

Marxism and the Paradox of Contemporary Political Thought

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WITH all the volumes that have been written about Marx and Marxism in recent years, there has been little or no attempt, in the English-speaking world at least, to relate his thinking to the general development of modern European philosophic speculation.¹ Fundamentally this is because Marx has received short shrift as a philosopher. Both English and American commentators have been almost entirely concerned with his role as "social scientist" and polemicist, and hence have concentrated their attention upon his historical materialism and his critique of capitalist society.

The preoccupation with this aspect of Marx's thinking to the neglect of his philosophical writings is at least partially understandable when one considers that it is his historical economic and polemical writings which have been of the most immediate moment.² But the preoccupation has other and just as important roots which derive from the nature of contemporary philosophy. Many contemporary political theorists, at least, tend to agree with Marx, though for different reasons, that philosophy is dead and that the real tasks of politics lie in science, if not, as he argued,

¹ Exceptions to this statement include: Sidney Hook, *Toward an Understanding of Karl Marx* (New York, 1933), and *From Hegel to Marx* (New York, 1936); Herbert Marcuse, *Reason and Revolution* (New York, 1941); H. B. Acton, *The Illusion of the Epoch* (London, 1955), and Robert Tucker, "Self and Revolution" (Unpublished Ph.D. Thesis, Harvard University, 1957). For a variety of reasons, however, none of these works is completely satisfactory. Marcuse's, which is still in many ways the most useful, is written within a Marxist frame of analysis.

² Marx would have preferred it this way. He had concluded very early in his life that philosophy was dead, and that the task of the future was to make the ideals of the philosophers real. In other words the real tasks were those which could best be carried out by social scientists and revolutionaries. Thus, Marx and Engels were quite happy to leave their early philosophic works to the gnawing of the "mice." These had served to clear their minds, to enable them to understand the nature of reality and thus to point the way to the real tasks. See: Karl Marx and F. Engels, *The German Ideology*, trans. R. Pascal (New York, 1947), pp. 1, 2, 15, 199. Hereafter cited as *GI*. Karl Marx, "Contribution to the Critique of Hegel's Philosophy of Right. Introduction," in Karl Marx and F. Engels, *Karl Marx and F. Engels on Religion* (Moscow, 1957), pp. 42, 49. Hereafter cited as *KMR*.

in science and action.³ And their interpretation of science informs them that existential and normative statements are of a different logical order and that the latter are merely personal preferences.⁴

Hence, to most contemporary political theorists, theories either consist of certain types of empirical propositions or they are simply ideologies, that is, to be understood not in philosophic but rather in social or psychological terms. Thus Marx's attempt to fuse the normative and the existential can only be the result of error. While it is possible to spend some time analyzing the social or psychological sources of this error, it is silly to expend intellectual effort attempting to understand what one knows is false. As Plamenatz puts it:

On the other hand the general philosophy supposed to lie behind Marx's social theory, I have deliberately neglected. He was no philosopher and I am not one, and I have thought it kinder to both of us to neglect that part of his writings. Social and political theorists who dabble in philosophy too often bring their own subject into contempt; philosophers are astonished at the naivete and clumsiness of their philosophies.⁵

This view, which springs partially out of the same tradition to which Marx belonged and partially out of Marx's thought itself, unfortunately obscures the real content of that thought.⁶

³ By the statement "philosophy is dead" Marx meant, as do the positivists, that given a correct world view philosophic speculation had lost its function. In arguing that the task of philosophy was now to make philosophy real, Marx was referring to the ideals of the "left Hegelians" and the French and British "utopians" who, he felt, had correctly understood the nature of a truly humane society without having developed a correct, that is, scientific, world outlook. See the references cited in note 2.

⁴ Marx, of course, argued that a scientific world view described not only what was but what should and must be.

⁵ John Plamenatz, *German Marxism and Russian Communism* (London, 1954), p. xix. By "philosophy" Plamenatz means the tasks which logical positivists set for themselves.

⁶ Richard McKeon notes as follows: "The refutation of philosophies is . . . a simple process. . . . Since the doctrine refuted is the doctrine of another and different philosophy it is presented and analyzed for purposes of refutation according to a method different from the one by which it was established, or it is made to depend on different principles. . . . So presented, the fundamental terms in which the doctrine is expressed are never found to be clearly or relevantly defined; its principles are always arbitrary . . . its method is haphazard and committed to obvious fallacies; and the final doctrine elaborated is never adequate, seldom important, and usually false." *Freedom and History* (New York, 1952), p. 21.

For example, Plamenatz and Sabine both accuse Marx of claiming to be an objective social scientist and yet of identifying the inevitable play of blind economic forces with the "good," of illegitimately inserting a "teleological" view into a discussion of natural economic processes, and of denying the existence of a specifically "human" nature and then assuming it.⁷

These criticisms are wide of the mark and are the result of approaching Marx with certain fixed presuppositions about the right kinds of questions to ask and the possible answers. Marx was not simply a historicist or economic determinist, narrowly defined. It is true that he did attempt to identify the good with what must be, but while his positivist critics may be right in denying the validity of this conjunction, his arguments should first be correctly stated in the terms in which he saw them and as part of the total system of his thought. After all, Marx was certainly aware of the problems involved. In fact, he felt that he had successfully dealt with them, and it is one of the arguments of this paper that the conjunction which Marx develops is not simply a naive logical error.⁸

But an analysis of Marx's philosophic thought requires at least a temporary skepticism about conclusions Marx had reached by 1846 and the method he adopted at that time, a method which permeates both contemporary philosophy and contemporary political science.⁹ It requires instead that one examine Marx and his

The approach to thought in terms of the sociology of knowledge is integral to both Marxist and non-Marxist social science, and its foundations rest on the assumptions of modern philosophy itself, as we shall see later. Of course, all modern social science is more or less Marxist, that is, is founded on the kinds of analyses to which Marx turned after 1846. Thus, in some sense, the treatment of Marx by modern social science is the supreme irony. He has been "hoist with his own petard."

⁷ See Plamenatz, *op. cit.*, and George Sabine, *A History of Political Theory* (Revised Edition; New York, 1950), pp. 751-798. See also Karl Federn, *The Materialist Conception of History* (London, 1939).

⁸ Or rather that Hegel had. See specifically his analysis of Max Stirner. *Marx-Engels Gesamtausgabe*, I/5 (1932), especially pp. 220-249. Hereafter cited as *MEGA*.

⁹ It is only in recent years that Marx's pre-1846 writings have come to the attention of philosophers and that translations of his *Economic and Philosophic Manuscripts* (London, 1959), and *The Holy Family* (London, 1957) have made these works available to those who do not read German. (Hereafter cited as *EPM* and *HF* respectively.) Their concern, however, has thus far been largely abortive since it has developed into a sort of "fetishism" of the concept of alienation. For a review of some of the literature, see Daniel Bell, "In Search of Marxist Humanism," *Soviet Survey*, 32 (April, 1960), 21-32.

relation to the development of modern philosophy in terms of the questions posed by the "founders" of modern thought to themselves and their successors. It requires the examination of Marx's thought as part of a meaningful dialogue concerned with real rather than pseudo-questions.

The remainder of this essay, then, involves a few tentative steps in an attempt to deal substantively with Marx's philosophy and relate it to the tradition of which it is part.

It is the argument of the essay that just as Marx's thought emerges from the same "modern" philosophic position as Liberalism, so he was involved in an explicit attempt to resolve some of the philosophic dilemmas created by Liberalism within the framework of Liberal metaphysics. This is a task which contemporary Liberals have largely ignored. The paradox which provides the title for this essay is as follows:

The values associated with both Marxism and contemporary Liberalism have a common source in a particular metaphysics. But while, on the one hand, Marxists deny in practice the values they assert, contemporary Liberals are skeptical in theory of the values to which they adhere in practice. The existence of such a paradox may not be an accident for it is at least plausible to argue that it is implicit in the philosophic foundations of Liberalism. Part one of the essay, then, will briefly discuss some facets of the development of modern and contemporary Liberalism, the problems it has posed and the solution (or lack of solution) to these problems which has characterized Liberal thought. Part two will deal with Marx's relation to this tradition and his approach to these same problems.

I

To classical political thinkers the universe was a cosmos, that is, it was purposively ordered. Within this cosmos all things, including man, found their natural place. To Aristotle, at least, this natural order needed no explanation beyond itself. His "unmoved mover" is no more than an explanatory principle. It is certainly not a God in the Hebrew or Christian sense. Thus

It should be noted that while I regard the early writings of Marx as essential to the understanding of his later work, and regard the later writings as a culmination of the earlier, there are those who see a sharp break between the two periods. The issue will be dealt with later in the essay.

Aristotle's cosmology is naturalistic and his metaphysics really belongs to physics and not to theology. His ethical position, too, is naturalistic and humanistic, and is derived from the natural order of things and man's place in the order. Fundamentally, then, to act well is to act in accord with the natural order of things, and to *understand* the natural order of things is to act well.¹⁰

Thomistic philosophy is, of course, largely Aristotelian. The differences which exist are designed to subordinate philosophy to theology and to make room for revelation and a transcendent personal God. However, while philosophy is subordinated to religion, religion is not divorced from philosophy. The existence of a natural purposive order is fundamental to the proof of God's existence, and, in general, to Thomistic ethics.¹¹

The rejection by contemporary Liberalism of Thomistic and classical thought is based on the Hobbesian interpretation of the modern "scientific" outlook. To Hobbes the revolution in science seemed to imply that for purposes of prediction and control the world was best understood mechanically, that is, in terms of efficient causes, and nominalistically, that is, in terms of particulars.¹²

Hobbes' thought involved a radical critique of received philosophic opinion. Classical and mediaeval philosophy, it was maintained, had substituted language for the examination of reality. That is, philosophers had argued from the conventional use of language to what must be. On the other hand, the true method was to recognize that language was merely conventional. One begins with the observer and what he observes, analyzes the basic components of his sense experience, and relates all statements about reality to this experience by assigning names to impressions, adding and subtracting them to form propositions and then testing these propositions.

¹⁰ For the above see J. H. Randall, *Aristotle* (New York, 1960).

¹¹ F. C. Copleston, *Aquinas* (London, 1955). Also H. Jaffa, *Thomism and Aristotelianism* (Chicago, 1952). The values emphasized, of course, differ in many ways.

¹² And also that all knowledge is, by definition, scientific knowledge, that is, derived from and related back to observation. See Thomas Hobbes, *Leviathan*, ed. Michael Oakeshott (London, n.d.), pt. 1, chs. 1-15. My analysis of Hobbes and Liberalism relies heavily upon Marx's discussion of the development of modern Liberalism and his own relation to it. See, for example, *HF*, 167-79. See also Leo Strauss, *Natural Right and History* (Chicago, 1952); E. A. Burtt, *The Metaphysical Foundations of Modern Science* (New York, 1954); and Karl Popper, *The Poverty of Historicism* (Boston, 1957).

The radical attack upon traditional thought raised two difficult but closely related problems: If all knowledge is derived from sense experience, how is it possible to know anything except a rapid and ever changing sequence of sense impressions? If the universe lacks a purpose which informs its component parts, how can one evaluate the moral rightness of individual and collective purpose?¹³

In general modern Liberalism has ignored the first problem rather than attempted to solve it. The character of Liberal philosophy, then, expresses a duality between thought and action. The philosopher is a skeptic in his library, but accepts the "ordered" reality of his environment in action. In effect Liberal philosophers refuse to worry about the contradiction between thought and action.¹⁴

The second problem was faced more directly. Again the prototype is the philosophy of Thomas Hobbes,¹⁵ Since one cannot discover the "good" in the nature of things we are left with individual desires and purposes. The desires of all men are equally legitimate and they are not additive. That is, if all men minus one share a common desire which would infringe upon the desire of this one man, it cannot be said that the satisfaction of their collective desires is a greater good than the satisfaction of his. The only goods, then, are those things which men individually call good and these are, basically, the avoidance of pain and the achievement of pleasure. The only function of reason is to inform the passions, in other words, to guide the passions to the achievement of these goals. The social good, thus, can only be that which all men call good. For only that which all men agree is good (or

¹³ It can be argued that just as the Hobbesian view derived from modern science, so Hobbes and Liberalism are related to the development of modern technology. To both classic and mediaeval thinkers the purpose of thought was to understand the natural order so that one might act in conformity with it. Since Liberalism, as we shall see, equates the right or good with individual desires, men's primary orientation is now legitimately directed toward changing the universe in order to be in a better position to satisfy these desires, that is, to secure a commodious life. Both classical and mediaeval thinkers, if not opposed to change and/or control over the environment, were, at least, not primarily concerned with this question.

¹⁴ The prototype for this position is, of course, David Hume. But, as is commonly accepted, Hume was merely developing the implications of the thought of Hobbes and Locke. See also Ernest Nagel (ed.), *John Stuart Mill's Philosophy of Scientific Method* (New York, 1950), pp. 364-392.

¹⁵ *The Leviathan*.

would agree is good if their view of reality was not distorted by pride and/or false doctrine) can serve as a norm through which individual actions may be judged.

Hobbes' effort was more than an attempt to deal with the problem of moral action. It laid the philosophical foundations for the development of Liberal democracy. If all men's interests are equally legitimate then the only basis upon which one man can exercise authority over another is if the latter is convinced that this authority is being exercised in his own interest. Thus, unless all men can know their own interest, and these interests can be discovered and taught, legitimate authority is impossible.

On its own terms the Hobbesian solution is consistent, but it fails to solve the fundamental ethical problem on at least two grounds: (1) The rules of "prudence" (natural laws) are necessarily limited to that upon which all men can agree, that is, the need for peace. This leaves an immensely wide range of human activity to which moral categories do not apply. (2) While reason may lead to general agreement on the prudence of all following the laws of nature, it cannot serve as a guide to judging the act of any particular individual unless this act, by itself, can be shown necessarily to result in a general violation of these laws. And, while all might agree, for example, that all should respect contracts, it is difficult for me or anyone else to believe that if I violate a particular contract the result will be a state of war.

The Benthamite solution, while it tries to resolve the Hobbesian problem, falls into errors which Hobbes avoided. On the one hand it accepts the Hobbesian argument that one can only speak of society as composed of individual men pursuing individual pleasures and that the "good" is conventional while, on the other hand, it assumes that pleasures and pains are additive and that that which the greatest number considers good is somehow better than what a minority would consider good. John Stuart Mill attempted to provide a firmer foundation for Utilitarianism by speaking of the "permanent interests" of mankind and defining them. Thus, a proper conception of self-interest leads individuals to act in such ways as to act in the interest of others.¹⁶ Unfortunately, however, it is impossible to square the assumption that ultimate

¹⁶ John Stuart Mill, "Utilitarianism," in John Stuart Mill, *Utilitarianism, Liberty and Representative Government* (Everyman's Library: New York, 1958).

reality consists of individual men pursuing their own self-defined interests with the conclusion that there are really no individually defined interests, that is, that it is impossible to distinguish between my interest and that of any other individual in the world.

The Utilitarian solution can only work if, as Locke seems to do on occasion, one brings in God, and worries about rewards and punishments in the hereafter. However, on the basis of Liberal metaphysics, at least as developed in Hobbes, Locke, and the Utilitarians, one can at best be a skeptic concerning God, and skepticism is a weak reed upon which to found an axiology. It is little wonder then that, in England and America, Utilitarian ethics eventually gave way to value positivism. For, given the failure of Hobbes and the Utilitarians, one is left with individual preferences among which it is impossible to choose. Liberal political theorists, then, base their acceptance of Liberal democracy upon a philosophic tradition which they can no longer accept.

II

Marx, as he often pointed out, built on the foundations laid by the German philosophic tradition. The dominant figures in this tradition were Kant and Hegel, and Marx went through both a Kantian and Hegelian phase before fully developing his own position.

Both Kant and Hegel took their starting point from the problems raised by the Hobbesian interpretation of modern science.¹⁷ Their systems are primarily directed to understanding what we can know and what we should do, given what seems to be the basic assumptions of this science.¹⁸ According to Kant we can know only a world of appearances structured by the human mind while the noumenal world remains undiscoverable. The Kantian analysis provides a basis for modern science by limiting the scope of science.

Hegel rejected the Kantian solution to the problem of knowledge — a rejection which Marx accepted. If the structure of the world bears no necessary relation to our conceptions of it the

¹⁷ By "modern science" I mean classical physics.

¹⁸ T. D. Weldon, Introduction to Kant's *Critique of Pure Reason* (Oxford, 1945), pp. 1-53. Marcuse, *op. cit.*, pp. 16-28.

Kantian solution is little better than skepticism.¹⁹ The Hegelian analysis converts reality into mind. Reality, then, is essentially spirit. The proof of this proposition lies in Hegel's total system, as well as his demonstration that all other analyses contradict themselves in practice and negate themselves. Hence, his criticism of the tradition which begins with Hobbes and reaches its apogee in Hume is essentially the one offered earlier in this essay, and Hegel's system represents an attempt to integrate modern science with a "more sophisticated" version of classical metaphysics.²⁰

The solutions offered by both Kant and Hegel to the problem of moral action are of the same order. Both of them criticize the Utilitarian solution, and in both cases their own ethical systems are founded on their re-examinations of the premises of modern science, and attempts to discover a metaphysics which, while consonant with modern science avoids the dilemmas of the Hobbesian tradition. To Kant, the rules of ethical action are to be found in the nature of reason itself, and the limitation placed upon the scope of science leaves room for faith.²¹ Hegel's criticism of Kant is based in part on his criticism of the latter's metaphysics and in part on the argument that it is impossible to develop an ethical system on the basis of a formal principle. His own analysis

¹⁹ According to Hegel there exist two possibilities: (1) Either things in themselves have no effect upon the real world, in which case it is, in action, impossible to even conceive of them. (2) There is some relation between things in themselves and the real world, in which case science is impossible. See among others Marcuse, *op. cit.*; J. Loewenberg, "The Exoteric Approach to Hegel's Phenomenology of Mind," and "The Comedy of Immediacy in Hegel's Phenomenology of Mind," *Mind*, XLIII and XLIV (1934-5), 424-445, 21-38; and J. H. Findlay, *Hegel: A Re-Examination* (London, 1958). See also F. Engels, *Anti-Dühring* (New York, 1939), pp. 71f.

²⁰ See G. R. G. Mure, *An Introduction to Hegel* (Oxford, 1940).

²¹ For the Kantian critique of hedonism see C. J. Friedrich (ed.), *The Philosophy of Kant* (New York, 1949), pp. 215-20. For the Marxian critique see Karl Marx and F. Engels, *Selected Works* (Moscow, 1951), II, 346-348. Unless otherwise indicated all references to the selected works refer to this edition.

The Kantian analysis provides the basis of modern Protestantism. The limits of science permit us to believe what our moral experience compels us to believe. Modern Catholicism seems to escape the problem by ignoring it. While accepting the argument that Thomistic physics is bad physics, modern Thomists still base their philosophic arguments on a position which is intimately related to Thomist physics. See, for example, Copleston, *op. cit.*, and his *Contemporary Philosophy* (London, 1956). See also Anton C. Pegis (ed.), *Basic Writings of Saint Thomas Aquinas*, 2 vols. (New York, 1944), I, xxxv-lili.

attempts to restore purpose to the universe and hence to develop a meaningful conception of both ethics and God.

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It is quite clear from Marx's writings that the break with Hegelian thought which occurred in the period 1843-6 consisted simply and entirely of what Marx said it did. Marx stood Hegel "right side up," that is, he substituted a materialistic conception of the universe for Hegel's idealism.²² This substitution, of course, had important effects on the later development of Marx's work. For one thing, it determined the priorities of that work. Since philosophic speculation was no longer of importance, Marx, as we have seen, concentrated on social science (*Capital*) and polemic (*The Manifesto*). Just as importantly, for reasons which flow, in part, from the materialistic position itself, he substituted analysis of the "real" sources of ideas with which he disagreed for the direct analyses of these ideas, and left to Engels the discussion of the validity of ideas *per se*.²³ There can be no question, however, but that the philosophic conclusions which he had reached in these years continued to inform all his writings. In fact it is impossible fully to understand his later work (including *Capital*) unless one understands these conclusions.²⁴

It is clear, then, that the place to look for the most explicit statement of Marx's philosophic position is in the writings of the 1843-1846 period. Even here, however, we do not find an articulated philosophy. Marx was writing, at this point, to a purpose, to free himself from the Hegelian and "left-Hegelian" schools. Thus, his work was almost entirely directed to those areas in which he opposed the Hegelians. To understand Marx, therefore, we must also understand those features of Hegel's thought which he does not reject but accepts as obviously true.²⁵

²² Karl Marx, *Capital* (Chicago, 1921), I, 24-6. Marx and Engels, *Selected Works*, I, 327-332; II, 324-368.

²³ *Ibid.*, 349.

²⁴ Marx continually urged this point. See Marx-Engels, *Selected Correspondence* (London, 1956), pp. 261, 290-291. See also Jean Hippolyte, *Etudes sur Marx et Hegel* (Paris, 1955).

²⁵ Engel's later writing is useful here, for he tried, in a number of works, to trace Marx's intellectual antecedents. While he is less sophisticated than Marx, he attempts to make some of the latter's assumptions more explicit. The argument that he departed significantly from Marx is without founda-

Of most importance is his belief that Hegel's critique of all other positions, is valid. Empiricism and nominalism break down in practice. In action, we must recognize the existence of universals and, in action, we must recognize that we must make judgments as to which of a number of possible courses is morally correct.²⁶

However, while the Hegelian system satisfies its own objections to other systems and is consonant with modern science, it stands in fundamental contradiction to the modern world outlook, for it attempts to restore purpose to the universe and the primacy of essence (in Hegel's case, spirit) over existence. This is merely "mystification." If modern science can do without this mystification in practice it should be able to do so in theory, and so should modern social science. What is necessary is not to show that modern science is compatible with a more sophisticated version of the classical view, but to show that modern science, on its own terms, can resolve the problems it poses. Indeed, such a demonstration is necessary if Hegel is to be transcended.²⁷

Hegel had shown that the view which denies the reality of universals breaks down in practice, and that while modern science had developed on the basis of methodological nominalism, it requires for its foundations the acceptance of the ultimate reality of universals. Marx's counter is to argue that, while this is true, one is not necessarily led to the conclusion that the ultimate reality of the universe is spirit.

Science analyzes the world in terms of space and time. It can do so because space and time exist as real relationships. They are part of the objective order of things. This objective order is material — that is, it is not mind — but the elements of the

tion. He submitted all of those philosophic writings completed while Marx was alive to the latter. His essay on Feuerbach quotes extensively from *The Holy Family*, and his *Anti-Dühring* contains nothing which stands in opposition to the Marx of 1843-1846.

²⁶ *Selected Works*, II, 335-6. See also *MEGA*, 229-249. Given the "implicit" quality of Marx's, and to a certain extent, Engels' writing, and the fact that, as with Hegel, the total system provides the proof of individual propositions, it is often difficult to provide direct references for particular points. Rather, these must be deduced from the structure of the total system. A basic assumption underlying these deductions is that the philosophic sophistication which Marx reveals in his early writings did not leave him after 1846, and that his awareness of the views of those whom Hegel felt he had transcended was a genuine awareness.

²⁷ *EPM*, pp. 142-171. *Selected Works*, II, 326-334.

world exist in dynamic relationships to each other, which are as real as the elements themselves. Thus in one sense, the world may consist of atoms in motion, but in another sense the relationships which manifest themselves as men or tables or yellows or greens are as real as these atoms themselves. In other words, Hegel had been right in arguing that the world is process and in arguing for the existence of universals:

In this way, however, the revolutionary side of Hegelian philosophy was again taken up and, at the same time, freed from its idealistic trimmings. . . . The great basic thought was that the world is not to be comprehended as a complex of ready made things, but as a complex of processes. . . .²⁸

And Marx was willing to go even further. Man is only in society and all societies consist of human beings in dynamic interaction with each other, with nature, and with their artifacts. This relationship is more than simply an aggregate of its parts. It has an objective existence. Thus one can speak of feudalism and capitalism as systems which have objective reality, and though the values of commodities consist of certain relationships, these are as real as the commodities themselves: "Although invisible the value of iron, linen and corn has actual existence in these very articles."²⁹

To Marx, in other words, the universe is essentially pluralistic. It can be approached from a number of points of view, each of which is valid so long as it permits men to predict and control their relations with nature.³⁰

Such a view, unlike the Hobbesian view, enables men to apply the method of science to social life as well as to nature, for such a view recognizes that social life is natural. For this purpose all that is needed is a tool which will enable men to analyze these

²⁸ *Ibid.*, 351.

²⁹ *Capital*, I, 107.

³⁰ Thus, in Randall's terminology, Marx was a "critical naturalist." The mechanistic nominalist views of the old materialists, so he argued, rendered them incapable of analyzing the activities of men. For to traditional materialism men could be no more than a particular relationship of atoms. To traditional materialism, then, man did not exist as such. See *EPM*, pp. 110-11; *HF*, pp. 172-6.

On another level classical economics is faced with the same problem. The starting point of classical economics is Hobbes. One analyzes economic relations in terms of individual men pursuing their own egoistic interest within the framework of a state which preserves the peace. But a refusal to recog-

relationships. The tool is the dialectic, a logic, which like all logic, mirrors reality.³¹

This, then, is the nature of the universe. And for Marx, as for the view of modern Liberalism, the universe needs no explanation beyond itself. To ask what had existed before the universe is to ask a meaningless question for it requires postulating the nonexistence of the universe.³²

But if this is all true and skepticism of the type exemplified by Hume is only a game played by armchair skeptics and professional philosophers, one still has to explain why the truth had so long escaped men. The answer to this question is to be found in social science, or, more specifically, in the sociology of knowledge.

As modern science had demonstrated, men derived all their knowledge of the world through sense experience. However, they had only gradually come to build up a really adequate understanding of this world. It can, thus, be understood why, at any given time, they should have distorted views and have asked meaningless questions. But this is not the full answer to the question, for the particular road taken by philosophic speculation can only be understood in terms of human history, that is, in the nature of the reality which men have created for themselves in the process of mastering nature.³³

During the childhood of the race (in ancient Greece, for example), man and nature were one; thinking, feeling, and acting

nize that the social order which men create is real, prevents classical economics from understanding what it seeks to understand. See *EPM*, pp. 110-111; *Selected Works*, I, 339-341; Karl Marx, *The Poverty of Philosophy* (London, 1956), pp. 115-172, 201-217.

³¹ *Capital*, I, 21-26. *Selected Works*, I, 350-351. It has been argued that the attempt to apply the dialectic to the natural world, as against the world of human history, is a gloss by Engels. This argument is untenable. See *Capital*, I, 338.

³² *EPM*, p. 113.

³³ Marx's sociology of knowledge is a logical development of Liberal political theory, although he gives it new dimensions. If all knowledge is derived from sense experience, then human values are as well. Thus the history of the values which men have held is the history of their experience or, more precisely, a history of the world in which they live. To Liberal philosophers the history of these values was the history of increasing knowledge, the history of the elimination of error, and the history of changes in the objects of pleasure which are produced by an expanding technology. By treating the social relations which men establish with each other as part of the real world and as a basic unit of analysis, Marx provided the ingredient which permitted the translation of the basic Liberal assumptions into the contemporary discipline.

were integrated. However, the breakdown of this world, the result of economic developments, had led to a rejection of nature. The adoption of Christianity was a reflection of this breakdown and rejection. Christianity, like its Jewish antecedent, separated man from nature, emphasizing a personal relationship between individual men and a transcendent God, and a duality between man's "sensuous" and thinking life. In Protestantism, which arose out of bourgeois capitalism, this separation of man from himself, from other men and from nature reached its highest point. The atomistic and competitive nature of man's relation to God so characteristic of Protestantism mirrors the atomistic, competitive nature of bourgeois society.³⁴ Even those thinkers who forswear religion cannot rise above their milieu. The very categories in which they communicate are shaped by bourgeois society. In general:

The whole history of the alienation process and the whole process of the retraction of the alienation is therefore but the history of the production of abstract (i.e. absolute) thought — of logical, speculative thought. The estrangement, which therefore forms the real interest of this alienation and of the transcendence of this alienation, is the opposition in itself and for itself, of consciousness and self-consciousness, of object and subject — that is to say, it is the opposition, within thought itself, between abstract thinking and sensuous reality or real sensuousness.³⁵

Skepticism in ethics derives from the same sources. In action men have always to make decisions affecting themselves and other men. This is the nature of the human situation. Men as men cannot help but agree on what kinds of action are appropriate to given situations, that is, what kind of situations are natural to men, for fundamentally there is no incompatibility between the desirable and the desired. The fact that philosophers see a dichotomy between the two is a reflection of existing reality and will disappear once this "reality" disappears.

³⁴ Karl Marx and F. Engels, *The German Ideology* (New York, 1947), pp. 14ff. Karl Marx, "A Contribution to the Critique of Hegel's Philosophy of Right," in *Marx and Engels on Religion* (Moscow, 1951), p. 51; F. Engels, "Bruno Bauer and Early Christianity," *ibid.*, pp. 195-201; Karl Marx, "The Jewish Question," in D. D. Runes (ed. and trans.), *A World Without Jews* (New York, 1959); *Capital*, I, 109.

³⁵ *EPM*, p. 149.

Communism . . . is the return of man to himself as social, i.e., human man. . . . Just as completed humanism is naturalism, so this communism, as completed naturalism, is humanism. It is the true solution to the strife between man and nature, and between man and man. It is the true resolution of the conflict between existence and essence, between reification and self-affirmation, between freedom and necessity, between individual and species.³⁶

But to understand the full Marxist response to value positivism one must examine in more detail Marx's discussion of both man and history.

* * *

Historically the emergence of culture is related to man's desire to increase his satisfaction (and to avoid pain) by satisfying basic instinctive "needs" through the manipulation of his environment. Marx thus takes his starting point from Hobbes and Liberal thought in general. But he does not end with Hobbes. For, he argues, as man changes the world, so he changes. Man changes not only because of his increased knowledge, but because he is constantly creating a new world from which he derives new experiences. And it is a world which he can more truly comprehend because it is a world which he constructs.³⁷

The first act of awareness, then, is an act of production, that is, men come to understand nature and themselves only by manipulating nature to achieve their own purposes:

Men can be distinguished from animals by consciousness, by religion or anything else you like. They themselves begin to distinguish themselves from animals as soon as they begin to produce their means of subsistence.³⁸

The process is self-energizing, for increased awareness of self and nature leads men constantly to acquire new needs and hence constantly to increase their mastery over nature.³⁹ It is, in fact, this "Faustian" element in man which leads to the development of society and the emergence and continued progress of civilization. At the same time, the emergence of civilization is a pre-

³⁶ *EPM*, p. 102.

³⁷ *Ibid.*, 110-11.

³⁸ *GI*, p. 7.

³⁹ *GI*, p. 17.

requisite for the emergence of man as man. For man only becomes uniquely man, as distinguished from all other forms of animal life, when he takes on peculiarly human characteristics, that is, when he begins to control nature, when he communicates with his fellows, and when he actually develops a culture. And he is fully man only when he fully understands himself and the forces around him. The essence of man ("generic man") is to be found in a potential which can only be realized at the end of human history, or, as Marx sometimes puts it, at the end of prehuman history:

All history is the preparation for "man" to become the object of sensuous consciousness, and for the needs of "man as man" to become natural sensuous needs. History itself is a real part of natural history — of nature's coming to be man.⁴⁰

Language is as old as consciousness, language is practical consciousness, as it exists for other men, and for that reason is really beginning to exist for men as well; for language like consciousness, only arises from the need, the necessity of intercourse with other men. . . . The animal has no "relations" with anything, cannot have any. . . . Consciousness is therefore from the very beginning a social product.⁴¹

But natural science has invaded and transformed human life . . . through the medium of industry; and has prepared human emancipation, however directly and much it had to consummate dehumanization. Industry is the actual, historical relation of nature . . . to man. . . . The nature which comes to be in human history — the genesis of human society — is man's real nature.⁴²

Therefore the sensitivities of the social man are other than those of the unsocial. Only thanks to the objectively unfolded wealth of nature, does the wealth of subjective human sensitivity develop . . . in short, for the first time there will develop senses which are capable of human appreciations, which will assert themselves as human essential senses.⁴³

The source of human progress lies not, then, in some mysterious clinging together of the forces and mode of production, but rather in human nature itself. However, man's increasing control over nature has not, thus far, been an unmixed blessing. In fact,

⁴⁰ *EPM*, pp. 110-11.

⁴¹ *GI*, p. 19.

⁴² *EPM*, pp. 110-11.

⁴³ *EPM*, p. 108.

Marx argued, civilization heretofore has been characterized by a contradiction or tension such that while, on the one hand, potential mastery of the world has increased, so, in some sense, has human misery. The source of this tension lies in the very process by which civilization is achieved. The awareness of one's separation from nature and from other men involves a kind of individuation and isolation. It involves increased awareness of pain and inevitable death. Finally, it involves an awareness of the destructive forces of nature which cannot be easily understood or controlled and, added to these, the forces which men create unintentionally and which dominate their existence. Thus, while man may have developed ten times the control over nature that a pig has, he suffers more than a pig simply because he is now at least partially human. Self-awareness, then, leads to an "unhappy consciousness."

This separation from nature and self and the pain it involves Marx labels alienation, and paradoxically the higher the level of civilization the more alienated men become. Thus the development of human cooperation requires the division of labor, a division which becomes ever more complex as the forces of production which men have at their disposal become more refined. The rhythm of the machine, indeed the successful completion of any complex task, requires that the natural animal passions, which are as much a part of human nature as the rational faculty, be repressed. Thus an intrinsic part of human nature is crippled through the very fact of becoming human, and assumes unnatural and violent forms which never fully satisfy natural needs and which are an expression of alienation itself.⁴⁴

Finally, the division of labor leads to the development of a class structure. Those who are stronger or more fortunate seize a larger portion of the limited economic pie. Those who are less fortunate must do with less — a bare level of subsistence, if that. And, of course, as society becomes more complex and passes into the stage of capitalist production this contradiction assumes its sharpest forms. Society becomes separated into two antagonistic social classes. The lower class, the class of proletarians, is deprived

⁴⁴ *HF*, pp. 226, 237. Marx's psychology, as all modern psychology, is an outgrowth of Hobbesian metaphysics. The starting point of analysis is man's instincts or passions. Reason emerges from experience as the result of attempting to satisfy these passions. The Marxist analysis, however, goes further and paves the way for the later development of psychoanalysis.

even of the ownership of its own tools; it is completely the victim of a machine-imposed rhythm, unable to satisfy even the most elemental human needs:

. . . the product of his activity is not the object of his activity. What he produces for himself is not the silk that he weaves, not the gold that he draws from the mine. . . . What he produces for himself are wages . . . does he consider this twelve hours' weaving, spinning, drilling, turning . . . as an expression of his life as life? On the contrary life begins with him where this activity ends.⁴⁵

Civilization, thus, contains a fatal flaw — a flaw which grows progressively worse, reaching its apogee in capitalist society. Men deny their passions in a restless urge to production. They think of each other not as human beings but as commodities, and they are but the victims of a complex set of social relations over which they have no control. And all men are alienated at this point. The bourgeois who pursues what he conceives to be his rational egoistic self-interest is a cripple just as is the industrial worker who is his employee.

It is this very flaw, however, which provides the source of human salvation, the motive power by which men can make the leap from prehuman history to truly human history. For men have not only created, at this point, the technical means by which they can fully master their environment but have also, in thought itself, developed to the point where at least some men can see the possibilities inherent in the situation. Most importantly, however, they have created a mass of brutalized proletarians who are forced by the very wretchedness of their situation to overturn the existing social order and create a new society. Marx, in a sense, gloried in the sufferings of the proletariat, for only as they suffered could they provide the energy for the transformation. The bourgeoisie could not do so, for as alienated as they might be their pain was not sufficient:

The propertied class and the class of the proletariat present the same human self-alienation. But the former class finds in this self-alienation its confirmation and its good . . . it has in it a semblance of human existence. The class of the proletariat feels annihilated in its self-alienation. . . .⁴⁶

⁴⁵ V. Adoratsky (ed.), *Karl Marx: Selected Works* (London, 1942), I, 356.

⁴⁶ *HF*, p. 51.

To the society which would emerge after the victory of the proletariat Marx gave only the briefest attention. After all, considering that he, too, was part of bourgeois society, and crippled by it, how could he know what developments would unfold? Further, just as social science emerges with the death of philosophy, so the emergence of the new society would bring the death of social science, for social science is only possible when men are not free.

In general, however, the future would see a society in which men, largely released from the need to labor, would give free play to their now civilized passions in creative effort. The ending of scarcity would play its role in ending conflict. Just as importantly, however, men, living together in a society in which their interdependence was clearly exhibited, would come to realize that they were "species animals." They would come to understand that while each was an individual, nevertheless mankind was one, and relations among men determined the level of individual self-fulfillment. Thus, each would realize that the general level of culture in each society determined his own cultural level. Only in a society, for example, which possesses great music can one enjoy great music. And, further, every relationship one has with another individual determines one's conception of self. Thus, the fact that someone in the society is starving impoverishes the person who has enough to eat, and the man who is looked on with envy is affected just as much as the man who is envious.

Under Communism, then, all dichotomies would be resolved and man would once gain be at one with himself. The long journey to civilization would have turned out to be worthwhile, even given the horrors it had entailed. Marx, incidentally, never maintained that men were or would become fully equal, nor did he see Communist society as one which would completely do away with authority. However, all men would freely give of their capacities since this would only bring increasing satisfaction to themselves, and all men would accept necessary rational authority for they would recognize that those exercising it were doing so in the common interest. Thus politics, the manipulation of men, would be replaced by the administration of things.⁴⁷

⁴⁷ *Selected Works*, I, 575-578. In other words, under Communism compulsion would be replaced by legitimate authority. Marx's definition of legitimate authority follows from the Liberal definition. His argument is that such authority is only possible in a Communist society.

Human nature, then, unlike dog nature, is to be understood in terms of the inherent human potential of the human race. While at any given point, therefore, man's nature is simply the "ensemble of all his social relationships," nevertheless in the end the truly human being will establish certain kinds of relationships with both other human beings and with the world in general. In his conception of man, therefore, Marx does resort to a teleological mode of thought, but it is a teleology which is quite consonant with the "Hobbesian" view of the universe.

* * *

We are now ready to outline Marx's response to value positivism. Before we do, however, it may be useful to compare Marx very briefly with the dominant strands of both classical and Liberal philosophy.

In the classical view the universe was to be analyzed in terms of the potential of the whole and its component parts. Thus one legitimate way of looking at all process was in terms of purpose. Man's "good" was to understand his place in the universe and to achieve it. The tradition which began with Hobbes replaced teleological by mechanical explanation. Men have purposes but these can be reduced to blind mechanical forces.

Marx accepts the Hobbesian rejection of a purposive universe. Inanimate objects are to be understood purely in terms of mechanical forces. On the other hand while man, too, can be analyzed in these terms, nevertheless the possibilities which exist by virtue of his capacity for mastering nature enable one to examine and define him in terms of his potential, for it is this potential which particularly characterizes him. Again, the classics saw the achievement of human potential in the comprehension of the unchanging order of the universe. To Marx, on the other hand, man's achievement lies in restructuring the universe and thus making it human.

In the last analysis, then, those actions which are right for man are those actions which are human, that is, those actions which he cannot help but perform once he is aware of what it is to be human. The objections raised to Hobbesian or Utilitarian ethics cannot be raised against Marx. His system provides a guide for both communal and individual action. He escapes from the Utilitarian dilemmas by arguing that the relations which men establish

among themselves are as real as individual men, and that, in fact, these relations inform the behavior and "interests" of those entering into this relationship.

Only one further objection can be raised against Marxist axiology within its own assumptions. Assuming that men one day will be able to act in no other way than as they do, does this give moral sanction to their actions?

Marx's reply to this question is twofold. First, in raising it one is merely asking for a standard beyond man, but there is nothing beyond man to supply a standard. Therefore, the question is meaningless.⁴⁸ Secondly, values are produced by human beings and value conflicts are the result of real conflicts. Given the absence of conflict, the question cannot even be imagined. Thus, he who raises the question which, as doubting the existence of a real world, is only an armchair question, either does so merely to be clever or because he is a victim of the society in which he lives.⁴⁹

Given the assumptions of his philosophic anthropology, Marxist axiology is consistent; and it solves the ethical problem created by Hobbesian metaphysics within the framework of that metaphysics. In fact, it can be urged that given Hobbesian metaphysics no solution to the problem is possible other than one which relies upon an anthropology of the Marxist type.

But to those who reject this anthropology, the Marxist solution must be unsatisfactory. And, in fact, it can be argued that the calculated self-deception and force which characterize the Soviet regime are to be largely understood as the result of an attempt to create a world which can never come into existence. In other words, the attempt to act on the basis of Marxist anthropology has historically negated the humane values which Marxism espouses.

We may legitimately conclude, then, that the emergence of Liberalism has led to a paradox. While Liberalism contributed to the rise of both modern science and modern social science and, thus, has enabled man to manipulate his environment to suit his purposes, it has been unable to provide criteria for evaluating these purposes. The world it has created would seem to be absurd.

⁴⁸ This reply is implicit in Hobbes.

⁴⁹ *MEGA*, pp. 222-249.