"THE RELEVANCE OF SOCIAL THEORY"

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CERTIFICATE

This is to certify that the dissertation entitled **"THE RELEVANCE OF SOCIAL THEORY"**, submitted by SONALI DEY in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the award of the degree of Master of Philosophy, is her original work according to the best of my knowledge and may be placed before the examiners for evaluation .

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INTRODUCTION

To be relevant means to do with the matter at hand i.e., to be appropriate to, be pertinent to. If social reality, with all the inter-subjective relationships and human practices is here the matter at hand then pertaining to this, the question arises what is the relevance of social theory? As social theory attempts to study social reality, its relevance can only be established by the nature of the relationship that may exist between the process of theorizing and social reality.

Theorizing as an activity has been much criticized, and accused of being confined to an ivory tower, far removed from reality. Apart from this the language of social theory itself has been said to be beyond the grasp of the common man and hence its usefulness has been questioned. If people cannot relate to it, then what is its relevance? Further, even within the academic works practice is given priority over theory, like in Marxism. Theory is made out to be a contemplative activity only. Plagued by the question of the futility of doing theory, this study attempts to provide some kind of an answer to the question on the relevance of social theory.

Theory here specifically means social theory. That is theory about human practices, relationships and all that which is composite part of the social whole. There are theories of the natural and physical sciences, the relevance of which is not being raised in this study. Nor, a comparative analysis between the social sciences and natural sciences is being attempted. The question which is chiefly being raised is, why are human beings who are able to carry out all their social obligation, understand their position vis-a-vis society, and are able to form a social whole still theorize about that social reality? And how theorizing, which as a process keeps changing, still remains relevant.

There are several theoretical perspectives which are wrestling with one another and the complexities of social reality. Whether it is Positivism, Behaviouralism, Structuralism, Marxism or the Interpretative theories, all endeavor to understand or explain society; and where possible influence social practices or action. They are perspectives that contend with one another, or there are those theories that are a development on previous theories.

The positivistic approach which emerged after the industrial revolution, was devoted to the suspicion of metaphysics, a desire to define clearly what is scientific,

an emphasis on the empirical verification of concepts and propositions, and construction of theory by a deductive method, starting with a hypothesis. A monolith view of science was promoted which did not differentiate between natural and social science methods. Questions of interpretation were repressed as they were seen to be incompatible with the formulation of laws. Understanding was seen as a part of the psychological phenomena, based on unreliable and necessarily interpretative aspects of human nature.

The bastion of logical empiricism was attacked by several writers like Kunh, Toulmin, Lakatos, and Hesse. They believed that there could be no neutral observation. Science is an interpretative endeavor and the problems of meaning, communication and translations are relevant while theorizing. There has been based on the interpretative approach, proliferation of traditions like phenomenology, and critical theory.

This gives a brief insight into the various debates and orientations within the whole process of the theoretical enterprise. All this is done with constant reference to human practices and/or the commonsense understanding, or knowledge that is the basis of the social entity. The question is, how is theory pertinent to these ongoing prac-

tices in the social reality, based on the commonsense knowledge.

Most existing texts on theory as such seek to explain the logic of a particular approach and, or are critical of the approach that is diametrically opposed to it.

Theory is done with some systemacity, may have a method and a certain way of looking at the social whole. To do theory requires training. Thus theory is about a reality that already has a kind of knowledge that is the basis of all activity. How does theory as a kind of knowledge relate to the above everyday reality. Theory can relate to the commonsense knowledge or try to mainpulate and explain practices from outside of intersubjective relations (like in positivism). Relevance of theory can be studied from looking at the relationship of theory with commonsense knowledge and practice seperately.

Chapter one will deal with what theory is and how it is a kind of knowledge. The first part will go into what is knowledge and how there are different kinds of knowledge. Theory and commonsense being two kinds. A relationship between the two, grounded in knowledge, will be established in the first chapter. The relevance of theory will be established by looking at the ability of theory to explain, negate or attempt to influence social reality; which is

composed of commonsense knowledge, practices and intersub-jective relations. Based on this positivism, hermeneutical and Marxist theories will be examined. The second chapter will deal with the relevance of theory, by examining the relationship between theory and practices. As varied theo-retical approaches perceive different kinds of relation-ships, taking the example of the interpretative, Marxist and positivistic theories; this will be illustrated and the nature of relationship between theory and practice will be seen.

The third chapter will deal with some arguements against theory i.e. of Michel Foucault, Steven Knapp and Walter Benn Michaels. Foucault argues against totalising theories and their role in the power - knowledge complex. Knapp and Michaels are against theory on both ontological and epistemological grounds.

The arguments against theory in this Chapter are rather limited and rejoinders to the arguments have not been provided. This shortcoming is not only due to the lack of time and space but because by itself "against theory" requires an extensive study. However this point has been made in a limited way to establish how the process of theo-rising has generated an argument against itself. These arguments arise to provide a defence mechanism against the

pitfalls of high theorising. Therefore to complete the arguement on social theory it is necessary to talk about a critique of social theory . Next the choice of positivism, hermeneutics and Marxist streams of social theorizing is deliberate, so as to examplify the issue at hand i.e. the relevance of social theory by relating it to commonsense knowledge and practice. Further more, these theories have also been major influencing forces on the whole theoritical output taking place over the last few decades. As "the attempt to tame the social sciences to the harness of a strict hypotheticodeductive model failed. Within the social sciences, phenomenological, Marxist, hermeneutics... approaches [have] vied in attempting to capture the distinctiveness of human phenomana."[1]

As must be obvious by now, relevance of social theory or the arguement against theory here is sought to be argued from the point of view of how social theory themselves are constructed and how they relate to social reality and practices. However, neither the expectation from this social theory, by social reality has been examined, and nor the question whether the problems in society are finding answers

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1. Cohen, R.S. & Waktofsky; "Epistemology, Methodology and the Social Sciences"; Holland, D. Reidel Publishing Co., 1983; p. vii.

within theory. Therefore after understanding how social theory attempts to be relevant, one could later examine aspects of social reeality like democracy, freedom or feminism and their theoritical implications. Also while claiming relevance of social theory, how social theorists refute criticism like that of Faucault, Knapp and Michaels can be taken up. A final point raised in the conclusion i.e. " who is social theory relevant for ?" is related to the expectations from social theory. That is what the people who compose society expect from social theory.

CHAPTER I

RELEVANCE OF SOCIAL THEORY BASED ON THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN COMMONSENSE KNOWLEDGE AND THEORY

Social reality is composed of intersubjective relations and practices. To make these possible human beings have to possess knowledge of the reality. Together knowledge, practices and intersubjective relations, form the social reality. Man acts on the reality and the reality acts on man. The knowledge at the every day level is the "commonsense knowledge[1]". But this is not the only knowledge than man possesses. Theoritical works also produces knowledge of society, and they may challange, extend or attempt to understand the reality. When examining the relevance of social theory this chapter will attempt at seeing how theoritical knowledge relates to this commonsense knowledge. As commonsense knowledge is the basis of activity; if social theory is to have relevance, it must explain, understand,[2] challenge or extend

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1. Schutz, A.; "Collected Papers Volume 1"; The Hague, Martinus Nijhoff, 1962; p., 2.

2. Explanation : The verb explanation is an accomplishment term (Zeno, V. "Linguistics in Philosophy" Ithaca, 1967 p.,102) To explain may mean to state what is meant or what are the intentions or explain what are the causes. Explanations are meant to rationalize facts, to render them intelligible to a mind seeking to understand (Rescher, N.; "Scientific Explanation", The Free Press, New York; 1970;p.,1). There are practical explanations

this commonsense knowledge. This chapter will see what the three major theoritical streams of positivism, hermeneutics and Marxism understand by theory and its relation to commonsense knowledge; and thereby, examine the relevance of social theory.

<center>I</center>

KNOWLEDGE, COMMONSENSE KNOWLEDGE AND THEORY

Question : Do you know who is Lakshmi and who is Swaraswati?

Adivasi : Yes.

Question : Who is Lakshmi?

Adivasi : Rice, cloths, hut.

Question : And Swaraswati?

Adivasi : Swakar's knowledge.

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that deal with how to perform certain activities. Explanation is not similar to justification. Explaining means giving reasons with respect to some fact and not reasons why what we say is true. Explanation has two parts, the fact to be explained - `explanandum' and the explanatory account i.e. the `explanans'.

Understanding - There are three meanings of understanding - Primary understanding which is necessary for the repotage of what has been observed to occur; secondary understanding is of what caused the occurance or how it came about; and tertiary understanding is that which is necessary for the description of any phenomena.

Question : If you could have one of them what is your pref-

erence?

Adivasi : Swaraswati.

Question : Why?

Adivasi : If everyone has knowledge, then no one can cheat

others. Then only can we have true equality.

(A dialogue between a tribal (Adivasi) poor peasant in Junglepatti, Thane District, Maharashtra, India. `Lakshmi' and `Swaraswati' are Hindu goddesses of prosperity and knowledge respectively. `Swakar' is the money lending landlord/trader/rich farmer).[3]

Two points emerge from the above dialogue; one, that those who have knowledge also have the power, therefore, the landlord is able to exert his influence and exploit the landless tribal. Second, those who have knowledge are better able to cope with life and its problems. The `adiva- si's understanding of why he needs knowledge is clearly guided by the fact that it would end his misery, free him from exploitation, and end his subordination.

Knowledge as explained above, is not knowledge for the sake of knowledge. As a part of social relationships, it

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3. Borda, O.F.(ed): "The Challenge of Social Change" California, Sage Publication, 1985; p.,107.

serves a purpose; for examples, aids in control. Further-more there are different levels of knowledge, like that of the tribal vis-a-vis the money lender's. According to the clarity and extent of knowledge, our actions become more certain, leading to better handling of the social reality.

Thus, knowledge acquired by humans who are a part of society, make possible the very existence of that society. This knowledge can be of various kinds, like commonsense understanding or systematic theories about the social reality. This knowledge is not final or absolute. It is evolving, changing and expanding. Even though there are several claims to possessing the true knowledge, whether theoretical or otherwise.

Man is a thinking being who takes cognizance of his surrounding. One thinks either to gain knowledge of what is, or to make up one's mind about what one will do in the future. Thus, two types of thinking takes place - contemplative and deliberative. Thinking is seen as a covert activity. It is always directed towards an object that may be abstract or concrete. A human being uses language to describe his thoughts. Language is an essential part of our thought process; and we think to the extent of our vocabulary. The more advanced a vocabulary, the more definite and well defined is our thinking. Thoughts are conceived in

relation to something. At the same time they have logical

forms. They can be categorical or hypothetical or disjunc-

tive or universal etc. Our day to day thinking is a mixture

of both contemplative and deliberative thinking. The type of

thinking that is involved in contemplation has often been

called theoretical, and the form involved in deliberation

called practical.[4]

This thinking man who is a part of the social whole

possess and keeps acquiring knowledge, this knowledge ena-

bles him to interact with others. But the question is, what

does knowledge mean? The meaning of knowledge emerges de-

pending upon the context in which the word is used. Knowl-

edge can mean "to know", for example "I know her". Knowl-

edge here is used in the sense of being acquainted with; we

have experienced someone or something in some way and can

relate our knowledge to it or her. Knowledge can be the

ability of knowing how; for example "I know how to change

the oil in my car" - this kind of knowledge aids in per-

formance of some kind of action. Or knowledge can also be

in the propositional sense - "I know that the sun will rise

tomorrow." Knowledge in this sense is used by scientists and

philosophers. As these people are all searching for knowl-

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4.   Edwards,P.; The Encyclopedia of Philosophy; London,
      Collier and Macmillan, 1967; p., 100

edge about the things they come into contact with, knowledge
for them is propositional. A proposition is a meaningful
sentence that makes a claim or says something about reality
and has the quality of being either true or false. There
are different types of propositions; (a) Internal sense
propositions - assertion of what we feel within us like - "I
feel pain"; (b) External sense proposition - proposition
about the external reality like- "The door is open"; and (c)
Moral proposition like - a statement of moral judgment.[5]

Knowledge is something typical to human beings and can
be distinguished from reflexes of the body to external
stimuli on instinctive behaviour. Only those creatures
that learn and modify reflexes by experience can be said to
be guided by knowledge. Knowledge has a unique feature, that
is, it can be communicated. A rat can learn by trial and
error to escape a maze, but this cannot be termed as knowl-
edge - as the rat cannot possibly transmit its knowledge to
any other rat. Man on the other hand can communicate the
knowledge he acquires. Man thus learns not only from his
own experience but from the collective experience. Man's
knowledge is also cumulative. He builds on the knowledge
already accumulated over the years (there is no need to

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5. Thiroux, P.J; Philosophy, Theory and Practice; New
   York, Macmillan, 1985; pp., 458-461.

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reinvent the wheel). At the same time human knowledge is also incomplete and falsifiable. Thus, our knowledge in the twentieth century corresponds better to the external world than in the seventeenth century.[6]

Some thinkers emphasise on the usefulness of knowledge. "Knowledge must be communicable and in the sense public and useful... capable of being translated into successful action."[7] However it is not possible that all knowledge is immediately useful. What looks useless today may prove otherwise in the future. For example it took two thousand years to find a practical use for the great discoveries of the properties of harmonic services, i.e., in the development of probability theory as applied by insurance.

The knowledge that we have, comes from various sources. We gain knowledge via our senses of both the external world and our internal being. Reason is another source of knowledge. We need reason to make a rational judgment, or use reasoning to arrive at more than just raw sense experience. Intuition provides knowledge too. An intuition can be a hunch, wild guess, insight or a higher form of reason. Intuition is immediate perception of knowledge. Even with-

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6. Childe, V.G: <u>Society and Knowledge</u> London, George Allen & Unwin Ltd. 1956; Chapter 1

7. ibid p., 4.

out personal experience one can acquire knowledge of the world. This is aquried from authorities in fields like history, anthropology, archaeology, the arts and sciences. Revelation, in the case of religions, is considered an important sources of knowledge. Closely linked with revolution is faith as a source of knowledge about God and the super- natural. Lastly, tradition and common sense form important sources of knowledge. Much of what we know has been taught to us through various cultural and social traditions and institutions. Even our laws, morality, sciences and social sciences can be traced to these sources. Common sense means the knowledge that is held in common by humans of a particular society. Tradition is knowledge that is passed down generations.

Sense experience and reasoning are the most reliable sources of knowledge. One can apply to them certain standards of reliability and verifiability. Though there is a possibility of error, for example, there might be an optical illusion bringing about perceptual errors. Internal sense experience can be accurate but not reliable, as it cannot be verified by any external standards.[8]

Thus knowledge can be acquired from various sources, leading to different kinds of knowledge. The rigorously

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8. op.cit; Thiroux.

systematized knowledge is called theory. However here too there are several areas of contentions. One is, related to what are the requirements before one can say "I know that". Some would hold the following:

(i) Objective requirement - for a proposition to be true it really must be true eg: "I know that the Earth is flat."

(ii) The subjective requirement - i.e., I must believe that it is true.

(iii)The evidence requirement - there must be evidence or proof of the truth of the acquired knowledge. This is the most difficult requirement to satisfy.

While some others like the interpretative theorists hold that given the nature of human beings, such stringent requirements cannot be met. This can only be possible in natural sciences and not in the social sciences.

As already discussed that man is a thinking being, and possesses and acquires knowledge that makes possible his social existance. Even the things perceived in everyday life "is more than a simple sense presentation. It is a thought object, a construct of a highly complicated nature, involving not only particular forms of time successions in

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order to constitute it as an object of one single sense; say of sight, and of space ralations in order to constitute it as a sense-object of several senses, say of sight and touch, but also a contribution of imagination of hypothetical sense presentations in order to complete it".[9] Thus man does not only experience but contributes to that experience from the knowledge he has acquired by the virtue of being a part of society.

Knowledge is produced at the every day practical level, as well as at the theoretical level. At the every day level, man's knowledge can be termed as commonsense knowledge. Man is born into a world, that is given to him. He acts within it and also upon it. With or without adequate knowledge he may also seek to change the world. This commonsense world is an area of social action within which people relate to one another and themselves. The commonsense forms the matrix of all social action. This knowledge is given to man historically and culturally. The world has existed before our birth, experienced and interpreted by others and our predecessors, as an organized world. How we look at this world depends upon the stock of previous experiences, both our own and those handed down to us. This

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9. Whitehead, A.N.; The Aims of Education; New York, 1929, Chapter 9 quoted in Schutz,A.; op.cit.; p.,1

"knowledge at hand" forms a reference for practices. At the same time the world is an inter-subjective world. It is "inter subjective because we live in it as men among other men, bound to them through common influence and work, understanding others and being understood by them."[10] Therefore a great part of the knowledge human beings have is socially derived. This knowledge makes it possible for man to come to terms with the social whole. The knowledge is shared by people, but all individuals need not possess the same level of knowledge. There can be varied degrees of clarity, precision, familiarity and distinctness of knowledge which accordingly influences practice. It is not always that the commonsense knowledge can be adequate or right. It is here that theory comes in.

Thus human beings donot just act, but act reflexsively, to do so they must possess knowledge. Knowledge of a situation is integral to their being. Social theory is also about the organisation of social relations and practices in everyday life however it is not as closely interwoven with the daily lives of human beings. Social theory as a corpus of knowledge is produced in a particular way and requires certain skills. Theoretical knowledge is born when people

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10. Schutz, A.; op.cit. pp., 1-15. Charles Taylor calls this as "Pre-theoretical understainding" in "Social Theory of Practice"

sit back and think about what is going on. May even try to suggest ways to change that reality. There is an agreement that theory is needed but the theoreticians disagree on how to do theory and what are the aims of theory. There are different methods and approaches of theorizing, and different methods perceive differentkind of a relationships between theory and the social reality. This will be examined later.

The term theory itself is full of ambiguities. It is sometimes used as a synonym for ideas, conjectures or speculations and in daily usage often contrasted with practice and facts. Sometimes theories are called as problem solving devices. From a simple definition of theory given in the Encyclopedia Britannica volume XXII as "a systematic account of some field of study, derived from a set of general propositions, called postulates or principles"; theory has been defined by Aristotle as more than just a method of looking at society. Theory according to him is pure knowledge as opposed to the practical. Plato calls theory as "contemplated truth." Just as Aristotle attempts to saperate theory from the practical, there are those who firmly believe that, "true knowledge, in order to orient actions must necessarily and firmly and uncompromisingly be

theoretical".[11]

Some thinkers define theory according to the issues theory is supposed to examine, like" the nature of laws and generalization, the interpretation of human agency and its differentiation from the objects of nature and the character of social constitution".[12] By this, social theorists are supposed to reflect on subjects like - what is out there in the universe? What are the functional properties of the world? What kind of analysis of these properties is possible and/or appropriate?

The word `theory' comes from the Greek Word "theoria" which has a religious origin. "Theoria is looking on at a sacred event. From this, due to a philosophical shift for looking into the universe for realisation of reality, theory became "contemplation of the cosmos". Thus theory came to be associated with the stable structure beyond the changing world. A contemplative life also was supposed to be a life incorporating the characteristics of a stable harmonious structure found or discovered in the cosmos. A contemplative or theoretical life was thus, from the times of the Greek thinkers, a life not swayed too much by history or change.

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11.   Pandeya, R.C & Bhatt, S.R(ed); Knowledge, Culture & Value Delhi, Motilal Banarsidass, 1976; p., 210.

12.   Giddens, A.& Turner,J.(ed); Social Theory Today"; Cambridge; Polity Press; 1987; p., 1.

This let theory flourish within a world of concepts and law governed structures.

Thus, the definitions of theory are very varied. However, what theory is very closely related to and used for, is; to either resolve problems, or to understand society or the patterns of regularities that occur, or what is there in the universe, or function as a hypothesis. Theory can merely be seen as a systematic acquiring of knowledge of a particular kind which requires a studied approach. Unlike any other form of acquiring knowledge, theorizing is thinking and cognition within a particular frame work. Theorizing therefore, involves a method.

A social theory is closely related to social practices, or is about them atleast. Moreover the knowledge expounded in a theory is not only for the sake of knowledge but for some use, even if it is increasing our understanding of society. So it is not misplaced if the `use of a theory' is incorporated in the very definition of theory. However, another perspective on this may be that, unless a theory is manifest in real practice, it cannot be called as use of a theory; even though hints of its use may be made in its definition.

There are a number of theories, which are influenced by the social context in which they emerge and compete to

understand the social reality: in what they consider, the best possible way. Each have a way of looking at the society and hence define theory accordingly even though they may all agree that theory is required. Therefore as stated in the begining of the chapter, that the relevance of social theory pertains to its relationship with commonsense knowledge(which is the basis of practice and intersubjective relationships); the remaining of the chapter will examine what positivistic interpretative and Marxist theories mean by theory and how they relate to commonsense knowledge.

II

POSITIVISTIC THEORY AND COMMONSENSE KNOWLEDGE

Theory, according to Karl Popper, is the intermediary stage between observation and experimentation. Theoretical terms have to be explained such that they can be observed in society and data can be collected about it. This is called operationalization. Thus a theory must aim to explain observable facts which are removed from values and subjectivity. The very definition of theory is derived from the positivist emphasis on the method used by natural sciences i.e. on testing and systematized experience rather than on undisciplined speculation. A theory is a hypothetical statement

that has to be validated by a set procedure of scientific operations like observations, measurement, predicting etc. Positivists hold that a theory can be constructed and truth arrived at from the outside of commonsense knowledge and power relations operating in society at the everyday level.

As the logical empiricist focus on certain regularities in society, which can be tested by observation, experimentation and validation, theory is simply a statement about the social reality, which then is subject to a definite methodology. For the positivist, method is far more important than the theory itself.

There are two positivism, one of the 19th and the other of the 20th century. But the common thread between the two is that science ought to replace metaphysics and theology. Infact, the name positivism is derived from the emphasis on the positive sciences - i.e on systematized experience and testing. The older positivism of Comte saw religion, metaphysics and science as the three stages of progression of human history. His work underlined the scientific principles and sought to reconstitute law, morality, politics and religion on a scientific basis. The other proponents of positivism were Herbert Spencer and Thomas Huxley.

The positivism of the 20th century was rechristened `logical positivism' and the movement was called "logical

empiricism". The emphasis here was on rationality as promoted by Leibniz, Hume and J.S. Mill. The modern version of positivism is almost synonymous with the Vienna circle (1920s) which had been established by Meritz Schlick, Rudolf Carnap, Otto Neurath, Herbert Feizel and other mathematicians and scientists.

This positivism perceives philosophy not as a repository of wisdom but as an activity, a way of analysing or theorizing about life. Russell has commented that the scientific method that is based on brute datum lays bare the "logical atoms" which were the bases of complex ideas. Infact, within the name `logical positivism' rests the form and matter of the philosophy itself, i.e. its method - logical analysis and its subject matter - which is positive science.

Some positivists emphasize on clarity as a goal of analysis. This was opposed by some who said clarity was not enough, infact mostly clarity is unattainable, since the question of human nature and destiny could not be subjected to exact treatment. Other positivists regard this as meaningless. Within positivism there has developed a `criterion of demarcation' that helps distinguish the meaningful from the meaningless statements. This criterion is Karl Popper's "verifiability theory of meaning". He later changed it to

`falsifiability theory'. That is, a statement holds good unless some evidence can be provided to show it to be false. This however, was not universally accepted by all positivists. There were several problems with it, one side wanted it to be liberal enough to allow the entry of all the science. And on the other side was the issue that introducing statements with theoretical terms would lead to problems in verifying as myths and ideologies would be readmitted.

Positivism basically emphasized on one method, laws and comprehensive theory for *Giestwissenschaft* and *Naturwissenschaft* [13]. With their inspiration from the natural sciences.

So positivism can broadly be divided into three major categories. The first is of Comte's formulation called `positive knowledge' i.e. based on observations, casual laws were to be derived. The second variant was the "logical empiricists" of the Vienna Circle. They stressed on verification of propositions. And finally, the third variant called the "standard view" of thinker like Carnap, Nagel and Karl Popper.[14] They believed that sciences attempt at expla-

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13. *Giestwissenschaft* has been translated variously as "humanities", "Sciences of man", "Social Sciences" etc. *Naturwissenschaft* means science of nature, or physical sciences.

14. Outhwaite, W.; "New Philosophies of Social Science"; London, Macmillan, 1987; p., 5.

nations, which are in the form of laws, analysed as a universal generalizations -

> "To give a causal explanation of an event means to deduce a statement which describes it, using as premises of the deduction one or more universal laws, together with certain singular statements, the initial conditions.[15]"

The positivist philosophy makes two basic points: (i) that objective knowledge is possible and only a verifiable statement can be called true knowledge and ; (ii) there is a standard method by which theories about the social reality can be constructed and, hence, there is a dichotomy between theory and practice.

Karl Popper held that science is essentially critical and evolutionary and employs a deductive method to produce theories, which then could be empirically tested - i.e. they must be potentially and empirically falsifiable. The more open to falsification a statement is, the more scientific it is. As no knowledge is absolute, a statement would hold good only till some evidence is produced that proves it to be otherwise. Thus knowledge is always provisional. Popper had aimed at drawing a distinction between values in general

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15. Popper, K. ; "The Logic of Scientific Discovery"; London, Hertchson, 1959; p., 52.

and values of scientific enquiry in particular. The aim of science he held was to search, objectively, true casual explanations. He held that the concept of truth had been undermined by relativistic ideologies. Social sciences Popper held, must conform to methodological prescriptions as the natural sciences do, and there must be an application of `situational logic' to achieve objective understanding. Popper included in "situations" subjective elements like wishes, motives, memories and associations. He held that history had no intrinsic meaning, but it could be given a meaning through conscious decision.[16] He was against inductive generalization and historicism to establish a law of historical progression, this became the basis of his critique of Marxist methodology.

Thus what emerges is an instrumentalist view of social theory that relies on empirical testing. The methodology was closely grounded on natural science methodology that was disassociated from the subject of study i.e. practice. Further there is a deep distrust for commonsense knowledge. At all stages positivists seek to eliminate values and make their language scintific.

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16. Popper, K.; Open Society and its Enemies; London, Routledge and Kegan, 1966.)

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INTERPRETATIVE THEORY AND COMMONSENSE KNOWLEDGE

Within the hermeneutic school, theory is defined as a means of "finding a more satisfactory fundamental description of what is happening - what is really going on."[17] Theory is not meant to be merely a search for regularities but, it is to go deeper then just a superficial perception. Since man's commonsense descriptions are not adequate, and can be misguided, often illusory such that they fail to explain the situation effectively. A theory can thus, replace, challenge or extend our commonsense understanding.

All the members of a society have a pretheoretical understanding of what is going on in society, which is "formulated in the description of the `self' and the `other', which are involved in the institutions and practices of that society".[18] These self understandings make possible the practices. These pre-theoretical understandings are grounded in practices and do not rely on theory. Thus, a social theory arises when we attempt to clearly formulate what we

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17. Taylor, C.; <u>Social Theory as Practice</u>; Delhi, OUP; 1983; p.,2.

18. ibid p., 3.

are doing, "describe the activity which is central to a practice, and articulate the norms which are essential to it".[19] Therefore the focus is on intention and meanings of actors and their actions. Theory must seek to make the pre-theoretical understanding, which is composite of social reality, clear. Theorizing is attempted when our implicit understanding is in some way crucially inadequate or even wrong, thus theory challenges and criticizes the self-understanding as well. Therefore, theory is closely related to practice, and the method of theorizing is based on understanding of what is happening in the society.

At this point giving Habermas's critique of Positivism would be the best way to highlight the points of differences between hermeneutical and positivistic thought and bring out the fundamental points of hermeneutics as well. Habermas upheld -

(i) The hermeneutic unity of theory and social reality i.e. practice. He rejected the analytical distinction sought by the positivists and said that the social reality could be grasped only through a circle of understand-

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19. ibid p., 4.

ing.[20]

(ii) That theory should be constructed in the context of the actor's prior experiences and pre-understandings of a social totality and then checked by the theorist, against his own experience in a dialectical manner.

(iii)That the subjective ideas and interpretations depended upon the connection that the people had with the `Objective real' i.e. the social situation. Social understanding had to be understood and criticized.

(iv) A critique of dualism between fact and technical methodological decisions. This dualism Habermas believed blurred the real difference between the technical and political questions. Therefore, the motive of social sciences should be to solve the problems of social reality itself, rather than decisions about implementation from above or manipulative corrections.[21]

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20. The circle of understanding or the hermeneutic circle as explain by Taylor- "The situation we have here is one in which the vocabulary of a given social dimension is grounded in the shape of social practice in this dimension; that is, the vocabulary would not make sense, would not be applied seriously, where the range of practices did not prevail. And yet this range of practices could not exist without the prevailence of this or some related vocabulary... The language is constitutive of reality, is essential to its being the kind of reality it is" - Taylor C.; "Philosophical papers I" ; Gibbons M.T.; "Interpreting Politics ; Oxford, Basil Blackwell, 1987;p.,2.

21. Lloyd C. (ed.); "Social Theory and Political Practice; Oxford, Clarendon Press, 1983;pp.,14-16

The primary tradition of contemporary hermeneutics has been biblical hermeneutics. Later thinkers like Schleiermacher, Dilthey and Heideggar enlarged its scope. The other major influences have been that of Charles Taylor, Paul Ricoeur and Hans-George Gadamer. These thinkers emphasized that an interpretative approach was essential for the study of social reality. They stated that the process of study cannot be divorced from the social reality it studies because, man is a linguistic animal and determines social reality as much as he is determined by it.

In the 20th Century hermeneutics developed further as a reaction against the intellectual imperialism of positivism and a type of scienticism that claimed the predominance of natural science's model to provide genuine knowledge; this effort was chiefly spear-headed by Dilthey. It was only with the influence of the phenomenological movement that hermeneutics moved to the centre of the continental philosophy. hermeneutics started being seen as a discipline concerned with the question - what human beings are? The humans who understand and interpret the world, and it was this understanding that underlay all human activities.'

A major development in hermeneutics came with disjunction between meaning and understanding and the psychological states of the mind. "Meaning and understanding are not

psychological processes, discrete events of states of mind, they are essentially linguistic"[22] Furthermore it was believed that meanings are not self contained - i.e. simply "there" to be discovered.

From the above view it emerges that, if the meaning of a work of art or text is affected or conditioned by the understanding of its meaning, then there is no "objective meaning" that is there in the work of art. Gadamer provided an argument against such criticism, in his defence of prejudice against enlightenments "prejudice against prejudice". He held that "prejudices are not necessarily unjustified and erroneous, so that they invariably distort the truth. In fact in the historicity of our existence entails that prejudices, in the literal directedness of our whole ability to experience. Prejudices are basis of our openness to this world"[23]. Gadamer says that understanding involves prejudice because there is no knowledge without preconceptions, and prejudices. Therefore, it becomes important to test them critically in the course of enquiry. Gadamer has distin-

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22. Gadamer, H. G; "Philosophical Hermeneutics"; Berkeley, University of California, 1976; pp., 175-179. Ricoure, P. in "Hermeneutics and Human Sciences" and Geertz, C. in "From the Native's Point" express similar views. (essays in Rabinow, Paul, and Sullivan (ed); "Interpretative Social Science, A Reader"; Los Angeles, University of California, 1979.

23. ibid p., 9

guished between blind prejudice and `enabling' prejudice. It is in and through the encounter with works of art, texts, and more generally what is handed down to us through our traditions that we discover which of our prejudices are blind and which are enabling. Gadamer further says that only through a "dialogical" encounter with, what is alien to us or, makes claims upon us, or has an affirmity with what we are, that we can make ourselves open to risking and testing our prejudices. To risk and test prejudices, Gadamer says, is our constant task.

Charles Taylor also defends the importance of the hermeneutic circle. When discussing the inevitability of the hermeneutic component to the sciences of man. However he states and defends against the typical objection to the hermeneutical circle - that it is really a "vicious circle", for validation of interpretations are made by appealing to other interpretation of the "parts" leading to getting trapped within the circle. This aspect will be dealt in greater detail in the second chapter.

It appears that the hermeneutic circle focuses exclusively on the relationship of the part and the whole in the text or the phenomena, with no reference to the interpreter, i.e. the individual who is engaged in the process of understanding and questioning. Further, there is no way of

achieving a determinate method to interpret. However, there are certain norms. For example in order to be authentic the inquiring gaze must focus on the thing itself and the manner of focus must be to grasp the person as such. There is need for fore-sight, fore-conception, and pre-judgment in all human understanding. Thus as Gadamer points out "authentic intention of understanding, is : in reading, a text, in wishing to understand it, and what we always expect is that it will inform us of something".[24] Thus, to conclude this point it can be said that receiving information with objective neutrality is not possible. It is only by baring ones prejudices that one can strip them of their "extreme character".

Thus keeping with the principles of hermeneutics, theorizing about social reality involves studying and being informed by it. So there is a fusion of theory, hermeneutics and praxis.

The major problem arose in hermeneutics, when there was a question of studying alien cultures. There was possibility of both linguistic and cultural prejudices entering the vision of a interpreter. It is here that Gadamer introduced

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24. Gadamer, H. G; "Problem of Historical Consciousness". p., 148. quoted in Bernstein R.; "Beyond Objectivisim and Relativism; Science, Hermeneutics and Praxis; Philadelphia, University of Pensylvania Press, 1983.

the concept of "fusion of horizons". The horizon is the range or vision that includes everything that can be seen from a particular vantage point.[25] This horizon is not limited but is fluid and changing. Thus when an interpreter seeks to understand a horizon other than his own, his own horizon first gets enlarged. This expansion of horizons, Gadamer holds, is a linguistic exercise. It is through this that our prejudices are tested and we come to learn about ourselves.

For Gadamer - "the hermeneutic phenomena is basically not a problem of method at all. It is not concerned with a method of understanding, by means of which texts are subjected to scientific investigation like all other objects of experience. It is not concerned primarily with amassing ratified knowledge which satisfies the methodological ideal of science - yet it is concerned, here too, with knowledge and truth".[26] The task is basically to elucidate the distinctive type of knowledge and truth that has been realized when one authentically understands.

Finally, the problem of application is central to hermeneutics. Gadamer, to explain this, refers to Aristo-

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25. Gadamer H. G; "Theory and Method" p., 269. (quoted in Bernstein R; "Beyond Objectivism and Relativism"

26. ibid p., (xi)

tle's analysis of `phronesis' - which is a form of reasoning

mediating between the universal and particular, without any

reference to method or technique. Gadamer holds that through

`phronesis' (which yields an ethical know how) both the

universal and the particular are determined - it involves a

"peculiar interlacing of being and knowledge, determination

through one's own becoming".[27] Similarly understanding is

not detached from the interpreter, but constitutive of his

or her own praxis. Thus understanding is a form of *phrone-*

sis.

At this point reference to the relationship between

theory and praxis becomes appropriate to explain the problem

of the "hermeneutic circle" and the possible escape from it.

Gadamer tries to relate ontological hermeneutics with the

tradition of practical philosophy, especially as it is

rooted in Aristotle's understanding of praxis and `phrone-*

sis'. Though Aristotle is not concerned with the interpreta-

tions of texts but Gadamer holds -

> "It is true that Aristotle is not concerned with
> the hermeneutical problem and certainly not with
> its historical dimensions, but with the right
> estimation of the role of that reason has to play
> in moral action. But precisely what is of interest
> to us here is that he is conceived with reason and

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27. Gadamer H.G; "Problem of Historical Consciousness". p.,
    107. quoted in Bernstein R; ibid;pp.,38-39

with knowledge, not detached from our being that is becoming, but determined by it and determination of it."[28]

Gadamer in his "Truth and Method points out that understanding, interpretation and application are not three distinct elements of hermeneutics. They are all related, as all the acts of understanding involve interpretation, and all acts of interpretation involve application. Thus it is evident that commonense plays an important part in the construction of knowledge and therefore hermeneutics attempts to understand and interpret the social reality.

IV

MARXIST THEORY AND COMMONSENSE KNOWLEDGE

The Marxists define theory as a "system of generalized authentic knowledge which gives an integral picture of the regularities and the essentialities of reality".[29] Theory here is a mental process of reflecting on reality and thus the practice of theorizing is different from "practice". From this it emerges that there is an

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28.   ibid.   p.,   38.

29. Kering C.D; "Marxism, Communism and Western Society Vol. 8"; New York, Herder and Herder, 1973; p., 173.

emphasis on objectivity, which allows for the natural reali-
ty and partial reality of the social to exist independently,
i.e. seperate from the process of their cognition which is
theory. At the same time for Marxism "men never construct
their own knowledge from scratch. It stands before them
always as a given product, a social transmit".[30] Which they
must themselves produce and partially transform. Man never
creates knowledge but only changes it . What has to be
changed has to be acquired. What is acquired is an *ensemble*
of the theoretical and empirical ideas, so that knowledge
can never be analysed out as a function of individual sense
expereince".[31] By this understanding social theory, as a
science of society pre-exists any particular generation of
thinkers and a particular moment of consciousness i.e. the
scientific process of theorizing produces knowledge of the
social reality that exists independently.

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30. Toulmin; "Human Understanding Vol I; Oxford, Clarendon
    Press, 1973; p., 158. quoted in Bhaskar R.; "Realist
    Theories of Science"; Sussex , Harvester Press, 1978;
    p., 148.

31. ibid. p., 148

Thus Marxism emphasises on two points (a) scientifici-
ty and (b) historicity. Therefore, according to Marxism all
sciences including social sciences are products of histori-
cal circumstances. Knowledge may exist because of human
activitiy but " it is not irreducible to the acts of men.
For any cognitive act to be possible there must be a materi-
al cause; some knowledge established, given to us, already
produced. No sum of individual cognitive acts can produce
knowledge. Knowledge can not be analysed in terms of experi-
ence".[32]

However, Marxism also sees a link, as theory is aimed
at ultimately resolving problems placed before it. Based on
this, a relationship between theory and practice developed
in Marxism. Marxism is also seen as a theory of emancipa-
tion. As such it is the expression of a subject, rather then
the knowledge of an object; it is "the theoretical expres-
sion of the revolutionary movement of the proletariat"[33]
This point has been further elaborated in chapter two. Any
theory, Marxist claim, is determined by historical condi-
tions in which they originate i.e. the level of production,
technology, experiment and science and the dominant social

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32. ibid p., 187.

33. Korsh K; "Marxism and Philosophy"; London, New Left,
     1923; p., 42. Korsh belonged to the Frankfurt School.

order and power structures, which may favour or hamper the creation of a theory. Accordingly Marxism holds that the liberal theories are a product of the capitalist classes, who aim at securing the means of production and capital in their own hands. Hence the liberal theories propagate a class divided society, are protective of private property and *laissez faire*. Thus there is no place for commonsense knowledge. Theory and correct practices are emancipatory.

V

CONCLUSION

To sum up, knowledge as possessed by individuals of the social reality makes possible the social relationships and practices. This knowledge keeps changing leading to changed practices. This knowledge has been termed as commonsense knowledge. Another kind of knowledge about the social reality is the theoretical knowledge. This chapter basically aims at establishing the two types of knowledge that have in common the factor of social reality. One kind of knowledge (i.e. commonsense) is indispensable for the very practices in society. Theory's relationship with this

knowledge and reality form the basis for discussion on the relevance of social theory itself.

From the illustrations of positivism, hermeneutics and Marxism, both positivism and Marxism have no regard for the commonsense knowledge. This however does not mean they are unrelated to the social relality.[34] Interpretative theory attempts to understand the role of commonsense knowledge in influencing practices. Infact in the attempt to move away from the scienticism, Gadamer had tried to reinstate 'prejudice'. The interpretative theory does not subscribe to the barrier between reality and theoretical method. Therefore it attemtps to understand this commonsense knowledge and challenge it or extend it. In this ability lies a relevance of social theory.

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34. This nature of the relationship will be seen in the next chapter.

CHAPTER II

RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN THEORY AND PRACTICE

Relevance of social theory has two aspects - one is the relevance that emerges when a theory understands, explains or challanges commonsense knowledge. The second is in the relationship between theory and practice which will be examined in this chapter. As was seen in chapter one, that theory is a kind of knowledge which seeks to examine the social reality. There already exists in society commonsense knowledge which makes possible the social reality and guides human relations and practices. The contention of this study is that for any other form of knowledge; here theory; to have relevance must relate to the commonsense knowledge by either making it clearer by understanding or explaining; by challenging it and offering alternative practices, or by changing the practices.

After examining how positivism, hermeneutics and Marxism relate to commonsense knowledge this chapter will see how these theoretical perspectives have handled the relationship between theory and practice. Infact, their methodological orientations is based largely on the kind of relationship they perceive between theory and practice.

Relationship between theory and practice have een con-
templated about from the classical times. Practice as such
refers to general activity or action. The word itself is of
Greek origin, meaning any kind of activity which a free man
is likely to perform. However, the true philosophical
history begins with Aristotle who said that, in the strict
sense, "*praxis*" (practice) must only be applied in human
beings, just like `theoria' and `poiesis'. This division was
based on the division of knowledge into three parts i.e.,
theoretical, practical, and political. The goal of theoret-
ical knowledge is truth, political knowledge is to produce
something and the purpose of practical knowledge is action
itself. Further practical knowledge was divided into econom-
ics, ethics and poiesis. For Aristotle the relation between
theory and practice is one of opposition.

The dichotomy between theory and practice wasaccepted
by medieval philosophy. Hugh St. Victor used "practical" in
the sense of applied, ("Practicia Geometrira" where he was
distinguishing between theoretical and practical geometry),
this led to the popular use of praxis for the application of
any theory. Bacon introduced the notion that knowledge
brings `fruits in praxis'. Thus, relating practical knowl-
edge to applied knowledge which was useful for life. Thus,

three types of divisions are possible - `purely practical',
`purely theoretical' and those that attempt to achieve
possible usefulness for praxis from the theoretical study of
their object.

With the writings of Kant there came about the modifi-
cation - (i) praxis was seen as an application of a theory,
and (ii) praxis as the ethically relevant behavior of man.
Kant in "Critique of Pure Reason" distinguished between
`theoretical cognition' and `practical cognition'. By the
former, one comes to know what is there and by the latter
(Kant says) we imagine what ought to be there. Kant di-
vides knowledge into three types practical, theoretical and
speculative, yet he believed that in the last analysis,
reason is the common thread. Kant gives primacy to practi-
cal knowledge or reason over the theoretical, and in practi-
cal knowledge `morality' is the "absolute practical". Sever-
al thinkers since have attempted to resolve the question of
the relationship. Schelling tried to find a higher third
member, which would neither be theoretical or practical, but
be both at the same time. Hegel who differentiated between
theory and practice and placed practice over theory, yet he
like Schelling thought that their unity was possible at a
third higher level. Hegel however refused to divide philos-
ophy into merely the theoretical and the practical, for him

philosophy could be divided into logic, philosophy of nature and philosophy of the spirit; and in each the dichotomy between theory and practice emerged. That is, the dichotomy existed in pure thought (Logic, nature (organic life) and in human reality (the finite spirit). As applied to man praxis was higher than theory but neither of them was `true'. The truth of theory and praxis was freedom, which Hegel believed could not be achieved at the individual level but only in the collective i.e., in the sphere of `objective spirit' and finally be known, as the absolute spirit, through art, religion and philosophy.

Even in contemporary western Philosophy this debate remains, as between the positivistic and the interpretative theories. Special emphasis in this chapter will be on the interpretative theory and the writings of Sir Charles Taylor. This will be contrasted with the Marxist and positivist perspective to bring out the different between theory of practice and theory as practice.

I

POSITIVISTIC THEORY AND PRACTICE

The positivist understanding of the relationship between theory and practice will be briefly dealt with have,

as much of the fundamental points have already been raised in Chapter One. As the positivists basically emphasized on methodological mononism, they have argued that the method used to study the natural world is also appropriate to study the social and political life. The ideal goal of empirical science is objective explanation through statistical correlation and causal laws, that can be empirically discovered. This is based on the assumption that there are regularities and units of data. For example, behavior during voting can exist independently of the method used to study it. Therefore a set method could used to study the social reality.

The positivist aim to replace vague and value laden everyday language by precise scientific language. Therefore, the emphasis is on operationalizing concepts, that is stating them in a way which can be empirically observed, and data collected. When it comes to validation of a theory, the positivist hold that a theory cannot be confirmed or refuted by experiment, they can only be judged by the extent to which empirically verifiable statement (laws) can be derived from them. Theories as defined by the positivists lead to three conclusions-

(i) That scientific theories are only a shorthand for the empirically observable.

(ii) That theoretical concepts relate to the observable social entities : and

(iii) Theory becomes an instrument.[1]

This instrumental approach seperates theory and practice. Theories are hypothetical propositions about society and are falsified or verified according to a method. Truth could be acquired objectively, from outside power relations and subjectivity.

II

HERMENEUTICAL THEORY AND PRACTICE

The proponents of the hermeneutic theory disagree with the above dichotomy between theory and practice. To understand a practice, interpretative theorists claim that one would have to understand the self-understanding of the practitioner, their intention and the meaning of the act. Charles Taylor has been a prominent supporter of this theory. Starting with explaining the relationship of language to practice, (and hence theory to practice) Taylor explains why interpretation is the only way one can study social

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1.   Gibbons M.T.; op.cit; p., 91

reality. He is highly critical of the empiricists on several accounts. He points at the impossibility of their trying to replicate natural science methods into the study social sciences.

Taylor is against methodological monoism. The object of study of social sciences is different from that of natural sciences. Nature shows repetitive patterns, which are more difficult to find in human society. Human practices do not have the same behavioral patterns like the objects of the material world. Human beings are linguistic animals; they use language to constantly interpret their surroundings. So in the social sciences the object of study is a man who is constantly defining his own actions, guided by intentions, motives, emotions and prejudices. As human actions are replete with meaning, the hermeneutic theorists hold interpretation to be the most suitable method to study human practices. Interpretation means making clear, coherent and unambiguous the meaning underlying every practice. However meaning itself must be distinguished from the expression of the meaning in practice, i.e., the difference between the sense made and the embodiment of the sense. The some meaning can be embodied in more than one substance. For example in voting; individuals who vote, are aware of what makes up this practice, what is a valid vote, and how through voting

an individual decision is converted into a collective decision, however this meaning can be embodied in different manifestations - like voting by raising a hand or by casting a ballot.

Meaning and its interpretation are vital as they are also important for the subject. It is the people themselves who give the practice meaning. So hermeneutics must understand and interpret these meanings. These meanings are not single unrelated events. A meaning emerges when associating or contrasting it with some other meanings. Meanings exists in a field. Attributing meanings to practices is done by all humans in a society. So, meanings of social actions and texts in large parts are in terms of the self understanding of the agent. The interpretative theory aims at uncovering the internal coherence between, intentions, actions and practices. Thus interpretative theory is a theory of practice in society.

But. man at the same time is also a linguistic creature, so language is "used to describe them (i.e., practices), evolve them and carry them out."[2] So the language is indicative of a set of practices and would not make sense if the practices did not exist. Similarly the range of practices would not exists without the related vocabulary.

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2.   Taylor C.; op.cit; p.,24.

Thus language is constitutive of reality and is essential to its being the kind of reality it is. Therefore to unravel the inherent meanings in practices, one would have to understand the use of language by that group of people. It would be necessary to recognize the problem in the same way as the agents do. Charles Taylor here points towards a dual problem. One, if you should stand outside this language and meaning paradigm you cannot understand or interpret the practice in all its dimension. And two, if you step totally within the paradigm a subjectivity develops. Taylor calls this interpretative problem the "hermeneutic circle." He explains this circle in terms of a part and whole relationship. Taylor says that we get trapped within the hermeneutic circle because at all instances we end up trying to interpret the entire text. This happens because even if we attempt at interpreting a particular expression, we have to actually read the whole text, as we are dealing with meanings and expressions, which only make sense (or do not) in relation to other meanings.

The Rationalists had tried to break out of this circle. Their efforts had culminated in the writings of Hegel whose desire for clarity had led to undeniable certainty. The Empiricists have also, tried to get beyond subjectivity and the `circle' of the agent's own interpretation. They have

attempted to reconstruct knowledge, such that there is "no need to make an appeal to readings or judgments which cannot be checked further."[3] Where the basis unit of knowledge is brute datum which is based on observation and not interpretation. Verification was grounded in data, the validity of which could not be founded or undermined by further reasoning.

Taylor is clearly against this kind of answer to the problem of subjectivity entering interpretation. The explanation had to go beyond theories based on subjective explanations and/or empirically identifiable behaviour. He lays stress on the self defining capabilities of human beings. It was because of this, that what we interpret is itself an interpretation. He objected to the empiricists claim of having differentiated between the logic of verification and the process of discovery; because, in verification itself statistical correlations and causal laws are difficult to establish, for example in the reasoning out, why rioting took place. It could have been because the people wanted to get a hearing, or redress grievances or humiliation or were in a fit of blind rage. Taylor has further pointed out that

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3. ibid p.,19.

even while formulating a questionnaire in an empirical excercise interpretative accumen is required.

Taylor has also attempted to save the interpretative approach from pure subjectivity. Though it maybe true that it is only through language that people relate to their surroundings, yet there are certain beliefs and attitudes that a group of people can have in common. This convergence of meaning gives rise to a common language. Further meanings are rooted in social practices which people shape, these are the base of inter-subjective meanings. These inter subjective meanings are different from convergent meanings because they have to be shared at all times unlike the latter which can be held collectively or individually. Taylor has also identified common meanings which may not be first shared but are still a part of the common reference world. The common meanings, are the basis of a community and the inter subjective meanings are what gives the people a common language to talk about social reality and a common understanding. Taylor holds that "Interpretative social science requires that we master the agent's self-description in order to identify or explain, but it in no means requires us to couch explanations in the same language.[4] He advocates to

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4.   ibid p., 30

go beyond this. This trend in Charles Taylor has led his philosophy in being categorized in the Expressivist tradition. The expressivist interpretation recognizes a constitutive dimension to the relation between language, action and theory. Taylor sees language as more than a mere instrument, to describe the world, but, since, language belongs to a community it expresses the relation between the self and the society as well. This leads to a second conclusion, i.e., interpretative theory can be seen as - social theory in practice also.

Taylor has also examined the issue of subjectivity which arise when studying other cultures different from ones own. Because, it is difficult to enter another's world totally, the studies about other cultures are bound to include the researchers own world views. This kind of a study is ethnocentric, which can also be a problem to the interpretative theorists. In the essay "Understanding and Ethno- centricity", Taylor holds that, while one can challenge another culture's language of self understanding, the language that gets used in our study is not `ours' or `theirs' but what Taylor calls a language of `perspicuous contrast'. This is a language that enables one to formulate both `their' way of life and `ours', as alternative probabilities in relation to some human contances at work in

both. This language of contrast has a capacity to show `their's ', `our's' or `both' the languages of understanding to be inadequate. This Taylor points out could cause an alteration in our self-understanding. Taylor's notion of "perspicuous contrast" is closely connected with Gadamer's concept of "fusion of horizons", (as explained before), which states that our horizons enlarge as we study another culture leading to a broader understanding of our `own' and the "other's " culture. Thus here the notion of a `circle' is replace by a `spiral', which keeps spiraling outwards. Taylor gives the example of Montesquieu, whose study "Monarchy and Republic" used a language of contrast.

In constantly defending a method for theorizing about social reality, against objectivism and empiricism, Taylor shows how important it is to understand the process of interpreting and explaining social reality. This is due to the relationship between theory and practice.

This relationship becomes more acute when Taylor seeks to explain the validity of a theory. As there is no dichotomy between theory and practice, it is in `practice' that social theory can be tested. As theory can alter our self-descriptions which are constitutive of our practices, the quality of practices that they inform are its test for its validity.

Taylor holds that self-descriptions serve more than a descriptive purpose, we may formulate self-understandings to inform a practice, stabilize it, reform it or purify it. He says that it is the need of modern times to subject these self-descriptions to an objective rigours and theorize. Many a theories though vulgarized have been incorporated into our practices. The people believe these to be correct theories. He gives examples of the way atomist and Marxian theories, however simplified, have attained general currency. Taylor identifies a few reasons as to why there is this trend towards theorizing. Firstly, there has always been a prestige attached to science in our lives. Further, by objectifying the social world through science one acquires a sense of control and ability to cope with the real life situations. Secondly, the rise of political economy as a specialized area and, thirdly, the realisation that the "mechanism's of social interaction" are not always clear. Only research can expose the underlying pattern. Thus via theory people can attain a clearer picture of what society involves. Theories define a common understanding and hence sustain or reform practices. At the individual level theories help to orient to the surrounding world. Taylor uses the term "self-defining" uses, for the above uses of theory. This self-definition is also the definition of norms or

values that in each practice form the "essential abling condition".[5] Taylor gives the example of democratic republics which identify norms of shared goods which then constitute and inform practices.

Taylor preempts the question that, it is true that theory can do all the above but what does it have to do with the validity of the theory itself? A theory may find support because it is partial to practices that are advantageous to a group of people. Thus the self defining use of theory can become ideologically in the pejorative sense.

Taylor presents his thesis in this regard, in two related proportions-

(1) There is such a thing as validating a social theory in its self-defining use, as well as establishing it as explanation or description.

(2) Validating a theory as self-description is in an important sense primary because understanding what is involved in such validation will frequently be essential to confirming a theory, even as an adequate description/explanation.

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5.   ibid p., 18.

To explain -

(1) Taylor holds that theories as self-definition cannot just be seen as reflection of self-interest. They indicate to the good or norm that make up a practice. Taylor gives the example of Rousseau's republican theory, where a certain principle of shared goods inform the practices. Accepting a theory will define how one responds to the state structures. If a theory mis-identifies norms, a practice grounded in it is bound to fail. Thus a theory in this case can be tested in practices. Therefore, in any debate where the Republicantheory is being criticised it can be done on the grounds that the concept of shared goods in the General Will is simplistic and practices based on this are bound to fail and instead of freedom the result will be a despotic rule.

Since theory as Taylor claims, can alter practices it is in thisthat a theory's test of validity lies. To make a practice clear, however, does not necessarily mean bringing about a change if need be for example, the Marxist theory shows how the capitalist enterprises are in vain and not beneficial for the majority. Their prescription which involves revolution to successfully abandon the "self-de-

feating enterprise" may not materialise. It is one thing making practices clairvoyant but another to change them.

(2) In the second proposition Taylor holds that for some theories understanding what is involved in validating a theory as self-description becomes essential to their confirmation. For there can be cases where historical precedence is not available or sufficient. For example, radical social theories claim that their theories have never been successfully applied so the real test is yet to come. This type of argument gives birth to a number of debates of how to interpret historical records. Conservatives would have us believe that as these social theories like the anarchist theories, which have never been realised in self-defining use are as such self-defeated. The radical's answer to this is, that the external conditions have never been suitable. Again in discussing bourgeois democracies, some hold that seeing the problems accompanying this form, the failures of this theory are apparent. Supporters believe that inspite of conditions not being favourable democracies have flourished and more countries have adopted it.

Taylor does not try to show which theory is wrong or right, he merely wants to establish how a wrong theory can render a practice self-defeating. He holds that the test of a theory is in the practice, means not just how a theory describes a practice but how the practice fares when informed by a theory. In other words "the extent the social action has been informed by self-understanding this will figure in any valid explanatory account, together with an assessment of the way and degree to which this understanding facilities or impeded the action."[6] Taylor holds that one has "to understand what it is to validate a theory in self-definition in order to glean from the historical records some defensible view of the theory's future prospect."[7]

III

MARXIST THEORY AND PRACTICE

For Marxism, praxis is the true goal of philosophy and, revolution is the true praxis, Karl Marx said that "It is a psychological law that the theoretical mind, having become free in itself, turns into practical energy, and

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6.   ibid p., 26.

7.   ibid p., 22.

emerging as well from the shadow world of Amenthes turns against the worldly reality which exists without it."[8] In the "Economic and Philosophical Manuscripts" Marx sometime refers to theory as a form of practice. But this reaffirms the contradiction between theory and practice and the primacy given to practice.

Earlier Karl Marx thought of criticism as practice, because, he thought that social reality would change for the better of its own accord, as soon as it had become conscious of it perversity. So he held that "the practice [praxis] of philosophy, however itself is theoretical. It is criticism which measures individual existence against essence, particular actuality against the Idea."[9] However he soon realised that this was unrealistic. By 1843, Marx started writing that criticism should terminate in another kind of practice, namely revolution i.e., philosophical criticism would turn into revolution as soon as it become the consciousness of a human group whose subjective needs could not be satisfied within the existing frame work of the existing order of the society. After this, for Marx the focus shifted from philosophical critique, to a critical reflection on

8.   Kering C.D., op.cit p., 167.

9.   Eastion L.D & Guddat K.H(ed): "Writings of Young Marx & Phllosophy & Society"; New York, Garden City; p., 61.

human practices for example on labour which the capitalist economic system became alienated from itself. Thus labour is alienating while praxis is not. The revolutionary practices embrace human history in which man by his labour creates himself as the man he is.

Man by his labour changes the world. The whole of the social reality is a product of his practices. It is the practices according to Marx that constitute both man and his world of experiences. Practice is more important infact, all problems of philosophical theory are tasks which can ultimately be resolved only through practices. Marxism sees in theory (i.e. Marxist), an emancipatery role, by its ability to influence practice. Emancipation means the "transformation and replacement of unneeded, unwanted and oppressive sources of determination, or structure, by needed, wanted and empowering ones".[10] This emancipation is possible by practice, "emancipation ... depends upon the transformation of structures rather than just ammelioration of states of affairs. And it will, at least in the case of self-emancipation, depend in particular upon a conscious transformations in the transformative activity or Praxis of

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10. Roy B.: "Philosophy of Freedom; Oxford, Blackwell, 1991; p., 164.

social agents concerned."[11]

As man performs labour, this labour also transforms man. Man produces to satisfy needs. Marx insists that `history is nothing but the activity of men in pursuit of needs.'[12] From a specific type of production emerge specific property relations which determine the structure of the society and its ideological interpretation, thus a capitalist mode of production would engender certain property relations and ideological patterns to justify its continuation.

> "History is nothing but the succession of the
> seperate generations, each of which...., on the
> one hand continues the traditional activity in
> completely changed circumstances and, on the other
> hand, modifies old circumstances with completely
> changed activity."[13]

This reflection involves a threefold relation between theory a practice (a) Initially practice determines theory(b) Then practice can only resolve the problems of theory. Thus the Marxist criticism of ideology and socio-political theories is based on the fact that in practice lies their resolution i.e., in revolution. (c) The third

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11. ibid p., 76

12. Roy B. op.cit; p., 164

13. Marx, K. and Engels, F.;"German Ideology"; London, La wrance & Wishart, 1942; p., 59.

dimension that theories have arisen from practices and later become a part of practice itself. Marx's own theory acquires a special status in relation to practice; it informs the proletariat about the future and offers it the possibility of embarking on a revolutionary practice which is emancipatory. Herein practice would become free and lead to a conscious creation of the world which all men endorse.

With the 20th Century, the Neo-Marxist when dealing with the issue of theory and practice, focused on the theoretical concepts and assertions in practice. They also dealt with the relevance of practice to the verification of scientific statements. In the 1920s & 30s it was argued that the theoretical categories had their origin in practical modes of human behaviour.

As the Marxist philosophy started finding manifestation in practice, that is theory in practice, certain problems arose and concession where made. The emphasis was that, in practice alone the objective correctness of ideas could be proved and that the "practice" of man was once more understood to mean at one time action, and at another time result of an action. However many a political practitioneers like Lenin were not so concerned with the epistemological problem as with the political. Philosophical theories interested them so far as they served a political purpose.

Practices are purposive activities by which man and society alter reality, which is independent of consciousness. The purpose of praxis is to bring about a change. While theory is a system of generalized knowledge and explanation of that reality. Just as on one level practice had primacy and is the basis of the relation on the one hand it offers the possibility of justifying perfectly concrete decisions of domestic and foreign policies as the application of a single, unchanging scientific theory; on the other hand it also provided an opportunity of defending decisions not derived directly from theory as "concrete developments" in which the influence of practice upon theory cannot be ignored.

At another level of connection is the criterion for truth and falsifiablity of a theory. This can mean three things

(i) to establish the truth some kind of an experiment will have to be under taken.

(ii) or they must occasion a practice which will realize the claim of the theory and

(iii) to say practice is the criterion for truth is like other philosophical doctrines who state that self intentions or consistency are criterior for truth. In the Marxist philosophy. however it is not absolutely

clear in which sense validity it is being used, as seen
from the above discussion on the relationship of theory
and practice.[14]

IV

CONCLUSION

In this chapter the aim was to establish the relevance
of social theory by examining the relationship between
theory and practice. Social theory is related to practice
in various ways. Even if a theory has no place for the
commonsense knowledge it does not become irrelevant because
it does at some level link up with practice, whether looking
at practice as a object of study as the way to acquire
emancipation.

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14. Kering C.D.; op.cit; p., 178

CHAPTER III

"AGAINST THEORY"

Chapter one and two have dealt with the relevance of social theory, by relating it to commonsense knowledge and practice respectively. It was seen how social theory and theoretical methods allow for a particular kind of relationship to be established between theory and social reality (i.e. commonsense knowledge and practices). Taking the example of the three major streams of thought - positivism, hermeneutics and Marxism, the above areas were examined. The above exercise was carried out with reference to social reality and theoretical approaches.

This chapter deals with the very critique of theorizing. The discussion on the relevance of social theory would remain incomplete of no critique is made of the very process of theorizing and theory that has been taking place. Yet this critique does not grow from the outside, but from within the movement of thought that has been taking place so far. This discourse of against theory "may be seen as an inevitable dialectical moment within the theoritical discourse, the moment when theory's constructive positive

tendency generates its own negation"[1]

That is moments in the theoretical enterprise have themselves generated arguements that doubt the very foundations of theory, which attempt to provide a way of looking at society. The two arguements taken up in this chapter are those of Michel Foucault and Steven Knapp and Walter Benn Michaels, both the perpectives are critical of the hermeneutical approach. Foucault is first critical of the interpretative theory and then goes on to promote his "geneological perspective" which is a way of looking at social reality without being a theory. Knapp and Michaels attack the very foundations of the interpretative theory, and theory as a whole and state that "theoritical enterprise should therefore come to an end."[2]

I

MICHEL FOUCAULT'S GENEOLOGY

Just as the importance of interpretative method was being recognized, a fundamental criticism arose from the Nietzschean perspective. Foucault was not only against the

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1. Mitchell W.J.T; "Against Theory"; Chicago, University of Chicago Press, 1985; p., 2.

2. ibid; p.,30.

interpretative theory but also against the totalizing claim of any theory. Foucault's attack on hermeneutics is at two levels (i) the interpretative exercise of the theory and (ii) the very fact that it is attempting to provide an alternative to the positivistic theories. The major point which Foucault is critical of, is that the interpretative theory emphasises on language and meaning and attempts to reveal the truth of what it interprets. The proponents of the interpretative theory hold that language is the expression of the mode of being in the world. Language constitutes all social life and practices and is the means of knowing our surroundings. However it is not always transparent. So language has to be subjected to interpretation to reveal the contained meaning. As there are several levels of meaning, the meanings that gain importance for the expressivist are inter-subjective and common meanings. These meanings form the social matrix, which make available to the participants a way of life. For example common meaning in academic life concerns prohibition against plagiarism, associated with it are a whole lot of values, rules and practices. if plagiarism was to be dropped, then the academic world would change beyond recognition. "The common and inter-subjective meanings that help constitute a way of life and are required for a complete explanation become part of the foundation of

normative appraisal of social and political action, apprais-
al that is not characterized by emotivism."[3]

In "The Birth of The Clinic" Foucault criticizes the
hermeneutics of everydayness, (the type as seen before in
Taylor's arguments on meaning) for its misplaced emphasis on
the meanings which social practices have for the practition-
ers. It is not, Foucault believes that one fails to under-
stand the surface significance of what is being said or
done, but that one does not know the effect of what one is
saying or doing, or worse, one has a mistaken view of these
effects. Thus he claims that any hermeneutics of man's pre-
ontological understanding does not help in understanding
what is going on. This does not mean Foucault subscribes to
the hermeneutics of suspicion.[4] Foucault rejects the view
that participants do not have direct access to the meaning
of their own discourse and practices because their everyday
understanding of things is a motivated cover-up. This posi-
tion (hermeneutics of sucpicion) Foucault explains rests on
a mistaken methodological assumption that there is an essen-

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3. Ball T.; "Idioms of Enquiry"; New York, State Universi-
    ty of New York Press, 1987; p., 139.

4. Hermeneutics of suspicion insists that the self-
    understanding available to the political and social
    actors is fundamentally flawed. They actually mask the
    underlying reality. So the self-understanding has to
    be penetrated for the true meaning: (Gibbons M.T;
    op.cit.; p., 4.)

tial connection between everyday intelligiblity and a deeper

kind of intelligibility which the everyday view covers up.

Some surface behaviour he claims, can be understood as a

distortion of significance which the subject senses but is

motivated to disguise. He objects to hermeneutics of suspi-

cious because it is these secrets that are mistakenly sup-

posed to be the true and deepest meaning of the surface

behaviours. Since the hidden meaning is not really the final

truth about what is going on, finding it need not therefore,

lead to liberation but can infact lead away from the kind of

understanding that might have helped the participant resist

pervasive practices which tend to rigorously order society

leading to cultural distress.[5]

When Foucault developed his method of geneology his

critique shifted. From his geneological perspective Foucault

argued that "we should not think of knowledge simply as

reflecting or representing the world, that we should not

imagine that the world presents us with a legible face,

leaving us merely to decipher it, ... there is no predis-

curssive fate disposing the world in our favour. We must

conceive discourse as a violence that we do to things, or at

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5.   Dreyfus, H. L; "Beyond Hermeneutics: Interpretation in
     late Heidegger and Reecent Foucault." Gibbons T.M (ed.)
     Interpreting Politics"; op.cit.;   pp., 215-216.

all events a practice we impose upon them."[6] What explains

the success of any particular discourse of knowledge according to Foucault is its connection with the network of power.

Foucault holds that in all societies the power-knowledge complex functions to produce some forms of truth and disqualifies some. Thus his argument even negates the attempts of the positivists and Marxist to construct a theory separate from the power knowledge complex.

Foucault's geneology is opposed to the Enlightenment view of the relationship between power and knowledge. Enlightenment sees power and knowledge as antithetical, i.e., knowledge if influenced by power is to be considered suspect, tainted or compromised. Thus truth and knowledge are on one side and power and authority on the other. On the other hand Foucault argues that any development in a particular discourse of knowledge and truth makes possible a particular set of power relations. A certain set of power relations make certain discourses of truth possible. Foucault holds that thus, there is no discourse of truth possible outside the relations of power and vice-a-versa. "... in a society such as ours, but basically in any society there are many fold relations of power, which permeate, character-

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6. Foucault Michel; "The Archaeology of Knowledge" quoted in Gibbons M. T.; "Interpreting Politics"; op.cit.; p., 21.

ize and constitute the social body, and these relations of power cannot themselves be established, consolidated nor implemented without the production, accumulation, circulation, and functioning of a discourse. There can be no possible exercise of power without a certain economy of discourse of truth which operates through and are the basis of this association. We are subjected to the production of truth through power and we cannot exercise power except through the production of truth".[7]

For Foucault power and knowledge are not external to each other. They operate in history in a mutually generative fashion. Neither can be explained in term of the other, nor reduced to the other. "That power and knowledge directly imply one another; that there is no power relation without the corelative constitution of a field of knowledge, there is no knowledge that does not presuppose and constitute at the same time power relations. These power knowledge relations are to be analyzed, therefore, not on the basis of a subject of knowledge who is or who is not free in relation to the power system, but on the contrary, the subject who knows, the object to be known and the modalities of knowledge must be regarded as so many effects of these fundamen-

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7. Foucault M.; : "Discipline & Punish"; New York, Random House, 1977; p., 93.

tal implications of power knowledge and their historical transformations. In short it is not activity of the subject of knowledge that produces a corpus of knowledge, useful or resistant to power, but power knowledge, the processes and struggles that traverse it and of which it is made up, that determines the forms and possible domains of knowledge"[8]

This relation between power and knowledge is best explained in the "repressive hypothesis".[9] Attacking the notion of repression of sexuality Foucault says that " sex was taken charge of tracked down as it were, by a discourse that aimed to allow no obscurity, no respite ".[10] To control any existing deviations in a localized instance - the confessions in churches sought to pursue the effects of sex to their `slenderest ramification'. Even in the organization of the life of a school boy, his precocious sexuality was sought to be regulated by constant supervision of the inter-actions amongst students. "Around the school boy and his sex there was a proliferation of a whole literature of precepts, opinions, observations, medical advise, clinical cases,

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8.   ibid; pp., 27-28.

9.   Foucault M; "The History of Sexuality. Volume I: An Introduction; New York, Vintage Random House, 1980;chapter 1.

10.   ibid p., 20.

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outline for reform , and plans for ideal institutions".[11]

Thus opposed to the 'repressive hypothesis' concerning sex in the Victorian Era, Foucault indicate towards a proliferation of discourse concerned with sexuality. But more importantly " was the multiplication of discourse concerning sex in the field of excercise of power itself : an institutional incitement to speak about it... a determination on the part of the agencies of power to hear it spoken about, and to cause it to speak through explicit articulation and endlessly accumulated detail"[12] to control it.

Foucault states that the growth of any set of power knowledge relations is accompanied by subjugation of other discourses and knowledge. Both erudite and local knowledge get subjugated. Therefore, "... we are forced to produce the truth of power that our society demands we must speak the truth; we are constrained or condemned to confess or to discover the truth. Power never ceases its interrogation, its inquisition, its registrations of truth: institutionalizes and professionalizes and rewards its pursuit".[13]

Foucault introduces geneology as a method of diagnosing and grasping the real significance of social practices from

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11. ibid p., 28.

12. ibid p., 18.

13. Foucault M; Discine and Punish op.cit pp., 93-94.

within the nature of the power - knowledge relationship that exists. A geneologist is a diagnosticians who concentrates on the relations of power and knowledge, and the body of modern society. Geneology aims at record of the singularity of events outside of any monotonous finality. A geneologist has no fixed essence, no underlying laws, no metaphysical finalities. They seek discontinuities. The search is for surface events and small details. They observe reality from afar and thereby geneology discovers depth; for example as seen through out the 19th century sex was held to be the most profound key to the meaning of a vast range of practices. Thus the visibility increased. The geneologists attempts at destroying the primacy of origin, of unchanging truths. A geneologist hunts for strategies of advancement from one domination to another. The role of the human body in the power play is exposed by geneology. Power relations "have an immediate hold on it; they invest in it mark it, train it, torture it, force it to carry out tasks, to perform ceremonies, to emit signs".[14]

Geneologist are therefore "not positivistic returns to a more careful or exact form of science. They are precisely anti science .... We are concerned, rather with an insurrec-

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14. Foucault M.; "Discipline & Punish"; op.cit.; p., 25.

tion of knowledge that are opposed primarily not to the content, methods, of science but to the effects of the centralizing powers which are linked to the institutions and functioning of an organized scientific discourse within a society such as ours. It is really against the power of a discourse that is considered to be scientific that a geneologist must wage its struggle".[15]

Based on the relationship of power and knowledge and geneological method Foucault raises his second criticism against the interpretative theory. Foucault holds that in its debate with the positivist approach to the study of social life, interpretative theory attempts at replacing one system of thought by another i.e. interpretation. The interpretative theory claims to a more solid epistemological foundation than any other alternative eg. Gadamer offers an alternative to the understanding of understanding, a more accurate account of what is taking place in the act of gaining knowledge.

Geneology is critical of the iterpretative approach which tries to take account of the whole society, Foucault is against any such universalistic theory. Foucault holds that at the maximum it will be able to rearrange the disciplinary society i.e. the ordering of control in society.

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15. Ball T.; <u>op.cit</u> p., 144.

Further it leads to disqualification of a kind of knowledge in favour of some other. Interpretative theory attempts to focus on legitimacy, evaluation, citizenship and moral responsibility, but this is doomed to fail like other political discourses that have tried to rearrange social order. They cannot do so for Foucault says the very order of democratization of modern sovereignty is founded upon discilinary techniques.

Thus the claims of the interpretative theorists that they are able to make clear hidden and imperfectly understood dimensions of political life, " at best seem to mask or distort the most extensive forms of power in modernity; and at worst serve as the discourse itself that allows the infiltration of the discourse of sovereignty and government-ability by the discourse of normalization and discipline.[16]

Thus Foucault holds that any theory is very much a part of the power knowledge complex and cannot make any totalizing claims. He subscribes to geneology to study the social reality and the role that discourses and theories play in ordering of society. Geneology will "deploy the parodical, the farcical, reversals of meaning and strategic examplars to encourage the play of discordance between the self and

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16. ibid; p., 135.

the social identities that our discourses produce. It will

provide a multiplication of possibilities of the self that

reveal what is excluded, what is disqualified, what is

subjugated and what is compromised by our production of the

truth of ourselves that characterize modern thought and the

expressivist reaction to it."[17]

II

KNAPP AND MICHAELS - "AGAINST THEORY"

Steven Knapp and Walter Benn Michaels are against

theory by which they mean a "special project in literary

criticism : the attempt to govern interpretation of particu-

lar texts by appealing to an account of interpretation in

general."[18] Their critique of interpretative theory of the

text will be explained in this section and then will be

extended to criticise the interpretative method of under-

standing social reality, and doing any theory at all.

Knapp and Michaels make the object of their critique no

one particular way of doing theory but the idea of doing

theory at all. Their first arguement is based on unreality

of problems like the function of authorial intention, the

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17. Gibbons M. T.; op.cit.; p., 22.

18. Knapp S. and Michaels W. B.; "Against Theory"; quoted
    in Mitchell W. J. T.; op.cit. p., 11.

status of literary language, the role of interpretive assumptions, etc., that theories attempt of solve show the impossibility of solving. They give the example of the attempt to separate authorial intention and meaning of texts (refer to Taylor in chapter two). Those who do this claim that interpretation is possible by recovering either. Knapp and Michaels hold that if you see authorial intention and meaning of the text as identical, the "project of grounding meaning in intention becomes incoherent."[19] Therefore if projects like this are incoherent they cannot fail or succeed, but are simply irrelevant.

Their basic arguement against theory is based on the assertion that theoretical accounts always go wrong. The reason why they have taken the issue of belief and intention as the main focus of building up their arguement against theory is that intention and belief are "central to the theoretical enterprise; our discursion of them is thus directed not only against specific theoritical arguements but against theory in general. Our examples are meant to represent the central mechanism of all theoreticl arguements, and our treatment of them is meant to indicate that

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19. ibid., p., 12.

all such arguements will fail and fail in the same way."[20]

Knapp and Michaels do not see any distinction between meaning and intention. They hold that they are the same. Based on this they are critical of the formalist who want to do away with intention altogether. This is not possible as meaning and intention go together. Thus if there is no choice to be made than theory vanishes. Theories exist because they hold onto the difference.

Knapp and Michaels reach this conclusion by examining the works of E.D. Hirch. Jr.. Hirch defines the meaning of a text as -what the author means, his intentions. Interpretations of the text involves reconstructing the author's intended meaning. Then the search for meaning means looking for author's intention. What Knapp and Michaels object to is that Hirch "begins by defining textual meaning as the author's intended meaning and then suggests that the best way to find textual meaning is to look for authorial intentions. But if meaning and intended meaning are already the same, its hard to see how looking for one provides an objective method- or any sort of method-for looking for the other; looking for one is just as looking for the other".[21] Thus actually intention and meaning are the same. They further

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20. ibid p., 12.

21. ibid p., 13.

seek to establish that there cannot be any intentionless meaning. "There is no getting away from intentionality."[22] Seperating meaning and intention, is a mistake that makes theory possible, as theory then can choose between alternative interpretations.

The second argument posed by Knapp and Michael is based on language and speech act. They contend that like intention and meaning, language and speech act[23] cannot be separated. There is no possibility of words existing in `abstracto' and retaining meaning.[24] Knapp and Michaels hold that this is not possible, language cannot be imagined without speech act. It is only to make method and theory possible that intentionless meaning is deviced. However "intention cannot be added to or subtracted from meaning because meanings are always intentional: intention cannot be added to or substracted from language because language consists of speech acts, which are always intentional."[25]

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22. Searle, John; "Reiterating the Difference : A reply to Derrida." quoted in Mitchell W.J.T. (ed.); op.cit p.,15.

23. Speech act bring with them certain intentions that allow interpretors to clear up ambiguities intrinscic to language as such. ibid; p.,21.

24. Objecting to the argument of Juhl P.D.; Interpretations"; quoted in Mitchell W.J.T.; op.cit.; p., 19

25. ibid p., 24

The above argument was against the ontological basis
of theory- Knapp and Michaels also examine the epistemologi-
cal goals of theoritical methods, "the governance of inter-
pretative practice by some larger and more principle ac-
count."[26] Theory tries to interpret without the distortion
of the interpreter's beliefs. However some claim that as
escaping the interpreter's beliefs is impossible theory's
epistemological goal is unattainable. Knapp and Michaels
hold that this argument is meaningless. This is based on
the grounds that knowledge and true belief are inseprable.
"If one believes what one believes is true, and conversely,
one believes that what one doesn't believe is not true."[27]
Having a belief is being committed to what one believes as
true as untrue, which is also basis of knowledge. There-
fore, it is not via knowledge that we get true beliefs just
like one cannot assume to search for author's meaning by
looking for his intentions, for the same reasons i.e., just
like meaning and intention, knowledge and true beliefs are
the same. Therefore, knowing the truth about beliefs will
not help in acquiring true beliefs.

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26. ibid p., 25

27. Fish S.; "Is there a text in this class?: The authority
    of Interpretative communities; quoted in Mitchell
    W.J.T.; op.cit; p., 26

Knapp and Michael hold that the whole theoretical impulse is based on the desire "to seperate things that should not be seperated: on the ontological side, meaning from intention, language from speech act; on the epistemological side, knowledge from true belief." [28] This is not possible. Infact the seperation of theory from practice rests on the fact that "theory is nothing else but the attempt to escape practice ... it is the name for all the ways people have tried to stand outside practice in order to govern practice from without."[29]

If Knapp and Michaels's arguement, which claims about the impossibility of literary theory is extend to social theory, then their reason to claim that all theory should end will become clear. Just as meaning and authorial intentions are the same, meaning of the act and intention of the actor are the same. Thus if there are no choices between alternative interpretations, the meaninglessness of theory becomes obvious. Secondly by showing that knowledge and belief are the same Knapp and Michaels make the arguement about the debate on the fact value dichotomy, between the positivisit and the interpretative theorists seem baseless.

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28. ibid p., 29

29. ibid p., 30.

Knapp & Michaels hold that the exercise of creating a methodology removed from the views of the actors or by taking the actors account into consideration (like that done by the positivist & hermeneutical theorists respectively) will make no sense once the gap between the knowledge of the act and the belief of the actors are coalasced.

III

CONCLUSION

Both Michel Foucault's arguement and that of Steven Knapp and Walter Benn Michaels begins by criticizing the interpretative theory but by the end they take on the entire process of theorizing. If the existence of theory itself is being questioned, then to even examine its relevance is futile. However as pointed out at the begining of the chapter, that this kind of a negative dialectics can be considered as moments within the theorizing process. These arguments challange theory, and need to be answered by thesupporters of theory.

CONCLUSION

The aim of this dissertation has been to look into the question of the relevance of social theory. As the 'relevance' has to be for something, therefore the first chapter has dealt with how social theory is related to social reality and the commonsense knowledge that makes the reality possible with its practices and inter subject relationships. It is in reference to this that the relevance of social theory was sought to be established.

Knowledge as seen in the first chapter, is typical of man and is composite of his being social. This knowledge which man possesses allows for the complexities of society. Apart from this commonsense knowledge, theorizing about the social reality also produces knowledge. Any relevance of this kind of knowledge i.e. theoretical can be established as discussed in chapter one by its connection to the knowledge at the every day level, which makes practices possible. However, how this relationship between theory and social reality is perceived differs from one theory to another.

Even when theory has been defined, it is always in reference to the social reality. However, as seen there is more than one definition of theory. This is so because, within the definition of theory lies the understanding of

what theory is for, and this differs in various perspectives. Thus, there is also a varied relationship between theory and practice.

As is evident the underlying fact in Chapter one has been the relationship between theory and practice. In the second Chapter this point has been raised with reference to how different theories perceive this relationship. Each social theory relates to the social reality simply by the fact that they are about, and referring to the social reality. Each theory also lays down how theories should be validated whether by observation or experimentation or in practice.

However, to leave it at this without raising the question "for whom is social theory relevant?' would be leaving this study incomplete. Relevance can be for the people and also for the theoreticians. When seeing the relevance of theory in context of the common people, then we see that only those theories that effect people and their practices directly will have relevance. People as such also have certain ideals to which they relate and base their practices on. Theories that become closely connected to practices can get transformed into ideologies. Taking the example of Marxism, one can see that apart from studying social reality, it has also provided a method for changing the reality

into what it should be, Marxism as a philosophy influenced the formation of U.S.S.R. even though if there may have been deviations from the theory; the aberrations here however theory lapsed into an ideology while transforming into practice.

Ideology is one variant form of those comprehensive patterns of cognitive and moral beliefs about man, society and the universe in relation to man and society, which flourish in human society.[1] Ideology has been defined as the integrated assertions, theories and norms that constitute a socio-political programme. Thus the meaning embraces both normative and factual elements.

Ideology is different from systems and movements of thought. They differ from each other in their -

(i)   explicitness of formulation,

(ii) intended systemic integration and a particular moral or cognitive belief,

(iii) acknowledge affinity with other past and contemporary patterns,

(iv) closure to any novel elements of variation,

(v)   imperativeness in manifestations in conduct,

(vi) accompanying effects,

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1.   International Encyclopedia of Social Sciences;   London, Collier Macmillan, 1972;vol.5.

(vii) consensus demand from those who accept,

(viii) authoritativeness of promulgation,

(xi) associations with a corporate body intended to realize the pattern of belief.[2]

Based on the above ideologies are characterized by a high degree of explicitness of formulation and for their adherence to an authoritative promulgation. Ideologies are integrated around a few pre-evident beliefs and values, like for example, ethnic purity. They are insistant in their directendness and resist any innovations. There is complete subserviance to the ideology followed, thus a consensus is demanded of all those who follow, with no scope for variations.

Systems and movements of thought are more or less explicit and systematic intellectual patterns develop, in the course of intellectual collaboration and division of labour, for example in Hegelian idealism, existentialism, etc., They are elaborate and internally integrated however they do not insist on complete consenses from adherents of a particular ideology.

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2.   ibid. vol.5

An ideology contends more strenuously for a purer, fuller or ideal realization of a particular cognitive and moral value that exists in the society in which the ideology obtains currency. Ideologies insist on the realization of the ideal, through a total transformation of the society. Ideologies are responses to some particular element in the dominant outlook and are attempts to place the neglected element in a more central position. All ideologies whether progressive, traditional, revolutionary or reactionary entail an aggressive alienation from the existing society, they prescribe transformation of life according to specific principles.

Ideologies are always concerned with authority and therefore they cannot avoid being political, except in the extreme reaction formations of complete withdrawal from society. In the 19th Century most ideologies have been political and have subsumed everything whether art, religion sciences or economics.

The Marxist ideology is an example of an all embracing ideology that seeks to transform society, demanding total consensus from all its adherents. As an ideology it is extremely political and promotes revolutionary tactics.

Ideology is knowledge gathered and channelized in aparticular way. Ideologies refer to particular social systems or classes. Theories on the other hand are abstract, and general and consist of systematic statements about the uniformities of the process in the social system or attempt to understand human behaviour. However, as seen theory when it becomes an ideology, influences practices and has a direct link to the social reality.

Even philosophy has interested politicians like Lenin and Stalin as it forwarded their political actions. The Soviet State developed with certain intolerance towards deviations. Thus ideology influenced social practices and provided the principles for social change.

This however does not mean that only theories that support ideologies are relevant to the common man by influencing social practices. Certain theories justify and make possible the continuation of a particular kind of social relations and dominance patterns. The liberal theories of democracy which emphasise on liberty and individualism allow for the growth of private entrepreneurship and inequalities in social relations. At the same time it also makes possible the continuation of all democratic institutions by giving them credibility.

Theories are also relevant for the theoreticians and those who study social reality. For example (based on the interpretative theory), several studies on societies have been carried out to understand practices particular to them. Whether these studies are available to the people in that society is another matter altogether. Another example would be "The Interpretations of Cultures" by Clifferd Geertz which examines the cultural nuances of Bali to make clear the variations in cultural perceptions of any practice (for example) a form of gambling in Bali - cock fighting which is not considered socially adhorant as is like in the west. This study attempts to understand but not particularly effect or influence practices. Here theories engender more studies and lead to a "spiral of theories" which keep inceasing the knowledge about the social reality. However it is not only asking "who is theory relevant for ? "(that may raise doubts about relevance of theory) but as seen in chapter three even within the processes of theory, has arisen a debate about how the basis of `having' and `doing' theory is false and therefore theorizing itself is redundant.

Today relevance of social theory is a pertinent question. Though the number of theories have increased, not many solutions are available for the increasing problems. There

are social upheavals of every kind taking place, whether religious feuds, ethnic cleansing or break down of the nation states leading to civil wars, however, answers are afew. Therefore, to look at social theory for answers is not unreasonable. This means more effort is require to understand the relationship of theory and social happenings today, and affect suitable changes to better life. Whether this is happening, or can transpire in future needs looking into.

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