, A., *Althusser's Marxism*, London, Pluto Press, 1976.

Culler, J., *The Pursuit of Signs: Semiotics, Literature, Deconstruction*, Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press, 1981.

Culler, J., *Saussure*, London, Fontana, 1976.

Culler, J., *Barthes*, Glasgow, Fontana, 1983.

Darrida, J., *Margins of Philosophy*, Chicago, Chicago University Press, 1982.

De George, Richard T. and Fernande M. (eds.), *The Structuralists from Marx to Levi-Strauss*, Garden City, New York, Doubleday (Anchor Books), 1972.

Eco, Umberto, *The Role of the Reader: Explorations in the Semiotics of Texts*, Bloomington, Indiana University Press, 1979.

Eco, Umberto, *A Theory of Semiotics*, Bloomington, Indiana University Press, 1976.

Engels, F., *Dialectics of Nature*, New York, International Publishers, 1960.

Feuerbach, L., *The Essence of Christianity*, New York, Harper, 1957.

Foucault, M., *The Order of Things: An Archaeology of the Human Sciences*, London, Tavistock, 1974.

Foucault, M., *The Archaeology of Knowledge*, London, Tavistock, 1974.

Gill, H.S., *Abelardian Semiotics and other Essays*, New Delhi, Bahri Publications, 1989.

Gill, H.S. and Pottier Bernard (eds.), *Ideas, Words and Things: French Writings in Semiology*, New Delhi, Orient Longman, 1992.

Giddens, A., *A Contemporary Critique of Historical Materialism*, London, Macmillan, 1981.

Gramsci, A., *Selections from the Prison Notebooks*, London, New Left Books, 1971.

Guiraud, Pierre, *Semiology*, New York, Routledge, 1975.

Hawkes, T., *Structuralism and Semiotics*, London, Methuen, 1977.

Hegel, G.W.F., *The Philosophy of History*, New York, Dover, 1956.

Heller, A., *The Theory of Need in Marx*, London, Allison & Busby, 1974.

Jameson, F., *Postmodernism*, London, Verso, 1991.

Kolakowski, L., *Main Currents of Marxism*, Vol. I, Oxford, Oxford University Press, 1978.

Kolakowski, L., *Main Currents of Marxism*, Vol. II, Oxford, Oxford University Press, 1978

Kristeva, Julia, *Desire in Language: A semiotic Approach to Literature and Art*, New York, Columbia University Press, 1980.

Kuhn, T.S., *The Structure of Scientific Revolutions*, Chicago, Chicago University Press, 1970.

Larrain, J., *The Concept of Ideology*, London, Hutchinson, 1979.

Lukacs, G., *History and Class Consciousness*, London, Merlin Press, 1971.

Mannheim, K., *Ideology and Utopia*, London, Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1936.

Marx, K. (1845), *Theses on Feuerbach*, reprinted in K. Marx and F. Engels *Selected Works*, London, Lawrence & Wishart, 1970.

Marx, K. (1847), *The Poverty of Philosophy*, Moscow, Progress Publishers, 1956.

Marx, K. (1852), *The Eighteenth Brumaire of Louis Bonaparte*, Moscow, Progress Publishers, 1934.

Marx, K. (1867, 1885, 1894), *Capital*, London, Lawrence & Wishart, 1970.

Marx, K., *The Economic and Philosophical Manuscripts of 1844*, New York, International Publishers, 1964.

Marx, K., *Grundrisse*, Harmondsworth, Penguin Books, 1973.

Marx, K. and Engels, F. (1845), *The Holy Family*, Moscow, Progress Publishers, 1956.

Marx, K. and Engels, F. (1845), *The German Ideology*, London, Lawrence & Wishart, 1965.

Marx, K. and Engels, F. (1848), *Manifesto of the Communist Party* in K. Marx and F. Engels, *Selected Works*, London, Lawrence & Wishart, 1968.

McLellan, D., *Karl Marx*, London, Macmillan, 1973.

McLellan, D., *Engels*, Glasgow, Fontana, 1977.

Mouffe, C. (ed.), *Gramsci and Marxist Theory*, London, Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1979.

Ollman, B., *Alienation: Marx's Critique of Man in Capitalist Society*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1971.

Parkin, F., *Marxism and Class Theory: A Bourgeois Critique*, London Tavistock, 1979.

Saussure, F. de, *Course in General Linguistics*, London, Fontana, 1974.

Scholes, Robert, *Semiotics and Interpretation*, New Haven, Yale University Press, 1982.

Therborn, G., *The Ideology of Power and the Power of Ideology*, London, New Left Books, 1980.

Wright, E.O., *Classes*, London, Verso, 1985.