MARXISM AND PHENOMENOLOGY

The Dialectical Horizons of Critique

*Edited by Bryan Smyth
and Richard Westerman*

Marxism and Phenomenology

Continental Philosophy and the History of Thought

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Marxism and Phenomenology

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Introduction

Bryan Smith and Richard Westerman

When Husserl's "Philosophy as Rigorous Science" was published in 1911,[1] it would have been hard to imagine such a thing as phenomenological Marxism. Criticizing both naturalism and historicism, Husserl insisted on the autonomy of philosophy against attempts to explain it away through either the natural or the social sciences. He was particularly concerned to defend against the tendency he perceived in empirical science to reduce the analysis of consciousness itself to the model of physics, arguing that "[t]o follow the natural scientific model means almost inevitably: to reify consciousness."[2] For Husserl, consciousness had a distinct character of its own that could not be explained in terms of merely physical processes.

Husserl's approach could not have been more distant from the dominant strands of Marxism at the time. Lenin's *Materialism and Empirio-Criticism*, published two years before Husserl's essay, may have been extreme in both its intemperate language and the purity with which it expressed its philosophical position, but it exemplifies the general attitude of what Lenin referred to as "ordinary Marxists" of the time.[3] In stark contrast to Husserl's concern with the essence of phenomena, Lenin argued for a narrow definition of materialism that reduced consciousness to the reflection of an underlying natural reality. The revolutionary ought to treat Marxism as an exact science that allowed consciousness to correspond to that reality as closely as possible. Lenin may have been an extreme figure in the Second International, with his belief that a vanguard party might possess a more exact knowledge of reality than the masses and should therefore bring consciousness of society to the proletariat from without; nevertheless, his more moderate opponents agreed with the fundamental claim that the forms of consciousness were of limited interest in themselves, save as symptoms of the underlying malaise of capitalism.

There seemed, then, to be little common ground between phenomenology's concern with the rich textures of subjective experience and Marxism's focus

on objective social structures—indeed, the two seemed mutually exclusive. Yet such a stark separation was not to last. The failure of revolution to spread beyond Russia prompted Marxist theorists to turn to questions of consciousness in the 1920s. For thinkers like Georg Lukács, Antonio Gramsci, and Karl Korsch, capitalism entailed more than just its economic base; rather, ideology, beliefs, worldviews, and thought in the broadest sense were essential moments of the total system, not merely epiphenomena that reflected underlying structures. Lukács's influential 1923 account of reification,[4] describing the disempowerment and meaninglessness experienced by the individual in capitalist society, seemed to be confirmed by the publication of Marx's *Economic and Philosophical Manuscripts* nine years later, which brought the problem of alienation to the fore.[5] At the same time, phenomenologists increasingly began to examine the socio-historical situation of the individual, a trend epitomized by Husserl's critique of the abstraction of Galilean science and its separation from the lifeworld in *The Crisis of European Sciences*.[6] It was little wonder, then, that there were growing efforts in many different contexts to bring Marxism and phenomenology into direct dialogue.

It is possible to identify three main historical strands of phenomenological Marxism, each emphasizing different parts of the phenomenological heritage. The first emerged from a Marxist reinterpretation of Husserl's *Crisis*, identifying the domination of abstract rationality as one of the key problems of capitalism, and responsible for inhibiting the fullest development of human potential. The second predominant interpretation found parallels between Marx's radical left-Hegelian account of the importance of labor in the *Manuscripts* and Heidegger's account of practical comportment in *Being and Time*, with the ontological reorientation of phenomenology that it implies. Finally, the third historical strand draws on other existential reinterpretations of phenomenology that resonated with Marxism—here, too, especially as expressed in the *Manuscripts*—with regard to alienation as both a subjective experience and an objective social pathology. This volume seeks to continue the dialogue between Marxism and phenomenology by finding new points of contact, going beyond these existing attempts at synthesis to identify new pathways for the development of phenomenological Marxism. In what follows, we shall simply outline the basic contours of each of these earlier schools before turning to the particular contributions made within this volume.

HUSSERLIAN MARXISM

It is difficult to draw any clear social or political message out of much of Husserl's oeuvre. The ruminations on meaning of the *Logical Investigations*

or the investigations of mental acts in *Ideas* were systematically cut off from any direct political import; the transcendental aspirations of Husserl's philosophy precluded direct transference of his thought to the realm of practice. True, there were already the hints of a Husserlian diagnosis of the times in "Philosophy as Rigorous Science"—but this remained at best an outline. It was not until his final major work, *The Crisis of European Sciences*, delivered as a series of lectures in 1935 but not published in complete book form until 1954, that a genuine social critique could find foundations in his thought. *Crisis* offers a teleological history of scientific development in the modern era and its consequences for the intersubjective lifeworld (*Lebenswelt*) of daily existence. This lifeworld comprises a pretheoretical horizon of assumptions, values, and beliefs that render meaningful every action, project, or mental act that we undertake. Our very experiences of the world are underpinned by the confidence that other subjects perceive it in roughly the same way, replete with similar objects operating in something like the way we perceive them. More practically, we are reassured of the value of our individual endeavors by the shared world of values against which we measure ourselves. What characterizes the lifeworld is that it is taken for granted, assumed by any individual act or thought. Of course, any part of the lifeworld can be thematized and questioned—but even in doing so, we retain our faith in much of the rest of it. The lifeworld thus serves to ground all kinds of activity and theorizing, providing it with the anchor it needs to be meaningful.

Though it emerged out of the lifeworld, Husserl argues, modern science has lost precisely this anchor. Mathematics, physics, and so on can be traced back to concrete lifeworld practices: the idealized forms of geometry, for example, were abstractions that emerged from physically measuring the land. In daily life, we see only rough approximations of these forms: geometry's perfect forms are never truly found in reality. But problems emerge when science separates itself from these practical origins and claims to represent the ultimate reality. Husserl identifies Galileo as the symbolic source of this transformation. Bewitched by the perfection of mathematics, Galileo treated nature itself as entirely mathematizable: reality as a whole could be understood in terms of an economically small number of quantifiable laws. Anything that could not be explained by such laws was reduced to secondary importance. Science was henceforth no longer anchored in the actual practices and values of the lifeworld; rather, it sought the perfection of mathematical methods on their own account. Positing an idealized image of a purely quantifiable world as the real foundation of existence, it substituted the lifeworld with a mathematical model. Crucially, non-quantifiable matters of value, ultimate truth, or the purpose of life are thereby sloughed off as illusory; all that gives our daily experience of the lifeworld its rich texture is reduced to an epiphenomenon.

The sciences have lost all meaningfulness for life by being transformed into pure method; moreover, the actual dominance of the scientific worldview in the modern world has led to a similar deprivation of meaning in the world more broadly. For Husserl, the task of philosophy is to restore that sense of meaning through phenomenological investigations prioritizing precisely such questions. Philosophy thereby fulfills a therapeutic role, helping us recognize our own historicity in a way that reestablishes the horizon of meaning for our lives.

Husserl's apparent belief that phenomenology could remediate this crisis on its own may not have persuaded many, but his account has clear parallels with the critiques of reification in the Hegelian-Marxist tradition of Georg Lukács and the Frankfurt School. Lukács's own account brought Marx's account of commodity fetishism together with the analysis of societal rationalization developed by Max Weber, whose protégé he had been prior to his embrace of Bolshevism in 1918. For Weber, modernization entailed instrumental rationalization: questions of ultimate value were replaced by questions of efficiency in achieving unspecified ends. This was illustrated by the emergence of capitalism from the so-called Protestant ethic—the practice of self-denying asceticism combined with the belief that labor for its own sake was a morally valuable vocation from God. Over time, the religious values underlying this behavior were lost, but the institutionalization of such practices meant individuals could no longer choose to behave differently. Modern society became an iron cage, in which we were compelled to labor ceaselessly and ever more efficiently, but for no ultimate purpose. The rise of science concomitant with the drive for efficiency undermined the traditional foundations of values, leading to what Weber called the disenchantment of the world—a "de-magicalized" view of existence deprived of any ultimate meaning or worth. Only by willful commitment to ethical values that we nevertheless recognized as lacking any rational foundation could we hope to find purpose.

For Lukács, such rationalization was grounded on commodity fetishism, in which material relations between people took on the appearance of relations between things. The exchange of commodities in capitalism abstracted from the incommensurable, particular use value of objects, comparing them only in universal form as definite quantities of value defined by the socially necessary labor required for their production. In this way, commodities were divorced from the material practices and lived experience of those who made and exchanged them, constituting a social world of impersonal objects moving according to strict laws without human intervention: this is what Lukács terms reification. The same abstraction characterized the totality of capitalist social institutions—law, politics, the media, and even personal relations of marriage were treated in such depersonalized terms, foreclosing the

possibility of finding meaning in a social world that was reified over against us and beyond our control.

Lukács's account decisively influenced theorists of the Frankfurt School such as Theodor Adorno and Max Horkheimer. What Lukács located in the capitalist commodity, they identified in *Dialectic of Enlightenment* as a pathology of reason as a whole.[7] Reason, they argued, was one of two ways primitive humans had sought to master nature. The other, mimesis, respected particularity: to curse an opponent, one required something specific to them, a lock of their hair or their prized spear. Rationality, in contrast, subsumed individual details beneath universal concepts and abstract categories that denied their specificity. All reality was reduced to abstract representation in order to dominate and turn it to use; this was practically manifest in the technical and social apparatuses of capitalism. Yet the very instruments humanity used to dominate nature had in turn come to enslave human individuals. Undercutting every source of meaning in the world, rationality turned even humans into means to the continued existence of the system.

There were clear parallels, then, between Husserl's *Crisis* essay and the Marxist analysis of reification. Each criticized the dominance of an abstract understanding of the social and natural worlds, both for its destruction of meaning and value and for its exclusion of subjective agency. It is surprising, therefore, that there was very little positive interaction between them. Lukács had studied Husserl's earlier works in his pre-Marxist youth, but his decision to commit to Soviet Marxism precluded engagement with such an ostensibly bourgeois philosopher.[8] Adorno, in contrast, wrote extensively on Husserl and the phenomenological tradition, but in the most scathing terms. His *Against Epistemology* was a vituperative attack on Husserl's thought, made with scant regard for scholarly accuracy or rigor.[9] Rather than productive engagement with a philosopher whose thought suggested several potential points of contact with his own, Adorno offered a vicious polemic.

Yet the parallels between Husserl's account of Galilean science and the Marxist analysis of commodity fetishism could not be ignored forever. Perhaps the most serious attempt to draw the two traditions together was that of Enzo Paci, one of the leading lights of the Milan school of phenomenology, most comprehensively in *The Function of the Sciences and the Meaning of Man*.[10] Here, Paci offered a materialist reinterpretation of the *Crisis* essay, which he presented as the key to Husserl's thought as a whole. Grounding the argument is his interpretation of the lifeworld in terms of *need*. Using Husserl's terminology, he describes the human subject as a "body" in two senses: as *Körper*, the body is treated as an object or thing in the world; as *Leib*, the body is the seat of first-person subjective experience, the "point of interchange" between our internal mind and the external world. As *Leib*, we experience need: we require food, shelter, and more for our mere survival.

Existence in the lifeworld is characterized by its temporal irreversibility as our needs are ever renewed: we may eat today, but we will still need to eat again tomorrow. Yet our relation to the natural world that satisfies those needs is not directly that of an isolated *Leib*-subject to an object but is, rather, mediated through the intersubjective complex of social relations in which we are located, shaping both the needs we experience and the way we satisfy them. This is the substance of the lifeworld: it precedes the individual; the relations in which we sit are the product of past human operations; the meanings we attach to things are handed down from our culture; the language we use contains the sedimented meanings of past subjects. Yet Paci is no determinist, arguing that subjects use language creatively, constantly renewing and revising these meanings: subjective spontaneity plays a decisive role in the lifeworld. In a Marxist vein, Paci therefore identifies political economy as foundational, but he gives it a Husserlian cloak by his focus on subjective experience and intentionality in bestowing meaning on objectivity.

Technology and the sciences emerge from the lifeworld but have come to dominate it. Following Husserl, Paci saw science as a by-product of practical lifeworld activities, formalizing and systematizing knowledge gained in practical operations; he went beyond Husserl in using this insight to offer a Marxist analysis of capitalism's use of technology in production. Drawing on Lukács's account of commodity fetishism, Paci identified the central problem as production geared toward the accumulation of economic exchange value and the valorization of capital, rather than use-values that meet the concrete, subject-relative needs of living humans. The productive system is thereby detached from its lifeworld roots, with the result that it comes to rule over us. This economic and technological manifestation of Galilean science denies the significance of intentionality, and therefore subjectivity: it presents objects entirely detached from all human purposes, simply as an empty, meaningless system that cannot be changed. Humans themselves are no longer treated as subjective *Leiber* but instead only as *Körper*, as mere objects in the world to be manipulated.

Paci called, therefore, for the disocclusion of the lifeworld and a return to subjectivity that allows the true *telos* of history to emerge. To accomplish this, we must employ a version of Husserlian *epoché* that does not ignore external reality as such but merely "mundanity"—the world presented by capitalism. What remains is pure subjectivity—but not the abstract, worldless subjectivity of, say, Kant; instead, we recover the subject constituted by the intersubjective lifeworld, concerned with questions of meaning. As part of our sense-making, we come to understand this lifeworld in terms of a *telos*, its past pointing meaningfully toward a future of redeemed subjectivity in which alienation is overcome. Society as a whole and in its intersubjective

relations must be compatible with the fullest expression of the subjectivity of all. In this world, technology will once again serve rather than subordinate humans. In a classically Marxist vein, Paci identifies the proletariat as the agent of transformation. This class has been most thoroughly reduced to objectivity by capitalism—but this cannot obliterate the basic subjectivity of the proletarian's subjective experience. The interest of the working class is the restoration of the free, meaningful lifeworld; in doing so, it will benefit humanity as a whole.

In sum, Paci offers a materialist reinterpretation of Husserl's *Crisis* that ties it to revolutionary Marxist questions of subjectivity as well as to the concept of reification. But he expands Marxism through his phenomenological concern with embodied first-person experience and the significance of meaning, allowing him to offer a unique, non-reductionist materialist ontology that links subject and object while avoiding both idealism and naturalism.

Paci's approach made a particular impact on Paul Piccone, the founder and driving force behind the journal *Telos* at the end of the 1960s. From its earliest days, *Telos* was in opposition to Soviet orthodoxy; in a series of articles, Piccone called for a more humanistic Marxism. Echoing both Paci and Husserl, Piccone criticized thought for presenting reality in terms of abstract, fixed concepts detached from their basis in lived experience, thereby reducing subjects to the level of objects—but, crucially, he argued that this was just as characteristic of mechanistic versions of Marxism as of bourgeois thought. The error consisted in transposing Marx's categories, which had emerged from the lived realities of nineteenth-century capitalism, to an entirely different set of circumstances, and reached its nadir in Soviet thought, which treated Marxism as if it were an eternally valid metaphysics. As a result, the bureaucratic apparatus of the Soviet state treated society and the individuals within it merely as objects to be manipulated through a predetermined set of abstract categories; only the Party retained any subjectivity. In its place, Piccone called for a phenomenological Marxism that recuperated the origins of such conceptual systems in the living processes of the precategorial lifeworld, combined with a historicized understanding of subjectivity that could restore the revolutionary potential of Marxism against the system. Though Piccone's own position was to change over the years (culminating in *Telos*'s sympathy for Carl Schmitt), these early works offer a rich source for reading Marxist theory phenomenologically.

Husserlian Marxism, then, has typically drawn together the *Crisis* essay's account of Galilean science with Marxist analyses of commodity fetishism, finding parallels in their critique of the abstraction and reification of modern thought and society, and the way it objectifies and imprisons those living in it. Only a return to the concrete material processes of the lifeworld from which these abstract schemas emerged can overturn them. Something of

this argument survives in Jürgen Habermas's account of the colonization of the lifeworld by the system, in *The Theory of Communicative Action*.[11] For Habermas, earlier societies had primarily been coordinated within the lifeworld in which subjects encountered one another directly, in free and unconstrained interactions. However, the complexity of modern society required the emergence of depersonalized systems such as power or the economy in order to function. Problematically, these systems were now invading parts of society previously linked to the lifeworld: for example, the public sphere of the press had first emerged as a realm of free debate but had been taken over by imperatives of financial gain that rendered profit-seeking more important than finding truth or establishing consensus. Yet though Habermas uses the Husserlian term *Lebenswelt*, his lifeworld is different: it is the background of communicative action, containing the values and norms that members of society take for granted in their interactions. Habermas's account lacks the sense of a precategorial reality, a world in which projects emerge and make sense, that is so important to Husserlian Marxists like Paci and Piccone. It is in restoring that primacy of lived experience that they seek to correct the reifying tendencies of both bourgeois society and of deterministic versions of Marxism.

HEIDEGGERIAN MARXISM

Where Husserlian Marxism has typically related the later Marx's account of commodity fetishism to Galilean science, Heideggerian Marxism has usually drawn parallels between the younger Marx's account of alienated labor and Heidegger's phenomenology of the subject's practical, hands-on engagement with the world through practical activity in *Being and Time*.[12] Our primary access to Being, Heidegger argues, is not through the theoretical categories with which a thinking subject seeks to understand an object separate from it. Instead, we are directly and practically engaged in the world, as he illustrates in a famous example of the way we might ordinarily encounter a hammer. It is equipment, a tool used in certain tasks; we learn its properties—its suitability for the job, its weight—in the activity of using it, not through theories or experiments on it. Indeed, engaged in the activity of hammering, we may barely be conscious of the hammer as a separate object. This is what Heidegger refers to as readiness-to-hand, characterized by a direct involvement with things encountered in the world. It is only when the tool breaks that we might step back from it, consider it, and grasp it theoretically. Thus, the practical attitude to the world is primordial, and the theoretical approach is derivative and secondary.

Such engagement in the world is what defines us. Rather than being subjects (i.e., minds that relate to an external world of entities), our existence is characterized by what he calls Being-in-the-world: we are involved in a range of projects, activities, and networks of signification. The activity of hammering, for example, presupposes a world of commitments and meanings within which it makes sense: the craftsman makes a cart, suggesting a world in which carts have use, as well as the animals that pull it, the food these animals must eat, and so on. Rather than an isolated monad or Cartesian subject, the individual, or *Dasein*, exists within a complex network of significance, sharing a particular cultural or historical context with others. This world matters to us: such care, as Heidegger puts it, is fundamental to our being; we see the world through a particular mood, we pursue projects within it, and the way we act is shaped by the way those around us act. In this way, *Being and Time* initiates an ontological turn in phenomenology. In contrast to Husserl's focus on mental acts, Heidegger explores what it means to *be* in the world, and relates this to the question of the meaning of Being in general.

Heidegger's account is obviously suggestive of Marx's investigation of alienated labor in the *Economic and Philosophical Manuscripts*. For Marx, labor defines us as humans: unlike other animals, we plan it, we perform it to attain goals beyond mere satisfaction of instinct, and we labor within a determinate set of social relations alongside other humans. In laboring, we come to know our capacities as subjects. Capitalism, however, treats labor as a commodity to be bought and sold; the worker is employed in a factory, their work reduced to simple, repetitive interactions that bring no fulfillment, alienating us from our species-being. Like Heidegger, then, Marx identifies our existence with practical, hands-on engagement with the world.

Curiously, it is his encounter with Marx's *Manuscripts* when published in 1932 that is usually seen as the point at which the first Heideggerian Marxist moved away from Heidegger. Herbert Marcuse studied under Heidegger in the 1920s, writing his *Habilitationsschrift* under the latter's tutelage. Published in 1932, *Hegel's Ontology and the Theory of Historicity* offered a Heideggerian reading of Hegel's thought.[13] Marcuse argued that the idea of Life underlies Hegel's ontology, but he interprets this in Heideggerian fashion: Life is engaged in a world, enmeshed in its environment; objects stand in relation to it as meaningful for its existence. Shortly afterward, however, Marcuse fled Germany to escape the Nazi government that his teacher embraced as the fulfillment of his philosophy—a step for which Marcuse never forgave him. Marcuse's next major work was a review of Marx's *Manuscripts*, which he himself later described as his turning-away from Heidegger. However, as Marcuse's own student Andrew Feenberg argues, his reading of Marx here was still colored by phenomenology.[14] In one respect, Marcuse undoubtedly moved away from Heidegger here: where

the latter referred to a vague, general "historicity," Marcuse proposed a concrete Marxist account of historical development. However, his interpretation of Marx's claim that nature emerges in history as a human product is clearly Heideggerian: rather than implying an emanationist subject, he read Marx as arguing that nature *as meaningfully experienced* is shaped by human actions; the reified image provided by the natural sciences is secondary to and derivative of such practical engagement in reality. In this way, Marcuse argued, Marx achieves an "ontological" union of human and world.

Despite Marcuse's repudiation of his teacher, there are still traces of phenomenology in his later works. This is clearest in *One-Dimensional Man*, wherein Marcuse offered a scathing critique of a society dominated by a system of production oriented toward ever-greater consumption.[15] The populace comes to believe that the comforts offered by capitalism are all that is possible, ignoring the exploitation within the system and limiting their critical consciousness. This, he argued, was grounded on the one-dimensionality of technological rationality that obscured the teleological potential of objects to become something greater. Instead, it presented objects as fixed and static, with no *telos* of their own, and thus ready to be taken up and consumed. Society is similarly rationalized: politics is reduced to technocratic management rather than the realization of ethical possibilities such as the transformation of capitalism into socialism. Strikingly, Marcuse gives favorable mention to Husserl's *Crisis* here. Moreover, there are clear (though unspoken) parallels with Heidegger's "The Question Concerning Technology,"[16] wherein he describes modern technology as "enframing" the world, setting it forth, as a mere "standing reserve," material to be used, rather than part of a meaningful lived reality. Despite Marcuse's insistence that he had freed himself of Heidegger's influence, the two alike interpreted modern technological rationality as re-presenting the natural world as merely the stuff of industrial production.

In contrast to Marcuse, Karel Kosík is explicitly Heideggerian. Published during a period of relative liberalization in Czechoslovakia, his *Dialectics of the Concrete* was largely suppressed after the Soviet invasion of 1968 but earned Kosík a reputation abroad as a leading humanist Marxist.[17] Much of Kosík's language is directly taken from Heidegger: he argued that our fundamental relation to reality is one of practical engagement, not cognitive theorizing; objects exist within a horizon, part of an integrated whole that makes sense of them, while the subject exists as care, acting within a world of projects. In capitalism, however, our activity is a false form of praxis: fetishized social relations limit us to the manipulation and procuring of that which already exists, not the creation of something new. The pure subjectivity of care, Kosík argued, is reduced to a depersonalized objectivity in which humans are merely part of an all-consuming rational system. We live in a

world we have produced but do not recognize it as our own product; he terms this false, reified reality the *pseudoconcrete*. Kosík thereby draws together a Heideggerian account of subjective being with an analysis of reification that anchors pathological forms of existence as specific phenomena of capitalist society. At the same time, his argument is a critique of vulgar Marxism that reduces history to the unalterable machinery of iron laws: this version of materialism is just as mistaken as capitalist economics.

To overcome the pseudoconcrete, Kosík turned to Hegelian Marxism, arguing that such surface appearances must be penetrated dialectically to uncover their roots in human praxis and reveal subject and object as inextricably intertwined. Drawing together Heidegger's account of the temporality of *Dasein* with a philosophical anthropology that points to Marx's *Manuscripts*, Kosík offered a phenomenology of labor as a happening that constitutes us as human. Through labor, we become three-dimensionally temporal, resisting present cravings in using the products of the past to satiate ourselves in the future. Labor is where subjective human and objective nature come together: in working over the natural world, we humanize it, embodying and objectifying our meanings in the artifacts we create. Thus, what classical phenomenology described in terms of the intentionality of acts of consciousness, Kosík attributed to the material ways humans appropriate the world and form it meaningfully.

This analysis of labor points to Kosík's central claim: social reality is the result of human praxis. Even the pseudoconcrete social reality of capitalism—its economic categories and its reduction of the human to *Homo œconomicus*—is produced and reproduced by the material processes with which humans grasp the world. This did not imply that humanity is an absolute subject capable of unilaterally shaping reality; indeed, praxis entails coming to terms with the independence of the natural world. However, Kosík argued, Marxism reveals history as a human product that is neither absolutely free nor absolutely determined. Like laboring individuals, historical epochs are three-dimensionally temporal: they are shaped by preconditions inherited from the past, anchored in the structure of the present, and have consequences for future social life. History is rational, not because it is preordained by some Hegelian *Geist*, but through the praxis by which we realize ourselves. Reality is not merely natural: while nature exists independently of us, our lives take place within a socio-human reality engaging with a natural world humanized and made meaningful by praxis. In this way, we are always both natural and historical, subjective and objective.

For thinkers like Marcuse and Kosík, then, reading the early Marx of the *Manuscripts* and the early Heidegger of *Being and Time* together suggests a subjectivity defined in terms of practical engagement within a meaningful world that makes sense of our projects. In contrast to a purely cognitive

approach to reality that presupposes a subject separate from the object, Heideggerian Marxism offers a notion of praxis that unites the two in the material activity of producing the social world.

EXISTENTIAL MARXISM

As with the specific sense of existentialism upon which it is based, existential Marxism is primarily a French phenomenon from the post–World War II period. Emerging amid the turbulent philosophical and ideological scene that followed the end of the German occupation, and in which new intellectual foundations for the nation initially took shape, existential Marxism was roughly temporally coextensive with the Fourth Republic and reflected its evolving political contours. Humanism was the order of the day, but the *liberal* humanist ideas that had held sway during the interwar years of the Third Republic were widely regarded as discredited for having led to naïve attitudes of social detachment and political complacency with regard to the rise of fascism and the threat that it posed. Some sort of *critical* humanism was called for, a more complete or integral humanism, and in keeping with the French tradition of *engagement* stemming from the Dreyfus Affair, many intellectuals self-consciously came to recognize an irreducibly political dimension in their work. Given the perceived collaborationist tendencies of more mainstream political views, and the fact that the French Communist Party (PCF) had played a prominent role in the Resistance, broadly Marxist ideas were relatively influential among the French population, regardless of party affiliation, and many intellectuals turned to Marxism as a framework for the critically engaged humanist outlook they sought.

At the same time, various new existentialist ideas were also gaining prominence in France. As with existential thinking more generally, French existentialism took both religious and secular forms, and in the postwar context the former tended to draw upon and radicalize older traditions of left-wing Social Catholicism. Politically and normatively, there was often some overlap with Marxism. But the underlying grounds differed fundamentally from nonreligious existential perspectives. Concerning existential Marxism, the specific kind of secular existentialism involved was *phenomenological* existentialism, or existential phenomenology. As a way to give politically humanistic form to existential insights on a secular basis, existential Marxism was premised on the recognition of important philosophical affinities between Marxism and existential interpretations of Husserlian phenomenology.

The specificity of existential Marxism so construed stems largely from the uniqueness of the prewar context in which it was rooted, which was characterized by the roughly simultaneous introduction into French intellectual life

of a century of German philosophy—notably, Hegelianism, Marxism, and phenomenology. Existential Marxism emerged from (but not necessarily *as*) an eclectic mash-up of these traditions.

1. In the 1930s, Hegel came to be widely discussed in France in ways that emphasized his *Phenomenology of Spirit*—not, however, as the introduction to a triumphant system of absolute idealism, but rather as the dramatic adventure of consciousness through historical forms of alienation. The most well-known of these neo-left-Hegelian readings was Alexandre Kojève's lectures on Hegel's *Phenomenology* that were centered on the mortal struggle through which Hegel had portrayed the dialectic of mastery and slavery.[18] Although gripping, Kojève's reading of the *Phenomenology* was exegetically weak, and it suggested a highly implausible end-of-history claim. But by offering a concrete conception of human history as a story of disalienation through struggle, it left an indelible mark on many French minds, and helped prepare the existential-Marxist reconciliation of Hegel with Marx and Husserl.

2. Concerning Marxism, the 1930s also saw the publication of Marx's *Economic and Philosophical Manuscripts*—originally in 1932, and in French translation in 1937 (with some excerpts appearing earlier). As with Heideggerian Marxism, the significance of these texts for existential Marxism cannot be overstated. But their import was somewhat different. Lending strong philosophical support to a humanist reading of Marxism that accorded central importance to issues of alienation, they provided the grounds for an existential conception of historical materialism that dovetailed neatly with the more radical approach to Hegel that was emerging at the same time. In affirming the theoretical priority of Marx's early philosophical work over the later texts on political economy, the existential view was in effect the target of Althusser's later claim of an "epistemological break" in Marx's intellectual development.

3. It is noteworthy that in trying to push back on the official received understanding of Marxism, French interest in Marx's *Manuscripts* was originally limited to left-wing Catholicism.[19] Theirs may have been a "militant" view in the theological sense, but what made existential Marxism a more politically militant approach, at least potentially, had to do with its phenomenological basis. Although Husserl was not unknown in France prior to his 1929 Paris Lectures (the basis of *Cartesian Meditations*),[20] it was especially in the late 1930s and into the war years, after he himself had radicalized his own approach to phenomenology in the *Crisis* texts,[21] that edgier existential takes on phenomenological givenness and the analysis of intentional experience slowly began to take shape in France. In this it is significant that two

key figures of existential Marxism, Maurice Merleau-Ponty and Trân Dúc Tháo, were among the very first to consult unpublished material at the newly established Husserl Archive in Leuven. These developments would narrow the gap between Hegelian and Husserlian conceptions of phenomenology and help make a Marxist humanism philosophically viable on a secular basis.

The seeds of many fruitful ideas were contained in this rich confluence of Hegel, Marx, and Husserl. But as a somewhat eclectic mix, it did lead to divergent views. This is reflected in the relationship between Merleau-Ponty and Jean-Paul Sartre, and the story of existential Marxism is largely (but not entirely) the story of the vicissitudes of this relationship. The central issue ultimately concerned how consciousness can be understood otherwise than as merely an epiphenomenal reflection of social being (as in, for example, Lenin's *Materialism and Empirio-Criticism*).

Although Sartre is often the figure most readily associated with existential Marxism, this may be due simply to his being the most famous figure. For as worked out in his best-known work, *Being and Nothingness*,[22] the main tenets of his existential-phenomenological ontology suggest an extreme individualism that stands in considerable tension with the main tenets of Marxism. Affirmations of absolute freedom, the apparent dualism of being in- and for-itself, and the seemingly interminable conflict between consciousnesses do not lend themselves very well to collective historical agency aimed at social transformation and universal reconciliation. Expressing a non-egological view of consciousness, this outlook ultimately stemmed from a restricted conception of phenomenology. Rejecting the transcendental turn as presented in *Ideas I*,[23] and with only the published texts in view, Sartre turned back to Husserl's earlier conceptions of phenomenology and intentionality. Sartrean existentialism is thus based on a wholly dereified conception of consciousness that rejects any meaningful sense of transcendental subjectivity.

Some references to Marxism notwithstanding, *Being and Nothingness* thus has no overt political dimension, and can easily appear apolitical—even the phenomenology of anti-Semitism that Sartre published shortly after the war was conspicuously lacking in social and political analysis.[24] But in the postwar context, this would not do, and Sartre was compelled to try—hence his famous lecture, "Existentialism Is a Humanism." Here he claimed that his existentialism *did* imply a robust humanism. But rather than being based on any positive (reified or *thing-ish*) feature of human beings, it is based on the nothingness (*no-thing-ness*) of consciousness, our freedom of self-transcendence, *and that this is coherent only on a universal basis*: "In choosing myself, I choose man . . . I bear the responsibility of a choice that, in

committing myself, also commits humanity as a whole."[25] Individual freedom implies the freedom of others.

Although not yet embracing Marxism, Sartre was trying to articulate a political orientation by arguing that human subjectivity *is* inherently inter-subjective. In so doing, he was partly taking a page from Merleau-Ponty (among others). Sartre himself recognized that Merleau-Ponty—who served as the political editor of the journal *Les temps modernes* that they co-founded after the war—had always been politically ahead of him, and that he had embraced Marxism much earlier. And this difference has a phenomenological aspect: unlike Sartre, Merleau-Ponty was drawn to Husserl's later work—the *Crisis* texts and other unpublished works to which he had access, including *Ideas II*[26]—that built upon the transcendental turn of *Ideas I* by radicalizing it in connection with the body and the lifeworld. It was on this basis that Merleau-Ponty interpreted Husserl through the lens of the idea that *transcendental subjectivity is intersubjectivity*.[27] We are irreducibly embedded in the pregiven lifeworld, and this is tied to Merleau-Ponty's focus on corporeality and embodied existence rather than just consciousness as such. In contrast to Sartre's view, then, this does not make our connection with others rest on a heavy moral imperative that retains echoes of Cartesian dualism, but rather tries to disclose the latent reality of that connection at the precognitive level of intercorporeal praxis, the transcendental fact of "a historical rationality immanent in the life of men [*sic*]."[28]

It was along the lines of unpacking what we might call the "proletarian lifeworld" that Merleau-Ponty had tried to articulate the terms of an existential-phenomenological Marxism. For him, existential phenomenology and Marxism effectively converged as forms of concrete critique based on the holistic or totalistic idea, definitive for him of historical materialism, "that morals, conceptions of the law and of the world, modes of production and work, are internally linked and mutually expressive."[29] On the basis of such a view he could maintain that even though particular historical events are thoroughly contingent, there is nonetheless an overarching "logic of history" whereby those events ultimately form a "single drama" that moves "toward a privileged state that gives the meaning of the whole."[30] Existential phenomenology and Marxism thus converge on the Gestalt-theoretic necessity that there *is* a meaningful direction in history by which we can and should orient ourselves with regard to historical contingency. The critical aim of existential Marxism is thus to decipher events, "to provide a perception of history which would continuously bring to appearance the lines of force and vectors of the present."[31] It was in this way that Merleau-Ponty made an audacious claim, the gist of which would later be reprised by Sartre:

On close consideration, Marxism is not just any hypothesis that might be replaced tomorrow by some other. It is the simple statement of those conditions without which there would be neither any humanism, in the sense of a mutual relation between men, nor any rationality in history. In this sense Marxism is not a philosophy of history; it is *the* philosophy of history and to renounce it is to dig the grave of Reason in history.[32]

This is not necessarily dogmatic, but it may be overly formal. For where would it leave us? While Sartre may have made the realization of a radical humanism rest upon the subjective voluntarism of a demanding moral imperative, Merleau-Ponty in contrast was more passively dependent upon the vicissitudes of objective historical circumstance. Are the actual forces of Communism still equal to their humanist intentions? Which events belong to the main thread of history, and which are mere diversions? *Qua* agency of revolutionary change, who exactly are the proletariat anyway? Such were the problems of historical perception that Merleau-Ponty had to contend with, and which led to his much-maligned "policy of waiting [*politique d'attente*], without illusion" that to many did not appear to be an especially robust form of *engagement*.

Among the others from whom Sartre may have been inspired in giving his existentialism a political push was Simone de Beauvoir. Traditional assumptions to the effect that Beauvoir simply drew on Sartre's thought and applied it to the situation of women have now been debunked, in favor of a view according to which she was an important source for the development of his own thought. In particular, in works such as *The Ethics of Ambiguity* and *The Second Sex*,[33] Beauvoir addressed the economic and socio-cultural structures that materially condition human life in a way that was clearly inspired by her understanding of Marx at the time. For Beauvoir, "the materiality of the human condition is what both enables us to engage in free, creative action in the world and constrains and delimits what we do. This ambiguous mixture of freedom and constraints also suffuses human relations."[34] In addressing the situation of women in particular as one of *oppression* along the lines of Marx's analysis of alienation, Beauvoir gendered the notions of freedom and self-transcendence in ways that were clearly distinct from the story told in *Being and Nothingness*. In contrast to Sartre, seeing such situations through the lens of Marxism enabled Beauvoir "to comprehend the social relations that put certain groups into situations of material dependency, making them vulnerable to, and sometimes complicit in, their alterity and oppression."[35]

In recognizing the essential ambiguity of embodied existence, the insuperable tension between immanence and transcendence, and in seeing that the realization of concrete freedom on a universal basis would require substantial social transformation, Beauvoir initially had more in common

with Merleau-Ponty than with Sartre. But there is a tension in that this ambiguity would appear to confound the active pursuit of such transformation—Merleau-Ponty's seemingly disengaged *attentisme* while awaiting an *un*ambiguous perception of history may be taken as exemplifying this. It was far from clear that a phenomenology oriented to the intercorporeal praxis constitutive of the lifeworld would have anything to offer toward the social, political, and cultural changes that the liberation of women implied. For the sexual division of labor was rooted precisely in that intercorporeality. Authentic freedom does indeed imply the freedom of others. So when the freedom of some, if not most, is severely compromised by oppression, then one risks inauthentic complicity if one fails to take a radical moral stand against the immanent structures of oppression. Such is the lesson that Beauvoir helped impress upon Sartre.

Starting in the late 1940s and continuing into the mid-1950s, the political trajectories of Sartre and Merleau-Ponty thus basically crossed. On the one hand, the situation in France and internationally was offering Merleau-Ponty increasingly fewer clearly discernible signs that contemporary Communism was in fact portending an adequate humanist solution. He thus dampened his already highly qualified sympathies, and the Soviet Union's imperialist role in Korea was for him the final straw. But Merleau-Ponty did not abandon his normative commitments, nor fundamentally alter his view of Marxism. Rather, he undertook a critical revision of his understanding of phenomenology, and tried to rethink it in methodologically *expressive* terms that would afford the possibility of perceiving the dialecticity of historical events against the larger background of the totality of nature.[36] Merleau-Ponty thus pursued a phenomenology of nature as a kind of critique of dialectical reason (to borrow a phrase) that could address outstanding philosophical problems in Marxism concerning the agency of historical change and its grounds.[37] In so doing, he effectively renounced the Lukácsian critique of Engels and the consequent exclusion of nature that was definitive of so-called Western Marxism—his later phenomenological ontology may be seen as contributing at least indirectly to Marxist philosophy, but not in that specifically qualified sense.

On the other hand, as the Cold War set in, and at least prior to events in Hungary in 1956, Sartre steadily ramped up his ostensible commitment to Marxism. But while he may have acquired a broader social perspective from Beauvoir, this belated embrace of Marxism occurred without Sartre fundamentally altering his earlier existential ontology, which was always at odds conceptually with the Marxist notion of class. So even though he never became a member of the PCF, as a nose-holding fellow-traveler Sartre (along with Beauvoir) increasingly embraced vanguardist ideas that regarded party organization as an essential and indispensable condition of

revolutionary agency. So while Merleau-Ponty, faced with the downturn in popular struggle, tried to undo the dualism of nature and history in order to disclose phenomenologically more deeply immanent normative grounds of such agency, Sartre in contrast doubled down on that dualism in the form of what effectively amounts to a communist Cartesianism that tried to come to terms with the possibility of an authentic revolutionary intersubjectivity that was not embedded in the intercorporeality of the lifeworld. Sartre developed this at great length in his social-ontological discussion of "groups" and their formation—especially what he called "groups-in-fusion"—in the first volume of his *Critique of Dialectical Reason*, which appeared in 1960.[38]

Merleau-Ponty had earlier harshly criticized the basis of Sartre's approach to Marxism as "ultrabolshevism."[39] The point of contention here ultimately has to do with the scope of phenomenology and how it fits into the project. In calling Marxism "*the* philosophy of history," Merleau-Ponty had in mind that an expressive or generative conception of phenomenology could support a fallible self-reflexivity in the historical perception of totality—that a Marxism allied with such a phenomenology would contain the means of its own self-critique or falsifiability. Rather differently, when Sartre claimed that Marxism is "the philosophy of our time," that "[w]e cannot go beyond it because we have not gone beyond the circumstances which engendered it,"[40] he was in effect, if unintentionally, ensuring a dogmatic view of totality, rather than one that would be more responsive to evolving concrete conditions, since for him phenomenology was simply not in a methodological position to contribute anything to the project at that level. At its apogee, then, Sartrean existential Marxism had a moral rather than a phenomenological compass.

Something similar might be said of Trân Dúc Tháo. Trân had studied under Jean Cavaillès and was close to Merleau-Ponty during the war and the postwar period of Liberation, which began, rather ironically, with France initiating military intervention in its Southeast Asian colonies. Trân initially shared with Merleau-Ponty the idea of trying to develop an existential Marxism based on a lifeworld phenomenology, and he was the first to apply such ideas to the problems of colonialism and national liberation struggles.[41] Although generally critical of Sartre from this perspective, the development of Trân's anticolonial politics exposed limitations with phenomenology even, or perhaps especially, when pursued by way of a concrete analysis of the lifeworld. For he came to see that the horizons of "French" lived experience effectively precluded the possibility of Vietnamese independence. Analogous to the problems discerned by Beauvoir with regard to the situation of women, Trân saw that, despite its intentions, on issues of colonialism even Merleau-Pontian phenomenology is liable to remain trapped in an idealist Eurocentric bubble.

More generally, in his 1951 work *Phenomenology and Dialectical Materialism*,[42] Trân claimed that phenomenology operates within egological horizons and that it unavoidably raises questions concerning the real origins of consciousness that in principle cannot be answered within those horizons. Its constitutive analyses of antepredicative experience necessarily lead it into intractable contradictions that could only be resolved, Trân thought, within the framework of dialectical materialism. For here subjectivity is understood in terms of "*nature* itself in its *becoming-subject* . . . the real movement by which nature *becomes conscious of itself* in biological development and human history."[43] This turn to nature and biology is not unlike what Merleau-Ponty wanted to pursue on a generative phenomenological basis, and in this he may well have been partly motivated by Trân's critique. But for his part, Trân was clear: the limited scope of phenomenology precludes it from gaining a truly critical view of the lifeworld, which could only be achieved through dialectical materialism. In short, for Trân, "Marxism appears to us as the only conceivable solution to the problems raised by phenomenology itself,"[44] and in shifting the center of historical gravity away from France, he looked to the national liberation struggle in Vietnam to provide a concrete resolution of those problems.

It is tempting to see Trân's view of the fraught relation between phenomenology and Marxism as reflecting the fault line that divided Merleau-Ponty and Sartre—whether the normative basis of concrete universality is authentically and materially immanent—and thus as exposing what many critics have suggested, to wit, that existential Marxism is an oxymoronic dead end. But Trân's view is itself far from stable. For how could either side, both of which are essentially oriented toward totality, coherently claim only a partial validity? It is not clear that *anything* is left standing here. So while Trân may have shifted Merleau-Ponty's orientation toward the proletarian lifeworld of France to the seemingly more radicalized lifeworld of national anticolonial struggle in Vietnam, and while this might implicate the sort of transcendent or unembedded moral impulse—along with the concomitant preparedness for eventual violence—that became more characteristic of Sartre's approach,[45] it may be the case that the relation between phenomenology and Marxism cannot be conjunctive, but rather needs to be understood and developed in a more integrated fashion. And this would mean working out a productive reconciliation of Merleau-Ponty and Sartre's respective emphases on immanence and transcendence, and doing so in a way that is neither Euro- nor androcentric.

Trân's anticolonial perspective influenced many others, including Frantz Fanon.[46] But Fanon's outlook was ultimately quite different. Unlike Trân, Fanon saw the need to adapt Marxism to the specific problems of colonialism, and here we get promising indications of precisely that sort of reconciliation between the Merleau-Pontian and Sartrean approaches. In ways that may

have been partly mediated by Beauvoir,[47] in Fanon's work there is much greater dialectical continuity between phenomenological analyses of concrete experience and its broader socio-historical horizons—for example, between the expanded account of lived embodiment that supports a phenomenology of racialized experience,[48] and the critical analysis of the overarching geopolitical context of colonial capitalism and anticolonial struggles against it.[49] There is a lot going in Fanon's work—phenomenology and Marxism are brought into engagement with the Négritude movement, Hegelianism, as well as with psychiatric theory. Rethought through the prism of revolutionary struggle, all of this was aimed at a radical new humanism, and it may be in Fanon that we can catch at least a preliminary glimpse of what a decolonized existential Marxism might look like as a response to "the crisis of European man."

TOWARD A NEW PHENOMENOLOGICAL MARXISM

Despite their significant differences, then, there are numerous points of contact between phenomenology and a non-reductionist Marxism. Many of the leading figures in both traditions shared the same concerns about alienation and the condition of humanity in the reified modern world. The chapters in this volume do not, however, seek to recapitulate these established accounts. Rather, they seek to uncover hitherto-overlooked parallels and conversations between the two traditions, to identify the implications of bringing them together, and to suggest new aspects of a phenomenology of capitalism.

The first three chapters agree in finding some intrinsic unity between phenomenology and Marxism—and in explaining this through questions of ecology and nature. Ian Angus brings together Husserl and Marx through their shared critique of formal abstraction divorced from the particulars underlying it, but he argues that their proposed solutions for a return to the world of the concrete are flawed. Both Husserl and Marx seek such a return through particularity and concrete experience, he argues, but neither succeeds because the connection between system and individual remains unclear. Instead, he proposes turning to a transversal relation toward the individual's background or horizon. The individual stands out against that horizon: what makes it an individual is that it is different from all that is around it. Abstraction conceals this by reducing the horizon to homogeneity; if instead we renew the relation of the particular to the whole in which it is situated, we can restore a kind of concretion. It is, Angus concludes, ecology that provides a model of this in its understanding of living things interacting with the worlds they inhabit, and should therefore be the starting point of a renewed phenomenological Marxism for the twenty-first century.

Where Angus draws ecological lessons from Husserl and Marx themselves, Marilyn Nissim-Sabat examines the adoption of Marx by contemporary ecosocialists, suggesting that they should interpret Marx as offering a humanist phenomenology along the lines of Husserl's *Crisis* rather than as pure science or philosophy. Such ecosocialism is caught in a contradictory understanding of Marx's account of the natural world: on the one hand, they reject the dehumanized relation to the world characterized by a positivism that treats nature as entirely independent of us; on the other hand, they recognize the objective existence of nature, beyond subjective knowledge. Nissim-Sabat argues that Marx's own solution parallels Husserl's phenomenological reduction in bracketing this question. Instead, he refers to materiality in two senses—one designates that which exists independently of human existence, while the second refers to the material world as experienced, known, and engaged with through cultural and social systems created by humans. Here, she suggests, there are again parallels with Husserl's call to return to a praxis predicated on the recognition that all our cultural products and projects have risen out of human activity. Both Marx and Husserl are, therefore, humanists in their preoccupation with our social creation of a world; recalling this reminds us of our freedom, against subservience to a reified understanding of nature.

Related to Nissim-Sabat's discussion of Marxism as a phenomenological humanism, while consonant with Angus's view of non-anthropocentric ecology, Bryan Smyth takes up the question of nature and humanity's relation to it in order to draw out the underlying epistemic point that both projects rest crucially on myth. Contrary to Enlightenment dogma, myth is an ineliminable dimension of human experience, and it behooves phenomenology and Marxism to embrace this fact. For their analyses both involve an orientation toward totality and hence a dialectical continuity with nature. But this can only figure in their accounts as a *horizon of narrative significance*, not as a reified object of scientific discourse. Far from impugning their rational credentials, recognition of the role played by myth on the part of phenomenology and Marxism—in the form, respectively, of a Husserlian generative phenomenology of the biohistorical lifeworld, and a biological and paleo-anthropological reprise of Engels's account of natural dialecticity—would imply a *higher level of critical enlightenment*. Smyth thus argues that they instantiate a positive reinterpretation of Horkheimer and Adorno's pessimistic claim that "enlightenment reverts to mythology." Concerning nature, then, both projects involve a moment of critical mythopoiesis that has real political import inasmuch as problematic forms of reification are primarily a function of normatively deficient mythic horizons.

The next two chapters take an intellectual-historical approach, seeking to identify hitherto-unremarked phenomenological elements in Marxist thought. Richard Westerman argues that Lukács's account of commodity fetishism as

a form of objectivity with a correlative subjective stance implies a notion of intentionality taken from his earlier reading of Husserl, transposed from mental acts to social practices that handle objects in specific ways. Thus, the commodity may be treated either as abstract exchange value or as a concrete use value; each is a distinct sense of the object, depending on the way it is intended. Such intentionality grounds a Lukácsian social ontology that recognizes the world of commodities as a reality in which abstract, quantitative objects circulate according to unalterable laws, excluding particularity and content from the network of social relations. As a result, the individual is integrated formalistically into social relations, while their personal qualities are designated as non-social; as specific individuals, they are alienated from society. It is this, Westerman argues, that motivates Lukács's account of the revolutionary party: a democratic, participatory party that incorporates the individual into the practice of organization will thereby overcome the passive contemplativity that results from the commodity form.

Probing even deeper into the history of Marxism, Mark Blum follows the lead of the Austro-Marxist Max Adler in identifying the elements of a phenomenological social science not only in Marx but even in Kant. For Adler, Kant sought to engage phenomenologically with the meaningful texture of lived experience, rather than reducing it to empty concepts. Such experience depends on what Adler refers to as the "social *a priori*," an intersubjective, preconceptual background to experience that gives a preliminary meaning to our interactions, and which, he argued, paralleled Husserl's lifeworld. Both Kant and Marx, Blum argues, sought to understand how we acquire such background know-how and come together as groups, both referring to this process as *Vergesellschaftung*, or "sociation." He points in particular to Marx's observations on the interactions of communist artisans coming together in a collective as a phenomenological account of this process, in which the individual not only learns the group's norms but also comes to need their companionship more. A proper phenomenology of this intersubjective process drawing on Adler and Husserl can, Blum suggests, help us understand what unifies social groups—and point toward more just forms of sociation for a post-revolutionary society.

It is the possibility of connecting Marx and Heidegger that motivates the contributions of Christian Lotz and Kurt Mertel in the next two chapters. Where much previous Heideggerian Marxism concentrated on the role of labor in Heidegger's early work, Lotz and Mertel both set his later thought in conversation with Marx. Lotz draws on recent value form theory to rebut Heidegger's critique of Marx in the *Letter on Humanism*: he is wrong, Lotz argues, to read Marx's emphasis on labor as a metaphysical account of subjectivity, for it is only in capitalism that labor in its abstract form is elevated to the central principle of society. As a result, the two are closer than they

first seem: capital constitutes an epoch in Heideggerian sense, one in which all relations among humans and toward nature are subsumed by the value form. In the same way, both argue that modern technology enframes or forms the natural world abstractly and universally, as objects to be manipulated and used. Ultimately, however, Lotz argues that the concrete historical analysis of Marx's account sets it above Heidegger's general historicity, identifying specific sources of the socialized abstraction both find problematic, and thereby pointing to its possible overcoming.

In contrast, Mertel finds potential for a critical social ontology that draws on both the early and the later Heidegger and on Marx. He identifies two strands of contemporary left-Heideggerianism. One, the "political paradigm," treat politics as primary: drawing on the later Heidegger to treat Being as an event or abyss rather than a metaphysical foundation that grounds the social order, it presents the political as an undetermined space of contestation, and the social as the reified outcome of political struggle. However, Mertel argues, this approach provides no criterion by which to identify which political projects are genuinely emancipatory. Instead, he calls for a return to the "social paradigm" of left-Heideggerianism epitomized by Marcuse, and centered on the *Umweltanalyse* that reveals *Dasein* as always already situated within a network of meaningful, unreified social relations. Here, it is *Angst* that provides the moment of instability that the political paradigm sought. Yet Mertel calls for a reconciliation between the early and the later Heidegger, so as to ground a historical analysis of *Dasein* that recognizes the different possibilities for authenticity and emancipation in various socio-historical contexts, rather than the universal terms of *Being and Time*. In this way, the social is shown not to be reified in the way the political paradigm assumes; rather, it offers within itself a certain emancipatory potential.

The remaining contributions extend and apply new phenomenological Marxist approaches to the analysis of modern society and its ethical implications. It is the normative implications of this approach that are the center of Max Schaefer's critical analysis of Marx's *Manuscripts* and the thought of Michel Henry. Latent within Marx's thought, he argues, is an ethics that privileges rational objectification, seen in the labor through which we remake the world according to reason; human flourishing depends on a communal life in which subjects take rational control of themselves and of the world. Though sympathetic to Marx, Henry turns away from such engagement with the objective world. Instead, it is pure subjective life, directly manifest in its drive to express itself, that grounds moral norms affectively. Nevertheless, Schaefer argues, Henry himself tacitly depends on the ability to call on reason in shaping the external world so as to ensure happiness. While recognizing with Henry that the subject can never fully master itself, we are still somewhat guided by relatively autonomous reason. This suggests an aleatory

materialism that recognizes the determinative effects of social conditions but avoids seeing history as the teleological expression of a rational human essence; it thus encourages new forms of experience and practice that realize drives in a multiplicity of encounters with the world.

Sharing Schaefer's concern with subjectivity, Paul Mazzocchi places individual experience at the heart of his interpretation of Walter Benjamin. Mazzocchi examines the two kinds of memory and experience outlined by Benjamin: the first, *Erfahrung*, refers to the integrated, deeply embedded memories that ground the subject's sense of their own life; the second, *Erlebnis*, refers to traumatic and fragmentary shock experiences that cannot be integrated into deep memory. It is *Erlebnis* that is produced by life in industrial capitalism, whether in the factory worker's repetitive labor, or in pushing through the crowds that throng the rapidly growing cities. The body responds by insulating itself against shock, its open sensuousness replaced by anaesthetic numbness. Moreover, Mazzocchi argues, intersubjective relations become distorted: capitalism crushes members of the crowd together into an undifferentiated mob, denying the space required for genuine intersubjectivity. Fascism takes advantage of this, reducing that crowd to passive contemplation of grand spectacles set up to satisfy the senses. In contrast, revolutionary communism rebuilds the space between individuals, restoring intersubjectivity, thereby allowing the emergence of collective agency and new, enriched experiences.

Jérôme Melançon's chapter has a similar focus on the phenomenology of the lived experience of contemporary society: such experiences, he argues, vary depending on one's place within social structures in ways that determine the possibility of a counter-hegemonic class consciousness. To explain this, Melançon turns to Erik Olin Wright's theory of contradictory class locations. Recognizing that Marx's antagonistic dyad of bourgeoisie and proletariat did not capture the complexity of class in contemporary capitalism, Wright identified the different permutations of class relations possible in modern society, pointing out that those in managerial positions are neither strictly proletarian nor bourgeois, and whose interests might therefore pull them in opposing directions. Such contradictory locations can be found, Melançon argues, in Fanon's account of colonial society: while the phenomenology of *Black Skin, White Masks* has been much examined, Melançon turns instead to *Wretched of the Earth* and *A Dying Colonialism*. Here, Fanon discusses social locations such as those of colonized intellectuals or national bourgeoisies, people whose interests may align them with either colonizers or the colonized masses. Crucially, Melançon argues, Fanon does not reduce individuals to their place within such structures; rather, the complex of relations produces phenomenologically different experiences of subjectivity and objectivity that offer varying levels of possibility for a revolutionary consciousness. Fanon's

method, he concludes, could help understand the dynamics of contemporary colonialism and identify potential sites of resistance.

Whether they identify historical connections, argue for a fundamental theoretical convergence, or apply the approach of one tradition to the questions and lacunae of the other, the contributors to this volume identify new ways in which Marxism and phenomenology might productively intersect. This survey has certainly not been exhaustive, and there are other important theoretical questions and political issues to which such an intersection might apply. But as these contributions help show, the seeming incompatibility with which we started is by no means the final word. Indeed, in the wake of poststructuralist erasures of subjectivity and postmodern incredulity *vis-à-vis* grand narratives, Marxism and phenomenology can come to look like two sides of a timely coin, each providing a distinct but complementary approach to understanding the crisis tendencies of modernity. With these tendencies assuming increasingly intense forms in the context of twenty-first-century capitalism, a productive reconciliation of the respective strengths of phenomenology and Marxism offers promising possibilities for articulating the terms of a concrete resolution.

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NOTES

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30. Merleau-Ponty, *Humanism and Terror*, 153.

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39. Merleau-Ponty, *Adventures of the Dialectic*, 95–201.

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42. Trân Dúc Tháo, *Phenomenology and Dialectical Materialism*, trans. Donald V. Morano (Dordrecht: Reidel, 1986).

43. Trân, *Phenomenology and Dialectical Materialism*, 129.

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The Problem of Form

Recovery of the Concrete in Contemporary Phenomenological Marxism

Ian Angus

European modernity is essentially tied to the domination of a certain form of abstraction over knowledge and social organization.[1] Even while such dominance has today become planetary, it is tied to its roots in the science and technology of the European Renaissance and its subsequent developments. The successive crises associated with this domination have led to successive critical analyses of its sources, forms, and consequences. This type of abstraction may be called formal insofar as it is not an abstraction from species to genus, which retains a material component and thus reference to possible concrete instantiations. Formal abstraction loses such connection due to its abstraction from any material content to an undetermined sign. The application of sign systems to social organizations and knowledge-structures is top-down, as it were, undetermined or limited by the material content to which application is made. The difficulties inherent in such application of formal abstraction irrespective of material content has given rise to the call for philosophy to return to the concrete, that is to say, for philosophy to relinquish its alliance with the dominance of formal abstraction and to pose critically the question of the limits and justification of its application to a given material content.

Two such attempts to recover the concrete have already become classic in our time. Ludwig Landgrebe claimed that Karl Marx addressed in an earlier

form the same historical crisis of modernity as Edmund Husserl in *Crisis of European Sciences and Transcendental Phenomenology*.[2] I will show that a third form of crisis has emerged that must be addressed by a reformulated phenomenological Marxism. We might call these, for simplicity's sake, the nineteenth-, twentieth-, and twenty-first-century forms of crisis and critique. I will show not only that the special science that is the object of critique shifts from political economy to mathematical physics to ecology but also that the sense of a return to the concrete correspondingly shifts. From the perspective of the third form, which will become evident in the teleology of the current presentation, the first two forms share a significant focus on the return to the concrete understood as a return to the immediate intuition of concrete individuals. While such a return is not (or no longer) possible in that manner, a recapturing of the concrete is both possible and necessary that is oriented not to individuals as such but to their relation to an unthematized background and horizon. It is the essential role played by background and horizon in the perception of individuals that motivates and justifies the contemporary turn to ecology as the exemplary special science.

The interpretation of Edmund Husserl's and Karl Marx's work is necessarily adumbrated here due to both the large extent of such work and the large volume of commentary. It is guided by teleological interpretation in the sense given to that term by Landgrebe: it focuses primarily not on the words and concepts utilized by Husserl nor Marx but on the emerging dynamic of philosophical articulation within their works. While the formulation of new problems must necessarily rely on terminology with established lineage and meaning, such usage may draw the understanding of such problems back to prior conceptual structures. Teleological interpretation, in contrast, "must be careful not to mistake the preliminary meaning of a name for the intended states of affairs themselves."[3] It is essential to both phenomenology and Marxism (understood as the continuation of Marx's critical method)[4] that the investigation is guided by an encounter with the phenomenon as it presents itself and only secondarily by previous investigations into the same or similar phenomena. Despite many points of agreement with the two previous forms of critique, the third critical form outlined here is distinct from them in essence and teleology. Identical to the previous forms, however, twenty-first-century phenomenological Marxism is limited to the critical intellectual-spiritual form of a historical crisis. It makes no promises whatever that the historical crisis itself will be adequately addressed or overcome.

The problem of form is the generative problem of European modernity and its influence on planetary technology. In Marx, it is shown that the presupposition of technological advance is the expulsion of the owners of labor-power from control of the work process such that its design focuses exclusively

on the end-product and not on the experience of labor itself. In that sense it is a formal organization elaborated independently of its experiential content, an organization of abstract rather than concrete labor. For Husserl, the twentieth-century crisis of the European sciences was the reduction of knowledge or reason due to its reliance on formal abstraction to a theoretical technique severed from meaning and value.[5] A contemporary ecological elaboration of phenomenological Marxism must address the relationship between technological intervention in natural processes and the balance between such processes in an ecological whole. This requires technical invention to be developed from within the active work process and not subsume that process within a formal organization.[6] In this sense the problem of form that defines modernity is outwardly expressed as a problem of technology, but this is not just any technology but specifically technology elaborated in a formal manner that removes meaning and value from its determinate content. The public face of the problem of form in European modernity is the critique of technologies of subsumption in favor of a recovery of concrete experience and technologies that reinforce such experience. Its philosophical face is the critique of form itself to which this chapter is directed.

HUSSERL'S CRITIQUE OF THE MATHEMATICAL SUBSTRUCTION OF NATURE

Husserl's *Crisis of European Sciences* shows that the modern science of nature provokes a crisis for philosophy because, as the hegemonic form of reason, it necessarily becomes divorced from meaning and value. Modern objectivism was traced back not only to Descartes's dualism, as is usual, but also to the mathematical substruction of nature by Galileo. If mathematics is understood to be the fundamental structure of nature, then the qualitative experience of nature evident in ordinary perception is necessarily regarded as secondary or misleading. "If the intuited world of our life is merely subjective, then all the truths of pre- and extra-scientific life which have to do with its factual being are deprived of value [devalued, cancelled, or defaced: *entwertet*]."[7] The crisis that Husserl addresses does not refer to the internal validity of sciences but to their lack of meaning and value for human life due to their abstraction from lived experience to mathematical symbolism. He stated the fundamental problem as the taking of a method for ontology (being). In this way, that which is not immediately mathematizable is understood to be indirectly mathematizable through a methodical procedure. "The whole of infinite nature, taken as a concrete universe of causality—for this was inherent in that strange conception—became [the object of] a *peculiarly applied mathematics*."[8] A "garb of ideas," which in Marxist terminology

would be called a "fetishism" or a "reification," is thrown over lived experience and obscures it.

Phenomenology neither denounces nor rejects mathematical sciences. It is concerned with the problematic ontology that the reification of method produces. This requires specifying the founding abstractions of mathematical sciences and grounding the abstracted contents in concrete intuition. Phenomenology thus has what we might call a *healing function* through the dual deployment of critique and reestablishment of adequate evidence. Concrete intuition in this sense refers to the fulfillment of an intention through the self-givenness of the content. A matching, we may say, of intention and immediate evidence that justifies concepts built upon such evidence and defines the limits within which such concepts are legitimate. For example, if I see a pen, a microscope, and a sheet of paper on a desk, I am justified in saying that I see three objects and may utilize the concept "three objects" in further syntheses such that, if I now see one object being placed on the table, I may say that there are four objects on the table without necessarily going back to re-count the previous three. Because the conceptual abstraction has been given with adequate evidence, it justifies its use in further abstractions. Legitimacy is passed along, as it were, as long as every step is assured by adequate evidence.

The crisis initiated by the mathematical sciences, according to Husserl, stems from the specific nature of mathematical abstraction in modernity. It refers not to the use of mathematics *per se*, nor simply to quantification as an element of scientific procedure, but to the specific algebraic reshaping of mathematics since Vieta that develops what Husserl called the "arithmetization of geometry" and Jacob Klein referred to as "symbol-generating abstraction."[9] In this case, the problem of adequate evidence pertains not to the chain of inferences and conceptual manipulations in the mathematical field but to their initial grounding—to the fundamental abstractive process itself. The specific character of such abstraction is that it is an indeterminate multitude—an "x"—which is not a sign referring to a being but a symbolic ratio to other such abstractions so that for such a *number* its being is identical with the notation.[10] It is an abstraction to an empty "anything-whatever" which is the basis of "system-forms [understood] themselves as mathematical objects," which can be particularized but not under the rules for specifying "the species of a genus."[11] This inability to specify symbol-generating abstractions in a species-genus manner creates a discontinuity, as it were, between conceptual abstraction and concrete instance, that leads to the crisis of the European sciences as a lack of grounding in the lifeworld and which motivates a new search for phenomenological grounding that could overcome that crisis.[12]

MARX'S CRITIQUE OF THE REGIME OF VALUE

Marx's critique of political economy in volume 1 of *Capital* begins with a distinction between value in use and value in exchange that, when applied to labor, becomes a distinction between concrete and abstract labor. This distinction parallels Husserl's distinction between concretely intuited nature and mathematized nature. Abstract labor is the foundation of the system of political economy that Marx constructs as his scientific object. He regarded this concept as his most significant contribution to political economy, as fundamental to the theoretical development in *Capital*, and as the basis for the theory of the exploitation of labor in capitalism.[13]

Abstract labor is the concept that allows Marx to answer the unresolved issue that plagued the history of political economy—that of the natural or real price, an invariable measure of value that could define the relative value of commodities. For example, Adam Smith asserted that "labour was the first price, the original purchase-money that was paid for all things" so that it is "the only universal as well as the only accurate measure of value, or the only standard by which we can compare the values of different commodities."[14] However, without Marx's distinction between abstract and concrete labor, the measure of commodity value by labor would lead to a higher price for products of less efficient labor. So, it remained an unresolved central problem for classical political economy how to account for the double-sidedness of labor that allows for its exchange-value to be measured and for labor to become the measure that determines relative price. As Marx said in *Theories of Surplus-Value* while commenting on the "disintegration of the Ricardian School":

> The problem of an "invariable measure of value" was simply a spurious name for the quest for the concept, the nature, of *value* itself, the definition of which could not be another value, and consequently could not be subject to variations as value. This was *labour-time, social labour*, as it presents itself specifically in commodity production. A quantity of labour has no value, is not a commodity, but is that which transforms commodities into values, it is their common substance; as manifestations of it commodities are *qualitatively equal* and only *quantitatively different*. They [appear] as expressions of definite quantities of social labour-time.[15]

Marx saw his concept of abstract labor—simple, undifferentiated labor distinguished only by duration—as answering the pervasive failure of political economy to understand the basic phenomenon of a market economy of the relation between prices of qualitatively different commodities.[16]

Abstract labor is thus the fundamental concept that underlies what we may call the system or regime of value. The regime of value is an integrated system whose elements are rigorously related due to the existence of a single homogenizing measure that operates behind the qualitative difference of commodities and labor. Though expressed in money, value is neither money nor price; it is an explanatory concept concerned not so much with the quantity of value as the *form of value* such that labor expresses itself in that which it produces.[17] The form of value is Marx's major concern. Capital organizes labor to produce commodities with the form of value and thereby structures a regime of value that is hidden behind but determines the phenomenal quantitative relations of labor and commodities.

In order for value to function as the regulator of the regime of value, four theoretical reductions of the phenomenal appearance of socio-economic activity are necessary: first, from concrete to abstract labor, which, being without qualities, can be measured only by the quantity of *time* expended; second, to labor-time, which is *socially necessary* as opposed to the actual time expended in any given case; third, from complex to *simple labor* (that is to say, the reduction of education and skill to an undetermined multiple of simple labor); fourth, from the variability of simple labor across space and time to a *given simple quantity of average labor* in a given place and time.[18] These four reductions are embedded within each other such that they constitute the abstractions through which the regime of labor can appear as a rigorously determined system. The final object of the labor theory of value is thus a given simple quantity of abstract labor that represents the fraction of total social labor invested in the production of a given commodity. The systematicity of the regime of value consists in this rigorous relation between each part and the totality of social labor.[19]

In this way, Marx argues that the value of any commodity can be theoretically reduced to a multiple of simple, average, abstract labor measured only in temporal units.[20] It is worth determining exactly in what sense Marx solved the fundamental problem of political economy. He showed that the problem can in principle be solved, that is to say, that the quantitative relations between commodities are not arbitrary but rather based upon the structuring regime of value that can be reduced to a theoretical concept of simple, average, abstract labor measured by duration. He further showed that this problem was not soluble within the science of political economy because labor-power as a commodity is its unquestioned presumption that can only be understood through historicizing the capitalist system by his critique of political economy. Thus, for Marx, the main problem is not the *magnitude* of value, as it was for political economy, but the *form of value*—why capitalist production measures labor-power through the commodities that it produces. The magnitude of value is determinable in principle through the quantity of abstract

labor that a given commodity requires for its production. However, since every commodity depends upon a multitude of other commodities for its production, this quantity is routed through the quantities required by all other commodities for their production. That is to say, the theoretical quantity of a given commodity is a definite but undetermined fraction of the total quantity of social production. Consequently, the quantity that a given commodity represents of the total system of social production cannot be determined in fact. The inner dynamic of capitalist production can only be expressed on the surface of capitalist society, in the sphere of process, as tendencies.

The theoretical determination of the regime of value therefore cannot be transformed into a commodity price within the phenomenal realm of the market.[21] It pertains only within the formal abstractions that purify the regime of value as such. The determinate algebraic relations of the formal abstraction can only be translated into tendencies, not determinate quantities, in the phenomenal realm. For example, a greater quantity of labor expended in a given commodity in one production unit versus another means that there is a tendency for the profit on that commodity to fall and therefore for there to be a pressure toward technical innovation that would increase the efficiency of labor and thus decrease its quantity. Such tendencies operate through time as pressures toward an equilibrium, whereas the theoretical abstraction of the regime of value is atemporally elaborated. Thus, the concept of a temporal unit of abstract labor is a theoretical determination that cannot be rendered as a determinate quantity and can only be represented by an unknown "x" that confers a systematic unity on the regime of value. It is not an actual determinate quantity but a formal mediation expressing the relation between a given commodity and total social labor. This measure and regulator never appears as such, neither in the system of value nor in the capitalist system. Marx's labor theory of value explains the hidden equilibrating essence of the system of value that is expressed in the tendencies of the appearing capitalist system that alter it through time.

THE FORMAL IDENTITY OF THE
HUSSERLIAN AND MARXIAN CRITIQUES
OF UNGROUNDED ABSTRACTION

It is now possible to show that Husserl's and Marx's critiques are not merely similar but formally identical. Both construct a rigorous object-domain based upon a historical science by focusing on its ungrounded assumptions in order to develop a critique of that scientific domain and its pervasive hold over common sense. Husserl developed the concept of "Galilean science" by uncovering the assumption of the mathematization of nature, whereas Marx

constructed a concept of the "science of political economy" idealized from the whole history of writers on the topic. Political economy in Marx's sense is a science with a Galilean form in Husserl's sense. Their critiques of the Galilean form are aimed at a return of the philosopher or socio-economic critic from the ungrounded abstractions that distort thinking about their subject-matters toward a direct confrontation with the "things themselves" or, as Marx would say, the concreteness of "use-value." Recovery of the qualitative character of use and direct intuition functions as the *telos* of critique.

Let us summarize the characteristics of the Galilean scientific form that subtend both the mathematical science of nature and political economy. We have already pointed out that the mathematization of nature and the regime of value are constructed as theoretical objects through an analysis of formal abstraction that abstracts toward an "anything-whatever" or undetermined "x." And that, through an indirect mathematization, all sensuous, qualitative experience is rigorously related to a mathematical index that, due to method becoming ontology, is purported to be the underlying reality of such subjective-relative experiences. In addition, the "definite manifold" of internal, rigorous, formal relations that such formal abstraction enables means that the *system of internal formal relations* achieves a separation from concrete, lifeworld experience.[22] That is to say, the relation of any formally abstract object is to the system of formal relations with other abstract objects and not directly to an individual concrete object in the lifeworld. It is for this reason that the regime of value cannot explain commodity prices on the market but only tendencies working behind such prices. In exact parallel, the mathematical science of nature does not describe the actual movement of objects as experienced but only those that would pertain if the system were purified of contaminating local factors—local factors that are always present in concrete experience.

We may now ask: What sort of relationship between definite formal manifolds and concrete, qualitative experience might be expected to enact the healing function of phenomenology and Marxism? On the basis of the preceding analysis, we can now assert that previous forms of Marxist and phenomenological critique have not appreciated sufficiently that the break between formal systems and concrete experience disallows a direct return to qualitative experience—either that of the direct perception of individuals in phenomenology or that of use and need in Marx.

Husserl assumed that phenomenological grounding would come from the immediate intuition of individuals in the lifeworld where "the universe is given as a universe of 'things [*Dingen*].' In this broadest sense 'thing' is an expression for what ultimately exists and what has ultimate properties, relations, interconnections . . . the ultimate substrate."[23] The notion that mathematical abstractions could be redeemed through concrete intuition of

individuals functioned as an unjustified assumption in Husserl's work.[24] This assumption has also pervaded attempts to link Husserl's analysis of the crisis of European sciences to Marx's critique of the formal reason that pervades capitalist society. Herbert Marcuse consciously followed Husserl's analysis in *Crisis* when he defined the object of scientific abstraction "not as this individual object but as exemplification of general objectivity."[25] Moreover, we can hear the echo of Marx's critique of the extraction of surplus value from living labor when Marcuse used Husserl's *Crisis* as a critique that specified the limits of domination of nature to be in "individual, non-quantifiable qualities [which] stand in the way of an organization of men and things in accordance with the measurable power to be extracted from them."[26] In a similar vein, Enzo Paci emphasized the phenomenological concept of the lifeworld as a critique of reification because the lifeworld is understood as "the mode of experiencing in which the world experiences and is experienced, where the world has the validity of truly lived being, given with the evidence of the things-themselves."[27] In short, the approach of a Marxism that appropriates phenomenology has been to interpret the parallel relations between science and lifeworld (phenomenology) and that between abstract and concrete labor (Marx) in a manner that implies a recovery of lived experience of individual, non-quantifiable qualities.

CONCRETE INDIVIDUALS AND THE WORLD-HORIZON

Since political economy is a science with a Galilean form, and the empty signs of a formal abstract system cannot be individually, directly related to concrete intuition of individuals, or the concreteness of use-value (which is an equivalent expression of this fact),[28] then what sort of relationship does a formal science have to the lifeworld, or the regime of value to wealth (in Marx's terminology)? More succinctly put, how can the critique of formal science engender a recovery of the concrete—and what should be meant by "the concrete" in such a recovery?

Let us begin by noting the residue of empiricism in Husserl's description of immediate perception of an identical object (noema) that resides in the distinction between substratum and attributes. In a manner reminiscent of Locke, Husserl understood a substance as distinct from its attributes since the qualities of attributes cannot subsist unless they inhere in something that is not an attribute. If "this raincoat is gray," for example, it must be the case that the raincoat is distinct from the grayness. And if "this object is a raincoat," it must be the case that the object is distinct from its being a raincoat. In this sense, an objective unity is distinct from any and all predicated attributes.

Since every determination can be expressed as an attribute, the thing itself can only be called a "pure x" devoid of predicated attributes. As Husserl said, "it is the central point of connection or the 'bearer' of the predicates, but in no way is it a unity of them in the sense in which any complex, any combination, of the predicates would be called a unity."[29] If the sense-bearer cannot be a unity of predicates, and must be distinct from them, then, Husserl thought, it must be a "pure x" devoid of determinations. Such a "pure x" recalls an empiricist substratum or a Kantian indeterminable "thing-in-itself." Aron Gurwitsch criticized this aspect of Husserl's description as a theoretical construct and showed that "though they must be distinguished, substratum and attribute cannot be severed or separated from one other."[30]

Gurwitsch found the distinction and relation between predicate and identical thing to reside in "the form in which the pertinent noemata are organized with respect to each other, on the specific form of unity prevailing in the group or system which they compose and to which they belong."[31] He described the identical object of perception as a Gestalt whole in which the constituent elements belong to a whole that is itself nothing other than the contextual whole present in the determinate relationships between constituents and thereby also co-present in each of its constituents. The perceiving glance does not perceive a property alone but perceives it as the property of a thing such that "the thing appears as an undifferentiated unity."[32] In explication of the original global perception, a single property may be thematized, which is then predicated of the global whole. In Gurwitsch's terms, "in explicating contemplation, the perceptual noema may be characterized as a *differentiated unity*."[33] In this way, the identical object of which predications are made is nothing other than the prior undifferentiated whole that is continuously explicated to become a differentiated whole. A predicate does not stand apart from the unity of the object but consists in its thematization as against the whole of which it remains a part. In this way, Gurwitsch showed that the empiricist residue of Husserl's theory of perception can be replaced by a Gestalt part-whole relation without reference to an underlying substance or substrate.[34]

It is through the differentiation of an originally undifferentiated unity of the perceived object that what Husserl calls the "internal horizon" of the object can be made intelligible through inferences and anticipations. Such anticipations extend not only to the determination of the object but also, beyond the object, to an "infinite, open, external horizon of objects cogiven" that refers to a "totality of typification belonging to the total horizon of the world in its infinity."[35] Every object of perception is perceived in distinction from an unthematized background that shades off indefinitely toward the horizon of the world.

We can now address the issue that motivated this excursus into the identical object of perception. Formal systems cannot be applied to individuals as

Husserl's residual empiricism led him to suppose. Rather, since individuals are perceived as individuals of a certain type against a background shading off into an indefinite horizon that constitutes a lifeworld, the reference of formal systems to the lifeworld consists in individuals understood as Gestalt unities whose background context shares in the constitution of its meaning and whose lifeworld horizon delimits the extension of that meaning. Similarly, "wealth" in Marx's qualitative sense of an amount of use-values is not to be found in a sum of individual useful objects alone but in the relation between a given use-value to the background in which it becomes actually useful and the worldly horizon in which such wealth creates the capacity for concretely enjoying life. The recovery of the concrete is not through an "underlying" individual, sensuous, qualitative experience but a "transversal" relation toward the individual's background and horizon.[36] And, we should note, it is transversal relations that are the main distinctive feature of ecological thinking.

The assumption of a reference of formal abstractions to concrete individuals explains an unresolved issue in the history of Marxist theory. The attempt by "Marxist" political economists to use the theory of value to determine the prices of individual commodities is not only a similar residual empiricism to Husserl's but also a regression of the critique of political economy into a supposedly better political economy. The theory of value is articulated as a critique of capitalism and it remains relatively undetermined in the less theoretically complete works of Marx what concrete alternative is possible. Consider the historical question of the relation between socialism and communism understood as the relation between the principle of equality and the principle of need. Socialism was understood by Marx as superior to capitalism because of the absence of exploitation of surplus value and as ruled by the principle of "to each according to their labour." Such a principle of equal right is still lacking since it treats unequals—or, more exactly, incomparables—as measured by a single standard. Thus, in his words, "unequal individuals . . . are measurable only by an equal standard in so far as they are brought under an equal point of view . . . taken from one side only."[37] Communism, as is well known, would be a higher system ruled by the principle of "from each according to his ability, to each according to his needs." The superiority of need derives from its consideration of individuals as whole individuals and not under a single aspect that can be represented as a measure. This is the identical assumption that underlies Husserl's attempt to uncover the concrete intuition of individuals underneath Galilean science. This is a fundamental issue that one would expect twenty-first-century phenomenological Marxism to pose differently than either Marx or Husserl.

RECOVERY OF CONCRETENESS
IN TWENTY-FIRST-CENTURY
PHENOMENOLOGICAL MARXISM

The perception of individuals as individuals through their background and
horizon is thus the final point of convergence between a twenty-first-century
phenomenology and Marxism from which one could expect a recovery of the
concrete that would justify their identical critique of formal systems. There
are two interrelated issues here: What motivates a dissatisfaction with formal
abstraction and a desire to return to the concrete? What is the meaning of
"concrete experience" that one is trying to recover?

Let us begin from the residue of empiricism that we have seen orients
Husserl's conception of the concrete toward sensuous individuals perceived
as individuals and which orients Marxist, if not Marx's, attempt to define
the true value of a given single commodity as a determinable quantity of
homogeneous labor-power. In this case, the reification of formal abstraction
consists in the loss of immediate qualitative perception of given individuals
taken as single unities. While many, if not all, critics of formal abstraction
in this sense would qualify their critique as not pertaining to abstraction *per
se* since abstraction is essential to thought, it is difficult to define a sense in
which formal abstraction can be irrevocably distinguished from abstraction
outright—in order to reject one and sustain the other. As a tendency, if not as a
theoretical postulate, it seems to favor immediate perception over abstraction
from the point of view of concreteness and therefore find in every abstraction
a loss that would motivate a return to the concrete. In both phenomenological
and Marxist traditions there is a tendency to understand formal abstraction in
this way even though it is not a sufficient understanding of formal abstraction
for either. In short, the residue of empiricism results in a tendency to under-
stand concreteness as individual sensuous unities and thereby to make it dif-
ficult to distinguish the necessary and valid abstractions required by thought
and description from the reifications that arise from formal abstraction.

As we have seen, the return to concreteness must now be understood as
a return to an individual against a background shading off into a horizon.
In this case, motivation for a critique of formal abstraction comes from a
loss of concreteness in a sense dependent on background and horizon. The
Riemannian manifolds to which Husserl referred, and the mathematical
models of commodity prices to which Marx referred, are distinguished from
concreteness in this sense by two related factors: (1) Application of such a
model to concrete individuals disallows the qualitative difference of such
individuals. (2) The model allows for the relationship between a plurality of
objects but those objects are in principle indeterminate—that is to say, they

are taken as homogeneous or equal in all relevant respects. This results in a correlative homogenization of background and horizon, a homogenization that means that they can be in principle left aside since they do not generate determinateness. As we have seen, it is the first aspect that has been the dominant tendency in previous phenomenological Marxism and which, taken alone, accounts for the residue of empiricism. We may expect, therefore, that it is the relationship between the plurality of objects in a formal abstraction and a plurality of objects with background and horizon in concrete experience that will allow us to address the three interrelated issues of fetishism, abstraction, and concreteness.

When formal abstraction is practiced on a concretely experienced object in the lifeworld, the background and horizon are eliminated. In order for an object to be designated by an uninterpreted sign such as "x," the background that is essential to its singularity and the horizon that unifies these backgrounds into a world-horizon are not designated at all. To state the result of the brief analysis of perception above, formal abstraction can only operate through the elimination of background and horizon. Indeed, the loss of the qualitative, sensuous individuality of the unity is accomplished precisely through the elimination of background and horizon. For Marx, the motive for the recovery of the concrete was the historical experience of concrete labor and its degradation within the regime of value due to its registering as abstract labor. For Husserl, the motive was the irrationalism provided by the dominance of formal abstraction over the exercise of reason. In each case, it is the actual concrete experience of labor or reason in the lifeworld that motivates critique of the hegemony of formal reason. Similarly, the role of background and horizon in the actual exercise of formal abstraction in the socio-historical lifeworld is what motivates recovery of the concrete for twenty-first-century phenomenological Marxism.

Marx aimed to recover the concrete through a critique of the science of political economy, Husserl through a critique of mathematical physics. The importance of background and horizon to contemporary critique of formal abstraction suggests that the science of ecology is a more fitting object for a twenty-first-century phenomenological Marxism. Husserl considered biology a science not subject to crisis due to the concept of "life" operative within it.[38] But, as I have argued in detail elsewhere, the science of ecology captures "life" more exactly and concretely because it focuses on the *interaction between* life-forms and the worlds that they inhabit which constitutes the "life" of the lifeworld.[39] Scientific ecology began with precisely this distinction between biology as a morphological science of characteristics of species considered independently and ecology as a science of the interaction between several species and also non-living forms. The set of relationships within a pragmatically delimited place constitutes a whole through achieving

a certain *balance* between its interacting parts. It is this concept of balance that most clearly adds to the biological concept of life to which Husserl reverted in seeking a concept of scientific striving not bound to the exemplary role of mathematical physics. The interdependence and balance of different life-forms that incorporate their physical environment within a given place captures the living quality of life as a series of balanced interchanges much more securely than an individual or a species considered in abstraction from its conditions of self-reproduction and therefore life.

However, the current presentation must be satisfied with only this gesture, which suggests a phenomenological foundation for the relation of part and whole in ecology can be sought in the concepts of individual, background, and horizon in a manner that makes it the leading science for a twenty-first-century phenomenological Marxism. The science of ecology would, in this case, contain an important element of the concreteness sought by previous phenomenological Marxism. Nevertheless, a critique of ecology would be required to show the way in which phenomenology might justify the application of, and also demonstrate the limits of, an ecological model of reason, which would require a critique (but not rejection of) ecology as a science of energy flows that can be measured mathematically.

CONCLUSION

The current presentation has attempted to show that formal reason is the central problem of European modernity that has generated successive attempts to recover concreteness in philosophy. It has shown that concreteness cannot be found in sensuous individuals and demonstrated the importance of background and horizon for a contemporary concrete philosophy. The gesture toward the role of ecology in this task is simply illustrative of what form such concreteness might take with respect to the contemporary relation between phenomenological Marxism and an exemplary science.

Perhaps a further gesture is in order which would point to the final destination of a recovery of concreteness. Within the universal horizon of the lifeworld there are specific worlds that we may term civilizational-cultural worlds. Each of these worlds contains an ontology of the lifeworld where things, subjects and communities of subjects, and a conception of the world of what is and can be is determined.[40] Concreteness would mean a recovery of the world-horizon in which individual objects are perceived. Husserl noted that the experience of things—that is to say, "stones, animals, plants, even human beings and human products"—occurs within a world-horizon that is relative to a "community of life" [*Lebensgemeinschaft*] in which one can

determine "'secure' facts" ["*sicheren" Tatsachen*].[41] He mentioned Hindu, Chinese, and Congo civilizational cultures in this respect. It is only by placing the recovery of the concrete within such civilizational-cultural worlds that the individual, sensuous object can be understood through its background and horizon. There are, of course, a multiplicity of such civilizational-cultural forms so that the recovery of concrete philosophy devolves upon a dialogue between such worlds of meaning. Phenomenological philosophy must therefore become an inter-worldly dialogue between worlds of meaning especially over the forms of abstraction through which reason is articulated and their relations to concrete intuition.[42]

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NOTES

1. Ian Angus, *(Dis)figurations: Discourse/Critique/Ethics* (London and New York: Verso, 2000), chapter 9.

2. Ludwig Landgrebe, "The Problem of Teleology and Corporeality in Phenomenology and Marxism," in *Phenomenology and Marxism*, ed. B. Waldenfels, J. M. Brockman, and A. Pazanin, trans. J. C. Evans (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1984), 55, 81.

3. Landgrebe, "The Problem of Teleology and Corporeality in Phenomenology and Marxism," 55–56.

4. Georg Lukács was insistent on this point, which is fundamental for any understanding of Marx, claiming that "orthodoxy refers exclusively to *method*" and that "we must extract the practical essence of the theory from the method and its relation to its object"—see *History and Class Consciousness: Studies in Marxist Dialectics*, trans. Rodney Livingstone (London: Merlin, 1971), 1, 2.

5. I have shown previously that formal science, when it is applied to lifeworld evidences, becomes a form of technical evidence related to means/end action rather than experiential evidence of a full, concrete individual from a technical means-end adumbration. See Ian Angus, *Technique and Enlightenment: Limits of Instrumental Reason* (Washington, DC: Centre for Advanced Research in Phenomenology & University Press of America, 1984), 51–57, 77–84, 125–30; "Jacob Klein's Revision of Husserl's *Crisis*: A Contribution to the Transcendental History of Reification," *Philosophy Today* 49, no. 5 (2005): 206–7; and "Galilean Science and the Technological Lifeworld: The Role of Husserl's *Crisis* in Herbert Marcuse's Thesis of One-Dimensionality," *Symposium: Canadian Journal of Continental Philosophy / Revue canadienne de philosophie continentale* 21, no. 2 (2017): 146–50.

6. See Ian Angus, "Logic of Subsumption, Logic of Invention, and Workplace Democracy: Marx, Marcuse, and Simondon," *Philosophy and Technology* 32, no. 4 (2019): 613–25.

7. Edmund Husserl, *The Crisis of the European Sciences and Transcendental Phenomenology*, trans. David Carr (Evanston, IL: Northwestern University Press,

1970), 54; cf. *Die Krisis der europäischen Wissenschaften und die transzendentale Phänomenologie. Eine Einleitung in die phänomenologische Philosophie*, ed. Walter Biemel (The Hague: Martinus Nijhoff, 1954), 54.

8. Husserl, *The Crisis of the European Sciences*, 37 (emphasis in original).

9. Husserl, *The Crisis of the European Sciences*, 44; Jacob Klein, *Greek Mathematics and the Origin of Algebra*, trans. Eva Brann (New York: Dover, 1968), 125.

10. Klein, *Greek Mathematics and the Origin of Algebra*, 205, 218, 224.

11. Edmund Husserl, *Formal and Transcendental Logic*, trans. Dorion Cairns (The Hague: Martinus Nijhoff, 1969), 93.

12. Ian Angus, "Critique of Reason and the Theory of Value: Groundwork of a Phenomenological Marxism." *Husserl Studies* 33, no. 1 (2017): 69–71.

13. Karl Marx stated that "I was the first to point out and examine critically this two-fold nature of the labor contained in commodities" (*Capital: A Critique of Political Economy*, trans. B. Fowkes [New York: Vintage, 1978], 1:132). In a letter to Engels of 24 August 1867, Marx claimed of the first volume of *Capital* that "the best points in my book are: 1. (this is fundamental to all understanding of the *facts*) the *two-fold character of labour* according to whether it is expressed in use-value or exchange-value, which is brought out in the very First Chapter; 2. the treatment of surplus-value regardless of its particular forms as profit, interest, ground rent, etc." See "Letter to Engels in Manchester (24 August 1867)," in *Marx-Engels Correspondence, 1867*, archived at https://marxists.architexturez.net/archive/marx/works/1867/letters/67_08_24.htm.

14. Adam Smith, *The Wealth of Nations* (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1970), 133, 139–40.

15. Karl Marx, *Theories of Surplus-Value*, vol. 4 of *Capital*, part 3, trans. Jack Cohen and S. W. Ryazanskaya (Moscow: Progress Publishers, 1971), 134–35.

16. The concept of abstract labor appears in the very first step of Marx's presentation of the logic of capital and constitutes both his unique contribution to philosophy and the critique of political economy as well as the basis for his extensive critique of capitalism as a socio-historical system in the whole of *Capital*. Here is the relevant passage: "If we then disregard [or set aside] the use-value [*Gebrauchswert*] of commodities, only one property remains, that of being products of labour [*Arbeitsprodukten*]. But even the product of labour has already been transformed in our hands. If we make abstraction [*Abstrahieren wir*] from its use-value [*Gebrauchswert*], we abstract [*abstrahieren wir*] also from the material constituents and forms [*körperlichen Bestandteilen und Formen*] which make it a useful thing [*nützlich Ding*]. It is no longer a table, a house, a piece of yarn or any other useful thing. All its sensuous characteristics [*sinnlichen Beschaffenheiten*] are effaced [*ausgelöscht*]. Nor is it any longer the product of the labour of the joiner, the mason or the spinner, or of any other particular kind of productive labour. With the disappearance of the useful character of the products of labour, the useful character of the kinds of labour embodied in them also disappears; this in turn entails the disappearance of the different concrete forms [*verschiednen konkreten Formen*] of this labour. They can no longer be distinguished, but are all together reduced to the equivalent human labour [*gleiche menschliche Arbeit*], human labour in the abstract [*abstrakt menschliche Arbeit*].

"Let us now look at the residue [*Residuum*] of the products of labour. There is nothing left of them in each case but the same phantom-like [*gespenstige*] objectivity; they are merely congealed quantities of homogeneous human labour [*unterschiedsloser menschlicher Arbeit*], i.e., of human labour-power expended without regard to the form of its expenditure. These things now only tell us that human labour-power has been expended to produce them, that human labour is accumulated in them. As crystals of this social substance, which is common to them all, they are values [*Werte*]—commodity values [*Warenwerte*]." Marx, *Capital*, 1:128; *Das Kapital, Erster Band, Buch 1* (Berlin: Dietz Verlag, 1957), 42 (translation altered).

17. "Political economy has indeed analysed value and its magnitude, however incompletely, and has uncovered the content concealed within these forms. But it has never once asked the question why this content has assumed that particular form, that is to say, why labour is expressed in value, and why the measurement of labour by its duration is expressed in the magnitude of the value of the product" (Marx, *Capital*, 1:173–74).

18. Marx argues that there is a "historical and moral element" in the determination of the value of labor-power unlike in the case of other commodities, where the value of labor-power is the "number and extent of his so-called necessary requirements," which "depend therefore to a great extent on the level of civilization attained by a country" (*Capital*, 1:275). But if the values of other commodities are determined by socially necessary abstract labor, then the value of reproducing labor-power will indirectly determine the values of other commodities and this difference will pertain to the normal commodity prices in different locations of a world system.

19. As Marx said, "magnitude of value of a commodity therefore expresses a necessary relation to social labour-time which is inherent in the process by which its value is created" (*Capital*, 1:196).

20. Thus, Marx says that "we know that the value of *each commodity* is determined by the quantity of labour materialized in its use-value, by the labour-time socially necessary to produce it" (*Capital*, 1:293, emphasis added). At this point in the logic of *Capital*, this is an *in principle* theoretical determination only. It does not apply to the sphere of appearance where the determination of normal prices takes place and which was the subject of political economy. See the following note.

21. Does this mean that Marx solves the problem of natural price as it existed in political economy? Not exactly. He argues that political economy posed the problem incorrectly because it lacked the distinction between concrete and abstract labor. Marx claims to have solved the problem once it is posed correctly—that is to say, as a theoretical determination within the regime of value. But value can never be transformed into price because the regime of value operates within four reductions whose formal abstraction distinguishes it from the phenomenal realm of price. The attempt to relate value rigorously to price was known as the "transformation problem." It arises from a misunderstanding that attempts to make Marx's critique of political economy into an improved political economy. As Marx put it in *Capital*, volume 3, "In capital—profit, or still better capital—interest, land—rent, labour—wages, in this economic trinity represented as the connection between the component parts of value and wealth in general and its sources, we have the complete mystification of

the capitalist mode of production" (Marx, *Capital*, ed. Frederick Engels [London: Lawrence & Wishart, 1972], 3:830). Since the actual value produced by a specific quantity of abstract labor is divided between capital, wages, and landed property—the trinity formula—the value of the commodity cannot correspond directly with the abstract labor that produces it. Isaak Illich Rubin is the main quasi-classical author who has made it clear that the sense in which abstract labor is an "immanent standard" for the relative values of products applies only in the sense that it refers to an "analysis of quantitative *changes* of events" rather than "a measure of equalization" (Rubin, *Essays on Marx's Theory of Value*, trans. M. Samardźija and F. Perlman [Montreal: Black Rose Books, 1973], 127). Rubin attributes this error to the difference of meaning of the term "immanent standard" in philosophy, from which Marx appropriated it, and in political economy, where many Marxist economists applied it.

22. David Carr, in his translation of *Crisis*, uses Riemann's term "manifolds" to translate *"Mannigfaltigkeiten"* (Husserl, *The Crisis of the European Sciences*, 45; *Die Krisis der europäischen Wissenschaften*, 45) as does J. N. Findlay in his translation of *Logical Investigations* (Husserl, *Logical Investigations*, trans. J. N. Findlay (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1970), 239–43; see *Logische Untersuchungen* (Tubingen: Max Niemeyer Verlag, 1968), 247–52). In contrast, Dorion Cairns uses "multiplicities" here and elsewhere in his translations (*Guide for Translating Husserl* [The Hague: Martinus Nijhoff, 1973], 81). Since Cairns's term fails to capture the close relationship to the development of formalization in mathematics that is present in Husserl's conceptualization, I prefer "manifold."

23. Husserl, *The Crisis of the European Sciences*, 226; cf. *Die Krisis der europäischen Wissenschaften*, 229; see also *Formal and Transcendental Logic*, trans. Dorion Cairns (The Hague: Martinus Nijhoff, 1969), 204–6. See also Husserl's similar statement in *Experience and Judgment*: "Formal logic can state nothing more about an ultimate substrate than that it is a something still categorically completely unformed, a substrate which has not yet entered into a judgment and taken on a form in it, and which, just as it is self-evident and self-given, becomes for the first time a substrate of judgment. At the same time, however, *this implies that such a substrate can only be an individual object [individueller Gegenstand]*" (*Experience and Judgment*, trans. James S. Churchill and Karl Ameriks [Evanston, IL: Northwestern University Press, 1973], 26 [emphasis added]; see *Erfahrung und Urteil: Untersuchungen zur Genealogie der Logik*, ed. Ludwig Landgrebe [Hamburg: Felix Meiner Verlag, 1997], 44).

24. Burt Hopkins has shown that the possibility of grounding of symbol-generating abstraction in concrete intuition functioned as an unredeemed assumption throughout Husserl's work—see *The Origin of the Logic of Symbolic Mathematics: Edmund Husserl and Jacob Klein* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2011), 362–491.

25. Herbert Marcuse, "On Science and Phenomenology," in *Boston Studies in the Philosophy of Science*, vol. 2, *In Honor of Philipp Frank* (Proceedings of the Boston Colloquium for the Philosophy of Science, 1962–1964), ed. Robert S. Cohen and Marx W. Wartofsky (New York: Humanities Press, 1965), 283.

26. Herbert Marcuse, *One-Dimensional Man* (Boston: Beacon, 1968), 164.

27. Enzo Paci, *The Function of the Sciences and the Meaning of Man*, trans. Paul Piccone and James E. Hansen (Evanston, IL: Northwestern University Press, 1972), 27.

28. See Ian Angus, *A Border Within: National Identity, Cultural Plurality and Wilderness* (Montreal and Kingston: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1997), 186–93; "The Rule of Value and the Communist Alternative: A Response to Peter Hudis' *Marx's Concept of the Alternative to Capitalism*," *Socialist Studies / Études socialistes* 11, no. 1 (2016): 220–22.

29. Edmund Husserl, *Ideas Pertaining to a Pure Phenomenology and to a Phenomenological Philosophy. First Book: General Introduction to a Pure Phenomenology*, trans. F. Kersten (The Hague: Martinus Nijhoff, 1982), 313.

30. Aron Gurwitsch, "Perceptual Coherence as the Foundation of the Judgment of Predication," in *Phenomenology and the Theory of Science* (Evanston, IL: Northwestern University Press, 1974), 249.

31. Gurwitsch, "Perceptual Coherence as the Foundation of the Judgment of Predication," 250.

32. Gurwitsch, "Perceptual Coherence as the Foundation of the Judgment of Predication," 257 (emphasis throughout excised).

33. Gurwitsch, "Perceptual Coherence as the Foundation of the Judgment of Predication," 260.

34. Gurwitsch also points out the unacceptable conclusion that Husserl's account of a pure undeterminable substrate means that all such substrates of perceivable things must be identical, thereby taking an important step toward the recovery of concrete specific difference ("Perceptual Coherence as the Foundation of the Judgment of Predication," 252).

35. Husserl, *Experience and Judgment*, 33, 36 (emphasis excised). See also his reference to "the horizon-consciousness surrounding every act. . . . [Such] horizon-intentionality contains very diverse modes of an intentionality which is 'unconscious' in the usual narrower sense of the word but which can be shown to be vitally involved and cofunctioning in different ways" (*The Crisis of the European Sciences*, 237).

36. Angus, "Galilean Science and the Technological Lifeworld," 157–58.

37. Marx, *Capital*, 1:530. Marx also considers a socialist system in the first volume of *Capital* in order to show that the regime of value applies only to the capitalist system (*Capital*, 1:172). Stanley Moore argues that Marx's philosophical commitment to communism, undertaken in his early life and never renounced, could not be sustained by his late critique of political economy—that only the superiority of socialism can be thus shown (*Marx versus Markets* [University Park: Pennsylvania State University Press, 1993]). My current argument agrees with Marx that communism would be a higher system—or, more exactly, a higher principle of justice—but shows that it is not possible as a system—which any complex society with a high division of labor seems to require. Thus, the current argument implies but does not develop an argument for market socialism. I have argued elsewhere that there can be no system of need in this sense of addressing exclusively the concrete needs of individuals as such because their actual incomparable difference would allow no systemic comparable reckoning. Only a state of unlimited abundance could satisfy such a criterion, and it may well be

that Marx was led into this problem due to such an assumption—see Angus, *A Border Within*, 188–93; "The Rule of Value and the Communist Alternative," 220–22.

38. Husserl, "Addendum XXIII to *The Crisis of European Sciences and Transcendental Phenomenology*," trans. Niall Keane, *Journal of the British Society for Phenomenology* 44, no. 1 (2013): 6–7; *The Crisis of the European Sciences*, 63; *Die Krisis der europäischen Wissenschaften und die transzendentale Phänomenologie. Ergänzungsband: Texte aus dem Nachlaß, 1934–1937*, ed. Reinhold N. Smid (Dordrecht: Kluwer, 1993), 156.

39. Ian Angus, "Crisis, Biology, Ecology: A New Starting-Point for Phenomenology?" *Journal of the British Society for Phenomenology* 49, no. 4 (2018): 267–79.

40. Husserl, *The Crisis of the European Sciences*, 173–74.

41. Husserl, *The Crisis of the European Sciences*, 138; *Die Krisis der europäischen Wissenschaften*, 141.

42. These two gestures toward the scientific and civilizational-cultural horizons of a contemporary phenomenological Marxism are intended only to indicate in the most general manner the larger context of the specific critique of formal abstraction and recovery of the concrete undertaken here. This larger context will appear in a longer work of which this chapter is an adumbration—Ian Angus, *Groundwork of Phenomenological Marxism: Crisis, Body, World* (Lanham, MD: Lexington Books, 2021).

Chapter 2

Catalyzing Convergence of Marx's Body of Ideas with Phenomenology

Ecosocialism

Marilyn Nissim-Sabat

Since the publication of Georg Lukács's *History and Class Consciousness* in 1923,[1] interpreters of Marx's body of ideas[2] have drawn upon various intellectual traditions in order to counteract ideological distortion or, allegedly, to improve upon or simply to clarify Marx's conceptions of capitalism or socialism and the praxis necessary to bring it about. Some of these Marx scholars have explored the relevance of Husserlian phenomenology to Marx's body of ideas, for example, Georg Lukács,[3] Antonio Gramsci,[4] Karel Kosík, Trân Dúc Tháo, Enzo Paci, and Maurice Merleau-Ponty. Notwithstanding this body of work, there is today no identifiable trend in Marx studies holding that historical materialism[5] is most comprehensible in conjunction with the phenomenological perspective. However, recent work by a group of contemporary Marx scholars, self-identified as "ecosocialists,"[6] who are concerned with the relevance of Marx's work to impending environmental catastrophe can catalyze the development of an authentic phenomenological Marxism. This chapter aims to show this to be the case.

RELEVANCE OF THE CONTEMPORARY
ENVIRONMENTAL CRISIS

Ecologists and climate scientists are in general agreement that the world will soon experience more and greater environmental catastrophes than ever before, and that some of these could threaten the existence of human life on earth. However, neither the promulgation of scientific findings nor the organization of protest movements by activists seeking to create a counter-hegemonic consensus to reverse environmental degradation have led the societies or nations of the world to a sense of urgency sufficient to motivate the immediate and radical change necessary to avert such catastrophes. Given this, it is pertinent to ask whether Marx's body of ideas offers resources for reversing the contemporary failure to understand and to act.

Seeking such resources presupposes that an understanding of the environmental crisis and of how it came about either inheres in, or is at least compatible with Marx's work. The phenomena referenced here—for example, the burning of fossil fuels to generate energy—involve human interaction with the natural world, with nature, or, equivalently in this context, with materiality. Analysis of such interaction is indeed a pervasive and central theme in Marx's work. However, given that historically the study of human-nature interactions has been the province of ecology, a branch of biology, one of the natural sciences, several questions arise as to the feasibility of a Marx-inspired program to avert environmental catastrophe. Does Marx's body of ideas constitute a science, a philosophy, another discipline, or none at all? If Marx's body of ideas is a science, what sort of science is it? If it is not a science, how can it generate knowledge regarding the relation between human activity and the natural world? These questions were debated even during Marx's lifetime, and resolution of them has long been considered essential to understanding his work. Notwithstanding this, however, until recently Marx scholars and Marx-inspired activists have generally assumed that neither Marx's writings nor his activities manifest any specific interest in ecology beyond his general critique of capitalism.

THE VALUE AND LIMITS OF THE
ECOSOCIALIST PERSPECTIVE

Contemporary ecosocialists have shown that, contrary to received opinion, there is embedded in Marx's work a fully developed ecological analysis of capitalism's complicity in creating environmental crisis. Most important, these scholars, as will be discussed below, have shown that a full

understanding of the ecological significance of Marx's work necessitates a full understanding of his view of the relation between human beings and nature, and, therefore, of his concept of nature, or materiality. The emphasis that the ecosocialists have placed on explicating the concept of materiality in Marx renders starkly salient the need for such clarification. In this way, the ecosocialist approach provides an opening for reconsidering whether Marx's body of ideas constitutes a phenomenology. It does this because, as we will see, in putting forth the *phenomenological reduction*,[7] the conscious act of suspending all ontological commitments, as its *sine qua non inception point*, Husserl cast phenomenology as a radical intervention into the entire history, including the histories of science and philosophy, of attempts to understand the relation between, on one hand, human consciousness and activity and, on the other hand, the natural world, especially its materiality.

As we shall see, however, despite their breakthrough to a new view of the relevance of Marx's work to overcoming the danger of environmental catastrophe, the ecosocialists, in failing to engage phenomenology also fail to understand the disciplinary (i.e., scientific or philosophical, etc.) character of Marx's body of ideas. This failure, I contend, prevents the new view of Marx and ecology, or ecosocialism, from decisively transcending positivism, and thereby from contributing to a viable Marx-inspired program for overcoming the environmental threat. This is a lost opportunity that I hope to characterize here and in so doing to take a step toward a twenty-first-century rebirth of a phenomenological understanding of, or foundation for, Marx's body of ideas along Husserlian lines. I will show, that is, *that the chronic conceptual problem that comes to the fore acutely in virtue of the work of the ecosocialists is resolved when we understand Marx's body of ideas phenomenologically.* It is in this way that the ecosocialist perspective catalyzes a convergence of phenomenology with Marx's body of ideas.

PROBLEM OF TRANSCENDING POSITIVISM IN THE ECOSOCIALIST PERSPECTIVE

In *Karl Marx's Ecosocialism*, Kohei Saito, a co-editor of Marx's ecological notebooks,[8] analyzes in detail Marx's intensive study of the natural sciences and integration of scientific findings into his historical materialist perspective. Saito provides a lucid analysis of how Marx arrived at the following conclusions: capitalism necessarily produces ecological crisis, and, therefore, ecological crisis can be overcome only with the abolition of capitalism.[9]

Saito does not claim that Marx extolled the natural sciences as a methodological model for historical materialism.[10] While Saito does not address the issue of positivism as such, he clearly rejects any attribution of its

equivalent—natural scientific materialism—to Marx.[11] He explains further
that Marx did not study the natural sciences for their own sake, but did so
specifically in order to demonstrate that capitalist industrial production alters
the interaction, or "metabolism" (Marx) between humanity and nature in
destructive ways.[12] Before establishing these conclusions, however, Saito
argues that Marx's mature historical materialist, ecological standpoint is
incompatible with both philosophy and humanism as expressed in Marx's
early, so-called humanist writings, notably the *Economic and Philosophical
Manuscripts* (EPM).[13]

I do not aver here the validity of this claim of incompatibility. On the
contrary, I will challenge its viability (that is, its coherence with Marx's body
of ideas as a whole). Notwithstanding this, however, Saito's case for incom-
patibility, conjoined with the strength of his explication of ecosocialism, has
sufficient merit to provoke the following question: if neither natural science
nor philosophy, nor humanist philosophical anthropology, what sort of body
of ideas is historical materialism, and why is it important to determine this?
Tellingly, after rejecting natural science, philosophy, and humanism as defini-
tive of Marx's body of ideas, Saito neither raises these questions nor suggests
any response to them at any point in his book. Yet responding to them is
vitally important, not only for comprehending the methodological framework
of Marx's conception of historical materialism but also, as we shall see, for
understanding and articulating his concept of praxis or revolutionary activ-
ity, the goal that all of his work aimed to achieve, and the means by which
capitalism and ecological crisis can be transcended.

As noted earlier, the ecosocialist approach renders starkly salient the need
for clarification of the meaning of "materiality" in Marx's writings. In those
writings, the physical existence of nature is invoked with two terms, both of
which denote the same reality: first, "matter," which usually denotes nature
in the sense in which it is held to exist not merely external to but also inde-
pendently of human existence;[14] second, "materiality," which usually denotes
nature, physical externality, as experienced by human beings through our
sensory capacities (i.e., nature as seen, heard, felt, and so on), and, as such,
as that which has been, and continues to be historically transformed through
human productive activity, and, in this sense, does not exist independently
of human existence.[15] Notably, it is the latter conception of materiality as
experienced in and through human sensuous activity that Marx counterposed
to positivism.

Neither Marx nor Saito, nor any of the other ecosocialists discussed below,
suggest any contradiction between the two usages. It is clear that these two
ways of construing materiality are held by them, and by Marx as well, to
refer to a single reality, nature itself. In the face of this determinate ambigu-
ity—the assertion of two conceivably contradictory denotations of the same

reality—that nature is both independent and not independent of human experience of it, both of which are held to be essential to the ecosocialist view of Marx's body of ideas, gaining clarity regarding the meaning of that reality—matter or materiality—is necessary if one is to know what one is talking about. Put another way, given that Marx unambiguously rejected positivism, as do the ecosocialists, who often refer to it as "mechanical materialism" or scientific reductionism, and yet seem to embrace one of its cardinal precepts—that is, belief that the world is *known* to exist independently of consciousness[16]—this question, which will be elaborated later, arises: Can any conception of nature or of human reality transcend positivism if it includes the claim to *know* that matter exists independently of human subjectivity? If "matter" (hence nature) is conceived positivistically, as existing independently of consciousness, it follows that knowledge of the material world—including our bodies as material entities—if it is to be knowledge, can only be a result of passive receptivity, just that positivistic attitude that Marx decried in Feuerbach's system.[17] The ecosocialists definitely, and without explanation, both attribute belief in nature's independent existence to Marx and at the same time acknowledge that Marx rejected natural scientific, reductive materialism or positivism. To gain clarity, we need to explore further the ecosocialist conception of Marx's materialism.

THE ECOSOCIALIST CONCEPTION OF MARX'S MATERIALISM

In "The Dialectics of Nature and Marxist Ecology,"[18] J. B. Foster reviews the most significant literature on historical materialism, from Marx and Engels through the many permutations in Lukács's stance to the present. Foster goes to great pains to represent the history of thinking about "materiality" fairly and accurately. Unlike Saito, however, Foster deals explicitly with the relation between "matter" and "materiality" in Marx's usages of these terms. He provides a key quotation from Marx's *Grundrisse*: "It is not the unity of living and active humanity with the natural, inorganic conditions of their metabolic exchange with nature . . . which requires explanation . . . but rather the separation between these inorganic conditions of human existence and this active existence, a separation which is completely posited only in the relation of wage labor and capital."[19] Commenting on this, Foster writes, "The separation both in material reality and human consciousness was, as Marx and Engels argued, to have disastrous ecological consequences manifested in what Marx called the 'irreparable rift' between nature and society."[20] In this way, Foster pins down his conviction that historical materialism is through and through an ecological critique of capitalism.

If, then, the "irreparable rift" is to be repaired and the unity of humanity with nature to be restored, in what way or ways is "matter" implicated in the process, either of separation or restoration (or both)? Foster, to his great credit, is well aware that to achieve his aims he cannot evade this question; yet his take on it is indecisive, to say the least. He asserts that Marx was "dedicated to ontological materialism in his emphasis and his starting point" and continues, in the same sentence, to say that "Marx also saw his 'new materialism' of praxis . . . as a synthesis with the active component of idealism." Finally, Foster quotes Marx's assertion that sensuousness is "'practical human-sensuous activity.'"[21] The two latter quotes, in contradistinction to the first, mean the human senses are not merely receptive, as positivists would have it. Instead, for Marx, human sensuousness, a dimension of human consciousness, is co-constitutive of the natural world in which we find ourselves, which is both human and natural. Concerned, it seems, that, owing to Marx's invocation of consciousness as a primary desideratum of the human relation to nature, readers might here interpret Marx in a Kantian or Hegelian (or any idealistic) manner, Foster asserts that "Marx never abandoned materialism or realism." He explains: "*Nature always existed to some extent independent of human beings and prior to human beings*—though human beings and their relations were ultimately conceived as a part of nature within a complex set of internal relations."[22] However, asserting that for Marx nature always existed "to some extent independent of human beings and prior to human beings," and asserting, at the same time, that human beings are conceived as "a part of nature" and as having "internal relations" with nature, provokes a question regarding how we are to conceive matter as "to some extent" independent of human beings and simultaneously, it appears, to some extent not independent of human beings. We can ask, further, what it means to say that nature existed *prior* to human beings, a view that Foster attributes to Marx, and in what way this is related to the question of matter. If in fact Marx believed that it is *known* that nature exists prior to human beings, doesn't such a view commit Marx unambiguously to ontological materialism?[23] But can ontological materialism, the foundational premise of positivism, be the case "to some extent"? As we will now see, contrary to Foster's claim, Marx believed the existence of nature prior to human beings is unknowable.

INDICATIONS OF PHENOMENOLOGY
IN MARX'S PERSPECTIVE

In his well-known book, *The Concept of Nature in Marx*, Alfred Schmidt stressed the difficulty of grasping the meaning of materiality in Marx. Section A of the first chapter of Schmidt's book is titled, in (anachronistic)

contradistinction to Foster, "The Non-Ontological Character of Marxist Materialism." There, Schmidt wrote, "The kernel of philosophical materialism contained in his [Marx's] theory of history and society and implicitly presupposed by it does not come so plainly into view and is difficult to establish."[24]

As noted earlier, Foster asserted that for Marx nature existed not only "to some extent" independent of human beings but also "prior" to human beings. Interestingly, Schmidt, discussing Marx's understanding of the "essence of man,"[25] cites several passages from the EPM, specifically from "Private Property and Communism," in which Marx directly addressed the question of whether nature exists prior to human beings. In this essay, organized into five points, Marx explains how the human essence is socially manifest in communism as over and against its manifestation in a society with private property. In his fifth and final point, commenting that it is extremely difficult for humans to discard the notion of dependence on a creator, Marx discusses the "independence" of human beings, their "self-creation." He does this by means of a thought experiment in the form of an imaginary conversation with an interlocutor who asks, as cited by Schmidt, "who created the first man and nature as a whole?" The core of the response is that the question itself "is the product of an abstraction" in that, in order to pose the question, one must suppose "nature and man to be non-existent."[26] That is to say, the question entails that there was a time when nature and man did not exist (i.e., the time prior to their creation), and the question presupposes further that at that time the questioner himself was nonexistent. Marx then states that the interlocutor might respond that he does not want to suppose the nothingness, in the sense of nonexistence, of nature; he only asks about the "act of creation" of nature as he would ask about "the formation of bones, etc." Marx responds, "Since . . . the whole of what is called world history is nothing but the creation of man by human labor, and the emergence of nature for man, he therefore has evident and irrefutable proof of his self-creation of his own origins."[27]

Thus, according to Marx, asking the question as to how man, the first men, were created presupposes that we can know that something existed prior to our own existence in nature (i.e., as natural beings). This mode of questioning is meaningless in that it abstracts from really existing human beings. Put another way, Marx points out that the presupposition of the nonexistence of human beings at some point in time is an impossible presupposition, one that does not "exist as such for rational thought."[28] Inasmuch as we do exist, we cannot even imagine that there was a time when we did not exist; such a time is inconceivable. Marx does not assert that he knows that there never was such a time or that there was such a time; what he implies rather is that this is unknown and unknowable.[29] That is to say, Marx, as I understand these writings, asserts that whether there ever was a time when we did not exist is

unknowable. According to Schmidt, the meaning of Marx's thought experiment is that "Marx rejected the ontologically posed question about the creator of the first men and of nature as a 'product of abstraction.'"[30] Therefore, responding to that question cannot be a goal of "rational thought." As we have seen, the meaning of ontological materialism is the conviction, the claim to *know*, that "matter" exists independently of human perception or experience of it. The upshot of Marx's thought experiment is rejection of ontological materialism.[31] Moreover, if asking whether anything existed prior to the existence of man and nature is an abstraction, an irrational quest, can we not also ask whether anything (call it "matter") exists independently of real, material, human existence, *at any time, including present and future time*? Isn't the postulation of such knowledge equally abstract? Marx, it seems, would concur: "But nature too, taken abstractly, for itself—nature fixed in isolation from man—is nothing for man."[32]

As we have seen, Foster concludes his statement that for Marx, "[n]ature always existed to some extent independent of human beings and prior to human beings" in this way: "though human beings and their relations were ultimately conceived as a part of nature within a complex set of internal relations." Foster here registers Marx's emphasis on the ecosocialists' proper domain of investigation—the "complex set of internal relations" between human beings and nature, as Marx's "ultimate" stance, while at the same time invoking Marx's, and his own, commitment to some version of ontological materialism. Foster's use of the term "ultimate" in this sentence suggests an uneasy vacillation between the two conceivably contradictory notions of nature or materiality. To be clear, my claim is that Foster *provides no conceptual support whatsoever* for conceiving how the terms can be construed, or mediated, to be non-contradictory. Marx's thought experiment shows, however, that Foster's apparent claim that they are not contradictory is untenable. In the next section, we will explore a possible root of this uneasiness in Foster's ecosocialist perspective.

THE RELEVANCE OF HUSSERLIAN PHENOMENOLOGY

Rejection of positivism in its many guises—for example, logicism, psychologism, anthropologism, and scientism (scientific reductionism)—is a constitutive moment of Husserlian phenomenology and is elaborated in all of Husserl's major works from his early *Logical Investigations* to his final work, *The Crisis of European Sciences and Transcendental Phenomenology*, written on the very eve of the European Holocaust. In this book, Husserl wrote that "[p]ositivism . . . decapitates philosophy"[33] and that "merely fact-minded

sciences make merely fact-minded people."[34] Thus, like Marx, Husserl rejected positivism, and natural scientific reductionism.[35] We see then that the imperative to transcend positivism is a crucial dimension of both Marx's historical materialism and Husserlian phenomenology as theoretical totalities. That is to say, writing anti-positivism out of either Marxism or phenomenology entails their dissolution.

However, despite that their fundamental focus is on the interaction between humanity and nature, ecosocialists hold, as shown earlier, that nature exists independently of human experience of it, independently of subjectivity. Indeed, they refer to this claim as the meaning of materialism itself. One of the concerns that motivate them to repeatedly emphasize this alleged belief of Marx is, it seems, that they wish definitively to avoid falling into "idealism," usually associated with Hegel, according to which the ostensible otherness of, or in Hegel's conception, our intrinsic alienation from, nature conceals an inner identity of subject (human subjectivity) and object (nature), of consciousness and nature, or the external world, which it is the task of history, through its dialectical unfolding, to reveal, thus transcending alienation. The ecosocialists seem to believe, and perhaps Marx did as well, that neither Hegelian nor any other type of idealism can be ruled out *in any other way* than by the assertion of ontological materialism. However, in focusing intensively on the metabolism between human beings and nature, ecosocialism impels us to ask how such metabolism can be knowable if nature is believed to exist independently of human subjectivity. For, if nature so exists, how can consciousness or subjectivity know it, or have a relation to it? Like Kant's thing-in-itself, materiality, or matter, believed to exist independently of subjectivity, would be unknowable. Even positivists cannot demonstrate what they hypothesize: that the perceptions that we are alleged to passively register constitute knowledge of an independently existing nature. It would seem then that the determinate ambiguity of the ecosocialists' conception of matter is a consequence of their effort to avoid both the Scylla of idealism and the Charybdis of positivism. Nor do they adopt the solution of Odysseus, to choose the lesser of two evils, for they hold that their stance is neither idealist nor positivist. Their mistake, I maintain, is in holding, as they appear to hold, that other than positing matter as having contradictory properties, *there is no other way to avoid the twin monsters*. However, phenomenology is just such a way.

It is of great importance, then, to examine the conception of materiality in Husserlian phenomenology. Phenomenology as conceived by Husserl has been held to be a form of idealism in the traditional, or Platonic, sense in which idealism is said to deny the reality of the world. Husserl explicitly denied this charge, saying that "phenomenological idealism does not deny the actual existence of the real world (in the first place, that means nature), as if

it maintained that the world were mere semblance, to which natural thinking and the positive sciences would be subject, though unwittingly." And here, we must understand that "natural thinking" posits, or believes, which for Husserl meant posits in the mode of certitude, that the world exists independently of subjectivity; otherwise, as dependent on subjectivity, the world would be a "mere semblance." Husserl then explained the specificity of phenomenology, or transcendental idealism, in this way: "Its sole task and accomplishment is to clarify the sense of this world, precisely the sense in which everyone accepts it—and rightly so—as actually existing."[36]

In other words, Husserl sought to clarify what we mean when we say, with complete conviction, and rightly so, that the world exists, that it is real. Husserl then discovered that in order to explore the nature of the existence of the world on the basis of the evidence of our immediate perceptual experience, it is necessary to refrain from "natural thinking," from belief that the independent existence of the world is knowable. Doing so does not mean that the existence or reality of the world is denied, or that one no longer experiences the world as really existing. It means that, as in the outcome of Marx's thought experiment, the independent existence of the world is neither affirmed nor denied.[37] After all, since we know the world only insofar as it is given to us as subjects, we cannot know whether it exists independently of us. Husserl called the conscious act of suspending such belief *the phenomenological reduction*, and later the transcendental-phenomenological reduction.[38] Thus, from a Husserlian perspective, since the independent existence of the world, including our own bodies as objects in the world, is unknowable, the phenomenological reduction can neutralize Hegel's, or Bishop Berkeley's, claims to know that the world does not exist independently of consciousness, and, at the same time, rule out positivism.

What is equally significant for the concerns of this chapter, however, is one of Husserl's original motivations for performance of the transcendental-phenomenological reduction. In *Crisis*, Husserl showed that natural science had "thrown a garb of ideas" over the world such that only that which is construed as known to exist entirely independently of subjectivity is a possible source of knowledge.[39] For this reason, the perpetual danger of falling into positivism or natural scientific reductionism—analogous to the Sartrean notion of the perpetual possibility of a fall into bad faith[40]—is an ever-present problem. Husserl expressed this motivation for the reduction in *The Idea of Phenomenology*, one of the earliest of his works to announce the phenomenological reduction. In this work, Husserl discusses the central issue of epistemology, usually known today as the problem of reference: "how cognition can reach that which is transcendent" (i.e., how can the cognitive function reach or know of the existence of things given as outside of it). Discussing the problem of regression to positivism, to mere unclarified assertion of

knowledge of the world's independent existence, Husserl wrote, "This comes about only by way of a mistaken but often seductive shifting between problems: between explaining cognition as a fact of nature in psychological and scientific terms [on one hand] and elucidating cognition in terms of its essential capabilities to accomplish its task [on the other hand]. Accordingly, if we are to avoid this confusion . . . we need phenomenological reduction."[41] As we have seen, the ecosocialist Marxists, despite the great power and rectitude of their interpretation of Marx's body of ides, in which they emphasize the concept of nature in Marx, and rightly so, in their zeal to avoid Hegelian-style idealism, and all idealism, fail to achieve another of their aims: transcendence of positivism. This failure occurs in that within their body of ideas there is no factor that would, so to speak break the fall, or mitigate the danger of regressing into positivism.[42] As a result, the ecosocialists manifest lack of clarity when they aver unequivocally that Marx was an ontological materialist, and yet, at the same time, both he and they reject positivism.

CRITIQUE OF SAITO'S CLAIM THAT MARX'S BODY OF IDEAS IS NOT A PHILOSOPHY: PHILOSOPHY AS PRAXIS IN MARX AND HUSSERL

Earlier I referenced a comprehensive review of Saito's *Karl Marx's Ecosocialism* by Karel Ludenhoff.[43] In addition to his lengthy exposition of the content of Saito's book, Ludenhoff included in his review a "Critical Interlude" in which he contested Saito's claim that Marx entirely abandoned philosophy. Saito explained this point in a section of his book called "Leaving Philosophy."[44] Saito's discussion is complex and well worth studying; the gist of it is that Marx, after writing *The German Ideology*, finally freed himself from both the Young Hegelians' and Feuerbach's philosophies and as a result attained a true materialist perspective. This holds that radical change can come about only through practice or action that is based on a materialist understanding of capitalism and its effects on human beings. Importantly, Saito sees in what he considers to be Marx's nonphilosophical materialism *a radical separation of philosophy from practice*. In Saito's conception of it, philosophy is the antithesis of practice, and, since Marx conceived activity as the essence of human species-being, Saito concludes that Marx rejected philosophy. For Saito, historical materialism is a means of restoring *Homo sapiens*' "original," entirely practical unity with nature. A thorough analysis of Saito's complex assessment cannot be undertaken here. However, Ludenhoff's trenchant critique will serve present purposes. Ludenhoff does not dispute Saito's ecosocialist conception of historical materialism; rather, he disputes Saito's claim that it necessitates rejecting philosophy.

Ludenhoff begins his refutation by quoting Saito's summary of several crucial aspects of Marx's concept of nature as given in the EPM:

"Marx sees the reason for the emergence of modern alienated life in a radical dissolution of the original unity between humans and nature . . . capitalism is fundamentally characterized by alienation of nature and a distorted relationship between humans and nature." That is why Marx comes to his "emancipatory idea of 'humanism = naturalism' as a project of reestablishing the unity between humanity and nature against capitalist alienation."[45]

For Saito, this passage from the EPM is philosophical in that it presupposes essences of humanism and naturalism. Ludenhoff then quotes the key passage in which Saito maintains that, after the EPM, in *The German Ideology* and *Theses on Feuerbach*, "Marx decisively distanced himself from philosophy and began to move forward to the non-philosophic conception of the unity between humanity and nature."[46] Saito claims that in the 1844 EPM, Marx is "still very much influenced by Ludwig Feuerbach's philosophy. As a result, he connected his historical analysis with an abstract and ahistorical 'human essence.'"[47] For Ludenhoff, however, despite the profound influence of Feuerbach on Marx, "it is quite another thing . . . to state that Marx, along the lines of Feuerbach, tended to connect his historical analysis with an *abstract* and *ahistorical* 'human essence.'"[48]

Ludenhoff then quotes from "an important section of the EPM, 'The Power of Money in Bourgeois Society,'" where we read,

If man's *feelings*, passions, etc., are not merely anthropological phenomena in the [narrower] sense, but truly *ontological* affirmations of being (of nature), and if they are only really affirmed because their *object* exists for them as a sensual object, then it is clear that . . . only through developed industry—i.e., through the medium of private property—does the ontological essence of human passion come into being, in its totality as in its humanity; the science of man is therefore itself a product of man's establishment of himself by practical activity.[49]

Ludenhoff comments, "This is a notion of philosophy, in particular a philosophy of humankind as species being, which is very different from that of Feuerbach. [Marx] uses the term species with a meaning totally different from that of Feuerbach."[50] Ludenhoff is rightly emphasizing Marx's insistence on the human species' interaction with nature as practice, a notion that is absent from Feuerbach's conception of species-being. However, Ludenhoff does not explicate Marx's singular, striking phrase: "the ontological essence of human passion," which comes into being "in its totality as in its humanity" in and through this practice.

It is this notion of practice, or, more accurately, praxis, the unity of theory and practice, that is a manifestation of the free creativity that is entirely contrary to Feuerbach's version of species-being as human passivity counterbalanced by abstractions (e.g., love). For Marx, "free, conscious activity is the species character of human beings."[51] It is precisely the restoration and fulfillment of this essence, one that cannot devolve into essentialism,[52] that for Marx will result from revolutionary praxis, the creation of a society in which "the free development of each is the condition for the free development of all."[53] Thus, in the quoted passage Marx uses the term "ontological" to denote not an abstract *je ne sais quoi* existing somehow, not merely given as external to but also independently of humanity. Rather, ontology in this context denotes the world itself in its being as indelibly, ineluctably, naturally, the product of human self-transcendence, of the essence, or praxis, of humanity as a moment of its own self-creation. As quoted earlier, Marx wrote that "Since . . . the whole of what is called world history is nothing but the creation of man by human labor, and the emergence of nature for man, he therefore has evident and irrefutable proof of his self-creation of his own origins."

Marx, of course, did not mean to say that "man" creates himself *ab novo*. Out of what, then? And, what grounds self-creation, what inhibits chaos? As shown earlier, Marx invoked matter and materiality in two conceivably irreconcilable senses: on one hand, as that which exists independently of human existence; on the other hand, as that which exists only in relation to human sensuous experience of it. The first notion of matter would ground human self-creation in that which is not as such experienceable, that which exists independently of and existed prior to human existence, that which, as noted earlier, in Marx's words "is nothing for man."[54] The second notion of matter, materiality, would ground self-creation in an inherent and inherently experienceable and experienced structural correlation between human sensuous perception and the perceived thing, or, equivalently, between human embodied, sensuous consciousness and the surrounding world in which we find ourselves, which Husserl referred to as the "lifeworld."[55] There are, Husserl maintained, underlying, experienceable, elements of the structural correlation between sensuous perception and the perceived things that are invariant both in immediate experience and historically. So, too, Marx construed the experienced world in structural terms. He asserted that capital, for example, is not at all a "thing," but rather "a social relation between persons which is mediated through things."[56] Capital, then, is a structural dimension of our experience of the world, but one that has not been constituted freely, socially.

Returning to the discussion of Marx and philosophy, Ludenhoff points out that in *The German Ideology*, Marx stated that "[w]hen reality is depicted, philosophy as an independent branch of knowledge loses its medium of existence."[57] Thus, Ludenhoff comments, "Marx is departing from or distancing

himself from the traditional notion of philosophy, philosophy as apart from 'real history.' . . . Marx, on the other hand, is creating a new form of philosophy, a philosophy that is connected to real history and thus with the practical activity of individuals, a philosophy in which there is a unity of theory and praxis."[58]

A dominant theme of Husserl's 1935 Vienna lecture is that "[t]he European nations are sick; Europe itself, it is said, is in crisis."[59] The eminently practical question Husserl raises is in regard to the natural sciences and the humanistic disciplines: "How does it happen that no scientific medicine has ever developed in this sphere, a medicine for nations and supranational communities?"[60] His answer is that reductive natural scientific conceptions of truth and reason have come to dominate European culture, thus consigning to meaninglessness all efforts to scientifically investigate the phenomena of immediate experience, all that Marx referred to as "human sensuous activity." For Husserl, and I believe for Marx as well, this crisis was, and is, one of abandonment of rationality, resulting in irrationality. Husserl's solution to this crisis is the attitude of transcendental phenomenology, which he views as the "synthesis of theoretical universality and universally interested praxis":

> This occurs in the form of a new sort of praxis, that of the universal critique of all life and all life-goals, all cultural products and systems that have already arisen out of the life of man; and thus it also becomes a critique of mankind itself and of the values which guide it explicitly or implicitly. Further it is a praxis whose aim is to elevate mankind through universal scientific reason, according to norms of truth of all forms, to transform it from the bottom up into a new humanity made capable of an absolute self-responsibility on the basis of absolute theoretical insights.[61]

Husserlian phenomenology is a phenomenology of praxis, the praxis of being-in-becoming, the praxis of the self-creation of every individual and of humanity as a whole, and of the world in which we find ourselves. The solution proposed here to the question as to what sort of disciplinary body of ideas is Marx's body of ideas is as follows: From the point of view of Marx's work as a phenomenological body of ideas, it is both science and philosophy, as is phenomenology itself.

ECOSOCIALISM AND HUMANISM IN PHENOMENOLOGICAL MARX

The central concern of this chapter, as announced in its opening paragraphs, is to show that understanding Marx's work as a phenomenological body of

ideas has the potential to motivate a greatly increased grasp of the environmental crises and greatly increased resolve to act accordingly. Thus far, I have provided a path of thinking that culminates in grasping Marx's body of ideas as phenomenology. In what way or ways, then, can this motivate change? Addressing this question necessitates consideration of Marx's body of ideas as a *humanist* and phenomenological body of ideas.

I take the core meaning of humanism to be centeredness. Human centeredness is expressed in Husserlian phenomenology in many ways. For example, Husserl's stipulation that the phenomenological reduction must be consciously enacted by each individual human consciousness. Moreover, each embodied person is a "zero point of all these orientations"[62]—that is, the spatial center of all experiencing of the world. For Marx, a post-capitalist, socialist society is to be preferred because in it the free and full development of each individual is ensured. Thus, each individual is a center of creativity. The issue at stake here is this: Does centeredness entail the ideological stance known as anthropocentrism, a stance that allegedly privileges the human so as to engender an instrumental and technocratic subordination of nature to human beings' narrow self-interests? If this were the case, then conversion to advocacy of Marx's body of ideas as a phenomenology would not result in an end to human complicity in destruction of the environment and disregard for the well-being of nonhuman animals, and ecosocialism would be an impossible dream.

I hold that this devolution from Marx and Husserl's human centeredness to anthropocentrism did not occur and will not occur in the future. This is so because the concrete totality of their bodies of ideas is itself a critique of reification and of all ideological modes of thought and praxis. It is well known that Marx rejected Hegel's claim that human alienation originates with Spirit's own self-diremption and will end only with Spirit's ultimate self-reconciliation. For Marx, rather than this, the "inverted world" of which both he and Hegel spoke will end with the end of capitalism, the actual source of alienation, of the systemic, institutionalized abstraction of individuals from their own inherent sociality. Husserl explained that each individual is the instantiation of a transcendental ego that is not itself a human ego and is, moreover, simultaneously transcendental intersubjectivity, "the intrinsically first form of being."[63] For Marx, "the individual is the social being."[64]

The understanding of Marx's body of ideas as a phenomenology, as a perspective that finally frees us from dehumanizing subservience to unknowable entities, whether gods or things-in-themselves, and that reveals the heretofore concealed creativity and productivity of human labor, can result in a heightening of consciousness of individual and collective or social freedom, freedom which is incomprehensible as freedom absent awareness of responsibility. Such a heightening of consciousness that can liberate action is

motivated by the above in that it frees us from impotence and self-blame—in other words, from the *denigration of the human* that chronically undermines realization of freedom.

Both Husserl and Marx showed that delineating this concrete totality, which is after all what the proletariat will grasp when as a class it "has nothing to lose but its chains," is a matter of a philosophy that is a science of historically mediated experience and praxiological engagement with the world. Thus understood, Marx's body of ideas construed phenomenologically is a "radical phenomenological humanism."[65]

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NOTES

1. Georg Lukács, *History and Class Consciousness: Studies in Marxist Dialectics*, trans. Rodney Livingstone (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1971).

2. In this chapter, I eschew use of the term "Marxism" in order to avoid any ideological connotations.

3. The influence of Husserl on Lukács has only recently been brought to the fore. See especially Richard Westerman, *Lukács's Phenomenology of Capitalism: Reification Revalued* (Cham, Switzerland: Palgrave Macmillan, 2019). This volume

offers a comprehensive survey and discussion of Lukács and phenomenology, including all of the major work in the field along with Westerman's own original contribution.

4. Though Gramsci is not usually included in such a grouping, I do so because the rejection of metaphysical (i.e., ontological) materialism, as in the phenomenological attitude, permeates his *Prison Notebooks*. For example, "The idea of 'objective' in metaphysical materialism would appear to mean an objectivity that exists even apart from man; but when one affirms that a reality would exist even if man did not, one is either speaking metaphorically or one is falling into a form of mysticism." Antonio Gramsci, *Selections from the Prison Notebooks*, ed. and trans. Q. Hoare and G. N. Smith (New York: International Publishers, 1972), 446.

5. Though the term "historical materialism" was first used by Engels and never used by Marx, it is generally used as a nonideological term to refer to Marx's body of ideas. However, it is to be noted, as Gramsci does, that "[i]t is well-known, more-over, that the originator of the philosophy of praxis [Marx] never called his own conception materialist." Gramsci*, Selections from the Prison Notebooks*, 456; see also 457, note 105.

6. Major works advocating the ecosocialist perspective on Marx include Kohei Saito, *Karl Marx's Ecosocialism*: *Capital, Nature, and the Unfinished Critique of Political Economy* (New York: Monthly Review Press, 2017); John Bellamy Foster and Paul Burkett, *Marx and the Earth: An Anti-Critique* (Chicago: Haymarket Books, 2017); John Bellamy Foster, Brett Clark, and Richard York, *The Ecological Rift: Capitalism's War on the Earth* (New York: Monthly Review Press, 2010); John Bellamy Foster, *Marx's Ecology: Materialism and Nature* (New York: Monthly Review Press, 2000).

7. The conjuncture of historical materialism and phenomenological reduction immediately brings to mind the work of Maurice Merleau-Ponty. No thinker has explored more profoundly the relation between historical materialism and Husserlian phenomenology with particular emphasis on phenomenological reduction. However, as Bryan A. Smyth points out, Merleau-Ponty "self-consciously deviated from Fink—and, indeed, from everyone, including Husserl himself inasmuch as he took this interpretation of phenomenology decisively in a particular existential direction that emphasizes what he called the 'paradoxical nature of the world.'" Thus, doing justice to Merleau-Ponty's existential phenomenology in relation to historical materialism and to the kind of conjuncture between historical materialism and transcendental phenomenology that I have suggested here would require another chapter. See Bryan A. Smyth, *Merleau-Ponty's Existential Phenomenology and the Realization of Philosophy* (London: Bloomsbury, 2014), xi.

8. Karl Marx, *Marx-Engels Gesamtausgabe*, vol. 4/18, *Exzerpte und Notizen. Februar 1864 bis August 1868*, ed. Teinosuke Otani, Kohei Saito, and Timm Graßmann (Berlin: de Gruyter, 2019).

9. Saito, *Karl Marx's Ecosocialism*, 136, 257–66. It is not my intention in this chapter to critically review Saito's findings. A comprehensive review of Saito's book by Karel Ludenhoff, "Marx, Socialism, and Ecology," can be found at http://logosjournal.com/2018/ludenhoff/. Ludenhoff's review of Saito can be found on the

website of the International Marxist-Humanist Organization at https://imhojournal. org/articles/marx-socialism-and-ecology/. The page numbers I cite are those of the article as downloaded from the IMHO website. While Ludenhoff critiques some aspects of Saito's conception of Marx's perspective, a critique that will be discussed later, he provides a comprehensive and largely favorable analysis of Saito's ecosocialist interpretation of Marx.

10. Saito, *Ecosocialism*, 83.

11. Saito*, Ecosocialism*, 85–90.

12. Saito, *Ecosocialism*, 136.

13. Saito, *Ecosocialism*, 25–61. Saito seems to hold that Marx's humanism is indistinguishable from his philosophy as these are expressed in the *Economic and Philosophical Manuscripts*. See Karl Marx, *Economic and Philosophical Manuscripts*, trans. T. B. Bottomore, in *Marx's Concept of Man*, by Erich Fromm (New York: Ungar, 1979), 87–196. Hereafter abbreviated as EPM. Humanism will be discussed in the conclusion of this chapter.

14. "The value of commodities is the very opposite of the coarse materiality of their substance, not an atom of matter enters into its composition." Karl Marx, *Capital: A Critique of Political Economy*, trans. Ben Fowkes (London: Penguin, 1976), 1:138.

15. "Even this pure natural science is provided with an aim, as with its material, only through trade and industry, through the sensuous activity of men. So much is this activity, this unceasing sensuous labor and creation, this production, the basis of the whole sensuous world as it now exists." Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels, *The German Ideology* (New York: International Publishers, 2016), 68.

16. Three tenets of positivism are relevant here: First, the view that reality, as Marx said in *Theses on Feuerbach*, "is conceived only in the form of the *object of contemplation*, but not as *sensuous human activity, practice*, not subjectively." The phrase "object of contemplation" indicates the positivist view that human perception is just the passive recipient of external stimuli, that the mind is, as Locke put it, a blank slate. Second, the well-known positivist view that the social sciences, or humanistic disciplines, should use the methodology of the natural sciences. Insofar as Marx used a dialectical method of investigation, his method is incompatible with natural science, which does not recognize dialectical processes. Third, and for present purposes most significant, insofar as positivism viewed only the methodology of the natural sciences as valid, it at the same time necessarily held, as one of positivism's presuppositions, that it is known that nature, the world, exists independently of human experience. This point is made explicit by Albert Einstein in dialogue with Rabindranath Tagore: "If nobody were in the house the table would exist all the same, but this is already illegitimate from your [Tagore's] point of view, because we cannot explain what it means, that the table is there, independently of us. Our natural point of view in regard to the existence of truth apart from humanity cannot be explained or proved, but it is a belief which nobody can lack—not even primitive beings. We attribute to truth a superhuman objectivity. It is indispensable for us—this reality which is independent of our existence and our experience and our mind—though we cannot say what it means" (retrieved from https://awaken.com/2015/01/albert-einstein-rabindranath-tagore-on-the-nature-of-reality/). In other words, positivism

holds that it is known that nature exists independently of human subjectivity, even though this is unprovable.

17. Karl Marx, "Theses on Feuerbach," in Marx and Engels, *The German Ideology*, 121.

18. John Bellamy Foster, "The Dialectics of Nature and Marxist Ecology," in *The Ecological Rift: Capitalism's War on the Earth*, by John Bellamy Foster, Brett Clark, and Richard York (New York: Monthly Review Press, 2010), 215–47. This chapter was originally published in *Dialectics for a New Century*, ed. Bertell Ollman and Tony Smith (London: Palgrave, 2007), 50–82.

19. Quoted by Foster, "The Dialectics of Nature and Marxist Ecology," 241. In Marx's terminology, "inorganic conditions" refers to nature external to us as we sensuously experience it—that is, to materiality.

20. Foster, "The Dialectics of Nature and Marxist Ecology," 241.

21. Foster, "The Dialectics of Nature and Marxist Ecology," 233–34.

22. Foster, "The Dialectics of Nature and Marxist Ecology," 234 (italics added).

23. In an earlier work, Foster unambiguously attributes ontological materialism to Marx. Foster, *Marx's Ecology*, 2.

24. Alfred Schmidt, *The Concept of Nature in Marx* (London: Verso, 2014), 1.

25. Schmidt, *Concept of Nature in Marx*, 37.

26. Schmidt, *Concept of Nature in Marx*, 38.

27. Quoted in Schmidt, *Concept of Nature in Marx*, 38.

28. Karl Marx, "Private Property and Capitalism," in Fromm, *Marx's Concept of Man*, 139. Oddly, Schmidt elides this sentence, one which seems to me to be exceedingly important, to wit: "Ask yourself whether that progression [regression to the origin of humanity and nature] *exists as such for rational thought*" (italics added).

29. One might ask whether Marx's stance here is a type of agnosticism. The answer is yes, with the proviso that agnosticism is taken to mean that the unknowability of the independent existence of the world means unknowable *in principle,* not merely unknown in fact or reality. Furthermore, Marx's view here is very different from agnosticism regarding the existence of god, which is the context in which the term is usually applied.

30. Schmidt, *Concept of Nature in Marx*, 37.

31. Foster also attributes to Marx a corollary of ontological materialism, which asserts "the unilateral dependence of social upon biological (and more generally physical) being and the emergence of the former from the latter" (Foster, *Marx's Ecology*, 2). However, while rejecting any idealistic interpretation of Marx, Philip J. Kain, in his scholarly and incisive book *Marx's Method, Epistemology, and Humanism* (Dordrecht: Reidel, 1986), differentiating between Marx's and Engels's views, states that "Engels does hold that the mind is a product of matter and that someday thought will be explained as 'molecular and chemical motions in the brain.' This is a position at which Marx never even hinted" (110).

32. Marx, EPM, in Fromm, *Marx's Concept of Man*, 193.

33. Edmund Husserl, *The Crisis of European Sciences and Transcendental Phenomenology*, trans. David Carr (Evanston, IL: Northwestern University Press, 1970), 9.

34. Husserl, *Crisis of European Sciences*, 6.

35. In a recent article in which he strongly defends Engels's *Dialectics of Nature* and in which he discusses the concept of materiality at great length without offering any suggestion at all as to what it is, Foster quotes Richard Lewontin, who differentiates between "reduction' and "reductionism" and explains reductionism, which he claims Engels rejected, as follows: "*Reduction* looks to lower levels of analysis for differentiating symptoms of forces at higher levels, whereas *reductionism* claims that forces at lower levels are the actual causes of the higher phenomena." Quoted in John Bellamy Foster, "Engels' Dialectics of Nature in the Anthropocene," *Monthly Review* 72, no. 6 (2020): 24. Interestingly, Husserl's concept of "founding" holds precisely that the stratum of psyche is founded upon the stratum of body as material thing, where the relation of founding is not causal (i.e., body is not the cause of mind). See Edmund Husserl, *Ideas Pertaining to a Pure Phenomenology and to a Phenomenological Philosophy*, *First Book*, trans. F. Kersten (The Hague: Martinus Nijhoff, 1983), 45.

36. Edmund Husserl, *Ideas Pertaining to a Pure Phenomenology and to a Phenomenological Philosophy*, *Second Book*, trans. R. Rojcewicz and A. Schuwer (Dordrecht: Kluwer, 1989), 420.

37. This outcome of the phenomenological reduction is often entirely ignored, as if asserting the unknowability of the independent existence of nature is equivalent to its denial. The entirely incorrect consequence of this is that Husserl is held to be a Platonic idealist denying the reality of things and the world.

38. The clearest, most unambiguous statement of what, in my view, the phenomenological reduction *is*, which I follow here, can be found in an essay by Dorion Cairns, a prominent student of Husserl and one of his first English translators. See Dorion Cairns, "The First Motivation of Transcendental Epoché," in *One Hundred Years of Phenomenology*: *Husserl's Logical Investigations Revisited*, ed. D. Zahavi and F. Sternfelt (Dordrecht: Kluwer, 2002), 219–31.

39. Husserl, *Crisis of European Sciences*, 51.

40. For an analysis of this analogy, see Marilyn Nissim-Sabat, "Crisis and Convergence: Humanism and Method in Lewis Gordon's *Fanon and the Crisis of European Man,"* in *25th Anniversary Edition of Fanon and the Crisis of European Man* (New York: Routledge, forthcoming).

41. Edmund Husserl, *The Idea of Phenomenology*, trans. W. P. Alston and G. Nakhnikian (The Hague: Martinus Nijhoff, 1964), 4.

42. There is considerable evidence in the train of thinking that originated with Engels's late writings and continued at least through Lenin's *Materialism and Empirio-Criticism* that a fall into positivism not only has occurred but also is a thriving historical tendency in ideological versions of Marx's body of ideas.

43. Karel Ludenhoff, "Marx, Socialism, and Ecology" (see note 9).

44. Saito, *Ecosocialism*, 51–61.

45. Ludenhoff, "Marx, Socialism, and Ecology," 7; quoting Saito, *Ecosocialism*, 14.

46. Ludenhoff, "Marx, Socialism, and Ecology," 8; Saito, *Ecosocialism*, 51.

47. Saito, *Ecosocialism*, 26.

48. Ludenhoff, "Marx, Socialism, and Ecology," 9.

49. Ludenhoff, "Marx, Socialism, and Ecology," 9.

50. Ludenhoff, "Marx, Socialism, and Ecology," 9.

51. Marx, EPM, in Fromm, *Marx's Concept of Man*, 101.

52. Essences invoked by Marx do not fall to the charge of essentialism because they do not precede but either follow or are coeval with their existence. For discussion, see Nissim-Sabat, "Crisis and Convergence." See also Lewis R. Gordon, "Essentialist Anti-Essentialism: With Consideration from Other Sides of Modernity," *Quaderna* 1 (2012). https://quaderna.org/essentialist-anti-essentialism-with-considerations-from-other-sides-of-modernity/.

53. Karl Marx and Frederick Engels, *The Communist Manifesto*, in *Karl Marx and Frederick Engels: Selected Works in One Volume* (New York: International Publishers, 1968), 53.

54. Kant held that we know that the thing-in-itself exists, but it is otherwise unknowable. Hegel severely criticized this stance, and posited the ultimate knowability of the existence and nature of the thing-in-itself. Husserl held that the existence of the thing-in-itself is in principle unknowable. Marx seems to vacillate between these two attitudes. But Foster rejects Kant and Hegel, and does not address the Husserlian position.

55. Husserl's work on the lifeworld can be found in his last work, *Crisis of European Sciences*, 103–89. On Husserl's rejection of relativism, see 139: "But this embarrassment disappears as soon as we consider that the life-world does have, in all its relative features, *a general structure*. This general structure to which everything that exists relatively is bound, is not itself relative."

56. Marx, *Capital*, 1:932.

57. Ludenhoff, "Marx, Socialism, and Ecology," 10; Karl Marx, *The German Ideology*, Marxists Internet Archive, accessed February 27, 2021, https://www.marxists.org/archive/marx/works/1845/german-ideology/ch01a.htm.

58. Ludenhoff, "Marx, Socialism, and Ecology," 10–11.

59. Husserl, *Crisis of European Sciences*, 270.

60. Husserl, *Crisis of European Sciences*, 270.

61. Husserl*, Crisis of European Sciences*, 282.

62. Husserl, *Ideas, Second Book*, 166.

63. Edmund Husserl, *The Paris Lectures*, trans. P. Koestenbaum (The Hague: Martinus Nijhoff, 1975), 38.

64. Marx, EPM, in Fromm, *Marx's Concept of Man*, 130.

65. This felicitous and altogether fitting phrase was contributed by the editors of this volume.

Chapter 3

Marxism, Phenomenology, and the Mythico-Political

Bryan Smyth

This chapter is concerned with the question of myth in Marxism (understood in the philosophically broad sense of historical materialism) and phenomenology (understood broadly in the Husserlian transcendental sense), and how, positively construed, myth represents a significant point of productive complementarity between these philosophically radical traditions. That there are points of complementarity between Marxism and phenomenology has long been contended, and it is a basic premise of the present volume that such do indeed exist. These may be variously articulated and will differ in terms of their relative importance. But owing primarily to its far-reaching epistemic implications with regard to issues of totality, I will suggest that there is something fundamental about the complementarity concerning myth that I shall try to elucidate.

Now, on the face of it such a complementarity may seem highly implausible. For in line with a central tenet of the Enlightenment, the overwhelming preponderance of contemporary thought—and this would include Marxism and phenomenology—holds a pejorative view of myth as (in a nutshell) *false belief naïvely held*. Moreover, opponents of Marxism and phenomenology have subjected both traditions to dismissive criticisms to the effect that their key claims *are* mythic in this pejorative sense—in the case of Marxism, for example, its claims concerning the proletariat as a universal class and the agency of historical progress; or in the case of phenomenology, its methodological desideratum of presuppositionless intuition and its claims of apodictic givenness—and both have pushed back on these accusations by insisting on the scientific rigor and "respectability" of their projects. In short, the

predominant self-understanding of both Marxism and phenomenology firmly aligns itself with the Enlightenment in opposing any association with myth.

But precisely therein may lie a significant self-*mis*understanding. The basic claim underpinning the following discussion is that it is a mistake to assume any necessary tension or incompatibility between scientific reason and myth, and that inasmuch as Marxism and phenomenology fall in with mainstream Enlightenment thinking in making this assumption, they fail to actualize their full radical potential. So it may be conceded that there is a certain partial (albeit misdirected) truth in the sorts of criticism to which I just alluded. But rather than trying to deny this partial truth, it is incumbent upon Marxists and phenomenologists to seize hold of it, *own* it, turn it around and *complete* it by showing that critical scientific rationality properly includes a recognition of its own ineliminable entwinement with myth, and that it takes self-conscious responsibility for how the implicit normativity of this myth conditions perception and knowledge. The potential philosophical radicalness of Marxism and phenomenology is thus tied to their achieving the higher level of critical enlightenment that emerges with the recognition that the Enlightenment ideal of a demythologized reason is itself a myth in the usual pejorative sense.[1]

I will not be discussing myth in general, but rather aiming to rehabilitate a specific sense of myth that concerns nature and humanity's relation to it. In this I will basically follow Herder's observation that "the mythology of every people is an expression of their own distinctive way of viewing nature."[2] As part of what Ricœur called its distinctive "mytho-poetic nucleus,"[3] every culture has some at least implicit understanding of nature, and these views can differ in politically consequential ways—hence I will refer to such views as belonging to the *mythico-political* dimension.[4] For instance, the Enlightenment notion of a demythologized reason is homologous to a dichotomization of nature and human history that is based on a reified view of nature (in the *naturata* sense) as a realm of ahistorical stasis. This dichotomy is politically problematic in that it enables so-called grand or master narratives to impose a falsely anthropocentric or ethnocentric universality with "totalitarian" implications. Critical recognition of the pejoratively mythical status of this dichotomy will be key to any epistemically sound orientation toward reality in its integral totality that is not itself problematically totalitarian. For such recognition would affirm that humanity does not transcend nature, that our history is not premised on a rupture with it, that in all we are and do we remain permanently embedded within it. Now, it may be generally agreed that, rigorously understood, human self-understanding implies coming to terms with this embeddedness. But this implicates nature in the deeper and ultimately opaque *naturans* sense. If this is (as I shall assume here) *uncognizable* as such—that is, if it is an insuperable precondition of any cognitive experience at all—then Enlightenment rationality, lest it pursue the

totalitarian option, can only acknowledge a skeptical limit. At a higher level of critical self-consciousness, however, myth can fill the resulting void of intelligibility by giving *horizonal* expression to the totality of nature within which human historical experience is invariably—albeit with indefinite variability—immersed. This horizonality *will* bear a superficial resemblance to "totalitarian" thinking—as we shall see, it will be a kind of "*metanarrative*."[5] But as an expressive product of *rationally self-conscious mythopoesis*, it can, within the limits of empirical knowledge, be adapted in normatively defensible ways that do not impose any illicitly universal sameness.

Approaching nature as a *horizonal totality* is particularly important for any approach to reality aimed at *critical elucidation* or *transformative participation*. Both kinds of endeavor will involve a praxis, the reflexive coherence of which raises the need for an oriented conception of nature as the encompassing context of history. As noted, fulfilling this need exceeds the epistemic limits of scientific reason in the Enlightenment sense. It can, however, be met through myth in the form of an epistemically neutral but normatively valenced "take" on nature *qua* horizonal totality. Any such conception will still have to clear a bar of theoretical justification. But the general idea is that myth, construed as *the idiom of horizonal totality*, ultimately gives expression—perhaps the highest expression—to the primacy of practical reason.

Although we might be tempted to associate the goals of critical elucidation and transformative participation with phenomenology (as "regressive"—i.e., *rückfragend*, interrogation) and Marxism (as "progressive"—i.e., forward-looking, change), respectively, the common concern with totality will blur that distinction, such that in each case what we are ultimately dealing with is a *mythopoetic* intervention on the contested terrain of "the politics of nature"[6]—or equivalently, a *political* intervention on the contested terrain of "the mythopoetics of nature." While its concern with nature will imply certain *prima facie* affinities with what is often termed *sacred myth* (and hence issues such as cosmogony), the sort of myth that I will be aiming to rehabilitate will have a more limited and wholly secular *anthropogonic* (or anthropogenetic) focus and can be better regarded as a form of what is typically termed *political myth*—that is, myth pertaining to the political situation of a social group, albeit now at a universal level,[7] and the normatively oriented *sense of history* that it provides will be its key mythico-political contribution.

This is a very broad topic, and my claim is rather heterodox. In what follows, I can only offer a preliminary sketch. Certain aspects will get short shrift, and the discussion will gloss over many details. But hopefully the picture that emerges will be sufficiently clear and comprehensible for readers to be able to form a judgment about it.

I will first (1) outline more specifically the sort of political myth that is in question here. I will then show how such a view emerges endogenously (2)

from within phenomenology in general methodological terms concerning the generative analysis of horizonal intentionality, and (3) from within Marxism in terms of the need to shore up its view of revolutionary historical agency with a conception of natural dialecticity. I will then (4) conclude with some brief observations concerning how the question of myth relates to the problem of reification.

POLITICAL MYTH OF NATURE AS DYNAMIC NARRATIVE HORIZON OF SIGNIFICANCE

Myth is a highly polysemic term whose different senses place it in close relation to numerous other discursive forms—for example, legends, fairy tales, fables, parables, allegories, even historiography and speculative philosophy—and there is a vast literature dealing with it across many disciplines. For present purposes, I am primarily concerned with the function and epistemic status of myth in the contemporary world. Setting aside purely historically oriented mythography, outside specialized fields of mythology,[8] the predominant attitude toward myth, especially among philosophers, reflects the repudiation of myth that is characteristic, if not definitive, of Enlightenment reason. This view sees myth in general as a prescientific stage of thought—hence the idea of it as false belief naïvely held. It thus maintains that scientific reason properly understood is premised on a radical break with myth, and disparages contemporary myth as an intellectually retrograde vestige of "primitive" or "infantile" thinking.

Now, to be sure, there *is* something to this disparagement—there *are* false beliefs naïvely held, and it is entirely appropriate to call these out and challenge them wherever they occur. But the basic point of my critical rehabilitation of myth is that it is not *all* "bad" in this epistemic sense. In this I am drawing on specialized mythological scholarship that takes up in a serious way questions concerning the persistence of myth in the contemporary world—which is a deeply puzzling anomaly from the Enlightenment perspective. Variously pointing back to such historical figures as Vico, Schelling, and Nietzsche, this scholarship discerns important continuities between archaic and contemporary myth in terms of a fundamental existential function of disalienation and sense-making that is consistent with but *not* supplanted by modern scientific reason.[9]

This function has to do with totality: the projection of encompassing horizons that frame and thereby provide the background for intentional experience. Although such a projection is typically not (if ever) normatively neutral, it can be understood as being *epistemically* neutral in the sense of having logical priority over questions of truth and falsity. *Qua* horizonal totality, myth

does not purport to *grasp* totality. It does not reify reality in its most general features. It does not put forward any claims purporting to be true rather than false, but rather provides the background against which such claims become meaningful. The validity of myth in this sense is pragmatic, and we might say that myths are *held*, not *believed*. It would thus be a category mistake to regard myth itself as *being* either true or false.[10] But this does not untether it from what *is* true or false. The content of myth is not unrestrictedly fanciful—in order to fulfill its function it must be plausible. It must not be inconsistent with established empirical knowledge, and it should develop responsively alongside it so as to achieve a kind of "reflective equilibrium." Still, in ways reminiscent of Kantian *Vernunft*, myth itself remains epistemically neutral, and it is this neutrality that enables it to say something about totality without raising the theoretical and practical worries associated with totalitarian thinking.

There are three specific features of myth as the epistemically neutral idiom of horizontal totality that I need to briefly address before turning to phenomenology and Marxism in the following sections. These features combine to characterize the content of myth so construed as *dynamic narrative significance*.

First, *significance*. I am drawing on the work of Hans Blumenberg, in particular his *Work on Myth*, in the sense of understanding myth primarily in the functional terms of providing a defense mechanism of sorts against the existential anxiety occasioned by the seemingly overwhelming capriciousness and indifference of reality toward human life. Based on paleoanthropological speculation that takes up Arnold Gehlen's claim that, in contrast to other animals, humans are "deficient beings" [*Mängelwesen*] in the sense of not being biologically adapted to a specific environmental niche,[11] Blumenberg portrays primeval humans as vulnerably exposed to what he terms "the absolutism of reality." And although the form of this "absolutism" has changed, our position today is ultimately no different.[12] Compensating for our biological deficiency, we seek to distance ourselves from the seeming arbitrariness of the world by pragmatically deploying our symbolic proficiency that provides what Blumenberg, following Dilthey and especially Erich Rothacker, calls "significance" [*Bedeutsamkeit*].[13] By this is meant a kind of intramundane background meaningfulness, falling between the banal and the ultimate, that precognitively mediates the absolutism of reality, rendering it definite in a way that enables us to feel "at home," cope, and perhaps even flourish in the world.[14] So construed, significance provides schemata for selectively "organising and filtering . . . the reception of new information, be it the combination of sights and sounds into images of physical objects or the complex perception of social situations."[15] Although myth is often thought of in connection with

some sort of "enchantment," this notion is at best orthogonal here inasmuch as mythic status—something's being a mythologeme rather than just some possibly weird idea—has to do, not with its content, but its functional role in providing significance. In Blumenberg's account, fulfilling this existential function is the "work *of* myth," and it comes down to the social-imaginative institution of a particular hodological landscape or "lifeworld" *precisely as the definite environmental niche that we lack biologically*. In this sense, it is no mere metaphor to say, with Geertz, that "man [*sic*] is an animal suspended in webs of significance he himself has spun."[16]

Second, *narrative*. Mythic significance so construed will ultimately take a narrative form, where this is understood essentially in the Ricœurian sense as a structure of intelligibility that mediates "the aporetics of temporality" through a process of "emplotment" that configures successive but often "discordant" events into a "concordant" or coherent whole.[17] The work of myth *qua* horizontal totality is thus accomplished through a narrative that provides an overall sense of whence and whither linking past, present, and future.[18] While particular lifeworlds may take shape, as Herder suggested, against particular views of nature, at a universal level the mythic *whence* goes deeper, extending a narrative of human history to nature as well—in effect, radicalizing Jameson's injunction: "Always historicize!"[19] Such a radicalized sense of *whence* can share the emancipatory interest of reason in a way that implies an inclusively radicalized sense of *whither*—as Ricœur put it, "[i]n genuine reason as in genuine myth, we find a concern for the *universal* liberation of all."[20]

As noted earlier, the mythic horizontal totality in question here will be a kind of metanarrative, or what might even be called a "foundational narrative." But owing to its epistemic neutrality, it need not generate the main worry usually associated with narrative history, to wit, that it ineluctably imposes an artificial coherence on events—the worry, in other words, that narrative history just *is* mythic in the pejorative sense and that as such it cannot but rationalize present conditions by "naturalizing" some aspect of their past in the sense of *dehistoricizing it*.[21] While some kind of historiographical irony might be able to parry that worry, mythic horizons that self-consciously historicize nature could remove the basis for it altogether—nature cannot be invoked to dehistoricize history if it, nature, has itself been historicized. The key is to include nature in our historical metanarrative. The underlying problem with "grand narratives" is that they remain premised on the false dichotomy between nature and history—in this sense, the problem is that they are *not grand enough*. What we need is something like the Adornian idea of "nature-history" [*Naturgeschichte*], and the possibility it affords of "interpreting concrete history as nature and [making] nature dialectical under the aspect of history."[22]

But pulling this off, telling a story soundly at this level, can only be done in mythical terms. Here we can glimpse certain affinities with *mythistory* as an approach to historiography that recognizes the irreducible social reality of myth and the consequent need for direct hermeneutical engagement with it.[23] Redolent of Nietzsche, the idea is that "a more rigorous and reflective epistemology"[24] will lead us to seek historical "truth" as pragmatically anchored in myth, because "[w]ithout myth . . . all cultures lose their healthy, creative, natural energy; only a horizon surrounded by myths encloses and unifies a cultural movement."[25] Nietzsche noted that myth operates in the background of experience,[26] and this fits well with Blumenberg's account of significance. Mythic historical narrative provides the overarching precognitive background that endows experience with a normatively valenced orientation and sense of purposiveness.[27] This enables individuals to identify with something more general by relating to the world in historically participatory terms. Mythic narrative can thus be seen as underwriting the sort of motivation specifically required for historical action.

The key issue here will have to do with the viability of such narrative within the grander, universal scope of nature-history. For now suffice it to say that whatever case can be made for the mythistorical rehabilitation of myth for particular historiographical purposes, it would not be weaker (and likely stronger) when it comes to narratives of nature-historical significance, if our historical self-understanding does indeed imply coming to precognitive terms with our natural embeddedness. Inasmuch as the *whence* of such a mythic narrative pertains in a more radical way to "an original past, a past that has never been present,"[28] the mythic *whither* can, as "an opening on to other *possible* worlds which transcend the established limits of our *actual* world,"[29] orient us toward a similarly radicalized future.

Third, mythic narrative significance is *dynamic*. Although in general the existential need for significance can be considered universal, just how it is fulfilled not only varies interculturally but can and does change within a culture over time as conditions evolve—myth is not carved in ancient stone, but is an ongoing dynamic process. This brings us back to Blumenberg—this dynamic aspect of myth is what he called "work *on* myth." Whereas the "work *of* myth" refers to its function of providing a horizontal framework of narrative significance, "work *on* myth" refers to how this actually occurs. There is no real separation between these aspects. Even if myth cannot be created *ex nihilo*, traditionally bequeathed myth has always already been "worked on" and passed along through a series of "coherent deformations," and in any case it does not *do* anything on its own—at any point, myth's function of providing significance is fulfilled in and through its critical reception and active adaptation to current needs. *Myth is always geared to the present.* It is thus always subject to critical scrutiny—not the same kind of critical

scrutiny to which science is subjected, of course, since its function of provid-
ing significance is very different from the function of scientific explanation.
Myth may be, strictly speaking, unfalsifiable, since it does not make truth
claims. But myth can still be discussed rationally with regard to "[its] *appro-
priateness* as a means for acting in the present," where this appropriateness
has to do with "the values that [it] purport[s]"—the normative defensibility of
the values it involves and how plausibly it suggests their actualizability—and
"[its] capacity to create significance *in these particular conditions*"[30]—how
well it locates an efficacy in those conditions that connects them to the his-
torical structure of the narrative.

Thus, inasmuch as its validity derives from this sort of pragmatic appro-
priateness, myth is always a matter of mythopoesis, or mythopoetic work on
myth. This need not occur self-consciously *as* mythopoesis, but simply as a
general aspect of ordinary human experience. Just as historical narrative in
general is, as Carr put it, "an extension by other means, and to some extent
with different attitudes, of historical existence itself,"[31] so, too, with the
mythico-political. Even if sometimes it is so subtle as to be barely noticed,
and even if reaffirming the same horizonality is more common than even
modest incremental change, we are always actively situating and orienting
ourselves with regard to nature-history through myth. Indeed, inasmuch as
the sort of *universal political myth* in question here aims prospectively at a
new framework of narrative significance and has far less of a traditional basis
than either sacred myth or particular political myth, the mythopoetic dimen-
sion will be sharply accentuated, although it will still stand in continuity with
ordinary experience.

Nowadays the process of situating and orienting ourselves with regard
to nature has mainly to do with the results of natural science. Myth always
develops alongside our empirical understanding of reality, and it should be
informed by it and, if necessary, altered accordingly. But myth does not *fol-
low* science. As noted earlier, for the sake of its appropriateness myth should
find itself in a "reflective equilibrium" with empirical science. This means
that in its function of providing significance, myth must take cognizance of
the results of science and not be inconsistent with them. But as institutive of
particular lifeworlds, that significance itself forms the heuristic horizon of
scientific practice that maintains it within certain limits. So there is a dia-
lectical interdependence between science and myth. Incongruities can arise,
however, and when they do, it is ultimately a pragmatic political question as
to which side will yield in order to resolve the tension.[32]

The relationship between myth and science is centrally important to phe-
nomenology and Marxism. In what follows, I am specifically interested in
how self-conscious political mythopoesis concerning nature-history as an
integral totality is called upon to play an important role in advancing these

projects. As an intervention into the mythico-political, this would not be any sort of utopian fantasy oblivious to science, nor mere metascientific commentary *on* science, but rather a speculative paleoanthropological narrative that would heuristically guide science in a certain normative direction. This is a delicate issue inasmuch as it may seem misguided to subordinate science to philosophy, let alone to *myth*, or *political myth* especially. Myth is typically associated with reactionary and totalitarian politics, while any seeming "politicization" of science can be easily dismissed as an attack on rationality. The prospect of self-conscious mythopoesis can thus seem to involve unsupportable concessions to irrationality and normative irresponsibility.

But while mythopoesis may well be a risky business, such concessions are by no means necessary. On the one hand, the projection of epistemically neutral significance in the form of a mythic narrative of nature-history is an entirely reasonable response to "absolutism" and is in no way contrary to rationality—as Blumenberg put it, myth is "a piece of high-carat 'work of *logos*,'"[33] and it can be readily seen as a feature of an expanded notion of reason.[34] On the other hand, myth, especially in the pejorative sense, is already out there—there is no question of *introducing* it. Political myth is normal and ineliminable: "the production and reproduction of mythopoeic narratives are constant features of political life"[35] Owing to their precognitive nature, however, they tend to pass unnoticed and unquestioned. "Political myths . . . are not only a part of the world that we experience, they are also, and foremost, the lenses through which we see this world."[36] They may be difficult to bring into focus, but they *are* there. Indeed, it is arguably the case that the increasing prominence of scientific disenchantment has actually *intensified* the need for significance in the contemporary world. Further, even if problematic "master narratives" have been firmly critiqued from postmetaphysical perspectives, their content may nonetheless persist in sedimented form at the level of myth. In short, there *is* myth today, possibly more so than ever, and it tends to be "bad"—epistemically non-neutral, or *ideological*—myth.[37] So there is no question about *whether* there is to be myth concerning nature, it is only a question of *which* myth—roughly, a "bad" reified one or a "good" historicized one.

This is why the seductive idea of a demythologized reason is a duplicitous trap for projects like Marxism and phenomenology. For by confining them within the existing mythic horizons of the *status quo*, naïve complicity with that idea exacts a conformity that neutralizes their essential radical possibilities, which depend on dereifying or historicizing nature. It is crucial to disalienate ourselves from nature and to be able to have a rationally well-grounded hope that the realization of our universal aspirations, in both philosophical and political terms, *can* in fact take hold there. Progress today points back to nature. So it is crucial to engage at the level of the mythico-political in order

to "save" myth, *and hence reason*, from ideological distortion.[38] "Bad" ideological myth must be confronted, not directly in terms of truth—if anything, it will be science that debunks it on that score—but on the level of significance, in the form of a plausible and compelling view of the integral unity of nature and history.

PHENOMENOLOGY AND MYTH

Here I wish to approach the idea of "enlightenment about enlightenment" by way of something like a "phenomenology of phenomenology." I take as a starting point the observation that as a philosophical project phenomenology remains methodologically ambivalent in a way that makes it vulnerable to accusations of naïve complicity with some form of "the myth of the given."[39] This situation has to do with the phenomenological reduction, and the existence of different conceptions of it that may be mutually inconsistent.[40] As expressed in the *Crisis* texts, what is arguably Husserl's own most developed view of the reduction proposed a "teleological-historical reflection upon the origins of our critical scientific and philosophical situation" through a universal ontology of the "prescientific lifeworld" understood as the locus of the "primal doxa" that grounds modern science and furnishes its pregiven horizons.[41] Recognizing the need to probe these horizons and the role they play, philosophy in this view becomes the "science of the universal *how* of the pregivenness of the world."[42]

Now, although even in *Crisis* Husserl himself ultimately remained committed to the Enlightenment repudiation of myth, the implicit logic of what he proposed is that the ontology of the lifeworld should be understood in mythic terms. The lifeworld cannot be regarded as "pregiven" *simpliciter* but as having been carved out, so to speak, from what, with a nod to Blumenberg, we could refer to as the "absolutism" of the primordial Heraclitean flux. There is a founding mythopoetic deed that is in effect reiterated by any rigorous phenomenology of the lifeworld. What I shall do here, then, is sketch out, in terms of horizonality, the motivation for construing phenomenology as a *generative* project and construing the gesture of phenomenological reduction as correspondingly involving the mythopoetic projection of something essentially like nature-history *qua* horizonal totality as discussed earlier.

Phenomenology aims to ground philosophical investigation on a metaphysically unbiased description of what transpires in experience. For this reason, the notion of "horizon" as the liminal frame of experience is absolutely central to it.[43] This is because the intentional experience of anything whatsoever always exceeds what is actually directly *given* in that experience, such

that rigorous description necessarily leads to the exploration and elucidation of the apperceived horizonality of the experience—especially in the "outer" sense where we consider how things are embedded within wider environing contexts—and ultimately to consideration of nature-history as the *outermost* horizon, or "the horizon of horizons,"[44] as a transcendental condition of human consciousness in general.

Outer horizonality can be approached as a set of nested levels wherein what is originally present in experience at one level as background *can*, through focused effort, be foregrounded thematically. *That*, however, is then necessarily experienced against a further horizonal level that itself must remain tacit as background. Were this process to continue indefinitely, phenomenology would face a vicious regress. For its aim is to gain a critical apprehension of the contents of experience through the elucidation of its horizonal intentionality. If it could not carry this out completely, then its results would be left uncritically provisional due to its having to take the outermost horizon for granted. So if phenomenology can make claims that are truly critical, then nature-history as the "horizon of horizons" must be thematically accessible to it—*some sort* of critical take on this is necessary in order to have a critical take on anything at all, since all experiential content occurs within this horizon and its sense is consequently conditioned by it.

The apparent difficulty is that, so construed, nature-history can never be *given* in experience, since experience in general is structured horizonally and to be given *means* to be given against the backdrop of an outer horizon. The outermost horizon of experience can thus never be anything *but* a horizon, and that would seem to imply that nature-history can never be thematically accessible to phenomenology and that the critical aspirations of the project come to naught.

Although nature-history can never be *given* in experience, it does not follow that it is radically inaccessible. The difficulty can be resolved by allowing that phenomenology is not entirely an intuitional undertaking, and that ultimately it cannot adhere to Husserl's "principle of all principles."[45] Although it is by no means obvious to begin with, and although it certainly may *seem* to conflict with its initial guiding motivations, in working back through static and genetic layers of intentional analysis, phenomenology comes to recognize the naïveté of thinking that it could ever have been a project of purely presuppositionless description. Precisely through its "archeological" work of unpacking and elucidating the horizonal intentionalities of the prescientific lifeworld as a "realm of original self-evidences,"[46] phenomenology, if it digs deep enough, will hit upon the primal mythic institution or institut*ing*, the mythic *Urstiftung* of the lifeworld. Husserl even hinted at this mythicality with an allusion to Goethe's *Faust*, describing the new path

of phenomenological reduction as descending to the "entrance to the realm, never before entered, of the 'mothers of knowledge.'"[47]

At this point phenomenology becomes work on myth. In order to turn the movement of phenomenological reduction around and return from the transcendental attitude—the movement that Fink called "secondary enworlding" [*sekundäre Verweltlichung*], understood as "the constitutive process which places phenomenologizing itself into the world," "the worldly objectivation of knowing about transcendental origin"[48]—what phenomenology must do here is provide its own foundation by actively taking up the mythic *Urdoxa*: reaffirming it, albeit now in a self-conscious and critical way, and reprojecting it, possibly as a more or less "coherent deformation." Although on the face of it this can seem utterly foreign to the project of phenomenological description, nothing could actually be further from the proper business of phenomenology, more unwarrantable from the perspective of its guiding idea, than to deny or repudiate the mythic horizons that ground the lifeworld. On the contrary, it is here that the spirit of phenomenology as fidelity to the phenomenon is most solid—for the mythic horizon is phenomenally self-evident with no further horizonality to unpack.

The reaffirmation of the mythic horizon is the definitive moment for phenomenology as a *generative* project.[49] And this is necessary for the methodological coherence of phenomenology in terms of giving an account of what actually transpires in experience. For logically prior to the tasks of static and genetic phenomenological description is the establishment of the outermost horizonality within which the contents of experience that are to be described in terms of their intentional structure first appear. If this horizonality is not to be naïvely taken for granted, then it must be posited or projected in a generative fashion. Phenomenology is a generative project ultimately because its primary object of concern—the lifeworld—itself emerged through a generative act. As in *Faust*, likewise here: *Im Anfang war die Tat*. Phenomenology is thus based on a *reiteration* of what Fink referred to as "primary enworlding," rather than a distinct second-order process. It's just that, *pace* Fink, this enworlding can only be a matter of mythic projection.[50]

But work on myth is inherently dynamic. The mythic *Urdoxa* that institutes the lifeworld fulfills a pragmatic function, and its content is not set in stone. It is *always already worked on*, and phenomenological fidelity simply extends this. Although Husserl may well have baulked at putting it this way, the generalized crisis that prompted his turn to the lifeworld can be regarded as a form of the overwhelmingly indifferent "absolutism" that in Blumenberg's account prompted a mythopoetic response in the first place. But as a critical reaffirmation of the pregiven horizon, phenomenology's generative projection is no longer, strictly speaking, pregiven. Nor does its content remain identical. The mythic function includes scope for adaptation—outer horizonality

can be reprojected in different ways, and this reprojection will always have a normative dimension. Fully carried out, then, phenomenological investigation into the lifeworld as a "teleological-historical reflection upon the origins of our critical scientific and philosophical situation" implies that the phenomenologist "actively and critically takes up the generation of intersubjective historical meaning from within generativity as it is taking place." Because it is situated within the historicity of the lifeworld, phenomenological fidelity to mythic *Urdoxa* is a functional continuation, not a literal repetition. Any paradox is merely apparent. Because her concern with the constitution of sense "extends to *how* sense *will be* constituted," the phenomenologist "is involved in a normative project from the start." Phenomenology is a generative project because the phenomenologist "must take a position with respect to the way sense is constituted, preferring this way to that; he or she must be engaged in how sense should, ought to or must take shape." Undertaking rigorous description, "the phenomenologist does not just detect a latent historical teleology, but becomes *critically involved in its directedness*." This is because the constitution of sense "concerns the *future orientation* of sense, which is to say, the *generation of new historical meaning structures*."[51]

This generative projection effectively amounts to stipulating what the sense of the totality of the experiential field—what I have been calling nature-history—*should* be, as opposed to the received sense that it might have in a particular historical or cultural context. The normative stipulation of a dialectical continuity between history and nature—the claim that cognition is rooted in biology, for example, or simply the denial of mind-body dualism—is informed by phenomenology's need for a reflective equilibrium between this totality and the results of its emerging investigations. It is through a moment of *transformative mythopoetic praxis* that phenomenology gains a critical hold on that totality, and this move is methodologically necessary for that reflective equilibrium. It is in this way, precisely through a differently oriented project of mythopoesis, that the crisis rooted in formal abstraction that so worried Husserl can ultimately be countered.

Although seemingly at odds with the ideal of rigorous presuppositionless description in ways that are liable to cause conniptions in more straitlaced phenomenologists,[52] this moment of irreducibly normative, epistemically neutral mythic generativity with regard to nature-history can be regarded as the fundamental gesture of the phenomenological reduction, and as such it largely coincides with recent proposals concerning *ecophenomenology*.[53]

Further argument is obviously required here. But inasmuch as phenomenology, and ecophenomenology in particular, can be seen as standing at the cutting edge of enlightened reason,[54] we have here a clear—*and entirely positive*—instantiation of Horkheimer and Adorno's famously pessimistic claim that "enlightenment reverts to mythology."[55] I shall return to this idea later.

MARXISM AND MYTH

Even more than phenomenology, Marxism has long been dismissed as a mythic discourse—articles and books from the mid- to late twentieth century dedicated to such a dismissal are legion,[56] and if there are fewer nowadays, it is probably because the charge seems to have sunk to the level of a truism.[57] The nerve that was once touched by these criticisms may have grown less sensitive, but it is still worth considering this issue—in fact, the situation's now being less ideologically fraught may actually be advantageous for this purpose.

Even in the heyday of "scientific socialism," Marxism did not altogether exclude myth—specifically, *Promethean* myth. It is well known that Marx admired Prometheus as a revolutionary symbol of human self-emancipation— "Prometheus is the most eminent saint and martyr in the philosophical calendar"[58]—and a dash of Prometheanism could always be admitted into the rhetoric of historical materialism understood as a strictly scientific discourse.[59] However, Leonard Wessell's deeper claim that the "salvational archetype" of Prometheus provides the "mythico-ontological root metaphor" for historical materialism is closer to what is at issue here—"[t]he 'myth' of the fall, suffering, and ultimate self-redemption of Prometheus constitutes the dramatic model underlying and informing Marx's Marxism."[60]

But Prometheanism can be deeply problematic, and Wessell's view in particular pertains to the classical but now largely outmoded conception of Marxism, one that is still in league with a naïve conception of historical progress as premised on a gesture of disidentification with nature. So what is objectionable is *not* Wessell's claim that historical materialism is anchored in myth. Rather, the problem has to do with the simplistic "salvational" dialecticity and self-sacrificial messianism of the specific anti-naturalist myth that he describes. While such an outlook may befit the tradition of "Western" Marxism, premised as it is on Lukács's rejection of Engels's dialectical account of nature,[61] it is at odds with important recent developments in Marxist theory pertaining to *ecology* that show—in a substantial and non-coincidental parallel with phenomenology's own impetus toward ecophenomenology—that historical materialism was originally based on the recognition of a "metabolic rift" between humanity and nature, and that repairing this rift is intrinsically central to the revolutionary political project of Marxism.[62]

These developments offer a clear and timely reminder that Marxist politics requires a broad historical-materialist horizon that can lend credence to the practical achievability of its project by grounding the dialecticity of transformative praxis in a prior natural dialecticity—such was the underlying rationale

for Engels's interest in nature in the first place, and this need has not changed. Although Engels's account of nature is limited, flawed, and easily susceptible to crudely reductive misinterpretation, it does have important salutary features: it is in effect based on an integral dialectical notion of nature-history, it is not anthropocentric, and, most important, it can support a *non-Promethean* conception of revolutionary agency. *The contemporary viability of Marxism thus calls for a critical reprise of Engels's project*. This reprise, however, will need to be along the lines of a generative-phenomenological approach to nature, with the implication that natural dialecticity should be construed in mythic terms. This is certainly not how Engels himself regarded his contribution, and no doubt typical Marxists—united perhaps only in this with typical phenomenologists!—would attack this claim as undermining the seriousness of their work. It is crucial to keep firmly in mind that the sort of myth in question here is not a "primitive" form of theoretical discourse. Structurally and functionally, myth differs qualitatively from *logos*—it provides the *sui generis* horizon of epistemically neutral significance that forms the perceptual background for any scientific *logoi*. It is otiose simply to affirm natural dialecticity as a scientific fact. But instead of dismissing it as mythic in the pejorative sense, as even sympathetic critics of Engels's legacy tend to do, we can see it as positing a narrative horizonal totality as a "universal ontology of the lifeworld," and thus pursue its critical reprise as work on myth.

The key shortcoming of Engels's view of nature concerns life—for the most part, Engels left biology aside as insufficiently developed at the time. But he still believed that the same dialectical generalizations applied to it, and this approach has been taken up and substantially corroborated by the work of "dialectical biology."[63] For Engels, the key question was whether there is dialectical continuity between inanimate and animate nature—and, crucially, whether there is such continuity with regard to anthropogenesis or hominization (i.e., the emergence of humanity from prehuman nature). Much of what Engels did write about biology thus had to do with evolution, where he tended to praise Darwin (while criticizing Social Darwinism). Still, the pivotal moment in his account of anthropogenesis, as presented in his well-known article "The Role Played by Labor in the Transition from Ape to Man," deviated sharply from the letter of Darwin's theory of natural selection and embraced distinctly Lamarckian ideas.[64] With the shift toward upright posture, Engels wrote, "*the hand became free* and could henceforth attain ever greater dexterity and skill, and the greater flexibility thus acquired was inherited and increased from generation to generation. Thus the hand is not only the organ of labor, *it is also the product of labor*."[65]

This is not the place to debate the relative merits of Darwinism or Lamarckism, nor the correctness of this specific claim, which should be seen as a mythologeme intended to emblemize and lend credence to the idea that

human evolution is not simply a matter of external forces but of self-destiny, that *ab initio* human beings have materially transformed themselves in transforming their environments, and hence that there are natural grounds for pursuing progressive transformation in history and culture. It is in terms of this function of significance—its appropriateness as a prototypical model of transformative praxis in the context of nature-history—along with its plausibility with regard to the available scientific evidence, that Engels's anthropogenetic narrative is to be assessed.

And it *is* a narrative. As Misia Landau argued, theories of human evolution in general tend to have a narrative structure.[66] This is because the subject matter of evolutionary biology is inherently diachronic, and the aim is to show how phenotypical change and pivotal environmental events (e.g., aridification) fit together in the most intelligible and compelling sequence. Landau suggested that accounts of anthropogenesis tend to take the form of a "heroic journey" in which some form of adversity is overcome, and within which the chronological connections drawn are understood to have causal implications. But inasmuch as these connections cannot be simply read directly off of the paleoanthropological fossil record, there will be competing narratives (e.g., whether bipedalism precedes encephalization, or *vice versa*). While practicing paleoanthropologists may engage in these debates in epistemically non-neutral ways, as far as projects like Marxism are concerned, what is involved is an epistemically neutral "anthropological reduction" that "consists in attempting to answer Kant's fourth question"—*viz.*, "What is man [*sic*]?"[67]—"in a rigorously non-teleological way."[68] This is important in order to provide mythic significance for contemporary concerns with the viability of transformative praxis that is not naïvely beholden to the normatively problematic teleology of progress implicit in the Enlightenment's mythic dichotomization of nature and history.

In particular, then, this means being able to locate *natural* grounds for *historical* progress (contrary to the idea of nature as imposing conditions that can only limit history). Dialectical biology contributes to the Engelsian evolutionary narrative by revealing the historicity of prehuman life in organismic terms. The evolutionary development of organisms in general involves a triadic co-evolution in which they are both the subjects and the objects of inner (genes) and outer (environment) forces. It is true neither that organisms have an "internal program" (genetic or otherwise) of which their life represents the necessary unfolding nor that their lives are the adaptive consequence of the way in which it is acted upon by an autonomous external environment. Rather, "the organism is the consequence of a historical process that goes on from the moment of conception until the moment of death. . . . Just as the organism is the nexus of internal and external factors, it is also the locus of their interaction. The organism cannot be regarded as simply the passive

object of autonomous internal and external forces; *it is also the subject of its own evolution*."[69] The inclusion of the organism as an active subject in its own ontogeny and in the construction of its own environment leads to a complex dialectical relationship between gene, environment, and organism. Here the relationship between organism and its environment is "a continuous process in which an organism evolves to solve an instantaneous problem that was set by the organism itself, and in evolving changes the problem slightly." In short, the metaphor of *adaptation* changes to one of *construction*.[70] And this vision of *autopoietic plasticity* ultimately offers a material basis for human freedom: "it is in the nature of living systems to be radically indeterminate, to continually construct their—our—own futures, albeit in circumstances not of our own choosing."[71]

Central to contemporary work on this narrative would be an emphasis on niche construction, and particularly cultural niche construction, as *lifeworld* construction. Niche construction refers to the process whereby "[o]rganisms through their metabolism, their activities, and their choices, define, partly create, and partly destroy their own niches."[72] While organisms in general may adapt to their environments according to natural selection, they also contribute to the construction of those environments in evolutionarily consequential ways: "changes the organisms bring about in their own selective environments may substantially modify natural selection pressures and can generate some novel evolutionary outcomes."[73] Such processes of gene-culture interaction are especially important for human evolution, inasmuch as humans lack a genetically determined niche to begin with, and because human niche construction occurs largely through cultural means: "niche construction due to cultural processes can be even more potent than niche construction due to other (gene-based) non-cultural processes. . . . Indeed, human niche construction is informed by a uniquely potent and cumulative cultural knowledge base."[74] Myth is the original cultural material of human niche construction, which influences the dynamic of human evolution in a way that establishes a feedback structure that in principle opens the possibility of more or less self-conscious interventions into the evolutionary process.

Although this is obviously but the barest sketch, it is this sort of *radically historicized evolutionary biology*—especially as it applies to human corporeality as the concrete hinge between nature and culture—that will, by furnishing an updated account of "the dialectics of nature," form the content of the mythic narrative of natural-historical plasticity required by Marxism.[75] To be clear, this horizon does not *determine* any particular experiences, but just frames the *meaning* they can have. In this way, it is ultimately a matter of the normativity of historical perception, how *well* we are able to see the present in light of our concerns. To regard the radically historicized story of

evolution as mythic is not to *impugn* it, let alone *deny* it, but just to clarify that our concern with it is as a generative claim that can facilitate our perception of the latent grounds of historical praxis—it can help us to see events as corroborating claims to the effect that "humans make their own history, but they do not make it as they please; they do not make it under self-selected circumstances, but under circumstances existing already, given and transmitted from the past." The myth in question is only tenable insofar as such experiences can plausibly be taken as expressing it. But as prototypical of historical agency, it shifts the focus to embodiment. It may be that "the tradition of all dead generations weighs like a nightmare on the *brains* of the living," but the ultimate grounds for revolutionary hope lie in our *bodies*—that is, on the relatively natural side of things (our nature is what will save us, not that from which we need saving).

This is the key to a non-Promethean myth of nature-history. While conceptions of anthropogenesis may in general be prototypical of different conceptions of progress, what is specifically needed here is a conception of anthropogenesis that supports the rigorously non-teleological possibility of *immanent progress*—that is, of historical progress as emerging, contingently and dialectically, from evolving natural conditions. Nature is not the background here, but the evolving scene itself, and history is the endless restaging of the original moment of hominization through metabolic interaction. Progress, if there is any, is not *from* nature or *over* it, but rather *within* it, and if the story is of a "heroic journey," then human *nature* itself is the "hero."

As with phenomenology, here, too, we can see an instantiation of Horkheimer and Adorno's claim that "enlightenment reverts to mythology." Misinterpreted as part of a "totalizing critique" of reason that issues in a paradoxically self-refuting dead end and lets the goal of emancipation slip away,[76] this claim is typically read as an extremely pessimistic one. Now, given their circumstances—German Jews in the mid-1940s living in exile in the heart of the culture industry—it is perfectly understandable why Horkheimer and Adorno might have had a bleak outlook. *But they were not without hope.* While they certainly intended to deny any teleologically progressivist conception of history, theirs is by no means a negative philosophy of history in the manner of a *Verfallsgeschichte*. History is shot through with contingency—the "calamity" of barbaric violence and genocide they perceived was not preordained, and as with the underlying crisis identified by Husserl, new and better directions *could* be taken. There is a profound and presumably inescapable ambiguity in the notion of enlightenment, and Horkheimer and Adorno's aim was ultimately to enlighten enlightenment about that ambiguity in order to prepare for "a positive concept of enlightenment" that would minimize "its entanglement in *blind* domination."[77] The "blindness"

in question here pertains to the mythico-political. Horkheimer and Adorno can be read as suggesting that recognition of the chiasmic intertwining of myth and enlightened reason is crucial in order to shake us free from naïve complicity with teleological assumptions about progress that form the mythic horizon of modernity. Only on this condition does future historical progress become a real, if difficult, possibility—myth will thus be key to making good on the paradoxical idea, as later expressed by Adorno, that "progress occurs where it ends."[78]

But Horkheimer and Adorno did not quite fulfill the glimpse they offered of a positive concept of enlightenment. They intended to follow through with their claim that "enlightenment itself, having mastered itself and assumed its own power, could break through the limits of enlightenment,"[79] and specifically that an antidote to the identitarian thinking that is based upon the myth of mythless reason could be provided through some kind of mimetic reconciliation with the concrete. As I have tried to indicate, this would take the form of a generative phenomenology of the biohistorical lifeworld that brings together on a mythical basis the unlikely duo of Engels and Husserl. Circa 1944, Horkheimer and Adorno were not big fans of either of those two—Husserlian phenomenology could not yet be viewed as a social-critical discourse, while the legacy of Engels was basically owned by Stalinism. Add in the strong association of myth with fascism, and it is not hard to see why Horkheimer and Adorno were unable to see past the apparent opposition of myth and reason in order to grasp the full implications of their own analysis: if enlightenment is intertwined with myth, and if hope *is* held out that enlightenment might yet be rescued, then it will not be rescued *from* myth, but rather *by* myth—from *bad* myth by *good* myth. Lacking this mythopoetic move, the grounds for Marxism's revolutionary hope can only be furnished by a crypto-theological messianism that obscures the materiality of praxis.[80]

THE MYTHICO-POLITICAL AND DEREIFICATION

Kant's third question—*What can we hope for?*—basically asks whether nature is in fact amenable to the realization of our universal normative aspirations, which could be seen in terms of the possibility of phenomenological elucidation or social transformation. And it points to the fourth question, the anthropological question about human being. It is by answering this in a rigorously non-teleological way that we can wrest free from problematic myths of progress that have the effect of reifying the *status quo*. In its project of elucidating horizonal intentionality, phenomenology turns back to nature, while the fulfillment of its goal requires that it move forward in a world-transforming way. In complementary fashion, in fulfilling its forward-looking project of

world transformation, Marxism looks back to nature for an elucidation of the grounds of its revolutionary agency. Phenomenology and Marxism can thus be seen as two sides of the same militantly anthropological coin.[81] In each case, there is a moment of mythopoesis concerning natural-historical plasticity that supports a radical praxis of dereification.

Briefly, the critical-theoretic concept of reification refers to normatively objectionable forms of entification or *thing*-ification—the "naturalization" or dehistoricization of aspects of experience that *should* be experienced in their historicity.[82] It is thus a matter of normatively problematic historical misperception. Entification, and *a fortiori* reification, is a function of the horizons of experience. It is thus closely tied to questions of myth. What is perceived as a fixed "natural" entity and what is perceived as a historical process (and what is even perceived at all) is ultimately a function of the mythico-political. The latter is thus a fundamental site of philosophical and ideological struggle, but it is generally not recognized as such. This obscurity shields the *status quo* while presenting an additional challenge to transformative views. For without self-conscious mythopoetic engagement, the critical moment of dereification is lost, and it is precisely dereified historical perception that is needed in order to open up the full potential of immanent social critique.

To be sure, embracing myth is fraught with risk. There are reasons why myth is regarded not simply as intellectually backward but also, and perhaps more important, as politically reactionary. But there is as much critical as regressive "power" in myth, and failing—whether through timidity, habit, or conformism—to harness its critical potential as a resource for the progressive aims of Marxism or phenomenology against what we might think of as the "absolutism of global capital" is ultimately indefensible and a recipe for at best limited success. Because their realization implies establishing an expanded notion of enlightened reason, Marxism and phenomenology should be at the forefront of rehabilitating myth. Although the worry is understandable that such a move could jeopardize their perceived rational credentials, and thereby set up further obstacles to their goals, I submit that they need to grab (very carefully) the mythic bull by the horns, so to speak, precisely in order to sharpen the critical edge of their efforts and make them more effective.

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NOTES

1. I will connect this view to the Enlightenment, although attempts have been made to trace it back to ancient Greece, notably in works along the lines of Wilhem Nestle, *Vom Mythos zum Logos: Die Selbstentfaltung des griechischen Denkens von Homer bis auf die Sophistik und Sokrates* (Stuttgart: Alfred Kroner, 1940). But no linear "*mythos* to *logos*" story holds up in the Greek context, and even for Plato no crisp unambiguous delineation between *mythos* and *logos* was established—see Chiara Bottici, "*Mythos* and *Logos*: A Genealogical Approach," *Epoché* 13, no. 1 (2008): 1–24. So even if, as Robert Fowler argues ("*Mythos* and *Logos*," *Journal of Hellenic Studies* 131 (2011): 45–66), the semantic content of the *mythos*/*logos* contrast did obtain similarly to its modern form, it does not follow that there was a fundamental rupture: "The Greeks had no notion of a mythical mentality, or of an age when mythical thought dominated; these are creations of the Enlightenment" (65).

2. Johann Gottfried Herder, "Ideas for a Philosophy of the History of Mankind," in *Herder on Social and Political Culture*, ed. and trans. F. M. Barnard (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1969), 300.

3. Paul Ricœur, "Myth as the Bearer of Possible Worlds," in *Debates in Continental Philosophy: Conversations with Contemporary Thinkers*, ed. Richard Kearney (New York: Fordham University Press, 2004), 118.

4. The term *mythico-political* is playing off the more familiar notion of "the *theologico*-political" that derives from Spinoza's *Tractatus Theologico-Politicus* and connects with Carl Schmitt's notion of political theology—see *Political Theology: Four Chapters on the Concept of Sovereignty*, trans. G. Schwab (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2005). But see also Claude Lefort, "The Permanence of the Theologico-political?" trans. D. Macey, in *Political Theologies: Public Religions in a Post-Secular World*, ed. H. de Vries and L. E. Sullivan (New York: Fordham University Press, 2006), 148–87. The key point will be that the mythico-political can avoid the problems of theological thinking in both phenomenology and Marxism.

5. For a related rethinking of the renunciation of "grand narratives" on the grounds of the exigencies of rational narrative self-understanding, see J. M. Bernstein, "Grand Narratives," in *On Paul Ricœur: Narrative and Interpretation*, ed. David Wood (London; New York: Routledge, 1991), 102–23.

6. Rather than as suggesting any sort of political ecology, in using this phrase I have in mind Bruno Latour's *Politics of Nature: How to Bring the Sciences into Democracy*, trans. C. Porter (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2004), where what is at issue is the meaning of nature as a principle of social organization. This is broadly congruent with recent work in critical theory that aims at a "denaturalization" of nature—for example, Steven Vogel, *Against Nature: The Concept of Nature in Critical Theory* (Albany: SUNY Press, 1996); Andrew Biro, *Denaturalizing Ecological Politics: Alienation from Nature from Rousseau to the Frankfurt School and Beyond* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2005); and Vogel, *Thinking Like a Mall: Environmental Philosophy after the End of Nature* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2015).

7. In modern secular contexts, myth generally tends to take more of a political rather than sacred form, and this is typically in connection with *particular* groups, nations, or regimes. Interest in political myth was prompted largely by the role myth seemed to play in the consolidation of totalitarianism in the twentieth century, especially in the case of Nazi Germany by such works as Alfred Rosenberg's infamous *Der Mythus des 20. Jahrhunderts: Eine Wertung der seelisch-geistigen Gestaltenkämpfe unserer Zeit* (Munich: Hoheneichen Verlag, 1930). Early criticism of the role of myth in fascism—for example, Ernst Cassirer's *The Myth of the State* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1946), and Max Horkheimer and Theodor Adorno's *Dialectic of Enlightenment: Philosophical Fragments* [1947], ed. G. S. Noerr, trans. E. Jephcott (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2002)—thus tends to be overdetermined (i.e., the critique of myth was overdetermined by the critique of *fascist* myth). More recent scholarship on political myth—for example, Henry Tudor, *Political Myth* (New York: Praeger, 1972); Christopher Flood, *Political Myth: A Theoretical Introduction* (New York; London: Routledge, 2002)—tends to offer more balanced assessments in the sense of showing that myth is not limited to fascism. Although the association of political myth with reactionary politics remains strong—for example, Philippe Lacoue-Labarthe and Jean-Luc Nancy, "The Nazi Myth," trans. Brian Holmes, *Critical Inquiry*, 16, no. 2 (1990): 291–312; or Robert Ellwood, *The Politics of Myth: A Study of C. G. Jung, Mircea Eliade, and Joseph Campbell* (Albany: SUNY Press, 1999)—David Pan's historical-contextual claim to the effect that Nazi "myth" was a kind of pseudo-scientific ideology and thus more of a suppression than a revival of myth (understood in epistemically neutral terms) pushes back on this tendency: "The Nazis never actually sought to revive myth. Rather, their cultural project consisted of an attempt to instrumentalize the concept of myth in order to legitimate their rationalist suppression of mythic structures in art and popular culture. The Nazi cultural project was in fact much closer to an Enlightenment attempt to overcome myth than to a *völkisch* revival"—see "Revising the Dialectic of Enlightenment: Alfred Baeumler and the Nazi Appropriation of Myth," *New German Critique* 84 (2001), 41. Cassirer's qualification of it as "manufactured" myth (281) and Horkheimer and Adorno's distinction between genuine and false myth leave open the possibility for seeing myth more neutrally. In drawing on the less overtly political work of Hans Blumenberg (see below), Chiara Bottici's *A Philosophy of Political Myth* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007) contributes much to understanding both the persistence of

political myth and the legitimacy of the need to engage with it. But the focus remains on *particular* political myth. The *universal* view that I develop in connection with nature will thus accentuate the mythopoetic dimension of political myth, and in this way pushes the envelope of Bottici's account.

8. Although general usage is inconsistent, I try to maintain a distinction between *mythography* as primarily descriptive accounts of myth and *mythology* as a more general (and ultimately self-reflexive) scientific understanding of myth.

9. With regard to overcoming the Enlightenment's "*mythos*-to-*logos*" myth, a key work in the background of my discussion will be Georges Gusdorf, *Mythe et métaphysique: Introduction à la philosophie* (Paris: Flammarion, 1953), especially 216–62. I will, however, draw more explicitly on Hans Blumenberg's *Work on Myth*, trans. R. M. Wallace (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1985). Although Ernst Cassirer's work—especially *The Philosophy of Symbolic Forms*, vol. 2, *Mythical Thought*, trans. R. Manheim (New Haven, CT; London: Yale University Press, 1955)—is better known in the Anglophone world than Blumenberg (or Gusdorf) and does provide a helpful starting point, it ultimately remains committed to the idea of myth as a precursory stage of thought—Phillip Stambovsky sketches out the contrast in *Myth and the Limits of Reason* (Lanham, MD: University Press of America, 2004). Other Anglophone authors have made points that are congruent with Blumenberg without being in dialogue with him, such as Milton Scarborough, *Myth and Modernity: Postcritical Reflections* (Albany: SUNY Press, 1994), and Mary Midgley, *The Myths We Live By* (New York: Routledge, 2004).

10. It may be that myth has a self-fulfilling impetus toward *making* itself true (i.e., being confirmed by empirical science). If so, this clearly need not be a flaw, although it can remind us of the risks of self-delusion and how even science can be distorted ideologically. Recognition of reason's inescapable entwinement with myth does raise the bar of intellectual responsibility considerably higher.

11. Arnold Gehlen, *Man: His Nature and Place in the World* [1940], trans. Clare McMillan and Carl Pillemer (New York: Columbia University Press, 1988). As Nicholls points out (*Myth and the Human Sciences*: *Hans Blumenberg's Theory of Myth* [London; New York: Routledge, 2015], 108–21), Blumenberg also relied heavily on Paul Alsberg's 1922 work, *In Quest of Man: A Biological Approach to the Problem of Man's Place in Nature* (Oxford: Pergamon Press, 1970), as a paleoanthropological reference point that unabashedly presented the primal scene of anthropogenesis in speculative terms that are to be assessed in terms of pragmatic plausibility.

12. Blumenberg suggested, for example, that modern science could be seen as an analogous pragmatic response to the indifference and arbitrariness of theological absolutism—see *The Legitimacy of the Modern Age*, trans. Robert M. Wallace (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1985), 48; Angus Nicholls, "Hans Blumenberg on Political Myth: Recent Publications from the 'Nachlass,'" *Iyyun: The Jerusalem Philosophical Quarterly* 65 (2016): 9. We might describe the contemporary situation as "the absolutism of global capital."

13. For his "principle of significance," Blumenberg (*Work on Myth*, 67) cited Rothacker's *Zur Genealogie des menschlichen Bewusstseins* (Bonn: Bouvier, 1966). Rothacker had earlier glossed the meaning of "significance" as follows: "Only that

which concerns me, that which 'is something' to me, that which means something, that which awakens my interest, that touches upon my being, that appears to me as noteworthy, then as memorable, and finally as worthy of the further steps of linguistic and conceptual acquisition . . . only that will find an entry point into my world over this first and most elementary threshold" (*Geschichtsphilosophie* [Munich: Oldenbourg, 1934], 99; cited in Nicholls, *Myth and the Human Sciences*, 84). See also Philip Rose, "Philosophy, Myth, and the 'Significance' of Speculative Thought," *Metaphilosophy* 38, no. 5 (2007): 632–53.

14. The projection of mythic significance thus bears some affinities with Alfred Schütz's notion of "the epoché of the natural attitude"—see "On Multiple Realities," *Philosophy and Phenomenological Research* 5, no. 4 (1945): 533–76.

15. Flood, *Political Myth*, 81.

16. Clifford Geertz, *The Interpretation of Cultures: Selected Essays* (New York: Basic Books, 1973), 5.

17. Paul Ricœur, *Time and Narrative*, vol. 3, trans. Kathleen Blamey and David Pellauer (Chicago; London: University of Chicago Press, 1988).

18. Cf. Anthony Steinbock, *Home and Beyond*: *Generative Phenomenology After Husserl* (Evanston, IL: Northwestern University Press, 1995), 213–19.

19. Fredric Jameson, *The Political Unconscious: Narrative as a Socially Symbolic Act* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1981), 9.

20. Ricœur, "Myth as the Bearer of Possible Worlds," 120–21.

21. "Narrative discourse, far from being a neutral medium for the representation of historical events and processes, is the very stuff of a mythical view of reality"—Hayden White, *The Content of the Form: Narrative Discourse and Historical Representation* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1987), ix.

22. Theodor Adorno, "The Idea of Natural-History" [1932], trans. R. Hullot-Kentor, in *Things beyond Resemblance: Collected Essays on Theodor W. Adorno* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2006), 264. On this concept, see Max Pensky, "Natural History: The Life and Afterlife of a Concept in Adorno," *Critical Horizons* 5, no. 1 (2004), 227–58; and Tom Whyman, "Understanding Adorno on 'Natural-History,'" *International Journal of Philosophical Studies* 24, no. 4 (2016): 452–72.

23. See William McNeill, "Mythistory, or Truth, Myth, History, and Historians," in *Mythistory and Other Essays* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1986), 1–10; Joseph Mali, "Narrative, Myth, and History," *Science in Context* 7, no. 1 (1994): 121–42; and Mali, *Mythistory: The Making of a Modern Historiography* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2003).

24. McNeill, "Mythistory, or Truth, Myth, History, and Historians," 8.

25. Friedrich Nietzsche, *The Birth of Tragedy, and Other Writings*, ed. R. Geuss and R. Speirs, trans. R. Speirs (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999), 108. This point is central to Sorel's view of myth, which claims that myths are not so much "descriptions of things," especially not of a utopian future, "but expressions of a will to act"—see Georges Sorel, *Reflections on Violence*, ed. Jeremy Jennings (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999), 28.

26. "The images of myth must be the unnoticed, but omnipresent, daemonic guardians under whose tutelage the young soul grows up and by whose signs the grown man interprets his life and his struggles" (Nietzsche, *The Birth of Tragedy*, 108).

27. Blumenberg, *Work on Myth*, 67–68.

28. The expression is from Maurice Merleau-Ponty, *Phenomenology of Perception*, trans. Don Landes (New York: Routledge, 2012), 252.

29. Ricœur, "Myth as the Bearer of Possible Worlds," 124 (original italics).

30. Citing Chiara Bottici, *A Philosophy of Political Myth*, 184 (italics added); cf. Tudor, *Political Myth*, 124–25; Flood, *Political Myth*, 275–76.

31. David Carr, *Time, Narrative, and History* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1986), 177. "To tell the story of a community . . . is simply to continue, at a somewhat more reflective and usually more retrospective level the story-telling process through which the community constitutes itself and its actions."

32. And as the "Lysenko Affair" showed, trying to hold onto the mythic side against the claims of empirical science can be profoundly misguided.

33. Blumenberg, *Work on Myth*, 12 [*Der Mythos selbst ist ein Stück hochkarätiger Arbeit des Logos*].

34. As a young Hegel wrote, "we must have a new mythology; this mythology must, however, stand in the service of ideas, it must become a mythology of *reason*." See "The Oldest Systematic Program of German Idealism," trans. Diana Behler, in *Philosophy of German Idealism: Fichte, Jacobi, and Schelling*, ed. Ernst Behler (New York: Continuum, 2003), 162.

35. Flood, *Political Myth*, 275.

36. Bottici, *A Philosophy of Political Myth*, 253, 225.

37. There is considerable discussion in the literature on myth concerning its relation with the numerous senses of ideology—for simplicity's sake, here I will simply define *ideological myth* as epistemically non-neutral.

38. See Richard Kearney, "Between Tradition and Utopia: The Hermeneutical Problem of Myth," in *On Paul Ricœur: Narrative and Interpretation*, ed. David Wood (London; New York: Routledge, 1991), 69.

39. See, for example, Jean-Michel Roy, "Phenomenological Claims and the Myth of the Given," *Canadian Journal of Philosophy* 33, suppl. 1 (2003): 1–32.

40. The classic point of reference here is Iso Kern, "The Three Ways to the Transcendental Phenomenological Reduction in the Philosophy of Edmund Husserl," in *Husserl: Expositions and Appraisals*, ed. Frederick Elliston and Peter McCormick (Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 1977), 126–49.

41. Edmund Husserl, *The Crisis of the European Sciences and Transcendental Phenomenology: An Introduction to Phenomenological Philosophy*, trans. David Carr (Evanston, IL: Northwestern University Press, 1970), 3n1, 154–57, 173–74.

42. Husserl, *Crisis*, 146.

43. See Helmut Kuhn, "The Phenomenological Concept of the 'Horizon,'" in *Philosophical Essays in Memory of Edmund Husserl*, ed. M. Farber (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1940), 106–24; and Saulius Geniusas, *The Origins of the Horizon in Husserl's Phenomenology* (Dordrecht: Springer, 2012).

44. Maurice Merleau-Ponty, *Husserl at the Limits of Phenomenology*, trans. L. Lawlor and B. Bergo (Evanston, IL: Northwestern University Press, 2002), 67; cf. *Phenomenology of Perception*, 345.

45. See Edmund Husserl, *Ideas Pertaining to a Pure Phenomenology and Phenomenological Philosophy, First Book*, trans. F. Kersten (Dordrecht: Kluwer, 1982), §24.

46. Husserl, *Crisis*, 127.

47. Husserl, *Crisis*, 152; cf. 156. See also Nicholls, *Myth and the Human Sciences*, 105.

48. Eugen Fink, *Sixth Cartesian Meditation: The Idea of a Transcendental Theory of Method*, trans. R. Bruzina (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1995), 99, 116; cf. 110, 129.

49. Concerning generative phenomenology, see Steinbock, *Home and Beyond*; and "Generativity and the Scope of Generative Phenomenology," in *The New Husserl: A Critical Reader*, ed. D. Welton (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2003), 289–325.

50. This is a step that Trân Dúc Tháo was unwilling or unable to make—he thus argued that in its analyses of antepredicative experience, transcendental phenomenology raises questions concerning the real origins of consciousness that can only be resolved within the framework of dialectical materialism—see *Phenomenology and Dialectical Materialism* [1951], trans. D. J. Herman and D. V. Morano (Dordrecht: Reidel, 1986).

51. Anthony Steinbock, "Spirit and Generativity: The Role and Contribution of the Phenomenologist in Hegel and Husserl," in *Alterity and Facticity: New Perspectives on Husserl*, ed. N. Depraz and D. Zahavi (Dordrecht: Kluwer, 1998), 196 (some italics added). It should be borne in mind that as rooted in particular lifeworlds, phenomenology as such is normatively indefinite. There is reason to expect, however, that when it is developed as rigorously as possible, the norms of rationality to which it is intrinsically committed will line up closely with the universal aspirations of historical materialism.

52. Consider, for example, this comment from Steven Galt Crowell concerning phenomenological self-reflexivity: "the phenomenology of phenomenology [does] not lead us beyond the Copernican revolution," and moreover "it ought to teach us that *the desire to go beyond it is a mistake*"—see *Husserl, Heidegger, and the Space of Meaning: Paths toward Transcendental Phenomenology* (Evanston, IL: Northwestern University Press, 2001), 263 (italics added). He thus rejects any mythic view of nature and defends the Enlightenment conception of nature as meaningless, even though, as his own argument inadvertently shows, taking a stand one way or another inexorably transgresses the Copernican revolution—see "The Mythical and the Meaningless: Husserl and the Two Faces of Nature," in *Issues in Husserl's Ideas II*, ed. T. Nenon and L. Embree (Dordrecht: Kluwer, 1996), 80–105.

53. Ecophenomenology is not phenomenology applied to environmental questions, but a rethinking of phenomenology as methodologically anchored on the question of nature—see David Wood, "What Is Ecophenomenology?" *Research in Phenomenology* 31, no. 1 (2001): 78–95; Charles Brown and Ted Toadvine,

"Eco-phenomenology: An Introduction," in *Eco-Phenomenology: Back to the Earth Itself*, ed. C. Brown and T. Toadvine (Albany: SUNY Press, 2003), ix–xxi; and Ted Toadvine, *Merleau-Ponty's Philosophy of Nature* (Evanston, IL: Northwestern University Press, 2009). Congruent conclusions are drawn by Ian Angus in "Crisis, Biology, Ecology: A New Starting-Point for Phenomenology?" *Journal of the British Society for Phenomenology* 49, no. 4 (2018): 267–79. In this sense, ecophenomenology would represent the most effective response to the issues concerning givenness that motivate the "theological turn" in phenomenology.

54. See my "Mythic Enlightenment: Phenomenology and the Question Concerning Nature," in *Nature and Experience: Phenomenology and the Environment*, ed. B. Bannon (Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield, 2016), 3–15.

55. Horkheimer and Adorno, *Dialectic of Enlightenment*, xviii [*Aufklärung schlägt in Mythologie zurück*].

56. For example, Robert Tucker, *Philosophy and Myth in Karl Marx* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1961); and David Lovell, *Marx's Proletariat: The Making of a Myth* (London: Routledge, 1988).

57. Here we might think of works such as François Furet, *The Passing of an Illusion: The Idea of Communism in the Twentieth Century*, trans. Deborah Furet (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1999).

58. Karl Marx, "Difference between the Democritean and Epicurean Philosophy of Nature" [1840/1841], in *Marx and Engels Collected Works* (Moscow: Progress Publishers, 1975), 1:31.

59. For example, in rebutting Tucker's claims, articulated in *Philosophy and Myth in Karl Marx* (see note 56), that Marxism represents a mythical development of post-Hegelian philosophy, John O'Neill could still admit a mythic element in the form of "the compassionate rebellion of Prometheus"—see "Marxism and Mythology," *Ethics* 77, no. 1 (1966): 47.

60. Leonard P. Wessell Jr., *Prometheus Bound: The Mythic Structure of Karl Marx's Scientific Thinking* (Baton Rouge; London: Louisiana State University Press, 1984), 62–64; cf. 22, 38–39, 189.

61. "The misunderstandings that arise from Engels' account of dialectics are based mainly on the fact that Engels, following Hegel's mistaken lead, extended the dialectical method to the knowledge of nature as well. However, the crucial determinants of dialectics—interaction of subject and object, unity of theory and practice, historical change in the reality underlying the categories as the basis of their change in thought, etc.—are absent from our knowledge of nature" (Georg Lukács, *History and Class Consciousness: Studies in Marxist Dialectics*, trans. R. Livingstone [Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1971], 24n6, translation modified). Among other works, Lukács may have had in mind Engels's *Anti-Dühring: Herr Eugen Dühring's Revolution in Science* (Moscow: Progress Publishers, 1969)—the volume *Dialectics of Nature*, ed. and trans. C. Dutt (New York: International Publishers, 1940), was edited and published posthumously in 1925. On the significance of the editorial process, see Kann Kangal, "Engels' Intentions in *Dialectics of Nature*," *Science & Society* 83, no. 2 (2019): 215–43. As it turns out, Lukács's actual view (unknown until 2000) was somewhat more complex in that he *did* believe that there must be an objective dialectic in nature—see

Tailism and the Dialectic: A Defence of History and Class Consciousness, trans. E. Leslie (London: Verso, 2000), 102.

62. See John Bellamy Foster, "Marx and the Rift in the Universal Metabolism of Nature," *Monthly Review* 65, no. 7 (2013): 1–19. Concerning ecological Marxism, see Paul Burkett, *Marx and Nature: A Red and Green Perspective* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1999); John Bellamy Foster, *Marx's Ecology: Materialism and Nature* (New York: Monthly Review Press, 2000); John Bellamy Foster and Paul Burkett, *Marx and the Earth: An Anti-Critique* (Leiden; Boston: Brill, 2016); John Bellamy Foster, Brett Clark, and Richard York, *The Ecological Rift: Capitalism's War on the Earth* (New York: Monthly Review Press, 2011); and Kohei Saito, *Karl Marx's Ecosocialism: Capital, Nature, and the Unfinished Critique of Political Economy* (New York: Monthly Review Press, 2017).

63. The founding text is Richard Levins and Richard Lewontin, *The Dialectical Biologist* (Cambridge, MA; London: Harvard University Press, 1985), and much further work has been done since.

64. Stephen Jay Gould famously wrote that Engels's essay made "the best nineteenth-century case for gene-culture coevolution"—see *An Urchin in the Storm* (New York: Norton, 1987), 111–12.

65. "Only by labor, by adaptation to ever new operations, by inheritance of the resulting special development of muscles, ligaments, and, over longer periods of time, bones as well, and by the ever renewed employment of these inherited improvements in new, more and more complicated operations, has the human hand attained the high degree of perfection that has enabled it to conjure into being the pictures of Raphael, the statues of Thorwaldsen, the music of a Paganini" (Engels, *Dialectics of Nature*, 281, italics in original).

66. Misia Landau, "Human Evolution as Narrative: Have Hero Myths and Folktales Influenced our Interpretations of the Evolutionary Past?" *American Scientist* 72, no. 3 (1984): 262–68; *Narratives of Human Evolution* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1993).

67. See Immanuel Kant, *Lectures on Logic*, ed. and trans. J. M. Young (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1992), 538.

68. Angus Nicholls, "Against Darwin: Teleology in German Philosophical Anthropology," in *Historical Teleologies in the Modern World*, ed. Henning Trüper, Dipesh Chakrabarty, and Sanjay Subrahmanyam (London: Bloomsbury, 2015), 102.

69. Levins and Lewontin, *The Dialectical Biologist*, 89 (emphasis added).

70. Levins and Lewontin, *The Dialectical Biologist*, 104–5.

71. Steven Rose, *Lifelines: Biology Beyond Determinism* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1997), 7.

72. John Odling-Smee, Kevin Laland, and Marcus Feldman, "Niche Construction," *American Naturalist* 147, no. 4 (1996), 641.

73. Kevin Laland, John Odling-Smee, and Marcus Feldman, "Cultural Niche Construction and Human Evolution," *Journal of Evolutionary Biology* 14, no. 1 (2001), 23.

74. Kevin Laland, John Odling-Smee, and Sean Myles, "How Culture Shaped the Human Genome: Bringing Genetics and the Human Sciences Together," *Nature Reviews Genetics* 11, no. 2 (2010): 140.

75. Cf. my "Merleau-Ponty and the Myth of Human Incarnation," *Journal of Speculative Philosophy* 30, no. 3 (2016): 382–94. This fits well with Husserl's idea of a "genuinely universal biology" as being able to account generatively for the emergence of sense in nature beyond the constituting activities of the ego— see Edmund Husserl, "Addendum XXIII of *The Crisis of European Sciences and Transcendental Phenomenology*," trans. Niall Keane, *Journal of the British Society for Phenomenology* 44, no. 1 (2013): 6–9.

76. Jürgen Habermas, "The Entwinement of Myth and Enlightenment: Re-Reading *Dialectic of Enlightenment*," trans. T. Y. Levin, *New German Critique* 26 (1982): 13–30.

77. Horkheimer and Adorno, *Dialectic of Enlightenment*, xviii.

78. See Theodor Sdorno, "Progress," trans. H. W. Pickford, in *Can One Live After Auschwitz?*, ed. R. Tiedemann (New York: Stanford University Press, 2003), 134.

79. Horkheimer and Adorno, *Dialectic of Enlightenment*, 172.

80. See notes 4 and 53—in a parallel way, the mythic turn I am proposing would enable both phenomenology and Marxism to avoid uncritical naïveté while also steering clear of theological interpretations.

81. "Militant" in the sense in which Merleau-Ponty used the term—see my "The Meontic and the Militant: On Merleau-Ponty's Relation to Fink," *International Journal of Philosophical Studies* 19, no. 5 (2011): 669–99.

82. Husserl was particularly concerned with the reification of consciousness: "Who will save us from the reification of consciousness? He would be the savior of philosophy, indeed, the creator of philosophy" (MS A I 36, 193b [1910], cited in Rudolf Bernet, Iso Kern and Eduard Marbach, *An Introduction to Husserlian Phenomenology* [Evanston, IL: Northwestern University Press, 1993], 62); see also Husserl, "Philosophy as Rigorous Science," in *Phenomenology and the Crisis of Philosophy*, trans. Quentin Lauer (New York: Harper, 1965), 103. On Husserl's influence on Lukács, see Richard Westerman, "The Reification of Consciousness: Husserl's Phenomenology in Lukács's Identical Subject-Object," *New German Critique* 37, no. 3 (2010): 97–130.

Chapter 4

Meaning and Being

Georg Lukács and the Phenomenology of Modes of Production

Richard Westerman

Oriented toward revolution, Marxist materialism necessarily asks the question of its own relevance: what is the role of theory if the underlying material relations are assumed to be determinative in the last instance? For the relatively vulgar versions of Marxism predominant in the lead-up to the Russian Revolution the problem was one of revolutionary tactics: if our consciousness was determined by material circumstances, then any attempt to bring the working classes to consciousness of their situation through, say, leadership by a party must by definition be premature.

But it was in the philosophical ferment of the 1920s that such versions of Marxism met their most significant theoretical challenge. Central to the arguments of many Second International theorists was Marxism's claim to be a uniquely authoritative science—it provided better knowledge of the objective operations of society than any other social or economic theory. Marxism was epistemically superior to its competitors. This belief was challenged by the failure of European revolutions in the wake of the Bolsheviks: in few cases had they commanded the mass support they anticipated. As philosophically trained Marxists like Karl Korsch and Georg Lukács recognized, this assertion could not easily be reconciled with the foundational premise of materialism: that consciousness, thought, language were dependent on material being. There was no possible view from nowhere, no point from which a theorist could claim to survey society as it really was; no non-circular

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argument could be made that Marxism presented a more true representation of society. Moreover, even if such a perspective were possible, it would have to confront the existential question of its relation back to the social world it described: how could a theory—descriptive or normative—have an effect on material relations? If those underlying conditions were determinative, then any thought about them, any normative demands, must be impotent, mere symptoms of the underlying problem, with no power to alter the situation.

The problem, of course, is the classic one of the dichotomy of thought and being—the gap between that which exists and our knowledge of it. Marx's own answers to the problem were sufficiently opaque as to have generated contradictory interpretations—from vulgar Marxist claims that the economic base absolutely determines thought as its mere reflection, to the Frankfurt School, at times so focused on ideology critique as to entail the near-total exclusion of political economy.

What both poles of the argument miss is the degree to which thought and meaning are necessary elements of material processes and social relations. A mode of production entails, as an essential moment of its functioning and not merely a reflection of underlying objective processes, the specification of objects as having a particular structure of meaning. This structure can be seen as defined through social practices that possess phenomenological intentionality. The way objects behave in their social relations and interactions is governed by this meaning-structure and the properties it entails, not by properties they may be supposed to have entirely outside of their social context. This is the basis of a phenomenological ontology of social being, which interprets objects through their intentionally designated properties: what they *are*, the way in which they exist socially, is determined by practices that intend them in definite ways. A mode of production as a whole thus presupposes a particular world of objects of a certain kind, interacting according to patterns governed by the meaning-structure of those entities.

Such a theory of meaningful social relations can be found in Georg Lukács's *History and Class Consciousness*. In the most philosophically sophisticated essays of this collection, I suggest, he gives an account of social being that is deeply indebted to the early phenomenology of Husserl—particularly the *Logische Untersuchungen*, a text Lukács knew well and cited extensively in his pre-Marxist work. Lukács's innovation is to take Husserl's account of the intentionality of *mental* acts and use it to analyze *social* acts and practices. In this way, he was able to make the formal meaning of an object integral to its social being. His influential account of reification relies on Marx's theory of commodity fetishism. Objects that enter into social relations as commodities are reduced to abstract, empty quantities of value; the same fate awaits the subjects who ostensibly control them. Lukács's account is often read by his

critics as subjectivist, whereby reification entails a misunderstanding of the "true" nature of social relations as grounded in human activity. In contrast, I argue that his theory is *objective*: the formal signification of objects as commodities—that is, their meaning—is integral to the functioning of social relations, and is the central category of their social being.

In placing the meaning of an object at the center of its role in objective social processes, Lukács shows the influence of both Neo-Kantianism and Husserl. I have shown elsewhere that Lukács engaged deeply with Husserl's thought in his attempt to write a philosophical aesthetics in the years before his turn to Marxism, and argued there that this continued to shape his thought in *History and Class Consciousness*.[1] Here, I shall argue that Lukács's thought offers a way to reinterpret social processes as phenomenological. A commodity, for Lukács, is a particular way of intending an object: it treats things solely as quantities of value. This is not simply a way of *thinking* about an object; rather, it is integral to what the object is in society, manifest in the way we handle or act toward these objects. Our practices themselves intend them in this way: we genuinely do produce and exchange commodities on the basis of their value, not any underlying essence. Reification itself is a consequence of the meaning-structure of the commodity, a consequence of the determination of commodities by one another, producing a semantically autopoietic world of objects operating without reference to subjects. It is not human subjects who alienate their labor to produce an objective world, but rather the objective world that alienates the subject from it.

To make this case, it will first be necessary to explain the notion of intentionality, before transposing it from the mental acts in which Husserl analyzes it to material social practices that define objects as commodities representing an abstract, formal quantity of value. I shall then argue that Lukács uses this to present a phenomenological account of social being that centers on the commodity as the decisive structure of the meaning of objects in the capitalist mode of production as a whole: entities interact with one another *as quantities of value* or similar abstractions. It is this that produces capitalism as a complete social reality—one with significant implications for our understanding of reification and alienation.

INTENTIONALITY, MEANING, AND
THE REALITY OF THE OBJECT

Lukács's critique of capitalism is grounded on Marx's analysis of commodity fetishism. What characterizes the commodity is its double face: one and the same entity can be designated as either a concrete use-value, answering a specific need for a particular person, or a formally defined quantity of

exchange value. As I shall argue below, these meanings are determined by the social practices that direct subjects toward objects in meaningful ways. In this respect, social relations and practices exhibit an intentionality analogous to that which Husserl finds in mental acts, inasmuch as Husserl's term describes the way one and the same object may have a number of distinct, even contradictory meanings depending on the stance adopted toward it. To justify the extension of this notion of intentionality to social practices, it is necessary to explore what it means phenomenologically and its implications for the objects toward which we are directed.

The concept of intentionality is usually traced back to Franz Brentano, who defined it thus:

> Every mental phenomenon is characterized by what the Scholastics of the Middle Ages called the intentional (or mental) inexistence of an object, and what we might call, though not wholly unambiguously, reference to a content, direction toward an object. . . . Every mental phenomenon includes something as object within itself, although they do not do so in the same way. In presentation, something is presented, in judgment something is affirmed or denied, in love loved, in hate hated, in desire desired and so on.[2]

Brentano's formulation was sufficiently opaque that he insisted none of his students had adequately understood him. What is important, though, is the connection between the thing and the attitude toward it: nothing is ever simply known but is also simultaneously judged, hated, desired, and such. This was given a semantic turn by Gottlob Frege, for whom the crucial distinction was that between sense and reference.[3] Frege took the example of the planet Venus, historically known as both Hesperus (the evening star) and Phosphorus (the morning star). Both names have the same reference—they indicate the same material entity—but different senses or meanings, such that the statement "Hesperus is Phosphorus" has a significance distinct from a simple identity claim such as "Venus is Venus."

Husserl's account of intentionality combines Brentano's concern with mental acts and Frege's focus on meaning and logic. His early *Logical Investigations* provides the example of Napoleon: we think of the emperor quite differently depending on whether we refer to or *intend* him as "victor at Jena" or "loser at Waterloo."[4] Each represents a meaning that is complete and independent: it is possible to imagine the triumphant Napoleon without referring to his later defeat in making sense of that image. Crucially, neither sense can claim to be the more true: both are equally valid. At this stage, Husserl's concern was perhaps more directed toward formal semantics: intentionality designates the fact that our approach to any object is always already meaningful; the laws governing those meanings (such as the relation of parts and

wholes) can be logically analyzed. Subsequently, in *Ideas*, he delved deeper into intentionality as a feature of consciousness. The intentional act contains two correlated moments: on the one hand, *noesis*, the act-character of intentionality, and on the other hand, the *noema*, or the object as intended, as a complex of meaning.[5] Thus, to every meaningful object there corresponds a subjective stance; they may be conceived of as subject-pole and object-pole of the act, such that neither can be said to produce the other; rather, both are determined within the intentional act as a whole.

The exact nature of the noema and its relation to material objects has been hotly debated. Thinking of an object necessarily entails selection from a mass of raw sensory data—which Husserl calls *hyle*; the noema takes up only a portion of the available *hyle*. When the emperor's family members think of him, their image might include his preferred breakfast food or fondness for dogs—intuitions that are irrelevant to the historian's account of the victor at Jena, and which may even be at odds with it. Neither account is necessarily untrue, and neither can claim priority: each counts as an independently coherent complex of meaning, though only including a limited amount of *hyle*. But this leaves open the question of the reality of the object. For the so-called West Coast school, such as Hubert Dreyfus, Dagfinn Føllesdal, and David Woodruff Smith, the noema is like a veil of meaning cast over the object: it is essentially the way the mind is directed toward the object, and can be analyzed even if it is merely a fictional entity, or the underlying object is destroyed.[6] Meaning is in this sense a product of the way the mind thinks about objects: it is subjective. Conversely, for the "East Coast" school, including Robert Sokolowski, John Drummond, and others, the object is fundamentally indistinguishable from the noema: the object fully *exists* as a complex of meaning, and cannot be analyzed independently of its noematic being.[7] Meaning is not simply how we think about objects, but is rather intrinsic to what the object is. Dan Zahavi offers a third perspective going even further in this direction: agreeing with the East Coast's claim that meaning is objective rather than a subjective projection, he suggests the subject too is constituted in those acts of meaning.[8] Neither subject nor object is thinkable without the other.

This is not the place to settle the question of Husserl's own intended meaning. Indeed, in applying the notion of intentionality to social practices and relationships, I will suggest, the noema *is* the social existence of the object: its meaning is central to its function. In this respect, the societal noema is closer to the East Coast/Zahavi interpretation than that of the West Coast. In what follows, therefore, I shall emphasize three elements of Husserl's account that can be taken up by way of Lukács's interpretation of Marx. First, the object exists as a complex of meaning that includes only a selection of *hyle*. Second,

this necessarily entails a correlated stance by the subject: the meaning of the object points to a corresponding way of *acting*. Finally, we can offer a formal analysis of the logic of meaning like that Husserl gives in the *Logical Investigations*. Where Husserl's account is transcendental, any transposition of his account to social practices must be socio-historically variable—but this does not preclude the possibility of identifying the logic behind meaningful objectivity within a given society.

LUKÁCS'S APPROPRIATION OF HUSSERL AS RESOLUTION OF THE THOUGHT/BEING DICHOTOMY

The recognition that the meaning of an object is an inseparable moment of its social existence is central to Lukács's analysis of commodity fetishism. Lukács barely refers to Husserl in his own account: the latter appears only in the footnotes.[9] However, as I have shown elsewhere, he was already deeply acquainted with Husserl's work: in his posthumously published drafts toward a philosophical aesthetics written before his embrace of Marxism, Lukács had referred closely to both *Logical Investigations* and *Ideas*.[10] In *History and Class Consciousness*, he tacitly appropriates Husserl's phenomenological-ontological insights for Marxian political economy: it is not simply the material qualities of an object as it might exist independently of any meaning that determine its interactions with other entities, but rather the significance it has as a socially determined object. It is the commodity's qualities as a bearer of value, not as a brute physical mass, that explain what happens to it in relations with other entities. Crucially, however, where Husserl explains these meanings in terms of the intentionality of mental acts, Lukács transposes intentionality to social practices: it is not how we think about objects but how we act toward them that discloses their meaning. In this way, Lukács is able to use Husserlian means to resolve the Marxian problem of the thought/being dichotomy.

  The problem of the relation of thought and being lies at the heart of Lukács's diagnosis of the antinomies of bourgeois thought in the central section of the pivotal essay of *History and Class Consciousness*. Lukács's argument begins with the Kantian problem of the thing-in-itself, the object as it is beyond the capacity of our knowledge to reach it. In Lukács's reading, Kant attempts to find secure ground for knowledge by resting it on the necessary categories of the subject's cognition. It is of the essence of these formal, rational principles that they transcend any particular representation or knowledge of a specific thing: they are a solid basis for knowledge because they are necessary *a priori*. But this leaves the bare factual existence of the object as an irrational residue that cannot be incorporated into the system—this is the noumenon.

Our thought about the object never coincides with its existence. Lukács reads post-Kantian philosophy as an attempt to resolve this with different kinds of objects determined by reason—Fichte's focus on moral acts, or Hegel's philosophy of history, for example. But in each case, rationality determines only itself; material existence itself remains incidental to the system. Thought and being remain at best in a Leibnizian *harmonia praestabilita,* any correlation between them merely coincidence. It is this separation that produces the attitude of powerless, detached contemplativity that Lukács terms "reification." The subject remains unable to intervene in reality, kept at arm's length from the world by its own internally coherent abstract system of knowledge.

This philosophical paradigm is, for Lukács, merely the clearest manifestation of a society-wide phenomenon: the domination of the commodity as the primary form of objectivity in capitalist society. In the capitalist mode of production, the basic needs of the individual are met by the exchange of commodities in a vast market selling mass-produced items. Any commodity has two faces. On the one hand, it has a use-value, designating the purpose it serves for its buyer; its existence as a commodity depends on it being demanded by some person or other in this way. However, use values are incommensurable, and hence cannot be a consistent basis for exchange: the purpose to which we can put a bottle of beer is quite different from that of a computer, for example; no amount of beers can replace the use-value of a computer if I need to write a paper (though they may help with my anxiety about the tenure clock). To exchange it with other commodities of quite different uses, we need, on the other hand, to identify a common property by which commodities can be compared: in classical Marxian thought, of course, this is the quantity of labor required to produce them and bring them to market—this is their exchange value. Thus, the same mass of material can have two different meanings—it can be represented in relation to a private individual, according to specific qualities that meet a concrete need, or it can be represented in relation to all other commodities as a quantity of value. There are immediate parallels with Husserl's account of intentionality. Both the use-value and the exchange value of the object count as separate and complete objects, neither requiring the other in order to be understood; what is important is the particular way we are directed toward the object, whether as something that serves our needs or as something we intend to exchange with identically specified objects.

Lukács's innovation is to highlight the importance of this duality in the processes of capitalist production—and to argue that it produces a reified separation of form and content that leaves individuals powerless against the system. In the first place, he treats the exchange value form of the commodity as real in the same way as the Husserlian noema under an East Coast interpretation. It is the object's significance as a commodity that governs what happens to

it when it enters into capitalist social relations: there is no more real material substance underneath that actually dictates events. Whenever a subject or object enters social relations with another entity, it does so on certain terms: in the case of the commodity, only exchange value governs the interaction. Any other properties the object may have are not socially real, because they have no effects—they are nonexistent in practice. Thus, the commodity structure "becomes the real principle governing the actual production of commodities."[11] The commodity structure is *the* category of capitalist social being *par excellence.* The production of an object is determined by the sum of value that may be realized on its sale; its movement around society in exchange for quantities of other objects is governed by that value, not the material properties of the object. Echoing the problems he finds in classical German philosophy, he argues that this form entails a systematic exclusion of content: what matters is the internally coherent structure by which the value of the commodity in exchange is determined. In the traditional reading of Marx as a labor theorist of value, this is manifest at the very moment the worker performs labor: value is defined in terms of "socially necessary" labor—the amount of labor typically required in a given society to produce a commodity, rather than the actual labor expended by a particular worker, which remains irrelevant. Lukács does not, however, depend on the labor theory of value: he criticizes instead value as a form, allowing him to argue that identical problems beset the consumption-focused theory of marginal utility.[12] The value of any commodity is defined not in absolute terms, but solely in relation to the sum of other commodities it enables us to buy. The value of, say, a coat thus fluctuates depending on the value of bread, or of cars or houses or shares in Google; it has become unmoored from the actual material coat. As Lukács puts it, "objectively . . . a world of fixed things and relations between things springs in to being (the world of commodities and their movements on the market)."[13] The formal determination of social objects comes to vary entirely independently of their contents. The purchasing power of my labor may be reduced by technological improvements or shortages in other parts of the economy; my social being is therefore distanced from my material existence, and the social existence of my product and of my own social being as wage-earner or contractor are, by definition, something over which I exercise only minimal control. Just as was the case in Kantian epistemology, social reality is governed by a set of rational laws unmoored from concrete individuals and things, leaving us as only passive observers, at best able to position ourselves to take advantage of processes over which we have no control. Lukács's complaint, then, is not directly against exploitation of the working class, but against the form taken by objects within the system of capitalism as a whole: it is at the formal meaning of objects that he aims his critique.

For Husserl, of course, the noema is correlated with noesis—the act-character of intentionality at the subject-pole. For Lukács too, the commodity structure of the object is matched by a specific attitude by the subject. We must understand the commodity "as a form of objectivity [*Gegenständlichkeitsform*] on the one hand, and as the subjective stance [*Subjektsverhalten*] appropriate to it on the other," he insists.[14] For Lukács, this subjective stance is not simply mental: it is manifest in practical acts. It was Andrew Feenberg who first argued that Lukács uses the term "consciousness" in ways analogous to the anthropological notion of "cultural practices"—that is, as regular patterns of behavior.[15] What I suggest is the reinterpretation of this notion of practices back through consciousness as phenomenological. Instead of mental acts, it is social practices that intend objects as having a certain meaning: practices entail signifying reference to an object or to other subjects. By treating practices as intentionally meaningful, Lukács is able to overcome the thought/being dichotomy: the meaning of an object is embodied in the practices that refer to it, and is intrinsic to the object's social existence.

The paradigmatic practice of the capitalism mode of production is the exchange of commodities. As Lukács explains, "the immediate, practical and intellectual confrontation of the individual with society, the immediate production and reproduction of life—whereby for the individual the commodity structure of all 'things' and the 'natural law' of their relationships is encountered as something already finished, something unsublateably given—can only occur in this form of rational and isolated acts of exchange between isolated commodity owners."[16] Notable here is the relation between the formal structure of objects and the particular ways the subject is supposed to act: the two elements are inextricably linked. The individual confronts objects with a definite meaning-structure: capitalists encounter *commodities*, quantities of value, not use values. Again, Lukács emphasizes the *structure* of objects: he is concerned with patterns of meaning that dictate how we behave toward objects, not the substantive meaning of individual objects. In other contexts, he might be less interested in the symbolism of a particular holy relic and more focused on the way we treat sacred objects in general. For capitalism, of course, no object is sacred: everything can ultimately be reduced to the quantity of value realized upon its sale. We do not act as though we have an essential connection to the commodity, or as though our identity depends in some way on possession of it. Rather, the act of exchange is a practice in which the material object is reduced to nullity, represented only as value. Thus, the practices of capitalistic subjects both embody and reinforce the meaning-structure of the commodity. Social practices may therefore be characterized as methectic; "methexis" in this sense refers both to the Platonic sense of participation in an Idea and to the ancient Greek theatrical practice of audience participation in drama. Entities exist as determinate objects because of the way people

act toward them, according to specified, regular patterns of practice: what an object is—its categorial determination—depends on practices that intentionally designate it. Because his analysis is at the level of formal structures of meaning through which objects in general are constructed, Lukács can identify similar patterns in practices outside economic exchange; for him "there is no problem of this stage of human development that does not lead back to this question in the final analysis, and whose solution could not be sought out in the solution to the puzzle of the *commodity-structure*."[17] Here Lukács asserts a Marxian primacy of relations of production, but with a distinct twist: objectivity in all areas of society follows the same *structure* of meaning as the economy. Capitalist production entails exchange that abstracts from the specific qualities of an object to the abstract, universal form of quantifiable value. Lukács's claim is that this same movement is found throughout the institutions of bourgeois society—for example, in the designation of the individual as a citizen bearing the same universal rights as every other regardless of substantial differences in their social situation, or the treatment of every legal case as subsumable in principle beneath a coherent set of universally applicable laws. Thus, the commodity structure is not simply a problem of the economy but is rather "the central structural problem of capitalist society in all its expressions" and the principle of all its "forms of objectivity and the forms of subjectivity corresponding to them."[18] Of course, this only applies at a certain point in history. Implicitly, previous social formations might have included multiple different forms at once; for Lukács, it is only in capitalism that one particular kind of meaning attains unprecedented domination by one form of objectivity over all of society.

Lukács's phenomenological analysis of capitalism, then, focuses not on the particular significance of specific objects, but on the formal structures of meaning embedded within relations of production that generate objects with generalized forms of significance. At one level, we can describe social practices as intentional inasmuch as they entail acting toward objects as complexes of meaning—such as the crown that the loyal subjects treat with reverence. But Lukács goes deeper, looking to explain how social structures make certain *kinds* of meaning possible. The practice of capitalistic exchange entails acting toward objects—intending them—as abstract, universal quantities of value, calculated in relation to the value of the world of commodities as a whole rather than any use they may have for an individual. Objects are formally identical in quality, differing only in quantity. A mode of production therefore comprises a system of signification: it entails a set of practices that intend their objects in a particular way. As a result, these practices not only define individual objects but also imply a total system of objectivity with its own regularities and rules of interaction between different objects. For Lukács, capitalism as a whole is characterized by an apparent determinism

that excludes intervention by subjects. As he puts it, "purely natural relationships or social forms mystified into natural relations stand on one side opposite people as rigid, complete and in essence unchangeably given things, whose laws we can at best make use of, and whose objective structure can at best be grasped, but never overthrown."[19] This is because of the particular form of objectivity of the commodity structure. Recall: the commodity is defined as a value relative to all other commodities. As a result, its value appears—as Marx had pointed out in his own account of commodity fetishism—as something intrinsic to it, part of its essential nature. It is formally cut off from any action by subjects: it is what it is, and cannot be changed. This produces what Lukács refers to as "the *contemplative* character of the attitude of the subject in capitalism": we are left only to observe naturalistic processes in which we cannot intervene.[20] Once again, Lukács insists that this applies across capitalist society, not simply the economy. For example, he contrasts "the 'law' of primitive societies," barely changed in centuries, but which can be "flexible, irrational, and renewed with every decision" with "modern law," which may seemingly be subject to change, but which has a "rigid, static, and finished" essence.[21] The laws of the former may be signified as emanating from a subject—a monarch or a divinity—and are hence alterable in principle; those of the latter claim to spring from impersonal and hence unchangeable principles. It is the underlying structure of signification, resting in capitalist relations of production, that not only defines individual objects as meaningful but also shapes a whole domain of objects which may interact only in specified ways.

CAPITALISM AS A REALITY

Treating practices as intentional and social objects as meaningful sidesteps the debate around Husserl's definition of the noema. Objects in society have effects on other objects and on subjects by virtue of the properties they have as complexes of meaning: the impact of the commodity on other things is defined by its character as quantity of value. In this sense, the meaning of the object is part of what it really is, not simply a veil cast over a more primordial thing beneath. To the degree that a mode of production entails a structure of signification across social relations, it determines the real as such; in Lukács's words, "society is *the* reality for man."[22] To explain this, it is necessary first to explain what is meant by the term "reality"; I shall then consider some of the specific features of capitalism in Lukács's account as a *totality* that permits no other form of signification, before exploring what this means for the question of alienation.

Speaking of a "reality" means referring to a comprehensive, internally consistent, self-validating system of appearances. Lukács does not offer an explicit theory of reality in this vein, but he provides suggestions as to how one may be developed. The best starting point is his account of the natural sciences—which, to the more positivistically minded elements of the Second International, had such a decisive claim on access to reality that it was important that Marxism too be counted as a science of this kind. For Lukács, however, the natural sciences present only one kind of image of objects, in which they are "reduced to their purely quantitative essence, as expressed in numbers and numerical relations."[23] The sciences are merely one way of intending objects, as incomplete as any other: they entail selection of a limited selection of *hyle* in order to construct a meaningful object. In this case, it produces "facts": data specified in a way that seemingly excludes the intrusion of subjectivity through the application of scientific method. However, such "facts will only first become facts within a methodological treatment—which varies according to the goal of knowledge."[24] The individual fact has to be understood within the broader context within which it makes sense. At the most trivial level, different sciences diverge on what counts as a datum for them: what is informative to a quantitative social scientist will tell nothing to one engaged in qualitative research. The "fact" is that which is solid, certain, and significant within the broader whole of the theory. It is constructed according to the grammar of that theory, and is comprehensible as such only within that context. Data are not immediately presented as such; they are framed within a broader system that makes sense of them.

What is "real," therefore, is a self-contained, internally coherent organization which sets out its own formal conditions of truth and factuality, and posits objects that adhere to that system. Thus, the natural sciences present an image of the world governed by regular forces operating according to predictable laws expressed quantitatively. Lukács himself does not develop this claim very far, but his argument here prefigures Husserl's account of Galilean science in the later *Crisis* essay.[25] For Husserl, modern science reduced the world to just such a formal, empty image: reality was reduced to a set of numerical relations. This, Husserl argued, required detaching science from its roots in the lifeworld of substantial purposes, leaving us adrift in a world without greater meaning. What Lukács and Husserl share here is the claim that a particular way in which individual objects may be intended can produce a complete worldview: for both, the abstract, quantifying approach of modern science presents a depersonalized world detached from the material projects of living individuals. For Lukács, of course, this is rooted in the separation of use-value and exchange value integral to the commodity form: the former is analogous to the Husserlian lifeworld from which the latter springs.

This, however, should be not taken to mean that use-value is more "real" than that of exchange value. For Lukács, the world of commodities is real in the sense that it is internally coherent and consistent. *History and Class Consciousness* does not elaborate in detail on the meaning of "reality." However, in earlier unpublished drafts on the philosophy of art predating his embrace of Marxism, Lukács offers the rudiments of an account of reality that laid the groundwork both for his philosophy of society in *History and Class Consciousness* and for his later defense of aesthetic realism in the 1930s and beyond.[26] In these drafts, Lukács argued that a successful artwork must be organized as a self-enclosed totality around a particular standpoint that bestowed a unified sense on the disparate elements of the work.[27] We miss the point of a work of art if we interpret its parts in relation to our own experience, the author's biography, or as a historical document, say; while each is a possible relation to or standpoint upon the work, none of them captures what the work is as *art*. Central to Lukács's account is the claim that the meaning of the work comes from its internal coherence: the significance of every element of the work comes from its relation to all the other elements through the central organizing standpoint. This is essential if the work is to present what Lukács describes as a "reality." His critique of naturalism here (again foreshadowing his later attacks on naturalism from a Marxian perspective) helps clarify his point. Naturalism fails artistically because it aims to represent every individual entity discretely, with a minimum of stylizing distortion.[28] Because it seeks to remain absolutely true to these elements, it refuses to take a standpoint that would organize them into an artistically coherent whole: the work is thereby atomized. As a result, the world presented by the work appears to the audience to be rather less "real" and more artificial than had those parts been organized in relation to one another. It follows that for Lukács, the real is entwined with coherence: objectively, a reality is a world whose parts fit together in regular, organized ways, such that each element makes sense within this whole; subjectively, it appears to the individual as an intelligible, seamless whole, something unquestioned and taken for granted.

Capitalism forms just such a reality: the world of the commodity, comprising objects defined as quantities of value, appears as what he refers to as a "self-enclosed" totality—noticeably using the same term to refer to capitalism as he did to the successful work of art.[29] Consider again the way the value of an individual object is determined. Rather than an absolute quantity of value, it is defined in relation to the other commodities it can purchase: the value of an individual commodity rises and falls in relation to all other commodities. As objective complexes of meaning, they make no formal reference to subjects and their needs; they are entirely defined within the commodity structure, their sense derived purely therefrom. Every object that comes into social relations with another object must take on this abstract, universal

form—whether in its purest manifestation through the exchange of commodities, or in formally homologous ways such as the legal relations between citizens defined in universalistic terms. The relations themselves determine both subjects and objects in this way when they enter society. At the same time, the subject experiences this as the only possible reality: not only do social processes appear to operate independently, but they seem so natural that no other form of society seems possible. It is in this sense that Lukács argues that Marxism understands capitalist society as a totality. He does not mean to claim that Marxism somehow has a more *extensive* knowledge of a greater number of "facts" about society than bourgeois thought. Rather, he means totality in an *intensive* sense: capitalism is a totality in that it defines all phenomena within it as having the same meaning-structure and in that those phenomena are defined in relation to all others as formally identical. It is total, too, in that it forecloses the possibility of alternatives; the seeming naturalness of capitalism overwhelms the subject, leaving them powerless to consider change.

By extension, this implies that capitalism is semantically autopoietic: it presents itself as an entirely self-sufficient system of meaning. It is characterized by the degree to which all entities and relations between them take on the same fundamental form, thus drawing together everything within a single, unified totality. He explains it thus:

> Humanity in feudal society could not yet become conscious of itself as a social being, because their social relations themselves often possessed a naturalistic character, and because society itself was far from sufficiently organized through and in its unification of all relations from person to person for it to be manifest in consciousness as *the* reality of humanity. . . . Bourgeois society completes this societalization of society. . . . People become—in the true sense of the word—social beings; society becomes *the* reality for people.[30]

The relations of personal loyalty between a liege and their vassals, or the transmission of authority by familial inheritance were grounded on something other than an abstractly defined social form. We might also think of the habit of aristocratic Roman families of adopting heirs, such as the emperor Nerva's adoption of Trajan as his successor, as a further example: in this instance, social relations had to take on the "naturalistic" form of the family. Of course, this does not mean that such relations have any kind of objective or *a priori* validity—simply that they were understood as grounded on something "outside" society. In contrast, the commodity structure at the root of capitalism produces a social order that is purely "autonomous, self-enclosed, and based entirely on immanent laws."[31] The individual is no more than the buyer or seller of commodities, which are themselves specified in terms of one

another—that is, of things purely internal to the system of relations, rather than anything outside themselves. There are clear material reasons for this. It is only possible to measure the value of commodities according to a universal standard such as socially necessary labor when productive forces and communications have advanced to a degree that allows consistency across the whole of society. Lacking these, previous societies did not exercise the same total control over social relations: it was possible for diverse forms of relation to coexist. What is distinct about capitalism, he argues, is that it transforms all social relations into this single, abstract form: everything that comes into society can only do so if it takes on this guise. Capitalism is thus the first entirely "self-enclosed, self-validating system" of social relations: the only conceivable form of being it allows is that which can be rationalized, and it transforms everything it touches into the form of the commodity.

In doing so, capitalism systematically excludes everything particular and substantial from social relations. This exclusion is at the very heart of the commodity form, and its strict separation of use-value and exchange value. In the act of exchange, the commodity is determined in the most abstract, quantifying way, as epitomized by the fact that labor value is defined in terms of "socially necessary" labor. Here, the specific details of an individual worker's labor are actively excluded from the object as it stands in relation to other objects: as Lukács explains, "the human qualities and peculiarities of the worker appear more and more as *mere sources of error*."[32] It is not the case that the universal form of the commodity merely does not adequately represent the content beneath; it must actively and positively exclude it. At the same time, however, in order for the commodity to circulate and profit to be realized, it must be sold—and for this, it must have a concrete and particular use-value for someone. That which the commodity form ignores is at the same time necessary for it. The social being of the commodity is, therefore, on the one hand, an abstract, formal, quantity standing in relation to other quantitatively variable but qualitatively identical objects but, on the other hand, a substantial content or use-value to be consumed that is excluded from those relations. Under capitalism, individual objects inevitably appear in this double way, divided against themselves. Their substance and particularity are determined as liminal; they have a paradoxical social being as that which is outside the system, as private rather than public concerns.

It is for this reason that the public/private divide has such decisive importance under capitalism. Everything particular to the subject is signified as external to social relations, and hence to the public life: they become matters of interiority and personal concern alone. Lukács touches on this in his discussion of the antinomic meanings acquired by the term "nature" from the eighteenth century onward.[33] On the one hand, he points out, "natural" refers to that which is governed by law, predictable, rational, and quantifiable—in

terms of both the laws of nature uncovered by science and the law-governed phenomena of bourgeois society. On the other hand, in the likes of Rousseau and the Romantics, the same word comes to describe precisely that which is *unsocial*, pure, spontaneous, emotional, and unpredictable—everything that is supposed to adhere to the individual before they are corrupted by social artifice. Just as the formal, law-governed public world excludes the particular, so too is rationality symbolically excluded from the substantial particularism of the private realm. This posits a division within the subject between public and private persona, excluding our particularity because the forms taken by social relations erase it from our interactions, and produces an opposition between the universal reason of the social and the irrational spontaneity of the private.

This is of crucial significance for understanding the difference between alienation and reification. According to Marx's account in the *Economic and Philosophical Manuscripts*, alienation is to some degree subjective: the activity of the laborer (albeit working within a determinate set of social relations) externalizes and estranges the product of their labor, the process of labor, their species-being, and their relation to others. The worker produces the conditions of their own oppression in producing more value for their employer. Lukács's notion of reification is the reverse: it is the result of the commodity structure as the dominant form of objectivity in capitalist society, which excludes and externalizes subjects by permitting them into social relations in only the most attenuated, abstract form. Objects are determined through mutual relations, rather than by subjective intervention; the system of social forms is completely self-enclosed. Social relations exist over and above both contents and members of society: they are reified. The objective determination of social being as a set of relations between things, not people means, subjectively, the systematic exclusion of the subject from the constitution of social forms. Society becomes something that *is*, rather than something we *do*; rather than depending on us, its forms are entirely self-sustaining. The structure produces particularity and subjectivity on its borders by excluding them from the system of relations that it governs; the object alienates the subject.

CONCLUSION

Lukács's account of capitalism is phenomenological inasmuch as he examines the capitalist mode of production as a system of meaningful phenomena governed by a particular logical structure. Tacitly treating practices as intentional in the Husserlian sense, Lukács argues that no object can be extricated from the webs of meaning within which it is embroiled. Its reality is governed

by the form of objectivity through which it is disclosed: it is as a *commodity* that the object is an effective social force, not as mere underlying material. The commodity structure is an essential moment of the capitalist mode of production, which depends on the circulation of abstract, quantitative values. The commodity is, in a sense, a societal noema; its noetic correlate is the set of practices of capitalist exchange that direct subjects toward objects as sums of capital. The absolute hegemony of this structure over capitalist society generates a phenomenal reality as a whole—an internally consistent, coherent world of objects structurally like the commodity, which operate in predictable ways precisely because of the abstract homogeneity of this social world. Everything that enters social relations does so in the most abstract form: its substance is excluded, alienating us from the public realm and confining us to a private life that sees reason as its foe.

Lukács's phenomenological account is important not just because of what it tells us about capitalism. It also has implications for the way we conceive of the practices that might seek to overcome such reification. By definition, Marxism itself cannot merely be a theory, in which thought about society is separated from its being. It cannot proceed aprioristically from a set of axioms about society or our tactics for changing it. Rather, it must be directly practical. He turns specifically to the revolutionary Party for this. However, contrary to those who have interpreted him as calling for a Leninist vanguard that carries out revolution on behalf of the working class, Lukács repeatedly and explicitly rules out any such centralist model of the Party. As Merleau-Ponty rightly states, when Lukács describes the Party as the "organizational form of this class consciousness," he does not mean consciousness in the form of an "I think": it is, for him, an embodied, material, meaningful *practice*. That is, the Party is not intended to represent the working class in the sense of acting on their behalf—a point Lukács repeatedly and explicitly states. It is instead a social space within which its members participate in the formation of their own social form. In this sense, the Party can be described as the site of methexis, capturing the quasi-ritualistic nature of Party praxis as symbolically meaningful intersubjective activity, whereby members of the revolutionary class interact with one another, relating to others from the perspective of the class and class interest, rather than from the perspective of the individual. In this way, Lukács makes his Party a form of thought-in-being, rather than thought-about-being. The Party is not there to develop a theory about society, which it would then apply to that external object; it is the embodiment of meaning in society. As the "organizational form of class consciousness," it is a set of phenomenologically meaningful social structures. This is reinforced by his demand that the Party be "a world of activity" for its members. The use of "world" here is significant: it is not simply that the Party

should take up great deal of the workers' time. Rather, "world" indicates the general principle of a social reality as a whole. Whereas commodity fetishism produces a world of passivity, the Party constitutes a world in which subjects are fully engaged, and not cast outside as isolated individuals. Their activity is directly meaningful, not one-dimensional material: practice is the unity of thought and being in the shape of signifying activity. *How* a group organizes itself is, for Lukács, even more important than what its organization aims to do. In this sense, preparing for revolution is the truly revolutionary practice.

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2. Franz Brentano, *Psychology from an Empirical Standpoint*, trans. A. C. Rancurello, D. B. Terrell, and L. McAlister (London: Routledge, 1973), 88.

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9. Georg Lukács, *Gesammelte Werke* (*GW*), 18 vols., ed. György Márkus and Frank Benseler (Darmstadt: Luchterhand, 1968–1981), ii.295, n.2.; *History and Class Consciousness* (*HCC*), trans. Rodney Livingstone (London: Merlin, 1971), 212 n14. Translations from *History and Class Consciousness* are my own; I have provided details of the relevant page of the standard translation for ease of reference.

10. Westerman, *Lukács's Phenomenology of Capitalism*.

11. Lukács *GW* ii.261: "zum realen Prinzip des tatsächlichen Produktionsprozesses der Waren wird" (*HCC* 87).

12. Lukács *GW* ii.280–1; *HCC* 104–5.

13. Lukács *GW* ii.261: "Objektiv, indem eine Welt von fertigen Dingen und Dingbeziehungen entsteht (die Welt der Waren und ihrer Bewegung auf dem Markte)." Lukács *HCC* 87.

14. Lukács *GW* ii.275: "als Gegenständlichkeitsform einerseits und aus dem ihr zugeordneten Subjektsverhalten andererseits ergeben." *HCC* 84.

15. Andrew Feenberg, *Lukács, Marx, and the Sources of Critical Theory* (Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield, 1981); see also "Culture and Practice in the Early Marxist Work of Lukács," *Berkeley Journal of Sociology* 26 (1981): 27–40, and *The Philosophy of Praxis: Marx, Lukács, and the Frankfurt School* (London: Verso, 2014), 70.

16. Lukács *GW* ii.267: "die unmittelbare, praktische wie gedankliche Auseinandersetzung des Individuums mit der Gesellschaft, die unmittelbare Produktion und Reproduktion des Lebens—wobei für das Individuum die Warenstruktur aller 'Dinge' und die 'Naturgesetzlichkeit' ihrer Beziehungen etwas fertig Vorgefundenes, etwas unaufhebbar Gegebenes ist—kann sich nur in dieser Form der rationellen und isolierten Tauschakte zwischen isolierten Warenbesitzern abspielen." Lukács *HCC* 92.

17. Lukács *GW* ii.257: "Denn es gibt kein Problem dieser Entwicklungsstufe der Menschheit, das in letzter Analyse nicht auf diese Frage hinweisen würde, dessen Lösung nicht in der Lösung des Rätsels der *Warenstruktur* gesucht werden müßte." *HCC* 83.

18. Lukács *GW* ii.257: "wenn das Warenproblem nicht bloß als Einzelproblem, auch night bloß as Zentralproblem der einzelwissenschaftlich gefaßten Ökonomie, sondern als zentrales, strukturelles Problem der kapitalistischen Gesellschaft in allen ihren Lebansäußerungen erscheint. Denn erst in diesem Falle kann in der Struktur des Warenverhältnisses das Urbild aller Gegenständlichkeitsformen und aller ihnen entsprechenden Formen der Subjektivität in der bürgerlichen Gesellschaft aufgefunden werden." *HCC* 83.

19. Lukács *GW* ii.192: "Reine Naturbeziehungen oder zu Naturbeziehungen mystifizierte gesellschaftliche Formen stehen dem Menschen einerseits als starre, fertige—im Wesen—unwandelbare Gegebenheiten gegenüber, deren Gesetze er sich höchstens nutzbar machen, deren Gegenstandsstruktur er höchstens zu erfassen, niemals aber zu umwälzen fähig ist." *HCC* 19.

20. Lukács *GW* ii.273: "Wodurch einleuchtenderweise auch hier der *kontemplative* Charakter des kapitalistischen Subjektverhaltens in Erscheinung tritt." *HCC* 97.

21. Lukács *GW* ii.272: "Es entsteht also der—scheinbar—paradoxe Tatbestand, daß das Jahrhunderte, manchmal sogar Jahrtausende lang kaum veränderte 'Recht' primitive Gesellschaftsformen einin fließenden, irrationellen, in den REchtsentscheidungen stets neu entstehenden Charakter hat, während das sachlich fortwährend und stürmisch umgewälzte modern Recht ein starres, statisches und fertiges Wesen zeigt." *HCC* 97.

22. Lukács *GW* ii.193: "Die Gesellschaft *die* Wirklichkeit für den Menschen." *HCC* 19.

23. Lukács *GW* ii.176: "Dieser Prozeß steigert sich noch dadurch, daß die Erscheinungen auf ihr rein quantitatives, sich in Zahlen und Zahlenverhältnissen ausdrückendes Wesen reduziert werden." *HCC* 6.

24. Lukács *GW* ii.176: "die Tatsachen bloß in einer solchen—je nach dem Erkenntnisziel verschiedenen—methodischen Bearbeitung überhaupt erst zu Tatsachen werden." *HCC* 5.

25. Edmund Husserl, *The Crisis of European Sciences and Transcendental Phenomenology*, trans. David Carr (Evanston, IL: Northwestern University Press, 1970).

26. Georg Lukács, "Realism in the Balance," in *Aesthetics and Politics*, by Theodor Adorno et al. (London and New York: Verso, 2007), 28–59; *The Meaning of Contemporary Realism*, trans. John Mander and Necke Mander (London: Merlin Press, 1962).

27. Lukács *GW* xvii–xviii; see also Westerman, *Lukács's Phenomenology of Capitalism*.

28. Lukács *GW* xvii.102–23.

29. Lukács *GW* ii.407; *HCC* 231.

30. Lukács *GW* ii.292: "Der Mensch der feudalen Gesellschaft konnte über sich als Gesellschaftswesen nicht bewußt warden, weil seine gesellschaftlichen Beziehungen selbst noch vielfach einen naturhaften Charakter besessen haben, weil die Gesellschaft selbst in ihrer Gesamtheit viel zu wenig einheitlich durchorganisiert und in ihrer Einheitlichkeit sämtliche Beziehungen von Mensch zu Mensch umfassend war, um im Bewußtsein als *die* Wirklichkeit des Menschen zu erscheinen. . . . Die bürgerliche Gesellschaft vollzieht diesen Vergesellschaftungsprozeß der Gesellschaft. . . . Der Mensch wird—im wahren Sinne des Wortes—Gesellschaftswesen. Die Gesellschaft *die* Wirklichkeit für den Menschen."

31. Lukács *GW* ii.407: "Kein Zufall, weil die kapitalistische Gesellschaft durch ihre waren-und verkehrswirtschaftliche Organisation dem Wirtschaftsleben eine so selbständige, in sich geschlossene und auf immanenten Gesetzmäßigkeiten beruhende Eigenart verlieh, wie sie den ihr vorausgegangenen Gesellschaften unbekannt war." *HCC* 231.

32. Lukács *GW* ii.263: "Infolge der Rationalisierung des Arbeitsprozesses erscheinen die menschlichen Eigenschaften und Besonderheiten des Arbeiters immer mehr *als bloße Fehlerquellen* dem rationell vorherberechneten Funktionieren dieser abstrakten Teilgesetze gegenüber." *HCC* 89.

33. Lukács *GW* ii.316; *HCC* 136.

Chapter 5

The Phenomenology of Societal Interaction in the Thought of Max Adler, Edmund Husserl, and Their Antecedents

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This chapter is an investigation of the phenomenological beginnings in the study of human intentionality that gave rise over decades to the complex methodology of phenomenology as an instrument for the examination of social interaction among persons. As with all knowledge, many lifetimes of thought are required to constitute the tools that enable us to problem-solve and offer solutions and progress in society. Generating a more fertile educational ground for humans to further their powers of self-reflective analysis as well as analysis of others has given rise to what we call the phenomenological study of human intentions and acts. Karl Marx was among those who took this study further. The accomplishments of Edmund Husserl and the Austrian Marxist Max Adler remain to be further developed, warranting more careful study of how they advanced the analysis of human intention at the level of social interaction.

INTRODUCTION TO THE DEVELOPMENT OF THE PHENOMENOLOGICAL ANALYSIS OF SOCIAL INTERACTION FROM KANT, HEGEL, AND MARX TO EDMUND HUSSERL AND MAX ADLER

As the twentieth century progressed, Marxist theoreticians neglected the phenomenological bases of Marxist thought. This oversight has led to an inflexibility in how to enable others to see the full horizon of Marx's vision of the liberation of the human being from the constrictions of the "class" society of capitalism. Marx's initial address of the "class structure" of society was in his phenomenological reorientation of Hegel's introduction of the concept of "class structure" in the *Philosophy of Right*.[1] Marx took Hegel to task for what he considered his hypostatization of concepts such as "class" without an adequate grounding in the pre-reflective judgment of individuals, a level of sensuous immediate judgment that Hegel certainly encountered in Immanuel Kant. Marx did not have knowledge of Hegel's early writings where more thought was given by him to how a valid concept arose from the sensuous content of an immediate judgment.[2] There was in Kant and Hegel, as well as in Marx, a "proto-phenomenology" insofar as many of their insights came from awareness of the social interaction of individuals that were guided by normative concepts within the culture. I use the term "proto-phenomenology" for the phenomenological insights of Kant, Hegel, and Marx in that these three seminal thinkers did not develop a systematic phenomenological method of inquiry as would Husserl. It will not be until the generation of Brentano, Husserl, and Adler that such social interaction is a focus of the careful phenomenological inquiry that justifies its name as a logic of phenomena. I will take the reader through the major thought of what I will see as a "proto-phenomenology" in Kant and Marx as it addressed social interaction, and then culminate my discussion with consideration of the phenomenological insights into social interaction of Adler and Husserl.

IMMANUEL KANT AND THE PROTO-PHENOMENOLOGY OF SOCIAL INTERACTION

There are passages in the *Critique of Pure Reason* that are genuine phenomenology, but they are sporadic. Rather, there is a conceptual guide for carrying out the phenomenological method. Kant realized this as he invited future researchers in his preface to the 1787 edition to carry out these inquiries.[3] What Kant treats phenomenologically is an analysis of the perception of an array of objects on a surface seen from two differing logical constructs. These

constructs are not chosen consciously, but rather are pre-reflective (i.e., an *a priori* way of thought). Kant's presentation is a phenomenological analysis of differing ways of structuring the same reality.[4] Social interaction is considered phenomenologically as an aside in a 1784 essay by Kant,[5] and otherwise we do not find it in his works.

Kant introduced the foundation of phenomenology to the Western world in his concept of how we "attend" in the immediate judgment of sensuous experience. As Kant stresses, in immediate judgment of "phenomena" there are logical structures that order the sensuous moment. These are "prereflective" (Kant's *a priori*) and organize the way we comprehend the sensuous complexity of human interaction—that which we hear, see, and feel within ourselves and externally, our experiential palette for value assignation. Marx discerned this pre-reflective judgment as it became the grammar of a normative reality that was skewed by "class" definitions that had become an internalized grammar. Marx saw how a normative grammar that favored a certain societal vision can contribute to the *logos* of immediate judgments that guided societal interaction in distinct ways. He did this by attending the character of his own and that of others' intentions, which were to be found in their manner of interacting with others. Adler and Husserl, contemporaries in the initial decades of the twentieth century, were among the few to develop Marx's phenomenology of pre-reflective intention, grammar, and the character of societal interaction further.

Phenomenology probes one's immediate sensuous reality and how we structure it. Marx would establish the epistemological ground for this phenomenological assessment of one's political-social world, as the bases of how to liberate the individual from the iron cage of a reality that curtailed one's social interaction as well as one's own potential development as a person. Phenomenology is able to probe what is known in one's life movement among others more accurately in its focus upon what is said, gestured, or in any other way expressed. In his *Phenomenology of Spirit*, Hegel argued from external evidence that one reflected in thought and deed one's "class." Marx's criticism of Hegel from a phenomenological viewpoint gave evidence of how and why one's immediate expression was influenced by "class," perpetuating its existence. Marx's phenomenology was never developed with the microsociological understanding of individual interactions. Yet the avenue he sketched as early as 1844 potentially enabled those who were followers of his theories and practice, such as Adler, to develop his insights further. One such line of thought was Marx's proto-phenomenology. Political-social change required what Marx would later call a *menschliche wiedergewinnen*, "a winning back of one's humanity"[6] from our self-alienation at the hands of a restrictive order of social interaction. Knowing in more depth and detail

human nature enabled Marx, but even more his followers who picked up this thread of thought, to more systematically envision in experiential depth how "one's humanity" could be restricted or liberated by social norms.

By 1903 (if not before), Adler perceived Marx's phenomenological intentions in his early writing, and on the strength of that understanding saw that his discernment of Marx's phenomenological analysis of the role of "class" in his contemporaries' judgments was also implicit in Husserl's phenomenological discernment of the role of political-social judgment among his contemporaries. The individual was compelled by normative thought to locate themselves in a social whole, and this self-location in its vocabulary and the emotive, value-based meaning of this vocabulary could stunt an individual's self-motivation and accordant action in every instance.[7] Only in Husserl's posthumous work do we find the explicit intention to study the political-social norms of present and past societies from the viewpoint of the normative intentionality taught to its citizens.[8]

Adler augmented the idea of the *a priori* from Kant, coining the term "the social *a priori*" to describe the necessity of a collective backdrop in the grammar of the human semantics. The origin of this realization that in every individual judgment there was a social *a priori* that was addressed differently in every society according to its normative political-social state of affairs of the time can be credited as a phenomenological advance to Adler's extrapolation of Marxist theory. Adler not only discerned its presence as a logical instrument to liberate thought but also gave it an epistemological foundation and clarified how Marx and Engels envisioned the interaction of Marxists among themselves. Political-social change did not liberate individuals through external changes in themselves. Rather, they provided a context for self-actualization based upon a new, more insightful knowledge of oneself and, with dialogue, of others.

Adler did not call himself a phenomenologist, but came to see how Husserl's thought was consonant what he saw himself developing with the tools of not only Marx but also Kant. Adler wrote in *Das Rätsel der Gesellschaft* [*The Riddle of Society*] in 1936:[9]

> My agreement with the ideas of Edmund Husserl, especially in relation to the social *a priori* as well as the working out of a social meaning of the objective world is such that I would like to make clear these correspondences. Husserl's turn to the "transcendental standpoint" in his *Ideas Pertaining to a Pure Phenomenology and to a Phenomenological Philosophy* (1913),[10] began this sameness in our thought, but it is even more enhanced in later publications, such as his *Cartesian Meditations*[11] and *Formal and Transcendental Logic*.[12]

Adler's definition and discussion of the transcendental concept of the "social *a priori*" is the same in intent as Husserl's concept of "the spatio-temporal *a priori*."[13] In his discussion of Husserl, as well as his own phenomenological investigations in shared social spaces, Adler shows how each of them formulated the conception of the social whole as one judges one's human experience. Indeed, how the "social world" is an objective reality whose nuances of order can be tracked over time through the phenomenological method of transcendental analysis is what makes both Adler and Husserl among the first phenomenological "social scientists." What is even less appreciated is that their forerunner as a phenomenological social scientist can be attested in the profound epistemological thought of the young Marx. When Marx writes the following appreciation of "social space" as early as 1844, we will see an epistemological justification that is the core of Husserl's phenomenological method, as well as the Marxist-phenomenological theoretical path taken by Adler:

> When communist artisans associate with one another, theory, propaganda, etc., is their first end. But at the same time, as a result of this association, they acquire a new need—the need for society (with one another)—and what appears as a means becomes an end. In this practical process the most splendid results are to be observed whenever French socialist workers are seen together. Such things as smoking, drinking, eating, etc., are no longer means of contact or means that bring them together. Company, association, and conversation, which again has society (with one another) as its end, are enough for them; the brotherhood of man is no mere phrase with them, but a fact of life, and the nobility of man shines upon us from their work-hardened bodies.[14]

Marx does not give us the actual phenomenological evidence of the social interchange through the dialogue between the workers or an analysis of that interpersonal exchange in this paragraph. Proof of his manner of attention to the immediacy of the discourse to which he refers will come later in his 1844 text as his correction of Hegel's phenomenological approach indicates that he had not only attended the conversations critically but also formulated a more valid phenomenological theory to undergird a conceptual transcendental integration of what was heard and sensed.

In the earlier quote by Marx, he uses a term for "society" that remains a normal noun in German: *Gesellschaft*. Yet, as his thought developed after 1844, he found a verb to express the actual interaction in its content and effects that he witnessed: *vergesellschaften*. The English translation of this term—"sociate" (and its cognate "sociation")—is little used and less understood. To sociate means to be integrated with a particular cast of mind into the normative aspects of life with others in a "society." How this process occurs

in an actual dialogue with others, and the consequences in behavior in the aftermath of such dialogues, will be tracked in conceptual language, behavior, and emotive mien by the phenomenological social scientist. Marx uses this term with this intention in a closing paragraph of the penultimate chapter of the first volume of *Das Kapital,* as he speaks of the new "sociative" impulses of the proletariat who now have knowledge of their actual socio-economic space, and what will occur:

> The centralization of the means of production and the sociation of work reached a point where it became unsupportable within its capitalist shell. That shell was shattered. The hour of capitalist private property knelled. The expropriators were expropriated.[15]

Marx's concept in his use of "*Vergesellschaftung*" here is a verbal noun. What he does in this usage is raise his experience of the discussion of workers who have seen the injustice of their sociation as it has occurred through the education and normative thought of their society to a concept derived from the actual experience with others, from his phenomenological acuity into what was taking place. He makes this clear as early as 1844 when he corrects Hegel's derivation and use of concepts. Marx clarifies how a "concept" can alienate us from ourselves:

> The man estranged from himself is also the thinker estranged from his essence—that is, from the natural and human essence. His thoughts are therefore fixed mental forms dwelling outside nature and man. Hegel has locked up all these fixed mental forms together in his logic.[16]

Hegel, as Marx understood him, dwells on the concepts of individuals, without tracking them to their "being lived in the moment." Husserl will show in *Experience and Judgment* how the epoché lifts the sensual evidence to a concept. Husserl makes clear what Marx knew.[17] The antidote to this imposition of a fixed concept upon the immediate sensual evidence of discourse is to only generate a concept from the material sensuousness itself, not to further connect concept to concept without the immediacy of sensual evidence. The phenomenological thinker—and Marx was one of the first—is to take careful note how persons, demonstrating through word choice and setting, the what, how, and why of the substance of the discourse. The what, how, and why of the substance of the discourse is the experiential immediacy that is the foundation of every discourse, and the basis of the *epoché* that leads to the concept. The phenomenologist is concerned first with an adequate attention to the sociative interaction. Marx writes:

Assume man to be man and his relationship to the world to be a human one: then you can exchange love only for love, trust for trust, etc. If you want to enjoy art, you must be an artistically cultivated person; if you want to exercise influence over other people, you must be a person with a stimulating and encouraging effect on other people. Every one of your relations to man and to nature must be a specific expression, corresponding to the object of your will, of your real individual life. If you love without evoking love in return—that is, if your loving as loving does not produce reciprocal love; if through a living expression of yourself as a loving person you do not make yourself a beloved one, then your love is impotent—a misfortune.[18]

Marx's reference to the "specific expression" that must be the "object of your will" is, as we will see in the phenomenological perspective as argued by Kantians and Husserlians, fundamental to phenomenology's focus upon the "intentionality" of human expression. Marx, who sat with these workers, attended all expressive moments. How the normative values and attendant concepts influenced what was said and done is the complex phenomenological social science that Marx began.

Husserl offers the same ground of living experience as the basis of phenomenologically developed concepts in *Experience and Judgment*. He speaks much like Marx in his critique of Hegel that concepts of an objective occurrence must be derived out of the sensuous particulars of an experienced state of affairs. He calls the flow of experienced sensuous existence, which in German is designated with the verb *erleben*, the "given-ness time" [*Gegebenheitszeit*] one generates in conjunction with the interpersonal social space of those with whom one interacts. A concept must be shaped from what occurs, not imposed from a preexisting lexicon—otherwise, the singularity and full meaning are lost. Thus, if one seeks to characterize the cultural influences upon the self-understandings that are transpiring as one *erlebt* the situation, an adequate abstraction must have its foundation within how language functions to express one's "lived experience" (i.e., what one *erlebt*).[19] In German, the concept of experience covered by normative abstractions is *Erfahrung*. I will show as I continue how the vision of one's "sociation" with others is governed by the immediacy of *Erlebnis*, not *Erfahrung*, even though one can impose (that is, misapply) the more general, normative concept that is the abstract experience of *Erfahrung*.

THE EVIDENCE AND CONSEQUENTLY THE VOCABULARY NEEDED FOR THE DISCERNMENT OF ADEQUATE SOCIATION [*VERGESELLSCHAFTUNG*]

In *Experience and Judgment*, Husserl tells us that every attentive discernment of a moment of immediate experience has richer material cognized than when it is elevated by an *epoché* to a formal judgment. This is called by Husserl "the given-ness time." Adler will demand that before such an *epoché* leading to a more formal concept can be realized by several Marxists who share a moment, the "given-ness time" attended be shared in richer reflective accounts of what is perceived by everyone in that shared moment.[20]

This will be an important discernment into the actual "given-ness time" known firsthand by phenomenologically informed Marxists such as Adler (and Marx himself). The higher-ordering concept that contained the criteria to designate a bourgeois society or its replacement by a socialist or communist society was formed only with careful construction from the actual discourse of those whom they observed with rigorous attention. The significance of the verb *vergesellschaften* and the verbal noun *Vergesellschaftung* will be the conscious replacement for the traditional noun *Gesellschaft*. *Vergesellschaften* refers more dynamically to the process, not merely the abstract outcome that is founded upon either an incomplete or a more complete consideration of immediate evidence of expressive acts. One generates the character of society by being that society in one's actions and values. One does not merely become understood as a "member" of this assemblage of humans. *Vergesellschaften* and *Vergesellschaftung* will be terms used constantly by Adler to articulate the manner of interaction between individuals who either create a socialist interaction of democratic equals or sustain the bourgeois norms of sociation and thus the maintenance of bourgeois societal space.[21]

The verb *vergesellschaften* was first used in the mid-1600s by Philipp von Zesen, and then in the late Enlightenment by Wieland, Herder, Musäus, and, most interestingly for this chapter, Kant, who was a progenitor of the phenomenological perspective in inquiry for Husserl himself.[22] Adler provides a compelling argument for Kant as a pioneer of the phenomenological method in his final book, *Das Rätsel der Gesellschaft*. There he brings to our attention that Husserl and the Husserlians argue that Kant did not focus upon the "intentionality" expressed in verbal (or other) grammars, rather only upon the facts generated by preexisting concepts that offered the larger vision of one's *Erfahrung* (i.e., generalized experience). True phenomenology enables us to see the *erlebt* moment in its expressed evidence—that is, the evidence of "intentional" thought and behavior stimulated by the person's immediate context. Adler cites Eugen Fink's 1934 *Kant-Studien* article that makes this

argument.[23] Fink asserts that Kant did not focus upon intentionality and its consequences in consciousness, but rather imposed general, conventional concepts of *Erfahrung* to establish a "transcendental" level of causation to human intention and its personal and interpersonal consequences, rather than finding that evidence in the immediate expression of persons. Fink argues that the Husserlian "transcendental" as the cause of the judgments of the moment is derived from the phenomenological focus upon its expressions, whereas Kant merely assumes a transcendental cause, imposing concepts to characterize their operation in the manner of Hegel. Adler rebuts this in his argument, demonstrating Kant's focus upon "intentionality" in his address of experiential predications. "Intentionality" is an immediate grammatical surfacing of one's thought, one's "lived experience." The grammar of these predications is the foundation for phenomenological analysis.[24] When Kant uses the verb *vergesellschaften*, he is demonstrating how the mind of the person, known in his or her predications, reveals a changing process of understanding, more primary and ample in indicators of what is understood than the higher-level concepts that may be in that predication.[25]

In both editions of the *Critique of Pure Reason*, Kant puts forth a compelling evidential argument of how there are essential logical and consequently imagistic experiential *a priori* differences between persons in how they judge a state of affairs. For example, he shows how what he calls an "aggregative thinker" would describe thirteen thalers on a table in immediate experience, contrasted with how a quantum thinker would.[26]

GRAMMAR AND IMAGE AS A PRIMARY EVIDENCE FOR THE PHENOMENOLOGY OF SOCIAL SPACE

Grammar, and the image of immediate experience, became for Kant a carrier of how one knows and reflects upon social space—that is, the intersubjective and object world in which we are. For Kant, grammar was a precursory syntactic and semantic "logic" for concept formation, which conditions *a priori* what is immediately perceived in its organization. Kant sees an image arising in immediate perception organized by these *a priori* grammatical associations. Through reflection from the formations of temporally formed moments of attentive expression, the rules of grammar and the concepts we identify in the perceived content are subsequently commented upon reflectively.[27] Kant saw that there is a logical *a priori* causation to how one perceives and reasons upon attended states-of-affairs. He saw a new discipline as possible with this recognition, which later developers of this insight called "stylistics."

Friedrich Schleiermacher, an early disciple of Kant, gave the name to this discipline, which he carried further. Stylistics is the close analysis of how

predication verbally was expressed, discerning in predicative "style" the "intentionality" of individuals that is an *a priori* function.[28] Thus, it became a hermeneutics for comprehending the process of thought in its complexities of predication. As a hermeneutical method, it can be viewed as a phenomeno-logical focus upon grammatical expression. Indeed, Wilhelm Dilthey, who wrote several volumes on Schleiermacher, insisted in a text written between 1907 and 1909, of which Husserl was aware, that studying grammatical expression was a more solid manner for the phenomenology of meaning in expressed predications. Dilthey foresaw a phenomenological historiography where a present or historical person's "lived experience" could be concret-ized for discernment by a hermeneutic that examined the linguistic artifacts of that person's sentences as they reported perceptions or asserted judg-ments. Dilthey realized that reflective phenomenology, if it was to examine the manner in which an individual's lived experience generated a distinct orientation toward the formulation of ideas concerning the world out of that lived experience, required the linguistic artifacts of sentential judgment as evidence of how one experienced time and consequently, judged of experi-ence, informally as well as through formal disciplines. Dilthey wrote between 1907 and 1908 that "whereas a fixed delimitation was not possible for lived experiences, this could be found for expressions and objectifications. . . . This indirect procedure that uses expressions (to reconstitute lived time) has to some extent been applied by Brentano and Husserl."[29] Indeed, both Brentano and Husserl had addressed the generation of grammar. Brentano was a pio-neer in seeing this non-conscious generation of predication at a pre-reflective level, and Husserl had discerned what he posited as "styles" of grammatical expression that achieve distinct meanings in the articulation of immediate (*erlebt*) experience. Brentano did this in a 1904 publication whose stylistic acumen pointed to the significance of syllables in articulating the moment.[30] Husserl set the stage for a hermeneutic analysis of sentential predications in his 1900 *Logical Investigations*.[31]

Kant's address of logic as a discipline likewise recognized it as the abstrac-tive process by reflection by which logical relations are formalized out of the temporal flux of attentive moments which, while possessing these logical relations, are unrecognized or only dimly recognized in expression during the ever-changing sequence of apprehensions. The apprehensions for Kant were the only source of evidence out of which logic could arise as a formal discipline. He argues this point throughout *Critique of Pure Reason*, but espe-cially in the three analogies of experience.[32] In his late text on logic (1800), the abstractive process that creates its formal concepts from the flux of the spatio-temporality generated by its sequential syntactical expression is shown as its basis once more.[33]

The formation of the concept is not to be studied by logic, but rather by attention to the grammar of the predications out of which concepts can be shaped. Following the earlier passage, Kant lists three forms of inquiry into the immediacy of grammatical judgment to show how the concept is formed. This practice, I contend, is the foundation of the phenomenological focus that led to its refined form in Brentano and Husserl a century later. Kant writes:

> The logical acts of the understanding by which concepts are generated as to their form are:
>
> > (1) *Comparison*, i.e., the likening of presentations to one another in relation to the unity of consciousness.
> >
> > (2) *Reflection*, i.e., the going back over different presentations, how they can be comprehended in one consciousness; and finally
> >
> > (3) *Abstraction* or the segregation of everything else by which presentations differ.[34]

How one's sequence of temporal attention for Kant appears grammatically as it is predicated in its understandings of relationships among the persons, places, and things in one's expressive style gradually becomes a concept for that person. And over time, with reflection, a clearer concept can arise. The individual normally will clarify his or her conceptual palette with constant usage and attention. This process is somewhat like an *epoché* in its lifting of concept from the expressive contexts in which such nouns are embedded. Kant writes on this in the penultimate chapter of the *Critique of Pure Reason*:

> Only after we have spent much time in the collection of materials in somewhat random fashion at the suggestion of an idea lying hidden in our minds, and after we have, indeed, over a long period assembled the materials in a merely technical manner, does it first become possible for us to discern the idea in a clearer light, and to devise a whole architectonically in accordance with the ends of reason. Systems seem to be formed in the manner of lowly organisms, through a *generatio aequivoca* from the mere confluence of assembled concepts, at first imperfect, and only gradually attaining to completeness, although they one and all have had their schema, as the original germ, in the sheer self-development of reason.[35]

The concept can be further reflectively worked into a world view, a process of clarification of what is known in the initial sentential judgment. Kant practiced a manner of viewing predications and an analysis that was phenomenological in its careful focus on not only sentences but also the character of the words used to express a judgment. For Kant, these immediate grammatical

artifacts of his study of others were shaped into higher concepts that enabled him to discern differences in how a certain logical avenue came from the use of certain specific types of nouns, adjectives, adverbs, and their differing usages in differing thinkers. As he writes in the *Prolegomena to Any Future Metaphysics*:

> To search in our daily cognition for the concepts which do not rest upon particular experience, and yet occur in all cognition of experience, where they as it were constitute the mere form of the connexion, presupposes neither greater reflexion nor deeper insight, than to detect in a language the rules of the actual use of words, generally, and thus to collect elements for a grammar.[36]

Husserl can be seen as using this grammatical focus in his account of the abstractive process that establishes an atemporal "logic" out of the temporal flux of attentive moments with their apprehensive content in episodes of judgment. He begins in paragraph 64c of *Experience and Judgment* with the term "given-ness time" to describe the temporal flux formed by the attentive moments of judging, echoing here Kant's coinage of "*given presentations become concepts in thinking*":

> We now pass to objectivities of the understanding. Like all objects, they certainly have their given-ness time. Like their unformed substrates, they are constituted in immanent time in a process of becoming; here, the becoming is a being-created by the subject. And thus the original being-itself of the judgment, that of its constitution, is also a being in the mode of being-created, therefore a being in the form of temporality. That is, a temporal form belong to it as the noematic mode of its mode of givenness.[37]

He goes on in the same section to speak of the raising of the representational data out of this "given-ness time" to a higher level of abstractive conceptualization:

> If we form any recollections whatsoever which, in their concatenation, yield the unified consciousness of the same object, repeating the same judgment, then the latter each time has its newly constitutive self-becoming, its new duration; the tempo of the judgment can even be a very different one. And yet *the* judgment as a judicative proposition is one and the same. That is: all judicative actions of this kind enter essentially into the unity of an inclusive total identification; they are composed of multiple acts, but in all of them there is an identical judicative proposition.[38]

Husserl's indication that higher-level concepts that are reflectively shaped may neglect the immediacy of articulated grammatical evidence of the non-reflectively formed "given-ness" of temporal expression thus opens a

portal to finer studies of the immediacy of grammatical style, and indicates how conceptual formulations that do neglect much of the immediate grammatical evidence can bias the conceptual formulation at a higher level. Here one meets the insights of Marx and Adler in how conceptual "sociation" biases the formulation of social space.

MAX ADLER'S SOCIAL *A PRIORI* AND EDMUND HUSSERL'S SPATIO-TEMPORAL *A PRIORI* ARE THE SAME TRANSCENDENTAL FORMAL CAUSE FOR DISCERNING "SOCIATION"

The epistemology of both Adler and Husserl posit a form of Kant's realization that an individual mind predicates an existential moment within a conceptual universe of other humans. One cannot think without this referential universe of one amidst others. The very act of predication as a sentential judgment—with a subject, noun, and predicate—is to inform others of what, how, why, when, and where a moment has occurred. This is the "transcendental" matrix of an articulated experience—a moment either shared or reported to others. Kant phrases this in an especially cogent manner when he speaks of the human compulsion to communicate, an effect of how his consciousness operates in every moment of thought: "Man has an inclination *to sociate* with others, because in such a condition he feels himself more as a man, that is, he feels the development of his natural capacities."[39]

Marx also formulates this Kantian thought of the individual only fully realized in a form of community. Marx, too, has an epistemology of grammatical concepts and behaviors rooted in the sociated space of existence. His critique of Hegel's view of conceptualization, while not formulated as a Kantian *a priori*, nonetheless has a Kantian phenomenological dynamic. Marx declares in his *Einleitung zu einer Kritik der politischen Ökonomie* (1857) that the individual is not some sort of Robinson Crusoe, but rather, as Aristotle phrased it, a "*zoon politikon*" (i.e., "a political animal") in the sense of always being in a "polis," a "community of others." Marx adds that "he is not merely a social animal [*geselliges Tier*], but rather an animal who can only individuate himself in a society."[40] Marx here argues how the notion of the solitary individual making a "social contract" with others to cooperate is the misguided conceptualization of the emergence of the bourgeois social society.[41] Thus, a more accurate comprehension of the historical forms of *Vergesellschaftung* or sociation enables a more informed understanding of normative political-social worlds in their false understandings of being human.

While Husserl was not a Marxist, nor a practicing social scientist, his development of the theory of transcendental intersubjectivity was a means of

studying how the experience of persons of a time in culture conceived their mutual spatio-temporal world. Husserl writes in *Formal and Transcendental Logic* of the "modalities" of intersubjective experience that can be investigated with the transcendental method,[42] and even in his late work spoke of the need of a broader transcendental history of a culture that either a Marxist or a non-affiliated historian should carry out with a phenomenological method.[43] Husserl calls for a phenomenological study of the cultural history of nations and international associations. This would be carried out by comprehending how individuals within those societies had previously and contemporaneously articulated their cultural identity. One would study "the intentional intercourse . . . between persons and how they influence each other."[44] Husserl adds "that not only the actual activity of persons would be studied insofar as their habitual goals (of a time), but their teleological understandings that defined them as a type . . . and, among the types so clarified, those of national identities and those of the wider European culture."[45] Husserl refers to the lifework and writings of Goethe as a focus of such phenomenological probing of cultural intentionality, thus implying a changing world of culture, not only his present.[46] And he speaks of the complex layers of intentionality in each person of a time, an issue that only a phenomenological focus upon the grammatical evidence (in this case, Goethe) could reveal.[47] Husserl thus projected how his phenomenological method into spatio-temporal realities could generate new knowledge, more complex historical knowledge of our political-social-economic-ideological milieux over time. Unfortunately, he never carried out any such studies. Yet what he wrote between 1934 and 1937 had begun to be carried out by Marxists such as Adler.

Addressing Husserl's theory of intersubjectivity and its possible relevance for phenomenologically based new understandings in the discipline of anthropology, Alessandro Duranti has justly pointed out that Husserl never took up these investigations, even as he called for them. Duranti states, "Husserl's original concept of intersubjectivity brings with it a number of unresolved issues, which are compounded by Husserl's tendency to return again and again to the epistemological and ontological foundations of his philosophy while providing very few exemplifications of what he had in mind."[48] Duranti goes on to show how Husserl's transcendental method of intersubjectivity could address both sociological and anthropological issues, insisting upon his continuing relevance. Adler sensed that Husserl could apply his phenomenological method to political-social contexts. Perhaps if Husserl had read Marxist theoretical writings such as those of Adler, he might have begun such studies himself. Certainly, the experience of Nazism prompted many of his associates to try to comprehend what had developed in Germany and across Europe.

Adler's last work, *Das Rätsel der Gesellschaft*, attempts a thorough study of how to investigate cultural historical change in social-temporal space. Of all the philosophers and sociologists studied in this text, Husserl is the most lauded as an equal in thought, lacking only an appreciation of how Marx and Marxists like Adler himself had begun the studies of national and international cultures for which Husserl had called. As Duranti notes, Husserl never carried out those studies, or he may have become a Marxist. What Adler generated remains both knowledge of his time and earlier times of culture. Adler's studies of culture were insightful with his Marxist historical perspective. However, with the careful phenomenological probing of the semantics and syntactic grammar of a time that Husserl would have used in his phenomenological approach to historical concepts of a time that were normative, Marxist theory would have enhanced epistemological evidence of how the political circumstances of a time condition individual liberty and action.

Adler emphasized that Marx's "classless society" of the future was a society fully aware of the epistemological value in understanding that every time was "sociated" by its values and the educational system. The gain in his view of "sociation," which he attributes to both Kant and Marx, is that with this self-understanding a populace can form a "developing general will," a will toward equality and equal access of the needs of life, even within everyday disagreements. Adler will call such a society a "solidarity society" in that the general will that binds allows differences to be overcome without intractable conflict:

In reality, Marxists have never asserted that with the dissolution of the class-based state development ceases, and that a condition of absolute harmony and a static equilibrium is achieved. *Only the form of social development is changed.* Heretofore, it has been only a struggle between classes, that is, a struggle not only with each other, but between existential milieus that each asserts a dominant authority. Human society exists, but its existence until now has not exhibited the reality of solidarity, rather its historical form has always been fundamentally a strife-filled picture of contradictory life interests, in which the interests of one part attempts to satisfy itself with a societal advantage through combat and power over those interests that oppose it. All advances in the sense of a greater societal feeling, a more comprehensive solidarity, a more complete realization of the ideal concept of society, in short, all social development, has been until now only the unintended results of class warfare—a warfare in which every subjugated class in its *victories* removed from the social life it experienced some element of its subjugation, the injustice that was part of the fabric of the irrationality of its conditions. Since the way of life *heretofore* in society was not that of a solidarity, but rather of the struggle among the classes with each other, and since that is still the case, the form of societal development *until now* was and is the class war.[49]

Education for Adler was the key to societal transformation, where social space became a constantly changing democratic socialism by dint of the enhanced self-awareness of self and others. The epistemology of Adler's "social *a priori*" and its dynamism of "sociation," as well as the same essential epistemology of Husserl's "spatio-temporal *a priori*," are fecund for now and the future. Both philosophers' insights into intersubjectivity, as well as the avenue they each pointed to for a study of this interpersonal intercourse over historical time, can function as a pragmatic tool of thought to "sociate" ourselves in a more just and effective manner.

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NOTES

1. G. W. F. Hegel, *Elements of the Philosophy of Right*, trans. Allen W. Wood (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991), §§ 201–7.

2. See Wilhelm Dilthey, *Die Jugendgeschichte Hegels und andere Abhandlungen zur Geschichte des deutschen Idealismus*, 2nd ed. (Leipzig: B. G. Teubner, 1959), 226.

3. Immanuel Kant, *Critique of Pure Reason,* trans. Norman Kemp Smith (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1965), 37 (B xliv) and 668–69 (A 856 / B 884).

4. Kant, *Critique of Pure Reason*, 204 (A 170 / B 212).

5. See Immanuel Kant, "Idea for a Universal History from a Cosmopolitan Point-of-View," in *On History* (Indianapolis, IN: Library of the Liberal Arts, 1954), 15–16 (Thesis Four).

6. Karl Marx, *Ökonomisch-philosophische Manuskripte* (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 2009), 129. The standard English translation of "*sich wiedergewinnen*" is "rehabilitation," which mistakenly imposes an external rather than an internal, self-chosen force of change; see Karl Marx, *Economic and Philosophic Manuscripts of 1844*, in *Karl Marx, Frederick Engels, Collected Works* (New York: International Publishers, 1975), 3:313.

7. See Edmund Husserl, *Formal and Transcendental Logic*, trans. Dorion Cairns (The Hague: Martinus Nijhoff, 1969), 237–44 (Paragraph 96).

8. See Edmund Husserl, *Die Krisis der Europäischen Wissenschaften und die Transzendentale Phänomenologie. Ergänzungsband: Texte aus dem Nachlaß, 1934–1937*, ed. Reinhold N. Smid (Dordrecht: Kluwer, 1993).

9. Max Adler, *Das Rätsel der Gesellschaft: Zur Erkenntnis-Kritischen Grundlegung der Sozialwissenschaft* (Vienna: Saturn Verlag, 1936), 286–87.

10. Edmund Husserl, *Ideas Pertaining to a Pure Phenomenology and to a Phenomenological Philosophy. First Book: General Introduction to a Pure Phenomenology*, trans. Fred Kersten (The Hague: Martinus Nijhoff, 1982), 105–7 (Paragraphs 47–61); *Ideas Pertaining to a Pure Phenomenology and to a Phenomenological Philosophy, Second Book*, trans. R. Rojcewicz and A. Schuwer (Dordrecht: Kluwer, 1989), 401–3 (Epilogue).

11. Edmund Husserl, *Cartesian Meditations: An Introduction to Phenomenology,* trans. Dorion Cairns (The Hague: Martinus Nijhoff, 1969).

12. Edmund Husserl, *Formal and Transcendental Logic,* trans. Dorion Cairns (The Hague: Martinus Nijhoff, 1969).

13. Husserl, *Formal and Transcendental Logic*, 292.

14. Marx, *Economic and Philosophical Manuscripts of 1844*, 313.

15. Karl Marx, *Das Kapital: Kritik der politischen Oekonomie, Erster Band. Buch I: Der Produktionsprozess des Kapitals*, ed. Karl Kautsky (Stuttgart: J. H. W. Dietz Nachfolger, 1919), 691. My translation uses the English "sociation," not recognized by Marx's English translators.

16. Marx, *Economic and Philosophical Manuscripts of 1844*, 344.

17. Edmund Husserl, *Experience and Judgment: Investigations in a Genealogy of Logic*, rev. and ed. Ludwig Landgrebe, trans. James S. Churchill and Karl Ameriks (Evanston, IL: Northwestern University Press, 1973), 258–59 (Paragraph 64c).

18. Marx, *Economic and Philosophical Manuscripts of 1844*, 326.

19. Husserl, *Experience and Judgment,* 258–59 (Paragraph 64c).

20. Adler, *Das Rätsel der Gesellschaft*, 91–92.

21. Adler began to use the term as a central element in his explanation of the Marxist understanding of how societal norms are formed in his first major Marxist publication, *Kausalität und Teleologie im Streite um die Wissenschaft* (Vienna: Verlag der Wiener Volksbuchhandlung Ignaz Brand, 1904), 180–81. One sees it then in every other publication including his last, *Das Rätsel der Gesellschaft*, 178–85.

22. The following passage from Kant's *Dreams of a Spirit-Seer* is cited in the entry for *vergesellschaften* in Jakob Grimm and Wilhelm Grimm, *Deutsches Wörterbuch von Jacob Grimm und Wilhelm Grimm*: "sie (die vorstellungen) können in das persönliche bewusztsein des menschen zwar nicht unmittelbar, aber doch so übergehen, dasz sie nach dem gesetz der vergesellschaftenden begriffe diejenigen bilder rege machen, die mit ihnen verwandt sind" (https://woerterbuchnetz.de/?sigle=DWB#0) [these (ideas) can cross over into the personal consciousness of human beings, indeed not immediately, but still such that, according to the law of the sociation of concepts, they stir up those images that are related to them]—see *Kant on Swedenborg: Dreams of a Spirit-Seer and Other Writings*, trans. Gregory R. Johnson and Glenn Alexander Magee (West Chester, PA: Swedenborg Foundation, 2002), 24 (translation modified). This is Adler's argument that Kant saw a complex, multi-staged *a priori* activity that gave rise to the very image of an immediately perceived state of affairs.

23. Eugen Fink, "Die Philosophie Edmund Husserls in der gegenwärtigen Kritik," *Kant-Studien* 38 (1933), 319–83.

24. Adler, *Das Rätsel der Gesellschaft*, 229–30 note.

25. See the quotation from Kant's *Dreams of a Spirit-Seer* in the Grimm dictionary entry for "vergesellschaften" (note 22).

26. Kant, *Critique of Pure Reason*, 204 (A 170–71 / B 212–13). For an explication of the phenomenological evidence of experiential implications of how one or the other type of thinker shapes events, see Mark E. Blum, *Continuity, Quantum, Continuum, and Dialectic: The Foundational Logics of Western Historical Thinking* (New York: Peter Lang, 2006), 67–80.

27. For a text that shows the Kantian and Husserlian roots of the *a priori* process of thought that generates reflective grammar in its syntax and semantics, as well as the relation of the perceived image that arises from these *a priori* associations, see Mark E. Blum, *Cognition and Temporality, The Genesis of Historical Thought in Perception and Reasoning* (New York: Peter Lang, 2019).

28. See Friedrich Schleiermacher**,** *Hermeneutics and Criticism and Other Writings,* trans. Andrew Bowie (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998); *Hermeneutics: The Handwritten Manuscripts,* trans. James Duke and Jack Forstman (Atlanta, GA: Scholars Press, 1977); "Foundations: General Theory and Art of Interpretation," in *The Hermeneutics Reader*, ed. and trans. Kurt Mueller-Vollmer (New York: Continuum, 1989), 72–99.

29. Wilhelm Dilthey, *Poetry and Experience*, ed. Rudolf A. Makkreel and Frithjof Rodi (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1985), 229. The German original is in Dilthey's *Fragmente zur Poetik, Strukturpsychologie*, in *Die Geistige Welt:*

Einleitung in die Philosophie des Lebens, Gesammelte Schriften VI (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1958), 318.

30. Franz Brentano, "The Equivocal Use of the Term 'Existent,'" in *The True and the Evident*, ed. Oskar Kraus, trans. Roderick M. Chisholm, Ilse Politzer, and Kurt R. Fischer (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1971), 65–73.

31. See especially Edmund Husserl, Investigation IV, Paragraph 13 in *Logical Investigations*, trans. J. N. Findlay (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1970), 2:518–22, where Husserl posits predicational forms with algebraic symbols that he has recognized in the immediacy of grammatical expression, such as a + b, ab, or a-b, that appear "only in certain conditions" of experiential thought. While Husserl never carried out such studies, the grammatical hermeneutics carried out by later minds followed this path.

32. Kant, *Critique of Pure Reason*, 208–38 (A 176–218 / B 218–265).

33. Immanuel Kant, *Logic*, trans. Robert S. Hartman and Wolfgang Schwartz (New York: Dover, 1974), 99–100.

34. Ibid., 100.

35. Kant, *Critique of Pure Reason*, 655 (A 835 / B 863).

36. Immanuel Kant, *Prolegomena to Any Future Metaphysics That Can Qualify as a Science*, trans. Paul Carus (La Salle, IL: Open Court Publishing, 1991), 85 (Paragraph 39).

37. Husserl, *Experience and Judgment*, 258 (Paragraph 64c). For Husserl, "noema" is the content generated pre-reflectively that is an ordering of one's field of regard in attention. In contrast, "noesis" is the process of formulating the idea with a focus on the "givenness" of the noema.

38. Husserl, *Experience and Judgment*, 258–59 (Paragraph 64c).

39. Immanuel Kant, "Idee zu einer allgemeinen Geschichte in weltbürger Absicht," in *Immanuel Kants Werke*, vol. 4, *Schriften von 1783–1788*, ed. Artur Buchenau and Ernst Cassirer (Berlin: Bruno Cassirer, 1922), 155.

40. Karl Marx, "Einleitung zu einer Kritik der politischen Ökonomie," *Die Neue Zeit* 20 (1903): 710–11.

41. Ibid.

42. Husserl, *Formal and Transcendental Logic*, 206.

43. Husserl, *Die Krisis der Europäischen Wissenschaften*, 56–59.

44. Ibid., 57.

45. Ibid., 57–58.

46. Ibid., 57.

47. Ibid., 58–59.

48. Alessandro Duranti, "Husserl, Intersubjectivity and Anthropology," *Anthropological Theory* 10, nos. 1–2 (2010): 16–35.

49. Max Adler, *The Marxist Conception of the State*, trans. Mark E. Blum (Leiden: Brill, 2019), 223.

Chapter 6

Capital as Enframing

On Marx and Heidegger

Christian Lotz

INTRODUCTION: CAPITAL AS
EPOCH AND EVENT

"The distinction between the subject of history, who is supposed to be able to 'make' it, and his object, which is supposed to be 'made' by him, can now be brought to a point in the following way as well: Man does indeed make history, but he does not make epochs."[1] It is true, humans do make history—but can they also make that which makes this "making" possible? After repeated attempts to analyze and describe the break that led to modernity in the history of human ideas, Hans Blumenberg has formulated this question in the following way:

> It is true that we must proceed from the assumption that man makes history—who else should make it for him?—but what can be experienced of history for us is not identical with what has been "made" to occur at any given time. For in relation to actions that could have "made history" whether of the discredited "great men" or, more recently, of the masses that are defined by their economic conditions—the element of interference always supervenes. . . . The principle that man makes history certainly does not mean that what is made depends solely on the intentions and the precepts as a result of and according to which it was produced.[2]

What Blumenberg has in mind is that "history" cannot simply be formulated on the level of actions alone, and that regardless of their intentions and motives, a new epoch cannot be derived from them. In other words, men do

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act and in this sense "make history," but they cannot bring about "true" history, as this takes place in a series of epochs and epochal breaks "behind their backs," and not in the intentions and actions within those epochs. Looking from a socio-economic perspective onto epochal breaks, we need to acknowledge that the epochal break of capital accumulation and that which Marx terms valorization [*Verwertung*] introduced a completely new dynamic in modernity that can be derived neither from political processes nor from economic developments alone. It is undeniable that we must assume that at some point merchants ceased to use their money for hoarding, peasants were driven off their land and violently turned into industrial workers, technologies and the sciences developed, and labor and the earth were made productive under capital as the new social principle. Nevertheless, despite these historical facts, we remain unable to fully explain the *break* that occurred with the arrival of value as the new principle of human social organization. The reorganization of reality into a new configuration that we try to address by the term "epoch" is itself something that does not exist on the level of actions.

As Althusser puts it, though in a slightly different context, "there is, in the first instance, no history but the history of social formations."[3] What Althusser has in mind is that the history of social formations should not be confused with history in a general sense. History in truth is the history of social formations, and these social formations can fundamentally change. Though numerous intentions and motives lead to factories, the steam engine, different infrastructure, and so on, "the capitalist epoch"[4] as such was not planned and foreseen in actions, intentions, and motives. A new mode of production as a new principle of social organization is not history; rather, it is that which makes history possible. It is its structure. So, although we can argue that the steam engine belongs to the capitalist epoch, we are unable to derive the capitalist epoch from the steam engine. The capitalist epoch is not an effect of a cause. Nor were there people who *wanted* to bring capitalism about, nor can we explain the new *total* configuration as an effect of a finite number of causes. The name that we give the event "capitalism" can only be applied retroactively, *after* the event. The social form that emerged and makes it possible for all developments to fall under one uniting principle cannot be derived from actions themselves. Capital, or, more precisely, the organizing principle of the value form as a new epoch, makes it possible for us to differentiate capitalism from pre-capitalist social organizations that have *occurred*, but which were not *made*. An epoch is a social configuration *of* history that can only be retroactively recognized once it has taken place. *Historically speaking, the value form as a new epochal principle is transcendental,* insofar as a social form, as Althusser puts it, "exists only in its existence, in the conditions of its existence."[5] To remind us, "transcendental" in the Kantian sense refers neither to something transcendent nor to an independent essence. As

Marx has it in *Capital*, "capital . . . announces from the outset a new epoch in the process of social production."[6] Capital, in other words, is an event and *therefore* history. This means that we are unable to predict with certainty any future changes in society. As the twentieth century has shown, all Marxist-Leninist attempts to administer the movement toward a communist society have failed. The future cannot be engineered. Accordingly, it can only take place the other way around (as Marx early on had already claimed): political and wider social changes can only take place once social relations are developed to a point where political change *becomes* possible. Though we can do many things, such as reorganize our workspaces, invent new organizations, remake our legal institutions, struggle on the streets, and so on, we cannot *make* a post-capitalist society. Until one day we wake up and have another name for what might have occurred, we can only wait for the event, which is to say, for history to happen. Of course, this position does not exclude that we should do *everything* to bring about the *conditions* for this event, but the point is that we will never know beforehand whether these conditions are *really* the proper conditions or whether they even lead into wrong directions. For example, for a long time many people in the former GDR thought that they were in the process of developing the socialist conditions for a communist society, but as we know, this project ended officially in 1989. Similarly, whether the dreams of current "techno-communists" who are building a peer-to-peer production network that can no longer be subsumed by capital come true, we will not know before the change actually takes place. Contrary to the determinism of certain Marxist traditions, we will only know this *retroactively*.

Based on these introductory remarks on capital as an event, in what follows I will try to demonstrate that, although Heidegger is certainly correct in claiming that the central metaphysical concept for Marx is the concept of life (and, hence, subjectivity), he does not see that for Marx the concepts of life and labor are framed by two elements that escape the subjective position—namely, the earth as the external condition for human activity,[7] and the value form (capital) as the external condition for how labor exists in our capitalist social organization. Put differently, he overlooks that Marx's concept of capital is *epochal* in the sense introduced earlier. *Furthermore*, modern subjectivity, as Heidegger proclaims it for modern epistemology and idealist metaphysics, is, for Marx, a moment of the social reorganization that occurred with the subjection of labor and the laborer *to* the principle of valorization. Accordingly, the value form is the condition of the possibility for life and labor turning into central metaphysical concepts for our current epoch. Put differently, the fact that subjectivity is central for Marx depends upon a non-subjectivist transcendental social form, which, through the process of valorization, positions [*stellt*] and orders [*bestellt*] laborer and the

earth as beings to be *material for* capital (accumulation). Consequently, what Heidegger calls "positionality" [*Gestell*] is *in truth* capital. The truth of being is value. Rejecting Heidegger's understanding of Marx and correcting his concept of positionality is made possible because recent Marx scholarship has moved away from the understanding of Marx that was prevalent in traditional and dogmatic forms of Marxism. It is now more common to understand Marx's theory as a critique of labor instead of making it part of an essentialist anthropological theory.[8]

HEIDEGGER'S CHARGE THAT FOR MARX BEING IS PRODUCTION

In order to prepare a proper confrontation of Heidegger's and Marx's thought, we would do well to briefly review one of Heidegger's main claims that he presents in the often-quoted *Letter on Humanism*. Heidegger writes the following about the dialogue of his own thinking with materialism:

> The essence of materialism does not consist in the assertion that everything is simply matter but rather in a metaphysical determination according to which every being appears as the material of labor. The modern metaphysical essence of labor is anticipated in Hegel's *Phenomenology of Spirit* as the self-establishing process of unconditioned production, which is the objectification of the actual through man experienced as subjectivity.[9]

Heidegger's claim that Marx remains within Hegel's metaphysics—that is, the claim that the central modern metaphysical concept is subjectivity as that through which and as which being shows up—is extended in numerous passages via the concept of labor, which Heidegger understands as human self-production through which everything (i.e., history and nature) appears as the product of human labor and self-production. For example, Heidegger writes in a later comment on Marx:

> For the word "labor" here does not mean mere activity and performance. The word speaks in the sense of Hegel's concept of labor, which is thought as the basic trait of the dialectical process, by which the becoming of the actual unfolds and completes its actuality. That Marx, in opposition to Hegel, does not see the essence of actuality in absolute, self-conceiving spirit, but rather in the human producing itself and its means of living, this indeed brings Marx into the most extreme opposition to Hegel, but by this opposition Marx remains within Hegelian metaphysics.[10]

Though Heidegger is certainly right in claiming that in his early writings Marx seems to defend an anthropological concept of labor that can be applied to the entire human history, he does not see that already in *The German Ideology* labor does not *simply* appear as the process of human self-production and the subordination of nature and history to the "making" of humans. Rather, the anthropological process that Marx addresses in *The German Ideology* is only possible because of certain underlying historical and social forms through which humans and their social (re)production appear in different configurations. Laboring and producing "as such" remain empty abstractions, insofar as these are, concretely grasped, an "ensemble of relations." As Marx puts it in the *Sixth Feuerbach Thesis*, "the human essence is no abstraction inherent in each single individual. In its reality it is the ensemble of the social relations."[11] Accordingly, the claim that laboring is identical with *making* is, at least in the way in which Heidegger uses this concept, misleading. This has led to the observation that runs from Althusser to Negri, which posits that Marx's thought is based on Spinozist materialism rather than on Hegelian metaphysics of subjectivity. Moreover, Heidegger underplays Marx's claim that production is not the baseline of all history, but is instead a process undertaken for the sake of satisfying *needs* as the primary acts of all human history (i.e., this does not mean that history is *only* the process of satisfying needs, as it is most visible in capitalism). As Marx writes in the *German Ideology*, "[t]he first historical act is thus the production of the means to satisfy these needs."[12] Accordingly, to repeat this point, the central aspect of production is not simply an act of creation, but both a response to and the *formation* of needs and wants within history. We should therefore be cautious about Heidegger's assumption that Marx reduces being to production, since it is rather "need" that is the first anthropological concept for Marx, though it is certainly correct to say that needs cannot be thought of independently from the satisfaction (and, hence, reproduction) of needs, which relies on the type of social formation reached within the stages of history. Human beings, for Marx, are needy and hence "open" beings.

Moreover, Marx's analysis of human labor in *The German Ideology* is developed and put on a much clearer footing in *Capital*, which is something that Heidegger never considers, most likely because he took *Capital* to be a work in economics. Marx argues here that labor turns into the center of all social organization *because* it becomes subjected to the commodity form and value. That is, only in societies in which the capitalist mode of production prevails does labor and production *become* the central metaphysical concept. Labor as the way in which being shows up, in other words, is *epochal*, not only for Heidegger but also for Marx, and in this way labor is not an essential property. So, Heidegger's claim (in the earlier quote from the *Letter on Humanism*) that the modern metaphysical essence should be seen in labor

and that Marx is the best representative for this view should be rejected, especially given that Marx's position is a *critique* of labor as the center of the human universe. According to Marx, it is rather the value form—and not labor—that *upsets* all social relations and reorganizes *all* human activities *as* productive activities. In pre-capitalist times human beings, except slaves, expressed their humanity in a manifold of activities, all of which are *now* subjected to capital, which leads to them being simply defined as something to be valorized. The consequence of this seismic and epochal shift is that all human activities become reduced to labor and, in addition, that labor becomes abstract because under capitalist conditions *only* its universal exchangeability counts. When Heidegger argues that the new, modern, metaphysical framework (1) turns human beings into *subjects*, (2) defines reality as the objectivity of objects [*Gegenständlichkeit*], and (3) brings it about that "labor in an aggravated sense becomes essential,"[13] he is arguing *precisely* what Marx argues in his later writings between the *Grundrisse* (1858) and the *Notes on Adolph Wagner* (1881).[14] Accordingly, when Heidegger claims that labor in modernity (1) is based on subjectivity, (2) is centered on rational representation, (3) leads to being as effectiveness [*Wirksamkeit*], and (4) lets the earth and the human being appear as a "source of raw material" [*Rohstoffquelle*], one cannot help being reminded of Marx's famous statement in the *Critique of the Gotha Program* that capital destroys both sources of wealth, the laborer and the earth.[15] All of this can also be expressed in Heideggerian terms, which has been nicely done by Michael Eldred:

> Beings are ordered into position, they are put into the order of the set-up and they are ordered just like items in a mail order catalogue. Setting-up and valorization are the respective essential actions of the respective essences, whereby action here cannot be thought in terms of human action, but as an historical destiny that prevails over and overwhelms everything by disclosing the totality of beings to human understanding within a specific epochal cast.[16]

Let me therefore analyze in more detail the shift that Marx presents in the central chapter 6 of *Capital*, which should then also clarify why I believe that Heidegger is not as far away in his technology essay than he himself seems to believe.

CAPITAL AS AN EPOCH

Heidegger's position toward Marx has also been echoed by many non-Heideggerian interpreters of Marx who took Marx's position in his early writings as the expression of a general anthropology that allows us to

interpret the world historical development as a quasi-naturalist process in which human communication, politics, and the arts are simply expressions of the metabolism between humans and nature and their need to reproduce themselves. For example, Arendt claimed that Marx's naturalist position leads to a reductive view regarding human freedom and political action, and Habermas argued that Marx's concept of labor leads to an instrumentalist reduction of human reason and the underestimation of communicative rationality. To repeat the point from the previous section, what both positions miss is that Marx does not present a theory for understanding the universal and general human condition; instead, Marx's theory tries to explain the conditions and the *kind* of relations of production under which certain labor relations become possible. For Marx, the bourgeois epoch differs from all forerunners because it disconnects the production and property relations from natural conditions. This does not mean that the metabolism between humans and nature gets cut. Rather it means that in all pre-capitalist social formations relations to nature are predominant whereas with the reign of capital, society *as a whole* stands opposed to nature (and is therefore hostile to it). With the arrival of modern bourgeois society, the relation between natural and historical is located *within* the historical process since the bourgeois promise consists in the emancipation from nature.[17]

This can also be grasped as a new historical time in which the configuration of history appears to be in a different *mode*. "Historical *time* is thus no longer the pure succession of changes or the universal relativism of the *hic et nunc*; it is the time *of* each mode of production, of the cycles of production and reproduction and so on."[18] What Althusser has in mind is that the way in which the relations of production are organized within an epoch determines the way in which changes and developments occur. Under conditions of capital accumulation and under conditions of uneven development developments can become complex in terms of production, circulation, and consumption time. Nevertheless the way in which historical time unfolds is historically specific. In this vein, Marx argues in *Capital* that "definite historical conditions are involved in the existence of the product as a commodity."[19] His philosophy thus does not allow us to come to any conclusions about labor and productivity that do not take into account the "definite historical conditions" under which these are possible. As he has it,

> [o]ne thing, however, is clear: nature does not produce on the one hand owners of money or commodities, and on the other hand men possessing nothing but their own labor-power. This relation has no basis in natural history, nor does it have a social basis common to all periods of human history.[20]

Marx argues that labor and productivity are abstractions that one can find in bourgeois philosophy, which he criticizes as ideological expressions of what is *really* going on under capitalist social organization. Accordingly, the view of Marx's theory as an anthropology based on labor misses the fundamental concept of social form under which such an anthropology becomes possible—namely, in its bourgeois-inverted way. Put differently, an anthropology that *abstractly* argues that labor and labor production are human properties is precisely the position that Marx criticizes, insofar as only in bourgeois ideology is labor taken to be an abstract, human, property. Every social form, then, depends upon its own conditions of existence that need to be in place in order for labor to express itself in certain ways. In modernity this event can be seen in the shift from concrete labor to abstract labor that is regarded and treated as universally exchangeable labor-power. Only under capitalist social conditions can labor-power as a *real* social factor appear. As Marx writes:

> It is otherwise with capital. The historical conditions of its existence are by no means given with the mere circulation of money and commodities. It arises only when the owner of the means of production and subsistence finds the free worker available, on the market, as the seller of his own labor-power. And this one historical pre-condition comprises a world's history. Capital, therefore, announces from the outset a new epoch in the process of social production.[21]

What Marx has in mind here is that with the event of capital a *new* form of labor emerges that can no longer be defined by concrete time or the product of labor; instead, labor is now defined by *abstract* measurability through money, abstract time, and universal exchangeability. This, in turn, leads to two consequences: (1) everything can be exchanged by everything, and (2) *all* human activities become "labor," as they are now newly configured as labor-power, which is the abstract property of productivity. As Marx has it:

> We mean by labor-power, or labor-capacity, the aggregate of those mental and physical capabilities existing in the physical form, the living personality, of a human being, capabilities which he sets in motion whenever he produces a use-value of any kind.[22]

The switch from concrete labor activities that are defined by the product to the entire range of mental, emotional, and physical activities that are independent from the product means that the *entire* human being can now be subjected to its underlying social form and its underlying social principle. With the event of the value form not only can *all beings* be subjected to the valorization process, but *all human capacities* can equally be subjected to this process. We can observe today the endpoint of this development, insofar as all noetic and emotional capacities of human beings *and* of all nonhuman

living capacities (plants, genes, animals) have been made productive by being included in the process of valorization and capital accumulation.[23]

However, we need to take into account another aspect, as the abstraction that occurs with the focus on labor-power as the principle of social organization is connected to the abstraction that occurs in the form that labor-power takes on under conditions of capital accumulation and commodification—namely, value, which, in turn, only exists in and as money. Social unity is established by abstract relations constituted in universal exchange in which everything (in principle) is exchangeable with everything. As Marx argues, this is only possible if the sociality takes on the value form—that is, if labor as the substance of social reality takes on an abstract form, which, on the one hand, is determined as abstract labor and, on the other hand, is determined as universal exchangeability. As abstract labor is taken to be the substance of social reality, legal and other social relations need to be taken as secondary over the commodity form. Right at the very beginning of *Capital* Marx promises to investigate the nature of commodities, by which he means the contradiction between the singular natural thing that is in use for consumption and the non-singular exchange value that establishes the intrinsic relationality of commodities. Since one commodity is worth x amount of another commodity, the exchange value is at first the *other* commodity (for example, x amount of linen is worth x amount of iron), which shows that exchange value is not a property of or in a commodity; rather, it is the *relationship* between commodities.[24] The *opposition* of the commodities is, however, only possible if the exchange value is itself made possible by a *universal* comparability, which, in this case, is the *exchangeability* of commodities. This is what Marx calls "value," which many commentators miss. Consequently, value—especially in its social expression as money—is primarily a qualitative concept, which expresses the social homogeneity of all things. Put differently, the goal of *Capital* is to reconstruct the *specific form of sociality* under capitalism. Value, as Postone nicely puts it, "expresses the inner nexus of connections of the capitalist social formation."[25] Consequently, it only *seems* to be the case that abstract labor indicates the expenditure of human labor energy, for Marx himself refers to abstract labor as the *common* "social substance" in the commodity form—i.e., the fact that "the" human becomes so important in bourgeois ideology *is an effect of the social form of labor (power)*. In the *Grundrisse* Marx puts it this way:

> Because money is the general equivalent, the general power of purchasing, *everything* can be bought, *everything* may be transformed into money. But it can be transformed into money only by being alienated [*alieniert*], by its owner divesting himself of it. Everything is therefore alienable, or indifferent for the individual, external to him. . . . With that, the individual is posited, as such, as

lord of all things. There are no absolute values, since, for money, value as such is relative. There is nothing inalienable, since *everything* is alienable for money. There is no higher or holier, since *everything* is appropriable by money.[26]

We can see here that for Marx the establishment of the human as the "lord of all things" (which, again, reminds us of Heidegger) is conceived of as the *effect* of the universal exchangeability of everything with everything, which is introduced as the value form in chapter 1 of *Capital*. On this point, Marx remains superior to Heidegger, insofar as Heidegger ends up with fairly empty claims about the shift toward our self-understanding as the master of beings. With Marx, though, we understand the social-historical dynamics included in the event of capital, which permits us to acknowledge the value form as the true modern metaphysical form. With Marx we can realize that nothing counts, unless it can be used as the material *for* capital accumulation. And since capital accumulation can only occur via money *as* capital, valorization sets in through both the subjection of labor to capital (the consequence of which is labor-power as abstract labor) and the subjection of the products of labor to capital (the consequence of which is the commodity form as the abstract form of sociality). Consequently, the value form is the way in which *everything* shows up *as* a thing under capitalism.[27]

MARX AND HEIDEGGER ON TECHNOLOGY AND ENERGY PRODUCTION

Heidegger says the following about his own thinking on technology:

> My thinking is not against "technology" (against the essential (dispensational) thoughtlessness), but rather against the superficiality and cluelessness in the ways that technology is regarded: (1) in terms of machines, apparatuses, and organization, (2) as a means, (3) as something neutrally present-at-hand.[28]

Whomever Heidegger has in mind in this statement, it is immediately clear that, after everything I have argued so far, this point can certainly not be applied to Marx, despite that he has occasionally been interpreted as either a technological instrumentalist or a technological determinist. However, if we take into account that, for Marx, technology in connection with knowledge production (science) is a productive force and therefore a social relation, then these claims about him being a determinist or an instrumentalist can safely be rejected, insofar as these positions do not take into account that a dialectical thinking about technology in which culture, economy, and class relations are intertwined cannot be causally traced back to technological inventions.

As Marx explains in an important footnote in the first volume of *Capital*, "[t]echnology reveals the active relation of man to nature, the direct process of the production of his life, and thereby it also lays bare the process of the production of the social relations of his life, and of the mental conceptions that flow from those relations."[29] It is quite remarkable that at this point in his thinking Marx does not use the word *verursachen* (causes) but instead speaks of *enthüllen* (revealing/disclosing). Put in Heideggerian terms, "causality as effecting"[30] differs from to-bring-something-into-the-open. Let us remember how Heidegger puts it: "technology reveals [*entbirgt*] the world, in which its results are fitted to."[31] For Marx, technology does not cause anything; rather, it discloses central relations within the social totality *in a certain mode*— namely, in the mode of *being available* (for valorization). Marx has often been read through some of his key formulations, such as that all history is the history of class struggle, or that being is prior to consciousness. These empty and abstract reductions are all misleading, though, as they do not appreciate that each phenomenon that Marx analyzes, including technology, can only be understood within the totality of social relations. Abstractions are just the beginning; the point is to reach the concrete. The phenomenon of technology discloses the entire range of social and ecological relations, which includes "technologies, the relation to nature, social relations, mode of material production, daily life, mental conceptions and institutional frameworks."[32] As Alfred Schmidt points out, we can see here how close Marx and Heidegger have come, insofar as "Marx understands 'technics' in the sense of an epochal world projection that includes economy and culture."[33] In this way, technology *is* enframing.

One of the relations that are implied in the phenomenon of modern technology is *energy* (production), which in Heidegger's model of the exploitation of the earth is central but, I submit, can be better explained with Marx. This is visible in the famous "machine fragment" in the *Grundrisse* in which Marx foresees the twentieth-century developments shift from industrial capitalism to knowledge-driven capitalism. In this cognitive capitalism, the "general intellect"[34] (i.e., a socially dispersed and networked form of knowledge) integrates individuals within a larger social network of productive relations. As Marx puts it, "social knowledge has become a direct force of production."[35] Moreover, in the "machine fragment" Marx draws a subtle connection between capital as the *center* of all social relations and its material actualization and existence in *energy* (through the system of machinery), which gets equally centralized in modern capitalism. Fixed capital is the *real existence* of capital: "*Machinery* appears, then, as *the most adequate form of capital as such*."[36] For Heidegger, energy production is centralized and universalized, too. As Heidegger argues, *energy production* and *power generation* no

longer use certain forces for human purposes, in a manner that, for example, a sailboat uses the wind for getting somewhere; instead, we now *produce* these very forces independently from the instrumentality in which natural forces are embedded within human instrumental goals (such as reaching the sea shore with a sailboat).[37] With energy production, as Mitchell has it, "the result is a homogeneity of force that renders it utterly replaceable, utterly exchangeable for entirely equal units of force."[38] Heidegger likes to use the power plant as an example for this process. For example, he writes:

> The hydroelectric plant is placed in the river. It imposes upon it for water pressure, which sets the turbines turning, the turning of which drives the machines, the gearing of which imposes upon the electrical current through which the long-distance power centers and their electrical grid are positioned for the conducting of electricity. The power station in the Rhine river, the dam, the turbines, the generators, the switchboards, the electrical grid—all this and more is there only insofar as it stands in place and at the ready, not in order to presence, but to be positioned, and indeed solely to impose upon others thereafter.[39]

Of course, one could argue that the produced forces are still used for something else, such as, for example, powering traffic lights and regulating human traffic so that there are less car accidents on our streets. However, as such, the produced forces are produced in order to bring about effects that are totally independent from natural forces, such as the Rhine river. The power plant does not function like the sailboat because the relation between it as a means and the ends that it serves becomes externalized. This disconnection of production and instrumentality leads to a new, independent and universal system of connections, such as the electrical grid that is connected to *all* beings powered by the produced energy. Energy (and money) become dis-embedded. The energy thing produced is no longer a *particular*; rather, energy now sets up virtually everything. It is rather astonishing that Mitchell (and Heidegger) do not consider the deeper *social* understanding of the homogeneity and dis-embedding of energy from "localized" production to a global system that is literally everywhere. As we argued in the foregoing section, the homogeneity and universality of capital and valorization should be analyzed in connection with the introduction of abstract labor within the value form. Consequently, the importance and centrality of energy production is the third way in which modern abstractions function. Accordingly, the homogeneity that Heidegger explains metaphysically are the result of three modern social abstractions: value (money), labor-power, and energy.

In a similar fashion, Heidegger argues that the machine is no longer a particular thing, insofar as its essence is *machinery*. Yet again, we can easily see how we can better understand this with Marx, who argues in *Capital* that the

system of machinery was from the beginning implied in the machine, once the latter becomes subsumed to capital.[40] Not incidentally, the interpretation of nature in terms of a machine is an integral part of the early modern scientific worldview. In addition, seen from a Marxian point of view, the power plant is the best *material* existence of capital because the energy production now has become so abstract that it can be totally disconnected from businesses and industry. In other words, the energy production becomes *external* to those who use the energy,[41] which, again, demonstrates the material actualization of capital as a self-referential process. As such, electricity production is closely related to the commodity and money form, insofar as the same real abstraction occurs with the *universal* exchangeability that subjects *all* beings to valorized money. As capital in the form of valorizing money circulates throughout the globe, so energy is the "flow" throughout everything that nowadays makes *all* social life possible. Let us just imagine that tomorrow the entire energy production on our globe comes to a halt!

In this development, nature appears, on the one hand, as something to be ordered for energy production (most visible in nuclear energy) and, on the other hand, as something to be ordered and positioned for growth. In both cases, energy and valorization, the being of beings shows up as something *limitless*, although it is clear after further reflection that the capacities of the earth are limited. For Heidegger, all of this can be summarized in the term "machination." He writes:

> Instead the name machination [*Machenschaft*] should immediately refer to making [*Machen*] (*poiêsis*, *technê*), which we assuredly know as a human activity. This latter, however, is itself possible precisely only on the grounds of an interpretation of beings in which their makeability [*Machbarkeit*] comes to the fore, so much so that constancy and presence [*Beständigkeit und Anwesenheit*] become the specific determinations of beingness [*Seiendheit*].[42]

"Makeability" means that nature is now showing up as something that can be produced. For example, our contemporary attempts to engineer plants, produce animal meat in the lab, or to remake the human genome presuppose that nature no longer shows itself to be something created by a divine being, insofar as it now shows up as something to be manipulated. We can get *into* the inner side of beings because we discover them to be functions brought about by natural laws. The question of how the tree *functions* in the ecological system systematically differs from the idea that the tree's essence is related to God. The metaphysical understanding of "ground" has substantially shifted in modernity. As Marx argues in *Capital*, the overall switch to nature as something that functions, and therefore can be made productive, is first visible in capitalized agriculture, which, in turn, has an immediate effect for

the role of the earth, soil, and fertility within the process of valorization and capital accumulation.[43] Agriculture and agricultural chemistry turn the earth into something *available* for capital accumulation, by positioning [*stellen*] the earth toward capital. The inclusion of science into this process and the turn of knowledge into a productive force takes place in close connection with turning the earth into a large-scale gas station. As Marx puts it, the process of separating humans from and turning them against the earth "is completed in large-scale industry, which makes science a potentiality for production which is distinct from labor and presses it into the service of capital."[44] Seen from a Marxian perspective, knowledge and science separate themselves from the labor process and become external to it, which, in turn leads to establishing the subject-object schema through which humans are now "positioned" toward everything else as an object for them.

CONCLUSION

For Marx nature is not, as in Hegel, a self-related process that can be grasped via a metaphysical logic; rather, as Schmidt underlines, nature is only something originally self-given, insofar as it is for us "given" in human activity.[45] Put differently, nature appears *as* independent *throughout* human activity, which, in turn, means that it is not as such produced by human activity. It is true that Marx's famous analysis of sensible experience in the *German Ideology* shows that all objects of human social reproductive praxis ought to be understood through that which, in the *First Feuerbach Thesis*, is called "objective activity" [*objective Gegenständlichkeit*]. However, the object appears here only insofar as it is related *to* human activities and labor, which *excludes* nature in its metaphysical sense. In addition, the early comments on the earth as the extension of the human body as well as the later comments in the *Gotha Program* on the earth as a *condition* of wealth production all point to the fact that Marx understood the earth and its materiality as the *preexisting condition* of human activity (i.e., *not* as the result of human productivity).[46] Moreover, the physical, moral, and cultural limits that capital tries to expand and destroy point to limits of growth set by something that cannot be included in an infinite process; it remains foreign to social totality. Given this, Heidegger's assumption that being shows up in Marx's metaphysical position *only* "as the material of labor" can safely be rejected, because, as I have tried to demonstrate, being shows up as a material for (abstract) labor *only under capitalist conditions*. Though it might be true that Marx still thinks within a Hegelian framework of thought, he certainly does not expand his philosophy *beyond* the social world, and, as such, Marx's call for communism as the "resurrection of nature" is a call for *overcoming* a world determined by capital

that subjects beings to material for valorized labor. Capitalist social formation would become a thing of the past. As Marx puts it in 1859, "The prehistory of human society accordingly closes with this social formation"[47] (i.e., the pre-history of human society ends with the end of capitalism). A world no longer determined by the value form would be a world in which beings would be freed from their status as *pure* material *for* valorization. We can safely assume that we need to wait for such an epoch to come and that we will, despite all calls for revolutionary praxis and despite all hopeful attempts to change the current state of the globe, not be able to *make it*.

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NOTES

1. Hans Blumenberg, *The Legitimacy of the Modern Age*, trans. Robert M. Wallace (Cambridge, MA; London: MIT Press, 1983), 478.

2. Blumenberg, *Legitimacy*, 477 (translation altered).

3. Louis Althusser, *History and Imperialism*, trans. G. M. Goshgarian (London: Polity, 2020), 126.

4. Karl Marx, *Early Writings*, trans. Rodney Livingstone (New York: Penguin, 1993), 274.

5. Althusser, *History and Imperialism*, 133.

6. Marx, *Early Writings*, 274.

7. The role of sensuousness and the externality of the body and the earth as *given* push Marx closer to Kant than to Hegel; for the Kant-Marx relationship, see

also Lucio Colletti, *Marxism and Hegel*, trans. Lawrence Garner (London: Verso, 1979), 113–38.

8. This position can be associated with Moishe Postone's *Time, Labor, and Social Domination: A Reinterpretation of Marx's Critical Theory* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994). Postone's position was especially decisive for the Anglo-American reception of Marx in (anti-Habermasian versions) of contemporary critical theory. In addition, during the last three decades, the German and Italian "value form theory" has demonstrated that the so-called "labor theory of value" is a misunderstanding of Marx's later philosophy, insofar as it reduces it to a theory about goods, values, profit, and prices. However, Marx's theory in *Capital* is primarily an analysis of the social *form* under which all social and ecological relations are subsumed and become totalized.

9. Martin Heidegger, *Basic Writings*, ed. David F. Krell (New York: HarperCollins, 1993), 243.

10. Heidegger, *Basic Writings*, 90; see also 132. For more background, see Lawrence Hemming, "Heidegger's Productive Dialogue with Marxism," *Philosophy Today* 58, no. 2 (2014): 179–95.

11. Karl Marx, *Capital: A Critique of Political Economy*, trans. Ben Fowkes (New York: Penguin, 1993), 1:423.

12. Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels, *The German Ideology* (Amherst, NY: Prometheus Books, 1998), 48.

13. Martin Heidegger, *Leitgedanken zur Entstehung der Metaphysik, der neuzeitlichen Wissenschaft und der modernen Technik*, Gesamtausgabe, Band 76 (Frankurt: Klostermann, 2009), 286.

14. Not incidentally, Marx refers to Descartes as standing in for an epistemology that implies the subjection of nature to humans (Marx, *Capital*, 522fn.).

15. In the words of Enrique Dussel, "Modernity has constituted nature as an 'exploitable' object, with increase in the rate of profit of capital as its goal. . . . Once the earth is seen constituted as an 'exploitable object' in favor of *quantum* (of capital) that can defeat all limits, all boundaries, there by manifesting the 'great civilizing influence of capital,' it now reaches its insurmountable limit, where itself is its own limit, the impassable barrier for ethical-human progress, and we have arrived at this moment." See Enrique Dussel, *Beyond Philosophy: Ethics, History, Marxism, Liberation Theology*, ed. Eduardo Mendieta (Lanham, MD: Lexington Books, 2003), 68.

16. Michael Eldred, *Capital and Technology* (North Charleston, SC: CreateSpace Independent Publishing, 2015), 79.

17. For this, see Alfred Schmidt, "Zum Verhältnis von Geschichte und Natur im dialektischen Materialismus," in *Existentialismus und Marxismus: Eine Kontroverse zwischen Sartre, Garaudy, Hyppolite, Vigier und Orcel* (Frankfurt: Suhrkamp, 1965), 119, 123.

18. Althusser, *History and Imperialism*, 44.

19. Marx, *Capital*, 273.

20. Marx, *Capital*, 273.

21. Marx, *Capital*, 273.

22. Marx, *Capital*, 270.

23. For more on this, see Christian Lotz, *The Capitalist Schema: Time, Money, and the Culture of Abstraction* (Lanham, MD: Lexington Books, 2014).

24. For more on this, see Christian Lotz, "Gegenständlichkeit: From Marx to Lukács and Back Again," in *Theory and Practice: Critical Theory and the Thought of Andrew Feenberg*, ed. Arnold Darrell and Andreas Michel (London: Palgrave, 2017), 71–89.

25. Postone, *Time, Labor, and Social Domination*, 134.

26. Karl Marx, *Grundrisse*, trans. Martin Nicolaus (London: Penguin, 1995), 839.

27. For more on this, see Lotz, *The Capitalist Schema*.

28. Andrew J. Mitchell, "The Question Concerning the Machine: Heidegger's Technology Notebooks in the 1940s–1950s," in *Heidegger on Technology*, ed. Aaron James Wendland, Christopher Merwin, and Christos Hadjioannou (New York: Routledge, 2019), 130.

29. Marx, *Capital*, 493.

30. Heidegger, *Leitgedanken*, 328.

31. Heidegger, *Leitgedanken*, 297; see also 308.

32. David Harvey, *Marx, Capital, and the Madness of Economic Reason* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2018), 113.

33. Alfred Schmidt, *Marx als Philosoph: Studien in der Perspektive Kritischer Theorie* (Springe: zu Klampen Verlag, 2018), 93.

34. Marx, *Grundrisse*, 706.

35. Marx, *Grundrisse*, 706.

36. Marx, *Grundrisse*, 694; for a detailed commentary, see Christian Lotz, *Christian Lotz zu Karl Marx: Das Maschinenfragment* (Hamburg: Laika Verlag, 2014).

37. The same process occurs in valorization. For more on causality and instrumentality, see Christian Lotz, "Reification through Commodity Form or Technology? From Honneth Back to Heidegger and Marx," *Rethinking Marxism* 25, no. 2 (2013): 184–200.

38. Mitchell, "The Question Concerning the Machine," 118.

39. Martin Heidegger, *Bremen and Freiburg Lectures: Insight into That Which Is and Basic Principles of Thinking*, trans. Andrew W. Mitchell (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2012), 27.

40. The following passage in Heidegger nicely demonstrates how his thinking about technology falls behind Marx's philosophy of technology, in so far as Heidegger does not consider society, the concept of which disappears behind the veil of metaphysics and empty chain of sentences, such as these: "The machine is just as little an object. It stands only insofar as it goes. It goes insofar as it runs. It runs in the drive of industry. The drive drives as the bustle of the requisitioning of the orderable. If the machine stands, then its standstill is a condition of the drive, of its cessation or disturbance. Machines are within a machinery. But this is no piling up of machines. The machinery runs from the plundering of the drive, as which positionality orders the standing reserve" (Heidegger, *Bremen and Freiburg Lectures*, 33). Though Marx would agree with Heidegger that a machine is not a thing, he would argue that the

system of machinery can only properly be grasped if we take capital, value, and labor-power into account.

41. For this, see Hans-Dieter Bahr, "Die Klassenstruktur der Maschinerie: Anmerkungen zur Wertform," in *Technologie und Kapital*, ed. Richard Vahrenkamp (Frankfurt: Suhrkamp, 1973), 51.

42. As quoted in Mitchell, "The Question Concerning the Machine," 121.

43. For this, see Kohei Saito, *Natur gegen Kapital: Marx' Ökologie in seiner unvollendeten Kritik des Kapitalismus* (Frankfurt: Campus, 2016).

44. Marx, *Capital*, 482. Heidegger also deals with this: method becomes technics and makes it possible that scientists are no longer related to the essential dimension of their ontological realm and their objects. The biologist no longer knows anything about living beings because the formalization of science is directly related to *research* and research results generated without essential knowledge (Heidegger, *Leitgedanken*, 160). Another example that Heidegger mentions is the art historian who no longer has any real experience of art and history. In contemporary terms, we could say that a researcher who uses x-ray technologies to determine the overpainted layers of a Renaissance painting no longer needs to *think* about art, painting, and history. The painting appears here as an object of research.

45. Schmidt, *Marx als Philosoph*, 152.

46. For the most updated overview of Marx's contribution to ecological thinking, see Saito, *Natur gegen Kapital*; see also Michael Zimmermann, "Marx and Heidegger on the Technological Domination of Nature," *Philosophy Today* 32, no. 2 (1979), 99–112.

47. Karl Marx, *A Contribution to the Critique of Political Economy*, https://www.marxists.org/archive/marx/works/1859/critique-pol-economy/preface.htm.

Chapter 7

Toward a Social Paradigm of Left-Heideggerianism

Kurt C. M. Mertel

Since the initial generations of "Heideggerians of the Left," which emerged in post–World War II Europe, the continued currency and relevance of Martin Heidegger's thought for critical theory, broadly construed, is evidenced in recent work in both poststructuralist and Frankfurt School traditions.[1] While the label "left-Heideggerianism" embraces a broad constellation of theorists from the former camp,[2] it is possible to claim that the predominant strand—what I call the "political paradigm" of left-Heideggerianism—shares two basic commitments: exegetical and systematic. As an interpretive approach, their foundational concepts are largely drawn from Heidegger's later work such as abyss [*Ab-grund*], ground, and event [*Ereignis*].[3] From a systematic perspective, they share a commitment to the constitutive status of a post-foundationalist political ontology grounded in the *political difference* between politics (ontic) and the political (ontological). This, in turn, implies the derivative status of the social as always already static, habitualized, and reified; emancipation thus requires its latent political, contingent, and ultimately groundless character to be periodically awakened or activated either through an exceptional "Event" [*Ereignis*] or via the exercise of political agency. This general absence of an autonomous account of the social is nicely captured by Oliver Marchart's description of his own approach as an "an ontology of the social conceived as political."[4]

By contrast, Heidegger's thought has played a comparatively more peripheral role in the Frankfurt School than in poststructuralism. Nevertheless, it is possible to identify shared exegetical and systematic commitments that constitute the rudiments of what I call the "social paradigm" of

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left-Heideggerianism. Since Herbert Marcuse's "Heideggerian Marxism,"[5] resources have been drawn primarily from the early Heidegger in the service of a critical social ontology capable of providing the necessary standpoint for the diagnosis and critique of social pathologies such as reification and alienation.[6] Indeed, Marcuse thought the late Heidegger's philosophy represented a complete break from the early emancipatory project of the hermeneutics of facticity and confirmed its ultimate inadequacy as a paradigm for social criticism. Subsequent generations of the Frankfurt School have largely followed this avoidance of the late Heidegger.[7]

As such, the current predicament of left-Heideggerianism is that the conceptual apparatus of Heidegger's fundamental ontology remains conspicuously absent in the political paradigm, whereas the social paradigm remains severed from the resources of the late Heidegger.[8] From the former perspective, fundamental ontology appears too invested in traditional metaphysics and subjectivity; from the latter, the allegedly nihilistic and quietistic implications of the late Heidegger's thought reveal a normative deficit that makes it unsuitable for the purposes of social criticism. However, without the resources of fundamental ontology and its analytic of *Dasein*, the political paradigm, on the one hand, remains too "asubjective" and therefore incapable of accommodating the first-personal dimension of social pathologies (e.g., the self-alienation and reification experienced in affective labor).[9]

On the other hand, even the most ambitious and comprehensive social-ontological appropriation of Heidegger's thought—Marcuse's "Heideggerian Marxism"—remains glaringly incomplete without the historicization of fundamental ontology undertaken in the later period. The challenge that currently confronts us, therefore, is to integrate both perspectives in a way that preserves the post-foundationalist core of the political paradigm, while avoiding emptying ontology of any content that might enable it to successfully diagnose social pathologies. Indeed, the vibrancy and fruitfulness of both the political and the social paradigm's appropriation of Heidegger notwithstanding, it thus seems clear that an expansion and enrichment of the current theoretical landscape of left-Heideggerian thought remains an ongoing and necessary project.

In this chapter, I will make a further contribution to this project by directly tackling the challenge revealed earlier—that is, to show that the social paradigm can fruitfully integrate the perspectives of both the early and the late Heidegger, thus going beyond both the poststructuralist and the Frankfurt School appropriations of Heidegger. In the first part of the chapter I will provide a brief account of the core features of the political paradigm to reveal what is worth preserving from it and set the stage for disclosing the relevant differences with my proposed social-ontological alternative. Later, I will provide an outline of some core features of fundamental ontology

as a post-foundationalist social ontology.[10] The aim is not to get bogged down in exegetical details and challenge the political paradigm's reading of Heidegger's overcoming of metaphysics in an anarchic or nihilistic direction,[11] nor is it to directly address the various readings of Heidegger from the Frankfurt School that render the late Heidegger unsuitable for social criticism.[12] These are issues better pursued elsewhere.

Rather, I will sketch an alternative approach within the social paradigm that successfully integrates the early and late perspectives in a way that makes for a more compelling approach to critical theory. I do this in the third and final part by showing that the *Seinsgeschichte*, and its corollary concepts (e.g., *das Ereignis*), can be understood as the fulfillment of the original emancipatory promise of fundamental ontology *to make philosophy concrete*. It does so by providing an essential *Zeitdiagnostische* dimension, which historicizes fundamental ontology for the purposes of social criticism, precisely because the emancipatory aim of fundamental ontology—the dereification and disalienation of *Dasein*—cannot be realized without an adequate understanding of the past and current epochs in which *Dasein* lives. In the process, I will show how my proposed alternative does not require abandoning truth, validity, and authenticity, nor the agent as a locus of social criticism, and how it points to the constitutive status of the social, rather than the political.

THE POLITICAL PARADIGM OF LEFT-HEIDEGGERIANISM

It would not be altogether inaccurate to claim that left-Heideggerianism begins where metaphysics ends. Whether this end is ultimately accomplished by Nietzsche, encapsulated by his famous thesis of the "Death of God" and the claim that there are no facts only interpretations, or in Heidegger's "destruction" or "overcoming" of metaphysics, Derrida's deconstruction, or Gadamer's ontological transformation of hermeneutics, is of little import for our current purposes. More important, rather, what Vattimo and Zabala call the "right to interpret differently" asserts itself precisely in the wake of the collapse of all totalizing foundationalist metaphysical systems or descriptions that claim absolute validity. The untenability of absolute principles, values, and so on, in light of the essential historicity, linguisticality, and contingency of all interpretation, not only leads to a necessary "weakening" of ontology into an anarchic and therefore anti- or post-foundationalist project but equally gives the "weak"—the "losers" or "forgotten" of history—a legitimate political voice against the hegemony of prevailing metaphysical systems of domination (e.g., liberalism). For this reason, Vattimo and Zabala claim that "the end of truth is the beginning of democracy [and hermeneutic communism]."[13]

Consequently, the nihilistic upshot of the end of metaphysics is that we are left with an infinite and perpetual play of competing interpretations, which possess an equal claim to validity. Being is not a static, ultimate ground from which timeless truths can be derived, as traditionally conceived, but rather an abyss [*Ab-grund*], an ever-shifting absence of ground that opens up a space of freedom and contestation (or *antagonism*, in Marchart's political ontology). This leveling of the playing field of interpretation, so to speak, thus helps explain the resulting essential negativity and antagonistic character of the political and the corresponding emphasis placed on the *strategic* as opposed to the epistemic dimension of democratic politics, which we find in Marchart, following Laclau and Mouffe. It is from this perspective that Vattimo and Zabala reformulate Marx's famous statement by claiming that until now philosophers have only described the world—in the sense of trying to mirror the nature of things—but that the "moment now has arrived to *interpret* it."[14]

For Vattimo, Zabala, and Marchart, "negativity" thus must have an event-like, momentary character. This is because prevailing hegemonic social and political orders and their absolutist pretentions can be dislodged neither through dialogue, which always already operates within their metaphysical framework, nor through the construction of truer, rival frameworks. Rather, these orders must be challenged, destabilized, and disrupted through happenings that are either non-contrived and unexpected or the result of the deliberate, strategic exercise of political agency. While this raises the legitimate question of how the political paradigm can avoid the corresponding extremes of fatalism or messianism, on the one hand, and voluntarism, on the other, it is beyond the scope of our current purposes to pursue here.

In this context, it is important to note that when observing the current political landscape, if we accept that metaphysics has come to an end, then it should be understood as having taken place, at best, at the philosophical or ontological level rather than ontically. This is because the neoliberal world order's "framed democracies" and the "scientific realism" that supports them, continue to dominate. Hence, in their response to Eduardo Mendieta's commentary,[15] Vattimo and Zabala claim that the end of metaphysics is a narrative that refers to an ongoing process rather than an already achieved outcome.[16] One might also claim that just as the disclosure of the essential antagonistic, ungrounded character of Being is a historically contingent affair, so is its socio-political realization. So far so good.

But there is another sense in which the specter of metaphysics haunts socio-political reality worth noting for our purposes. From the perspective of hermeneutic communism, one might plausibly claim that the reification of social and political structures stems from the imposition of comprehensive doctrines or metaphysical frameworks that are useful for the perpetuation of certain regimes and, as a result, is a historically contingent matter. However,

from the perspective of Marchart's political ontology *qua* fundamental ontology, the social as such is always already reified or "sedimented" (or the political in "sleep mode"). This sedimentation is problematic because it conceals the contingent foundations of the prevailing norms, practices, and institutions, and therefore the possibility of things being otherwise. As such, Being *qua* antagonism must be reactivated or awakened from its slumber through events or concrete political agency that exposes the failed totality of the social.

For this reason, the social occupies a derivative status in the predominant currents of left-Heideggerianism. Indeed, from this perspective, it is not inaccurate to claim that the terms "social" and "society" are simply different names for designating *Seinsvergessenheit*. In this way, the political paradigm can be understood as also providing a critique of reification. But if the social is always already reified and politics is always already dereifying, then this inevitably leads to some version of the dreaded "question of criteria"[17] (i.e., if all moments of antagonism are made equal, why choose one political movement over the other?) that most proponents of the political paradigm would reject.

In light of the earlier discussion of the political paradigm, it is not surprising that it draws its main inspiration from the late Heidegger's apparent shift away from the more subject (*Dasein*)–centered, ahistorical project of fundamental ontology toward an asubjective, historicized and dynamic approach to the question of Being (i.e., Being *qua* Event [*Ereignis*]). From this perspective, the self-disclosive activity of *Dasein qua* agent is replaced with the epochal and event-like self-disclosure of Being. This idea fits well with the poststructuralist thesis of the "death of the subject," which is captured, for example, by Marchart's appeal to a notion of political agency "without an agent." The basic thought is that this move makes a decisive step beyond traditional substance metaphysics, by rejecting the idea of a foundational subject as the locus of meaning and by situating Being within the contingent conceptual frameworks or language-games that belong to discontinuous socio-historical epochs.

Hence, Being can no longer be conceived of as an ultimate ground [*Grund*] or horizon of intelligibility, but rather as an "abyss" [*Ab-grund*] that exposes the very impossibility of such a foundation. Far from imposing interpretive closure, it rather opens up a space for the infinite play of competing interpretations. In this way, the epochal event of Being is taken as the very opening of the *political* in that it exposes the contingency, partiality, and fallibility of any socio-political order. It follows that fundamental ontology can no longer be understood as "pure" and "neutral" (i.e., as having purely philosophical foundations). But given that the task of thinking Being remains unavoidable,

the mantle of fundamental ontology must be taken up by a particular "region" of Being—namely, *the political*. We have thus arrived at the terrain of the weakening of ontology that characterizes Vattimo and Zabala's approach and Marchart's project of political ontology as first philosophy.

THE SOCIAL PARADIGM OF LEFT-HEIDEGGERIANISM: FUNDAMENTAL ONTOLOGY AS SOCIAL ONTOLOGY

In contrast with the political paradigm, the social alternative to be sketched in what follows is grounded in fundamental ontology, whose original emancipatory impulse can be seen as pervading across the various periods of Heidegger's thought. Let us begin the task of following the ethical thread of Heidegger's thought with his definition of the hermeneutics of facticity, the precursor of fundamental ontology, as an emancipatory project that aims at the dis*alienation* of the *specific Dasein*:

> *It is the task of hermeneutics to enable the specific Dasein to gain access to its own character of being as Dasein, to proclaim it and to trace back the self the self-alienation that is plaguing Dasein.* In hermeneutics what is developed for *Dasein* is a possibility of its becoming and being for itself in the manner of an *understanding* of itself. . . . *The theme of hermeneutical inquiry is the always particular Dasein, more specifically questioned as to its character of being with a view to developing a radical awareness of its own self.*[18]

Subsequently in *Being and Time*, we learn that the disalienation of *Dasein* requires the dereification of Being by reformulating the traditional question of "*What* is Being?" into a question of its *meaning* for an ethical, rather than an epistemic subject. In this orientation toward the traditional metaphysical question of "the all,"[19] fundamental ontology maintains that only a holistic approach aimed at grasping the totality of human existence could be adequate in diagnosing social pathologies and indicating emancipatory possibilities. In fact, Marcuse argued during his Heideggerian Marxist phase that the fundamental ontology of *Dasein* must be prior to Marxist-Hegelian social ontology, since it provides a broader and therefore more adequate perspective from which to diagnose social pathologies.[20] This is a line of thought that has since been ignored by both political and social paradigms, but one that will be pursued in what follows.

From the perspective of this ethicization of ontology, our primary mode of being is not that of a detached observer (*homo cogitans*), but of a caring, engaged being-in-the-world (*homo cura*). Correspondingly, the world does

not confront us as an inert object waiting to be discovered, but rather in the form of an *address* that calls us to respond in one way or another; the world is neither something that impinges upon us from "without" nor the projection of transcendental subjectivity. As a result, the proper relation to self, world, and other must be understood in *second-personal terms*. So when it is claimed that what distinguishes *Dasein* from all other beings is that Being *is an issue for it*, what is referred to is existence *as a whole*—the totality of beings or of what is—addresses it as something that matters. The *homo cura* of *Being and Time*, therefore, was always already non- or anti-anthropocentric in orientation.

Indeed, it cannot be emphasized enough that the term *Dasein* designates a multifaceted ontological structure that not only encompasses self, other, and world (including *Natur*) but is always already present simultaneously in all its doings.[21] It follows that the freedom of *Dasein* must be correspondingly *social* in character: "To be free is to understand oneself from out of one's own capacity-to-be; but 'oneself' and 'one's own' are not understood individually or egoistically, but *metaphysically*. They are understood in the *basic possibilities of transcending Dasein in the capacity-to-be-with with others, in the capacity-to-be by extant things, in the factic existentiell capacity-to-be in each case toward oneself*."[22] This is why Heidegger characterizes authentic Being-with as a "freedom with-one-another" that encompasses the *totality of beings*: "*Being-with as a comportment of authentic existence is only possible in such a way that every existing-with can be and is authentically itself*.[23] The question of the "All" can thus be reformulated as a question of "What does it mean to 'be' in such a way that connects us with all other beings?"

Correspondingly, the fundamental challenge posed by attempting to answer the question of the meaning of Being can be formulated in terms of the following question: How is it possible for *everything to simultaneously matter to us* (*qua* agents) and for us to articulate meaningfully all that matters to us all at once? As shown in *Being and Time*, however, while the circular, factical, historical, and linguistic character of all understanding and interpretation makes this an impossible task—ruling out the possibility of an all-encompassing metaphysical system—it does not thereby diminish the necessity and fruitfulness of ontological inquiry.[24] This is precisely why Heidegger defended the view—inspired by what Charles Taylor calls the Herder-Hamann-Humboldt (H-H-H) tradition—that language is defined by its constitutive *world-disclosing function*. Accordingly, the primary unit of meaning cannot be a discrete object (empiricist-instrumental) nor a proposition (descriptivism), but rather a text, story, or poem (i.e., a world *qua* totality of existential possibilities).

The essential interconnectedness and interdependence implied in the question of Being were already expressed in the *Umweltanalyse* of *Being*

and Time, which is often overlooked by readings that approach it from the perspective of metaphysics and epistemology (e.g., the primacy of practical intentionality, knowing how vs. knowing that, critique of Cartesian epistemology, etc.). In fact, it is present in the very analysis of tool manipulation (hammer) that is the focus for such readings. It is, of course, true that when the hammer breaks, the background network of taken-for-granted beliefs is disclosed along with the thing-like (present-at-hand) character of the hammer. However, most important in this context is the way it reveals *Dasein*'s essential entanglement in a network of interdependence: not only does the proper functioning of the hammer require the presence of other equipment, but the equipmental context as such ultimately refer back to other *Dasein* (e.g., craftsmen, producers, etc.) and to a broader, symbolically structured society in which such practices serve a specific function and acquire a shared meaning. In short, the *Umweltanalyse* shows the way in which *Dasein* is always already embedded in a network of *social relations* that are neither always already reified and alienated *nor political as such*.

The question of the political is thus made possible by the fact that Being *as a whole* always already addresses and matters to *Dasein*'s possibilities of existing as the ontological precondition for ethical agency as such— being-political is, therefore a distinctive mode of being-social, not the other way around.[25] For example, *Angst* represents a particular affective mode of being-in-the-world that exposes the always already failed totality of *das Man* as an ultimate foundation of meaning and, therefore, the possibility that Being can always be otherwise than it is. In particular, *Angst* accomplishes this silencing the authoritative voice of *Man* and foregrounding the essential singularity of *Dasein* and its non-identity with the prevailing social order (i.e., that it is not simply a token of a social type). It thereby discloses the possibility of the individuation and freedom of *Dasein*, pointing ultimately to the necessity of an individualizing mode of sociality (i.e., an authenticity-enabling *das Man*). After all, authenticity is a modification of our *Man-self* and our everyday being-in-the-world, not an exceptional state or experience that can be episodically turned on and off, activated and deactivated.[26]

As such, it performs a similar function as politics in the political paradigm by exposing the contingent and fallible foundations of society. But it is not, for all that, a political mode of attunement unless, of course, one identifies the disclosure of the possibility of things being otherwise with the political (e.g., Thornhauser). While *Angst* could provide the catalyst for a transformational political moment under certain factical circumstances, it must be first and foremost understood in its broader, methodological ("undifferentiated") function: as mode of being that discloses the ontological structure of *Dasein* as a whole. In sum, from this perspective, the ground of being-political is

solidarity not antagonism. We do not need political agency to expose the "holes" in the social order precisely because it's *always already sieve-like*: it provides a frame of intelligibility by privileging some and filtering out other phenomena and, therefore, can only *feign* exhaustibility.

And it is through his appeal to Kant's critics (especially Hamann and Herder) that Heidegger accomplishes his de-transcendentalization of the subject and of philosophy characteristic of the *post-metaphysical*, *linguistic turn*. Indeed, if all understanding is linguistic, interpretive, and situated, then reason can never be "pure" since there is no correspondingly pure, universal language; no formalization of language as a closed system of signs could possibly capture all possible meaningful utterances or contexts and, therefore, Being. Thus, fundamental ontology must embrace the descent to facticity and all its diversity of language-games, as well as the essential performativity or contextuality of meaning. The contextual character of meaning, however, need not entail the abandonment of all claims to criteria and truth. By claiming, for example, that there are authentic and inauthentic modes of being that cannot be fully specified *a priori*, but only in their instantiation in concrete circumstances, we do not thereby impose an oppressive metaphysical frame that divides being into strong and weak, oppressor and oppressed.[27] That fundamental ontology must relinquish any claim to systematicity in the mold of the Kantian and post-Kantian transcendental tradition—and mutually informed by the ontic—is reflected in Heidegger's re-construal of the function of its existential-ontological concepts in terms of *formal indication*, which he developed prior to the publication of *Being and Time*. Formally indicating concepts are neither "universals" in the sense of providing a set of necessary and sufficient conditions for subsuming objects nor simply empty names or signifiers attached to them through "baptismal acts." Rather, they serve to point or orient us toward certain phenomena or contexts without thereby giving them in advance. This is why they are sometimes described as having no "special content" or "not binding" from an ontic perspective.[28] For example, if we stick rigorously to the methodological status of *Dasein qua* formal indicating concept, we must accept that it does not pick out any particular entity *a priori*. That is to say, even if we grant that the human being happens to possess all the abilities and characteristics constitutive of *Dasein*, we must also leave open the possibility that other entities might as well (e.g., nonhuman animals) and even that our initial concept might have to be correspondingly revised.[29] The ontological structure of *Dasein*, therefore, designates not a "what" or content in advance, but rather a "how," thereby leaving space open for the new, the unanticipated. As such, formal indicators must be thin enough to allow space for factical, situated appropriation, but not so thin as to provide no guidance or criteria; they must leave room for *mutual illumination and feedback between the ontic and the ontological*. The opposition

between fundamental ontology and a traditional philosophical system there-
fore lies precisely in the former's appeal to formal indicators in opposition
to the latter's universal categories or "transcendental concepts": "Exactly this
appearance of the formally indicating consideration, *which feigns finality and
universal applicability*, makes a fool of philosophy when the latter believes
to find itself and its task, which is as such meagre and therefore so hard to
detect and establish, *in abstract systematic conceptualization*."[30] The consti-
tutive incompleteness of fundamental ontology as a dynamic, open-ended
("feign[ing] finality"), emancipatory enterprise, furthermore, implies, as
shown earlier, that it must seek fulfillment ("filled in") through its appropria-
tion by regional ontologies and, therefore, be *interdisciplinary* in character:
"When understood historically, the relationship between ontic interpretation
and ontology is always a correlative relationship *insofar as new* existentialia
are discovered from ontic experience."[31] From this perspective, therefore,
it is possible to construe fundamental ontology as a post-foundationalist
social-ecological ontology of interdependence.

As a result, Marcuse's retrospective claim that fundamental ontology is
ultimately based on "static transcendental concepts" that are "immune against
the specific material and mental conditions which make up the course of his-
tory" must be rejected.[32] But while Marcuse failed to grasp the significance
of formal indication and, therefore, its necessary formality or incompleteness
to give leeway for situated appropriation, he was nevertheless right to empha-
size, during his Heideggerian period, that the ontological self-interpretation
of *Dasein* is ultimately for the sake of the dereification and disalienation of
the *always particular Dasein*.[33] *Dasein*'s ontic, pre-ontological understanding
is both the methodological point of departure and the ultimate destination.
Simply put, no interpretation of Being can be forcibly imposed on *Dasein*
from without.[34] The ultimate validity of ontological concepts, therefore,
depends upon their appropriability under concrete socio-historical circum-
stances, which Marcuse glossed as the *truth of appropriation*.[35] And this is
precisely where the *Seinsgeschichte* can play a role within a Heideggerian
emancipatory project: to disclose the limitations and possibilities for authen-
tic self-appropriation inherent in our epochal understanding of reality. In
this way, fundamental ontology can fulfill its original promise of providing
a concrete philosophy defined by Marcuse as "*the science of the possibili-
ties of authentic being*."[36] Heidegger's characterization of formal indicators
as providing a *productive* rather than a *deductive* logic further accentuates
their emancipatory function: they "leap ahead" to indicate possibilities for
authentic self-appropriation rather than a logical ground from which they can
be deduced and imposed *a priori*.[37]

Questions of politics, society, and ethics are thus reserved for the level of
analysis Heidegger called the "metaphysical ontic" (metontology), which is,

in a nutshell, a regional ontology (ideally) informed by the fundamental ontology.[38] Hence, the fulfillment of fundamental ontology requires a "metaphysics of *Dasein*" capable of properly grasping *Dasein* in its "*essential metaphysical breadth* to which belong being-with [other *Dasein*] and being by [entities]."[39] Indeed, it is precisely because "fundamental ontology does not exhaust the notion of metaphysics [metontology]" that its concepts must be conceived as formal indicators.[40] It is worth emphasizing in this context that "metaphysics" is understood as having undergone a transformation through its re-appropriation from the perspective of a "meta-metaphysics" (i.e., fundamental ontology); the orientation toward the "All" cannot be relinquished, but neither can the regions of Being, and, as a result, any answer to the question of the former cannot be deemed satisfactory unless it can adequately inform and illuminate the latter (and vice versa).

In this context, it is worth noting that arguably the most important testament to the ethical thread of the corpus and the interdependence between the ontological and the ontic is the *Zollikon Seminars*. In these seminars, Heidegger devoted a decade of his life to teaching the basics of the existential analytic of *Dasein* and its therapeutic implications to psychologists, psychiatrists, psychoanalysts, and medical practitioners. In fact, shortly before Heidegger passed away only five years after the last seminar, he contributed to Medard Boss's *Existential Foundations of Medicine and Psychology*, which shows that he was concerned with the ethical and therapeutic applications of fundamental ontology until the very end. As such, it is necessary to ask the following question: If fundamental ontology was replaced by the *Seinsgeschichte*, why did Heidegger devote so much of his career to explaining a dead paradigm to medical practitioners? This is something the proponents of the early/late dichotomy cannot explain. In fact, the concepts of *Seinsgeschichte*, *Ereignis*, *Ab-grund*, and so on, which provide the foundation for the political paradigm, do not make a single appearance in the recorded seminars from 1964 to 1969.

Most important for our current purposes is that these seminars reveal the way in which the possibilities of individual freedom can be understood only within a broader socio-ontological framework. This is reflected in Heidegger's remark that "[w]e do psychology, sociology, and psychotherapy *in order to help the human being reach the goal of adjustment and freedom in the broadest sense*. This is the joint concern of physicians and sociologists because *all social and pathological disturbances of the individual human being are disturbances in adjustment and freedom*."[41] It is thus highly significant that psychology, psychotherapy, and sociology are understood as animated by a common emancipatory aim because it accentuates the way in which fundamental ontology must be conceived as an interdisciplinary project that both informs and is informed by regional ontologies.

Indeed, as sociologists Patrik Aspers and Sebastian Kohl have noted,[42] fundamental ontology can provide the hitherto lacking socio-ontological foundations for the social sciences in the form of a philosophy of social science. The social paradigm sketched here makes an important step toward showing how this might be possible. Consequently, there is no room in fundamental ontology thus construed for a strong *a priorism* that reifies the social or politicizes in advance. It also means that there can be no "agency without an agent" or (appropriative) event [*Ereignis*] without an appropriator. We can accept their mutual belongingness without falling back into substance metaphysics precisely because their meaning is not always already determined and objectively present, but rather contingent, dynamic, and performative.

RECONCILING EARLY AND LATE PERSPECTIVES: THE ROLE OF THE *SEINSGESCHICHTE* WITHIN THE SOCIAL PARADIGM

In addition to the basic emancipatory aim of fundamental ontology, the existential-ontological characteristics of *Dasein* sketched in *Being and Time* yield the raw materials for a critical social ontology: understanding, interpretation, speech/talk, *Mitsein*, *das Man*, historicity, and attunement all capture important features of our social existence. And insofar as each of the *existentiales* (formally indicating concepts) can be appropriated in inauthentic or authentic ways by *Dasein* in concrete socio-historical conditions, it is impossible to escape the critical or normative dimension of this ontology. Moreover, and perhaps most important for the purposes of social criticism, given that *Dasein* is essentially dependent upon the social world for its possibilities of existence, *das Man* plays a crucial role in determining the factical possibilities for inauthenticity and authenticity. As such, it is necessary to distinguish, at the ontic level, between societies that promote or enable authenticity (or inauthenticity) to different degrees without thereby identifying the social as such with either, in advance. This, in turn, requires that we understand *das Man*—as well as all fundamental-ontological concepts—first and foremost in its undifferentiated[43] or modally neutral mode that can be instantiated in more or less authentic and inauthentic ways.

For this reason, I have argued elsewhere that what I call the "social difference" between society and the social—the latter corresponding to the ontological dimension of *das Man* and the former to its ontic instantiations—is an essential feature of fundamental ontology as an emancipatory project, even if it was not employed by Heidegger himself. Nevertheless, Heidegger recognized the way in which the ontological structure of *das Man* is instantiated in different ways in different socio-historical circumstances: "*das Man*

[has] various possibilities of becoming concrete as something characteristic of *Dasein* [*seiner daseinsmassigen Konkretion*]. The extent to which its dominion becomes compelling and explicit may change in the course of history."[44] It follows that a viable left-Heideggerian approach to critical theory must be concerned with questions such as "Who is the 'One'" [*das Man*] and associated "One-self" [*Man-selbst*] at global, national, and local levels today, how it instantiated in various social, cultural, and political contexts, and how does it influence our factical possibilities for authentic appropriation of self, other, and world?[45] This is precisely why, as argued earlier, that the social paradigm must be interdisciplinary in orientation and scope (i.e., informed by and shaped through critical engagement with other social science and humanities disciplines).

While it is not the task of fundamental ontology as such to inquire into the character of concrete societies, it nevertheless indicates the essential structures that must be investigated at the ontic level; only then is it possible to grasp the socio-historically specific possibilities for emancipation.[46] This is because historical *Dasein*'s time is always the time of her *generation*.[47] But this is tantamount to the claim that in order to grasp the full scope of the possibilities for authentic agency, it is necessary to have an understanding of the epoch in which one lives, particularly of the predominant understanding of Being because, as *Being and Time* demonstrated, the way we understand Being has *practical consequences* (e.g., reifying or alienating effects). And it is precisely at this point that the *Seinsgeschichte* can be introduced as fulfilling the function of providing an epochal understanding of Being that is required for the ultimate fulfillment of the emancipatory promise of fundamental ontology. In fact, if we consider that the *Destruktion* of the metaphysical tradition in *Being and Time* already traced the various understandings of Being from the Ancient to the modern period—ending with Kant's *Gegenstand*—the *Seinsgeschichte* simply adds a new chapter to the story, to wit, Being as *Bestand* ("standing reserve") in the age of technology [*Ge-stell*] and mechanical or calculative thinking. While it might be objected that the *Seinsgeschichte* is "asubjective" in that it is supposed to trace the various ways Being manifests itself, this is simply the other side of the coin (i.e., the objective correlate to our various understandings of Being).

When we consider that in the immediate aftermath of *Being and Time* Heidegger was largely preoccupied with responding to charges of subjectivism, anthropologism, and existentialism, it is not surprising that he supplemented the early "*Dasein*-centric" view with the "Being-centric" view of the later period. This is because the two perspectives are mutually interdependent and, therefore, cannot stand alone, which is reflected, for example, in a central concept in the late Heidegger: co-respondence [*Ent-Sprechen*]. Insofar as it is always a question of how we are to *respond* to the call of Being—particularly

to the withdrawal of Being in the age of technology—one cannot privilege one view or the other: they are equiprimordial. For this reason, we must reject the traditional charge laid against the *Seinsgeschichte*—viz. that it justifies complete passivity and quietism in the face of our contemporary predicament. It is worth recalling here Heidegger's famous claim that Being is both the danger and *the saving power*. It follows that the *Seinsgeschichte* does not foreclose the possibility of free agency because what is at stake is always a *mode of comportment*, viz. the appropriate *response* to the predominant way in which existence is understood and reveals itself in the age of technology.[48]

A similar point can be made with respect to another central concept of the late Heidegger: the Event [*das Ereignis*]. In *Being and Time*, the focus was on *Dasein*'s appropriation *of* Being; in the late period, the emphasis was on the way in which *Dasein* is appropriated *by* Being. To be sure, already in *Being and Time*, it was clear that *Dasein* is always already appropriated by the social order in which it is thrown [*das Man*]; the question of "who?" is always already answered for us, as reflected in the variety of social roles we are required to adopt by virtue of being socialized in a particular community. Just as the former perspective does not entail a form of voluntarism about existence, the latter does not entail an extreme passivity or quietism in relation to it. This becomes clear, however, only if we have both perspectives equally in view—that is, only if we understand them in their *mutual belongingness*, which is nicely captured by the translation of *Ereignis* as the "*appropriative* event."[49]

In this context, it is important to stress that the *Seinsgeschichte* has the status here of an empty placeholder or a formal indicator. As a result, we are not thereby limited by or forced to inherit whatever problems remain in Heidegger's construal of it; the general validity of its function within an emancipatory enterprise remains. Hence, if we consider the fact that Marcuse's turn away from the project of Heideggerian Marxism was motivated, in part, by its alleged formality or emptiness and, therefore, unsuitability for social criticism, the introduction of a reformulated *Seinsgeschichte* into the picture provides a Heideggerian critical theory with enhanced conceptual tools that have been hitherto ignored by most left-Heideggerians.

Indeed, in light of the fact that disalienation and dereification are always targeted to the "specific *Dasein*"—*Dasein* in its concrete socio-historical circumstances—it appears impossible to provide an adequate analysis and assessment of the current possibilities for human emancipation without addressing the *seinsgeschichtlich* or *zeitdiagnostische* level (i.e., technology as the predominant way of understanding reality). An adequate *Zeitdiagnose*, however, cannot be construed along the lines of the political paradigm (i.e., by reifying the social in advance). Rather, we must be open to what in ontic experience might have emancipatory potential, and in what sense, which

makes the question of criteria inescapable. For example, it is impossible to adequately understand current possibilities of authentic discourse and language and, therefore, of moral articulacy without understanding the nature and extent to which they are influenced by various social media.

In sum, the important point for our purposes is simply that if the original emancipatory aim behind fundamental ontology is to be realized, then it must be supplemented with a *Seinsgeschichte* in some form. Moreover, this implies, as argued earlier, the necessity of an interdisciplinary approach: the fulfillment of fundamental ontology requires its concrete appropriation by regional ontologies, which, in turn, can point to necessary revisions in the former. It follows that it is a serious mistake to insulate the early from the late Heidegger. Instead of cutting the ethical thread prematurely,[50] we should be following it through to the end to fully work out its implications for contemporary ethical, social, and political thought. In this way, the social paradigm outlined here goes well beyond its origins in the early Marcuse, while providing a compelling alternative to the predominant political paradigm of left-Heideggerianism.

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NOTES

1. Examples of the former are Gianni Vattimo and Santiago Zabala, *Hermeneutic Communism: From Heidegger to Marx and Back* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2011); Oliver Marchart, *Thinking Antagonism After Laclau* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2018); and Oliver Marchart, *Post-Foundational Political Thought: Political Difference in Nancy, Lefort, Badiou and Laclau* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2007). For examples of the latter, see Axel Honneth, *Reification: A New Look at an Old Idea* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008), and Rahel Jaeggi, *Alienation*, trans. Frederick Neuhouser (New York: Columbia University Press, 2016). For the most comprehensive and important contributions reconciling hermeneutical ontology with Frankfurt School critical theory, see Fred Dallmayr, *between Freiburg and Frankfurt: Towards a Critical Ontology* (Boston: University of Massachusetts Press, 1991); Nikolas Kompridis, *Critique and Disclosure: Critical Theory between Past and Future* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2006).

2. In *Post-Foundational Political Thought*, Marchart includes Ernesto Laclau, Chantal Mouffe, Claude Lefort, and Alain Badiou in this camp.

3. Exceptions to this are Gerhard Thornhauser and Jan Slaby, who attempt to show the relevance of *Befindlichkeit*, *Angst*, and *Eigentlichkeit* for the political paradigm and critical theory, broadly construed. See Gerhard Thornhauser, "Authenticity and Critique: Remarks on Heidegger and Social Theory," in *Regelfogen, Regelschaffen, Regeländern—die Herausforderung für Auto-Nomie und Universalismus durch Ludwig Wittgenstein, Martin Heidegger, und Carl Schmitt*, ed. James Thompson and Matthias Kaufmann (Vienna: Lang, 2020), 115–31; and Jan Slaby and Gerhard Thornhauser, "Heidegger and the Affective (Un) Grounding of Politics," in *Heidegger on Affect*, ed. Christos Hadjioannou (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2019), 265–89.

4. Marchart, *Thinking Antagonism*, 238.

5. The recent contribution from Mikko Immanen shows that the influence of the early Heidegger on the first generation of the Frankfurt School runs much deeper—extending beyond Marcuse to Adorno and Horkheimer—than is generally acknowledged. As such, he challenges the predominant narrative by construing this encounter as a fruitful intellectual exchange, rather than as hostile confrontation. See Mikko Immanen, *Toward a Concrete Philosophy: Heidegger and the Emergence of the Frankfurt School* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2020).

6. Such an approach is also taken by theorists from Central and Eastern Europe such as Karel Kosík, Ivan Dubsky, and Gajo Petrovic.

7. A notable exception to this is Andrew Feenberg—see *Transforming Technology: A Critical Theory Revisited* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2002); *Between Reason and Experience*: *Essays in Technology and Modernity* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2010); and *Technosystem: The Social Life of Reason* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2017). See also Andrew Feenberg and Dana Belu, "Heidegger's Aporetic Ontology of Technology," *Inquiry* 53, no. 1 (2010): 1–19.

8. An exception to this is Thornhauser, "Authenticity and Critique," on *Angst* and *Eigentlichkeit*.

9. I elaborate this criticism in more detail in Kurt C. M. Mertel, "Two Ways of Being a Left-Heideggerian: The Crossroads between Political and Social Ontology," *Philosophy and Social Criticism* 4, no. 9 (2017): 966–84.

10. The comprehensive exegetical and systematic foundations for my "appropriative" approach to social ontology is elaborated in Kurt C. M. Mertel, "Liberating the Self-Relation from Reification and Alienation: Towards an Appropriative Approach" (PhD diss., Northwestern University, 2016). This work informs my subsequent contributions to left-Heideggerianism: "Two Ways of Being a Left-Heideggerian"; "Self-Appropriation vs. Self-Constitution: Social Philosophical Reflections on the Self-Relation," *Human Affairs: Postdisciplinary Humanities and Social Sciences Quarterly* 27, no. 4 (2017): 416–32; "Situando la *Seinsgeschichte* en el proyecto del heideggerianismo de Izquierda," *Proceedings of the 14th Meeting of the Peruvian Circle of Phenomenology and Hermeneutics* (2019): 1–10; and "Heidegger, Technology and Education," *Journal of Philosophy of Education* 54, no. 2 (2020): 467–86.

11. While I find this gloss tendentious from a scholarly perspective, the systematic aim of this chapter requires that we leave this dispute aside.

12. I have dealt with this issue elsewhere in Mertel, "Liberating the Self-Relation from Reification and Alienation"; "Two Ways of Being a Left-Heideggerian"; "Self-Appropriation vs. Self-Constitution"; and "Heidegger, Technology and Education."

13. Gianni Vattimo and Santiago Zabala, *Hermeneutic Communism: From Heidegger to Marx and Back* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2011), 23.

14. Vattimo and Zabala, *Hermeneutic Communism*, 5.

15. Eduardo Mendieta, "The End of Metaphysics, the Uses and Abuses of Philosophy, and Understanding Just a Little Better: On Gianni Vattimo and Santiago Zabala's *Hermeneutic Communism*," in *Making Communism Hermeneutical:*

Reading Vattimo and Zabala, ed. Silvia Mazzini and Owen Glyn-Williams (Cham, Switzerland: Springer International, 2017), 3–15.

16. Gianni Vattimo and Santiago Zabala, "Reply to Eduardo Mendieta," in *Making Communism Hermeneutical: Reading Vattimo and Zabala*, ed. Silvia Mazzini and Owen Glyn-Williams (Cham, Switzerland: Springer International, 2017), 18.

17. This question has been posed in some shape or form by Mendieta, Grondin, Habermas, and Malpas, among others.

18. Martin Heidegger, *Ontology: The Hermeneutics of Facticity*, trans. John van Buren (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1999), 11–12 (emphasis added in first and last sentences). I adopt the translation from Grondin in the first and third sentences and that of van Buren (1999) in the second. See Jean Grondin, "The Ethical and Young-Hegelian Motives in Heidegger's *Hermeneutics of Facticity*," in *Reading Heidegger from the Start*, ed. Theodore Kisiel and John van Buren (Albany: SUNY Press, 1994), 345–57. From now on, I will employ the following abbreviations for Heidegger's texts (all references are to their respective English translations, unless otherwise noted): *Being and Time* (*BT*), *Metaphysical Foundations of Logic* (*MFL*), *The Hermeneutics of Facticity* (*HF*), *The Zollikon Seminars* (*ZS*), *Letter on Humanism* (*LOH*), *Logic: The Question of Truth* (*LQT*), and *Phenomenology of Intuition and Expression* (*PIE*).

19. The non-or anti-anthropocentric character of fundamental ontology is fruitfully captured in Françoise Dastur, "The Critique of Anthropologism in Heidegger's Thought," in *Transcendental Heidegger*, ed. Steven Crowell and Jeff Malpas (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2007). Hence, when Heidegger made a move toward the question of "Being as a whole" or "beings as a whole" in his middle period, this was not a transition away from the problematic of *Being and Time*, but rather an explicit deepening of it. Moreover, the existential analytic of Dasein is methodologically subordinate to answering the question of Being; it is necessarily incomplete in that only those structures essential to disclosing the meaning of Being can be accommodated.

20. Herbert Marcuse, *Heideggerian Marxism*, ed. Richard Wolin and John Abromeit (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2005), 39–40, 45. Marcuse's commitment to the foundational status of fundamental ontology for the social sciences is, in my view, expressed in his frequent claim that phenomena must be grasped from the "totality of human Dasein" (*Heideggerian Marxism*, 123, 129–30, 142). The clearest expression of this commitment is found in "On Concrete Philosophy" (*Heideggerian Marxism*, 39–40, 45). Hence, as Marcuse rightly observed, fundamental ontology is not incompatible with Marxist-Hegelian social ontology: they are not rivals precisely because the former is situated at a more basic level of analysis. Hence, it is appropriately described as an "originary ethics" [*ursprüngliche Ethik*] that aims at providing the "the existential conditions for the possibility of any morality whatsoever" (Martin Heidegger, *Being and Time*, trans. Joan Stambaugh [New York: SUNY Press, 1996], 286).

21. This unity of self, other, and world is nicely captured in the following remarks in *The Metaphysical Foundations of Logic*: "*In choosing itself Dasein really chooses precisely its being-with others and precisely its being among beings of a different*

character. . . . Conceived in an existential-ontological way, *the phenomenon of authentic self-choice highlights, in the most radical way, the metaphysical selfhood of Dasein, and this means transcendence as transcending one's own being, transcending being as being-with others, and transcending beings in the sense of nature and items of use*"; Martin Heidegger, *The Metaphysical Foundations of Logic*, trans. Michael Heim (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1992), 190 (italics added).

22. Heidegger, *MFL*, 214.

23. Heidegger, *MFL*, 139 (italics added). Heidegger goes on the claim that "This *freedom of with-one-another*, however, presupposes the possibility of the self-determination of a being with the characteristics of *Dasein* as such, and it is *a problem how Dasein can exist as essentially free in the freedom of the factical ties of being-with-one-another*" (Heidegger, *MFL*, 139; italics added). While this is precisely the problem Marcuse claims is of no interest to Heidegger, it is clear that Heidegger recognizes that *it is one that cannot be worked out from the standpoint of fundamental ontology alone* (i.e., it would be necessary to attend to the factical conditions in question, which is the task of metontology).

24. Herbert Günther points to various examples found in Dzogchen Buddhist texts of non-conventional linguistic strategies to provide a simultaneous mode of disclosure (e.g., using only root syllables without any grammatical case marking or nominalizing particles such that each syllable becomes, in effect, a verb or adverb, reading nouns as compound verbs, etc.). I am grateful to Samuel White for making me aware of Günther's work. See Herbert V. Günther, *Kindly Bent to Ease Us: Mind* (Berkeley, CA: Dharma, 1975); *The Teachings of Padmasambhava* (Leiden: Brill, 1996).

25. It is important to stress, in this context, that this claim does not imply that the field of politics must be relegated to a "subsystem," which the proponents of the political paradigm rightly guard against.

26. Most readings of Heidegger emphasize its momentary, episodic character captured by the term *Augenblick*, sometimes translated as "moment of vision." While this is a topic for another chapter, in my view, this is a distraction from the more fundamental claim about authenticity *qua* mode of everydayness. That is to say, it must, in principle, be possible to make the "moment" inform and pervade our entire being-in-the-world, an idea that has far more radical, even utopian potential, than the episodic understanding of authenticity. Indeed, it is only from this perspective that we open up the possibility for (more or less) authenticity-enabling forms of life, rather than condemning sociality to an objecthood that can be temporarily destabilized, only to become reified again, *ad infinitum*.

27. In truth, the quotation from the *Hermeneutics of Facticity* cited from the outset reveals that the aim of fundamental ontology is precisely to liberate, rather than impose or coerce, by indicating to *Dasein* the possibility of a "radical awareness of self." This implies, however, that there be a *fact of the matter* regarding who *Dasein* is not, and what the source of the reification and alienation that is "plaguing" it *actually is*.

28. Heidegger, *BT*, 311, 361.

29. For example, Heidegger argues that the status of *Dasein* as a formal indicator only entitles him to the claim that "[i]f *Dasein* in fact exists, then its existence has

the structure of being-in-the-world, i.e., *Dasein* is, in its essence, being-in-the-world, whether or not it in fact exists" (Heidegger, *MFL*, 169).

30. Martin Heidegger, *The Phenomenology of Intuition and Expression*, trans. Tracy Colony (New York: Continuum, 2010), 65 (italics added).

31. Martin Heidegger, *Zollikon Seminars*: *Protocols—Conversations—Letters*, trans. F. Mayr and R. Askay (Evanston, IL: Northwestern University Press, 2001), 207 (emphasis added).

32. Marcuse, *Heideggerian Marxism*, 168. Of course, this is not the only problem Marcuse attributed to fundamental ontology. Dealing with the others, however, is beyond the scope of this chapter.

33. Heidegger, *HF*, 11–12.

34. See, for example, Heidegger, *BT*, 311, 360, 362, and Marcuse, *Heideggerian Marxism*, 45.

35. "If truth is thus related to human existence through validity, this relation receives its existential significance through a phenomenon that is often over-looked: *appropriation* [*die Aneignung*]. Truth demands by its very nature—however independent from all human existence the being of its conditions may be—*an appropriation through human existence. Truths are not sought out and secured, not grasped through the labor of knowing then to be tucked away somewhere and preserved in abstracto; rather, in the knowledge of truth lies the demand for its appropriation. . . .* Appropriation in no way constitutes the being of truth (the true conditions), but it does constitute the purpose [*Sinn*] of truth. *The 'to what end' of truth is realized only in appropriation*" (Marcuse, *Heideggerian Marxism*, 35; italics added).

36. Marcuse, *Heideggerian Marxism*, 14 (italics added).

37. Heidegger, *BT*, 30–31; Heidegger, *HF*, 13. From the standpoint of fundamental ontology, however, "leaping ahead" can be identified neither with idly waiting for a transformational event to occur nor with strategic action oriented toward immediate, tangible results; the latter would represent a return to a causal theory of agency that is a holdover from Marxist-Hegelian metaphysics and the apogee of anthropocentrism. This is a false dichotomy that revolves around the "activity-passivity" distinction and continues to plague the landscape of left-Heideggerian thought. For a systematic account of the way in which Heidegger overcomes this dichotomy—inherited from German Idealism—in his account of selfhood and agency in *Being and Time*, see Mertel, "Liberating the Self-Relation from Reification and Alienation."

38. As such, metontology is the site in which the question of ethics, among others, "may be properly raised for the first time" (Heidegger, *BT*, 157).

39. Heidegger, *MFL*, 206. Moreover, as Heidegger continues, "Since being is there only insofar as beings are already there, *fundamental ontology has in it the latent tendency toward a primordial, metaphysical transformation* which becomes possible only when being is understood in its whole problematic. The *intrinsic necessity for ontology to turn back to its point of origin* [in the ontic] *can be clarified by reference to the primal phenomenon of human existence: the being 'man' understands being*" (Heidegger, *BT*, 156; italics added). The ultimate fulfillment of fundamental ontology, therefore, depends upon its appropriation and application by regional ontologies and *a fortiori* by *Dasein* in concrete socio-historical circumstances.

40. Heidegger, *MFL*, 156.

41. Heidegger, *ZS*, 154 (italics added).

42. Patrik Aspers and Sebastian Kohl, "Heidegger and Socio-Ontology: Sociological Reading,"*Journal of Classical Sociology* 13, no. 4 (2013): 487–508.

43. For a detailed account of Heidegger's tripartite distinction between undifferentiated, authentic/owned, inauthentic/unowned modes and their social-ontological import, see Mertel, "Liberating the Self-Relation from Reification and Alienation."

44. Heidegger, *BT*, 167.

45. Marcuse accused Heidegger of not being concerned with the *Dasein* and *das Man* of capitalism: "How does the individual situate himself and see himself in capitalism—at a certain stage of capitalism, under socialism, as a member of this or that class, and so on? This entire dimension is absent. . . . The *Man* (the anonymous anyone) is no substitute for the social reality" (Marcuse, *Heideggerian Marxism*, 169). The account of formal indication provided here clearly shows that the *existentiale* were never intended to serve as surrogates for social reality. Moreover, the fact that Heidegger himself did not pursue the question of the historical modification of *Dasein* and "Man" under the conditions of capitalism is irrelevant: it does not undermine the claim that such an enterprise is required by the core philosophical commitments of fundamental ontology as an emancipatory enterprise, as if Heidegger's omissions, blind spots, and so on must also be ours. As such, Marcuse was never able to disentangle the philosophical from the biographical: nobody "owns" fundamental ontology, including Heidegger himself.

46. The line of thought pursued in the following three paragraphs is based on Mertel, "Situando la *Seingeschichte*," 6–8.

47. Heidegger, *BT*, 436 (italics added).

48. For our purposes here, we are sticking to the formal-indicative character of ontological concepts and, therefore, leaving open what an authentic response might look like. In other words, we are not, for example, bound to adopting Heidegger's own account of "thinking." I gloss thinking as a historically inflected modification of appropriation, which encompasses self, other, and world in Mertel, "Heidegger, Technology and Education."

49. Although this cannot be pursued further here, it thus is worth noting that it is possible to understand these mutually interdependent and complementary perspectives as a way of reconciling the perspectives of system and lifeworld, a problem that has plagued the Marxist-Hegelian tradition until today and was the original impulse behind the project of phenomenological Marxism.

50. I borrow the expression "ethical thread" from Grondin, "The Ethical and Young-Hegelian Motives in Heidegger's *Hermeneutics of Facticity*."

The Dawning Ethics of Aleatory Materialism

A Study of Marx and Michel Henry

Max Schaefer

There is a latent ethical spirit to Marx's understanding of the material life of the human being and the capitalist society in which it labors. Without employing these terms exactly, Marx characterizes capitalism as an ethically and ontologically unjust system that alienates the working class and prevents the fulfillment and flourishing of human nature. Famously, though, Marx does not explicitly draw out or otherwise elaborate upon the ethical nature and potential of his thought.

In order to gain further clarity on the ethical spirit of the material life of the human subject, and on how this life may yet undermine the oppressive and exploitative practices of our day and realize its nature, this chapter will begin by seeking to understand Marx's hesitations with explicitly engaging in a study of the ethical issues that beset human life within capitalist society, calling attention to the eudaimonistic ethical theory that his work implicitly harbors. At the same time, we will look to seize upon any elements in Marx's understanding of human nature that appear questionable, and which may thus threaten to weaken the effectiveness of his ethical account of human flourishing.

To gain clarity on human nature and flourishing as they are experienced and lived, we will turn to the work of French phenomenologist Michel Henry. It will be argued that Henry's work reveals that Marx, following the spirit of the Enlightenment, places an unwarranted faith in the ability of reason and

the objectifying acts of consciousness to bring about the flourishing of life. For what is most forcefully revealed in Henry's work, we argue, is that the non-objectifying drives of bodily life play a much larger role in founding and guiding the normative actions of the subject than Marx cares to admit. While suggesting that Henry furthers our understanding of human life and flourishing inasmuch as he draws attention to the essential role of affectivity in determining the actions of the individual, we will find that his view of these matters remains premised upon the Enlightenment views of self-mastery and progress, and, no less important, that his analysis of life does not in fact support his conclusion that human life and its fulfillment do not relate to or depend upon the world and the objectifying acts of consciousness that unfold therein.

In our view, it is by constructively rereading Marx in light of Henry's insights into affectivity, and by drawing out what Louis Althusser sees as the aleatory materialism that is implicitly contained within his account of the dialectical movement of history, that a more sound and robust understanding of life can be returned to the world. In so doing, we offer a conception of a material life-in-the-world that is no longer premised upon the Enlightenment faith in reason, self-mastery, and progress, and which provides a more incisive understanding of human flourishing and how it may come about.

THE LATENT ETHICS OF MARX

From 1845 onward, Marx expresses an open hostility toward ethical discourse.[1] As he maintains that it is the life-activity of the subject that, in its historical and material conditions, determines consciousness, he views all ideas—ethical or otherwise—as derived from the material conditions of life.[2] Insofar as history has thus far been one of class antagonism, exploitation, and the dehumanization of workers, it follows on this view that all forms of ethical consciousness must reflect the material interests of their time, specifically those of the ruling (bourgeois) class,[3] and that, to varying extents, they tend to reinforce rather than revolutionize the exploitative class structures on which they depend for their own survival. Within the capitalist framework of the time, for example, Marx notes that the bourgeoisie can argue that the current distribution of the gains of labor (i.e., income, the goods produced, etc.) is just, and that they themselves are entirely justified in laying claim to this position under the present system. It is only with the dissolution of class antagonism, Marx says, that the working class can transcend this "muck of ages," these deep-seated biases in the dominant forms of consciousness, and "become fitted to found society anew."[4]

The question then arises as to how this might be best accomplished. According to Marx, socialist arguments that depend upon ethical critiques of the exploitative and exclusionary nature of capitalist society risk occluding an analysis of the constitutive yet contradictory structures of capitalist society with which workers have to contend on a daily basis. While early stirrings of socialist thinking were dominated by idealized, ethical alternatives to capitalism, Marx believed they did not adequately examine what could actually be achieved under the present circumstances. This is a crucial point for Marx. As he states in the eleventh of the *Theses on Feuerbach*, "[t]he philosophers have only *interpreted* the world in various ways; the point is to *change* it."[5] This means that we need to understand the world if we are to change it, rather than interpret it so as to better reconcile ourselves with it.[6] This suggests that the world cannot be changed by simply engaging in an ethical or otherwise theoretical criticism of what exists. To bring about such change, we must first understand the inner nature and essential structures of our current situation in the world, and only then, on this basis, can it be duly transformed by concrete material action. As he believed that ethical discourse threatens or at least takes away from such an analysis, which is a necessary condition for revolutionary political action, Marx claims that it must be understood as a limited and even dangerous tool in such political affairs.

Indeed, in observing the nineteenth-century revolutionary militants of his time, Marx finds that, however well intentioned, their concentration on moral matters such as justice tend to muddle their heads and lead them to fashion shortsighted critiques of the capitalist system in which they find themselves. As James Daly notes, Marx observes that many of the moral critiques of his time, for example, that of "the crude communists," tend to overlook the total (or ontological) injustice that is undergone by the proletariat, which consists in the capitalist system's elimination of human relations, of relations that would be "worthy of their human nature,"[7] in favor of a more narrow concern over ensuring that workers receive a fair wage within that system (i.e., mercantile justice).[8] In so doing, Marx points out that these ethical discourses of his time tacitly accept and sustain the bourgeois domination and exploitation of workers. By merely seeking to ensure that there is a more equitable distribution of the fruits of their labor, these ethical discourses implicitly accept the prevailing system's reduction of human relations to wage relations, which enslaves human beings by forcing them to turn their labor-power—that is, their ability to work—into a mere commodity that they must sell on the market economy in order to ensure their survival.[9]

Marx's disdain for morality is thus a strategic decision more than anything else.[10] For the reasons discussed earlier, Marx did not believe that the moral discourses of his time were in and of themselves fit to sufficiently analyze and address the essential conditions that were responsible for bringing about

and sustaining the injustices that afflicted workers in their everyday lives. Yet none of this means that Marx engages in an outright rejection of the validity of ethical claims, or even that socialism is not itself without an ethical character. Marx's description of capitalism as an essentially violent system that destroys the human essence and steals surplus value from the labor of the working class, signals that his analysis contains an ethical dimension. The communist society of the future, in which the muck and violence of the capitalist political economy are thrown off, is itself not without an ethical component, as Marx makes most clear when he famously states that, at its height, and as a matter of necessity, this system must operate according to a principle of distributive justice: "from each according to ability to each according to needs."[11]

While Marx himself never explicitly lays out this ethics, it is there in his work, even if only in embryonic form.[12] This latent ethics stands very much in the Aristotelian tradition of *eudaimonia* (i.e., happiness or human flourishing). Marx's eudaimonistic ethical theory is rooted in his analysis of human nature, and it is his understanding of the essence of human life that shapes his descriptive and normative account as to how, under the present circumstances, this flourishing of the human spirit can actually be achieved.[13] In the *Economic and Philosophic Manuscripts of 1844*, Marx states that

> [m]an is directly a *natural being*. As a natural being and as a living natural being he is on the one hand furnished with *natural powers of life*—he is an *active* natural being. These forces exist in him as tendencies and abilities—as *impulses*. On the other hand, as a natural, corporeal, sensuous objective being he is a *suffering*, conditioned and limited creature, like animals and plants. That is to say, the *objects* of his impulses exist outside him, as *objects* independent of him; yet these objects are *objects* of his *need*—essential *objects*, indispensable to the manifestation and confirmation of his essential powers.[14]

On this account, then, human nature is rooted in the subject's sensuous life—in its needs, drives, feelings and so on. This includes natural or biological drives for self-preservation, sex, food, shelter, rest, other human beings (i.e., sociality), which are common to all animals. Yet Marx also maintains that the human being is driven to achieve the "all-round development of all his abilities, including, for example, the ability to think."[15] The human being is driven by a need for its own personal or spiritual development, for the development of the full range of its abilities through a plethora of pursuits.

Similar to Aristotle, though, Marx maintains that what ultimately distinguishes the human being from the animal is its conscious, free, rational, and social life-activity. Whereas animals are fully absorbed in their drives and life-activity, human beings can freely take a stance on their life-activity; they can turn it into an object of their will and consciousness. In Marx's eyes,

this gives the creative, productive activity of the human being a distinctive character. Because the subject is able to take a stance on her instinctual life and turn it into the object of her regard, her productive activity is not entirely determined by her physical needs, but rather is something that she can plan and rationally control, and which she can carry out for particular reasons or purposes—to create a fine work of art, for instance.[16]

Indeed, Marx affords a dubious privilege to these objectifying acts of consciousness. In his view, it is these rational, objectifying acts that constitute the normative framework of the subject's lived experience, and which largely guide her in her engagements with the world. That is to say, it is the objectifying, interpretive acts of consciousness that enable the subject to evaluate and form judgments about the world, which lead her in this or that direction, and which inform her of how she is faring. That being said, though it is customary within the history of Western thought to afford such privilege to reason over instinctive life, it should be asked whether this assumption is in fact justified by the experiential facts of the matter.

As the preceding reflections have already begun to suggest, though, while Marx acknowledges that the subject possesses this general nature, he also maintains that human nature is to some extent shaped and transformed by its environment, by the historical, material conditions of the relations of production in which particular individuals are situated.[17] There is a relation of dialectical interdependence between human nature and the material conditions of its productive activity: human nature determines the way in which the life of the individual is played out, while simultaneously being to some extent determined by the material conditions of the historical situation in which the living individual finds herself.

In this case, human happiness or flourishing necessarily consists in a way of life—in specific relations of production—that wholly fulfills this rational, creative and social nature of the living individual. It consists, in other words, in the realization of a rational, creative, communal form of production (i.e., communism), in which the subject rationally takes control of herself and the world. The flourishing of life therefore depends upon the liberation of the working class from the alienation imposed upon it by capitalism, and from its ideological illusions and myths. When the objective conditions for this emancipation are in place, and the true interests of the working class are communicated to it by way of a workers' party, the rational nature of the subject being what it is, Marx thought that the working class would invariably follow its rational interest and pursue its genuine class interests. Marx's understanding of human flourishing is thus premised upon an optimistic belief in reason and progress, in the belief that scientific rationality and its technical advances can gradually overcome natural necessity and all manners of myth and ideology.

HENRY'S DREAM OF HAPPINESS

While developing Marx's latent eudaimonistic ethical theory, Henry's phenomenology of life gives us reason to doubt the Enlightenment belief in reason that underlies and orients it. It does so by drawing out the essentially subjective and affective nature of the materiality of life, and by arguing that it is the non-objectifying drives of life, and not the rational, objectifying acts of consciousness, which forge the normative framework of experience, and which are ultimately responsible for guiding the actions of the subject and for bringing about the flourishing of its inner nature. In fact, for all his differences with him, Henry views Marx as one of the few precursors to his own phenomenology of life.[18] The true genius of Marx, Henry tells us, is that he glimpses that the being of the subject consists in its distinctive kind of praxis (i.e., as creative and social).[19] In his eyes, though, Marx does not adequately seize upon and develop his nascent insight into the nature of this living praxis, which is to say, into the way in which it occurs and is experienced (i.e., appears). While Marx regards the action of the subject as founded upon its sensuous and instinctive life, owing to his faith in reason, Henry maintains that he does not grasp the true nature and potentiality of this sensible life, and so, of praxis itself. By attempting to do just this, Henry's work offers a corrective to Marx's questionable subordination of sensible life to reason, one that, according to Henry, fulfills the untapped potential of the spirit of Marx's own thought.

In Henry's view, what Marx's work points toward, without fully developing, is that the ecstatic (transcendent) appearing of the world, which is opened and made possible by the intentional directedness of consciousness, is itself founded upon the radically immanent, non-intentional and non-objectifying praxis or movement of the bodily life of the individual.[20] In other words, Henry believes that Marx's work implicitly reveals that the ecstatic appearing of the world, and the intentional and conceptual forms of knowledge it makes possible, are founded upon the immanent appearing of life, understood as the movement by which the individual first affects and knows herself in the flesh.

In this case, the phenomenological material or reality of life consists in nothing other than the immanent movement of this transcendental affectivity. The "material" reality Henry has in mind is thus not the physical matter or objective reality that is studied by the sciences, but rather the phenomenological life of the individual, the first-person self-experience of what it feels like to undergo the dynamism of life.

Indeed, since this phenomenological life of the subject is said to function as the absolute foundation of all appearance and knowledge, Henry claims that it does not depend upon or relate to anything other than itself. The

transcendental life of the subject is a radically autonomous, generative (i.e., productive) movement that continuously brings itself into being as an end-less array of affective tonalities.[21] By construing life in this way, Henry tries to radically divorce the transcendental from the empirical, the flesh from the body, the non-intentional from the intentional. As other commentators have noted, what we find in Henry is thus a hyper-transcendentalism, an angelism of the flesh, such that the immanent appearing of life is entirely distinct from and independent of the ecstatic appearing of the world.[22] This leaves us with a bifurcation of the two modes of appearing, where life founds the world without ever appearing therein.[23]

In laying out an account of this angelic flesh, Henry provides a strikingly detailed and insightful account of the essential role of this affective life in determining the nature of praxis and in bringing about the normativity of experience. Building upon Marx's insight into the human need for personal development, for the development of all of its abilities, Henry argues that life's original and all-founding impulse consists in a drive for self-growth or self-enhancement. That is, life is at heart driven to expand and intensify the ways in which it feels and experiences itself. This means that, as Henry notes, "[e]ven when it [life] functions with the apparent designs of procuring some advantage or removing some obstacle [e.g., diminishing the hunger it feels], the ultimate motivation behind its effort is the happiness that it experiences through the experience of its force."[24]

Since the reality of life is said to be exhausted by this non-objectifying drive, Henry finds that the reality of action consists in nothing other than this movement of affectivity. As he explains in *Marx*,

> Imagine a runner on the stadium track. As the object of intuition, as empirical, objective, sensuous, natural phenomenon, his race is there for each and every one. But the spectators look on and do nothing. It is therefore not the empirical intuition of the race, its objective appearance, that can define it and constitute its reality; it is nothing but its appearance. The reality of the race lies in the subjectivity of the person running, of the lived experience that is given to him alone and that constitutes him as an individual, as this individual who is running, as a "determined" individual, to speak as Marx does. *This is what is signified by the decisive affirmation of the first thesis* [of Feuerbach]*, according to which practice is subjective.* Because practice is subjective, theory, which is always the theory of an object, cannot reach the reality of this practice, what it is in-itself and for-itself, precisely its subjectivity, but can only represent this to itself in such a way that this representation necessarily leaves outside itself the real being of practice, the actuality of doing. Theory does nothing.[25]

On this account, the reality of action consists in the immanent way in which the subject feels or lives-through its movement. It consists, in other words, in

the original knowledge of the flesh, in its practical know-how.[26] Thought and all manners of sensible or intelligible intuition cannot access the reality of the runner's action inasmuch as this immanent realm is entirely refractory to the distance or transcendence of the world that structures and makes thought and intuition possible. According to Henry, given their ecstatic structure, all that thought and intuition can do is tear the immanent reality of life from itself and reveal things, not as they really are in themselves, but as exterior, illusory images or signs. Hence Henry's depiction of the world as an extreme unreality. The reality of action forever remains an invisible and singular self-feeling that can only be experienced and known within the immanent self-feeling of the individual herself.[27]

That being said, while Henry regards the world as an illusion, he doesn't deny that everything that is experienced therein is experienced as real within our flesh. The truth of the external world simply does not belong to it. Rather, it consists in the way in which it is endured (i.e., suffered and enjoyed) in our flesh. In this case, when the runner sees herself frantically running, when she feels her limbs strain via the kinaesthetic sensations of her sensible (worldly) body, or when she thinks about and evaluates the terrain just ahead of her, though these sensations and higher-order concepts are unreal as worldly contents, they are lived in a real way as the non-objectifying self-affection of our flesh. Everything in the world, even conceptual contents, such as sunset, friend, or triangle, are lived-through as a non-objectifying feeling.[28]

Deepening Henry's clarification of the potentiality of this living praxis is his insistence that life enjoys an absolute priority over intentionality. Life enjoys an absolute priority over intentionality not only in that it founds the latter but also in that it makes possible the normativity of experience, and unilaterally drives all of the subject's actions. As Henry writes,

> life itself knows what it should do. . . . It does not know what it should do through rational knowledge but in its own way—not through the discovery of an objective field of quantifiable and calculable phenomena but through the irrecusable experience of its desire and its passion. Life leads individuals to work in order to feed themselves; it leads couples to be formed and societies to exist. Life is the true Reason. It assigns specific goals to human beings. It has initially constructed these goals in them, and they reside in the irresistible movement of their drives and their love—in the movement of life.[29]

With this, Henry acknowledges that the non-objectifying drives of the subject, which strive for the enhancement of their own power, are themselves more than capable of producing the goals that spur the subject onto action. In terms of how these actions fare in satisfying the drives in question, the ensuing pleasure or displeasure that is undergone within the flesh of the individual

will designate certain actions and things in the world as useful or useless, good or bad, permissible or impermissible, and thereby establish the norms and standards for action. In this way, the pulsional life of the subject is able to steer the subject through the world, without the assistance of objectifying, interpretive acts of consciousness and its rational planning.

In coming to this finding, Henry undermines the faith that Marx and much of Western philosophy places in reason.[30] Not only are the non-objectifying drives of life more than capable of producing the normative character of experience and directing the subject through the world, but, given their absolute priority over intentionality, as our everyday experience itself seems to suggest, these drives cannot be controlled by the subject's rational thought processes.

This forces us to reconsider the way in which human flourishing might be achieved. Despite Marx's attempt to wed flourishing and self-realization to rational self-control, it must be acknowledged that the flourishing of the subject—that is, its participation in practices that fulfill its need for self-growth—is something that lies beyond the purview and power of reason. The realization of one's key potentials is not something that any rational knowledge or insight can in and of itself bring about. Life "blows where it wills," as Henry says.[31]

While this gives the impression that human flourishing is something fortuitous, something that happens all of a sudden for no apparent reason, Henry's actual account of how this unfolds suggests that, generally speaking, this is not the case. Though it is life that, in its absolute priority, determines the course of the subject's actions, Henry's study of how the flourishing of the human essence takes place reveals that this is a process that in some way needs the world. In his study of Marx and the cultural world more generally, it becomes plain that Henry acknowledges, without explicitly stating as much, that the things of the world play an essential role in the growth (and impoverishment) of life. In a development of Marx, Henry finds that the organization of work around surplus value rather than use value, and the subsequent degeneration of human relations (i.e., creative communal modes of production) to those of wage relations, fails to fulfil the needs of the living subject and to release its energy. As such, such relations of production render the energy of life a burden it no longer cares to endure.[32] Life becomes weak and sickly—or barbarous, to use Henry's term—in the sense that it now turns against itself and becomes bent on negating or otherwise destroying itself by devolving into increasingly excessive and incoherent forms of action.[33]

By the same token, Henry acknowledges that objects in the world, and the intentional acts through which they are constituted, play an essential, positive role in the enhancement of life. In his study of the abstract art of Russian painter and art theorist Wassily Kandinsky, for instance, Henry

makes it clear that the sensible qualities (i.e., colors, lines, shapes, etc.) of such artworks—as an exemplar for things in general—and the intentional relations through which the subject accesses them, are experienced within the subject's flesh as an affective movement or tonality. When the sensible qualities of the art-object are arranged in a skilled manner to evoke a particular affective theme, it intensifies the life of the individual by carrying it to its apogee, where life experiences itself on its own basis, in which it is lost in this "'impossible happiness' that Kandinsky calls 'ecstasy.'"[34] Insofar as this is the case, it must be said that aesthetic engagements are ethical in that they realize life's need to grow and allow it to feel more, sense more, and so on. Hence "[d]ance, for example, is an ethical form of walking and an expression of bodily mastery."[35] According to Henry, it is startling affective experiences such as these that can shake the subject from her barbarous forgetting of life and allow her to be reborn to life, and to a creative, communal way of life that is better able to rise to the heights of her energy and to fulfil her needs.

In this case, the intentional acts and the things to which they are related play an essential role in the flourishing and impoverishment of life. While life evidently always takes the initiative in calling the subject back from barbarism and returning it to its basis in life, nevertheless, human happiness in some way depends upon the subject actively taking up a creative, communal form of production within the world. Human happiness depends upon the world being arranged in a certain way, and on the subject participating in certain relations with things and others.[36]

In this sense, Henry joins Marx in insisting that the flourishing of life involves the subject properly assuming her role as the master of the world, and in shaping and arranging the world in a way that best suits her needs. Though Henry moves away from the Enlightenment conviction that self-realization involves rational self-mastery, he adheres to its belief that self-realization involves the subject's properly realizing its vocation as the master of the world. Indeed, once the individual reunites with her basis in life and realizes this calling, there is every indication that Henry believes this state to be a permanent one, and that such an individual participates in something of a blessed life, wherein she pursues the continual improvement of life as a whole. However unwittingly, Henry thus shares in the Enlightenment faith in progress, only one that is driven by affectivity rather than reason.

A DREAM DENIED: UNDOING OF THE ANGELIC MATERIALITY OF LIFE

Be that as it may, if we acknowledge that intentionality is essential to the various movements of life, then the question arises as to what this means

for Henry's conception of life as a radical immanence that does not relate to or depend upon anything outside of itself. If intentionality tears everything from itself and renders it an unreality, how could it and its objective works play a positive role of any kind in the growth of the self? For that matter, given its extreme unreality, how can intentionality function as a factor in the accomplishment of barbarism? As Christina Gschwandtner states, "[i]f the world were purely an illusion in the extreme sense Henry occasionally suggests, it could not have the power of barbarity and evil he also claims for it. There would be no need to fight it as intensely as he does."[37] The problem is one of which Henry seems to have been (at least to some extent) aware: "But how affectivity is something that understands, how it is able to grasp and to live transcendent significations, this is what must precisely be explained, especially if, as we have claimed, nothing is so repugnant to the essence of feeling as transcendence, if the deployment of a horizon of understanding is that which is most foreign to feeling."[38] To properly account for these matters, it would be necessary to detail how the immanent appearing of life gives rise to the ecstatic appearing of the world. However, Henry does not provide a sufficient explanation of this. It ultimately remains a mystery how life, conceived as a radical immanence, without any fissure or alterity, can possibly found intentionality and the transcendence of the world. The fact that, as we have now made plain, intentionality plays an essential role in all of the transformations of life only reinforces the very real need to provide a more sufficient account of this matter.

Furthermore, though Henry's work is helpful in that it draws out the historically overlooked role that the non-objectifying self-sensing of bodily life plays in the constitution of the world, it should be asked whether this sensibility is in fact able to guide the subject in all of the complex issues that are involved in fashioning a work of art, or in assisting others in a charitable or otherwise ethical manner, or in simply living out our daily lives. As Frédéric Seyler points out, "it is difficult to see how the . . . recognition of immanent life would translate itself *univocally*" when certain complex decisions must be made on either an individual or a collective level.[39] Though Henry successfully establishes that the non-objectifying drives of the subjective body play a more prominent role in guiding the subject in its constitution of the world than has traditionally been supposed, further consideration of the experiential facts of the matter indicate that there must be at least certain limits on its ability to steer the subject and to translate itself into intentionality.

This suggests that the intentional acts of the subject cannot be wholly reduced to affectivity, and that, as Seyler similarly comments, the former, while being founded in affectivity, must nevertheless possess a certain "*relative autonomy*."[40] Indeed, upon recalling its basis in life, can the subject really just become a vehicle for the will of the latter, and carry on, as Henry appears

to suggest, in an uninterrupted, progressive fulfillment of life's primal needs? Henry's response to the sickness of life is facile. As important a role as the primal sense of life may play in our lives, it would seem to be the case that thought and reason must also be involved in steering the subject through some of life's more complex situations, at least to some extent. In short, the experiential facts of the matter indicate that intentionality must play a larger role in the life of the living individual than Henry suggests.

However, Seyler himself merely states this point, and no explanation is given as to how Henry's thought might accommodate this finding. If, in its absolute priority, life unilaterally founds and drives intentionality, such that everything that appears within its visible order is ultimately but an unreal reflection of the subject's affective lived-through experience, then Henry's thought cannot tolerate any autonomy on the part of intentionality. For the intentional acts of the subject to enjoy any such autonomy, it would be necessary for life to admit of some kind of fissure or transcendence.

So far as our firsthand experience requires us to acknowledge that the subject's intentional acts have at least a certain relative autonomy over affectivity, and Henry's work falls short in accommodating this reality, it must be said that his phenomenology of life fails to give due weight to the role of intentionality in the life of the living subject. That is to say, Henry fails to duly recognize that the intentional acts wherein the subject interprets or in some way takes a position on things themselves stand as an essential structure of life and its reality and that they have a significant role in deciding the subject's course of action.

In order to remedy this, and to properly account for the essential role that intentionality plays in life, and that Henry's own analyses actually call for, it would be necessary to dissolve the strict division and heterogeneity between the non-intentional affectivity of life and the intentional display of consciousness, and to concede that life must itself possess an ecstatic formal structure. It would be necessary for material phenomenology to recognize that the radical separation that Henry imposes between affectivity and intentionality, life and the world, is a sign of an inadequate determination of appearing.

The result of our study is thus clear and undeniable: despite some of his conclusions, Henry's own analyses, as well as the things themselves, reveal that the life of the subject cannot wholly coincide with itself but must admit of some internal transcendence or self-differentiation. Consequently, life must shed its angelic skin, it must shed the radical immanence that separates it from the world and which renders it indifferent to anything other than itself. In so doing, though, it must also give up the romantic dream that goes along with it, the dream of a life that is independent and unsullied by the vicissitudes and limitations of the world, the embrace and mastery of which might in and of itself usher us onto ever-new heights of happiness.

TOWARD THE FLOURISHING OF LIFE'S
ALEATORY MATERIALISM

While Henry's thought remains helpful in drawing out the potentiality of affectivity—i.e., its ability to found the norms of experience and to drive the actions of the subject—that Marx and so much of the history of Western thought has overlooked or at least downplayed, in light of the preceding reflections it is necessary to acknowledge that the material of life is always already open to and dependent upon the physical material of the world. In turn, an account of the flourishing of life must necessarily take into consideration the nature of life's original and ineluctable bond with the world.

To begin to get a sense for this, we would do well to turn to the logic of Marx's dialectical materialism. As we already know, Marx treats the subject as historically and materially embedded in the world. On his account, the subject stands in a dialectical relation with the material world as its opposite. As such, nothing is given immediately in a pure self-presence. Everything is relational and mediately given. Everything contains contradictory aspects, and it is this dialectical tension or conflict that drives the historical development of life.

According to Marx, the subject here finds herself driven to actualize her human essence, as a being who belongs together with the natural world, by achieving a certain self-identity or fullness of presence, which she does by mastering and taking control of her interrelation with the world through her reason and through ever more effective forms of labor and industry.[41] As we have begun to see, in Marx's view, this is finally realized in communism. It is with communism that the free, rational, and social activity of humanity achieves control over the natural world and that there is thus a true resolution of the conflict between humanity and world, between freedom and necessity, and between the individual and him- or herself.

However, the insights we have drawn from Henry concerning the essential role of the irrational, non-objectifying impulses in driving the normative action of the subject require us to acknowledge that this dream of happiness, this dream of becoming a fully self-contained entity by rationally mastering oneself and the world, is one that can never be realized. While it may be the case that the living subject can, as it matures, increasingly reflect on and examine the consistency and the consequences of its impulses, and thus decide whether to deny or postpone some of its impulsive tendencies, it can never do so entirely.

In light of this, it should be acknowledged that while the non-objectifying drives make possible the normative character of experience, and guide the lower-level perceptual acts of consciousness, the rational, objectifying acts

of consciousness can themselves guide some of the individual's higher-order perceptual acts. This leaves us with a more nuanced view of the matter than we find in either Henry or Marx. It enables us to join Henry in acknowledging the affective basis of the norms of experience, as well as the uncontrollable nature of some of the drives, while at the same time not going so far as to deny, as Henry himself does, that reason possesses a relative autonomy, and that it is able to have at least some influence over the actions of the subject.

That being said, it is not only what, considered abstractly, we might refer to as the subjective "side" of the living individual's original bond with the natural world that precludes her from achieving some sense of mastery over herself and the world. For there is an implicit moment of non-identity within Marx's account of dialectical materialism. In Marx, there is a sense in which there always remains something in the object that cannot be seized upon or thematized in the concept. There is always something in the object that the subject cannot fully comprehend.[42] This negative moment in the object helps prevent the subject from achieving any perfect self-presence. As such, though Marx does not explicitly draw this out himself, his analyses themselves betray the fact that the relation between subject and object operates according to a dialectical logic of non-identity, in which both "terms" mutually motivate and modify one another, while always remaining irreducible to each other.[43] Therefore, the negative and transient moment of the object helps sustain the dialectical movement of history, which renders this process—that is, the interrelation between subject and object—one that is incomplete and open-ended.

Indeed, if we acknowledge, as Louis Althusser argues, that the dialectical contradictions we find in life are generally intricate and operate according to a multiple causality, in the sense that they are made up of a wealth of competing and unstable ideological, socio-political and economic practices,[44] then it is necessary to acknowledge that "'true' materialism, the materialism best suited to Marxism, is *aleatory materialism*," a materialism of contingent encounters.[45] If this is the case, then the productive movement of life, in its open-endedness, is not bent on the progressive fulfillment of a pre-given human essence but is essentially aleatory and non-teleological. In our case, this means that the movement of life is irreducible to any given order and that it is always open to being upset by the rebellion of the flesh and the alterity of its unknown and indeterminate future in the world. Determined as it is by the irreducible conflicts of life-in-the-world, the praxis of the subject is changing and unpredictable in its very nature, and, as such, it always threatens to upset the present.

In turn, this account of the aleatory materialism of life suggests a process of flourishing that is no longer bent on the accomplishment of a perfect self-presence through the progressive mastery of oneself and the world.

Since the praxis of the subject is determined by the irreducible tensions of life-in-the-world, the subject can no longer be understood as the master of the world, as that which constitutes and orders the world as its independent ground. Indeed, neither the subject nor the world can be considered the self-determining ground of the other. Both stand in a relation of mutual need with one another, one driven by the aforementioned dialectical logic of non-identity. Accordingly, the flourishing of life does not consist in progress, but in the reiteration of non-identity through the reconfiguration of its forms. It consists in those creative, communal practices that open the living individual onto uncharted plains of experience, and which thereby enhance the individual's ability to feel and think through the multiplicity of factors involved in her aleatory encounters.

At the same time, contrary to what Althusser suggests, this does not mitigate the need to engage in a dialectical analysis of the effects of this material process within one's current historical situation. If, as Marx's analysis of the conflicts of capitalism suggests, social relations only ever have meaning within one's particular historical situation, then it remains beneficial, even necessary, to engage in a dialectical analysis of the specific forms that the movement of life assumes within history.[46] Thus, as Michelle Mawhinney notes, while "any social 'totality' (a subject, class, an economy, a state, a community) must be recognized as a 'site' of ongoing *processes* rather than posited as an ontologically present and pre-given 'thing,'" it is also necessary to recognize that "these processes must be understood as historically 'bounded' in their effects. In these terms it is possible to speak of the homogenizing and totalizing *effects* of capitalism (even in terms of an 'inner logic') without positing these as expressions of some originating contradiction."[47]

The eudaimonistic ethics most befitting of the aleatory materialism of life thus consists, in part, in ways of life that acknowledge and promote the precarious movement of life, and which debunk the seemingly unified and stable social relations and identities of one's historical situation. In doing so, such practices unsettle the dominant and oppressive forms of consciousness of one's time, and open living subjects up to new forms of creative and social activity, which may better fulfill life's key potentials. Yet it also recognizes that, in order to most effectively open living individuals up to these other modes of production, it is no less necessary to undertake a dialectical analysis of the way in which historical issues such as capitalism actually operate under the current historical circumstances.[48]

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NOTES

1. In *The German Ideology* (1845–1846), Marx begins to lay out a social science that is not involved in moralizing, and which takes issue with what he regards as the abstract theorizing of philosophy. Within this work, we employ the terms "ethics" and "morality" interchangeably.

2. Karl Marx and Frederick Engels, "The German Ideology, Volume 1," in *Karl Marx, Frederick Engels: Collected Works*, vol. 5, *1845–1847,* ed. Maurice Cornforth et al., trans. W. Lough (London: Lawrence & Wishart, 1976), 36–37.

3. Karl Marx and Frederick Engels, "Manifesto of the Communist Party," in *Karl Marx, Frederick Engels: Collected Works*, vol. 6, *1845–1848*, ed. Natalia Karmanova et al. (London: Lawrence & Wishart, 1976), 503.

4. Marx and Engels, "The German Ideology, Volume 1," 53.

5. Karl Marx, "Theses on Feuerbach," in *Karl Marx, Frederick Engels: Collected Works*, vol. 5, *1845–1847,* ed. Maurice Cornforth et al., trans. W. Lough (London: Lawrence & Wishart, 1976), 5.

6. Lev Churbanov, "Preface," ed. Lev Golman, in *Karl Marx, Frederick Engels: Collected Works*, vol. 5, *1845–1847*, ed. Maurice Cornforth et al., trans. W. Lough (London: Lawrence & Wishart, 1976), xv.

7. Karl Marx, "Capital, Volume 3," in *Karl Marx: Selected Writings*, ed. David McLellan, trans. S. Moore and E. Aveling (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1977), 535.

8. James Daly, "Marx and Justice," *International Journal of Philosophical Studies* 8, no. 3 (2000): 354–55.

9. Ibid., 354. The dominant morality of the modern age, as Marx sees it, is thus one of separation or alienation, of egoistic, possessive individualism; it is one of self-centered values, wherein individuals are encouraged to engage in an endless pursuit and worship of financial gain and private property.

10. For more on this, see Lawrence Wilde, "Marx, Morality, and the Global Justice Debate," *Global Discourse: An Interdisciplinary Journal of Current Affairs and Applied Contemporary Thought* 2, no. 1 (2011): 26.

11. Karl Marx, *The First International and After*, ed. David Fernbach (London: Penguin, 1974), 347.

12. Lawrence Wilde argues that Marx provides an implicit ethics of liberation in *Ethical Marxism and Its Radical Critics* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 1998). For an overview of the secondary literature on the latent ethics in Marx's work, see Rodney G. Peffer, *Marxism, Morality, and Social Justice* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1990).

13. Norman Geras highlights the central role of human nature in Marx's work in general in *Marx and Human Nature: Refutation of a Legend* (London: Verso, 2016), 107–9.

14. Karl Marx, *Economic and Philosophic Manuscripts of 1844 and the Communist Manifesto*, trans. Martin Milligan (New York: Prometheus Books, 1988), 154.

15. Marx and Engels, "The German Ideology, Volume 1," 255, 292.

16. Marx, *Economic and Philosophic Manuscripts of 1844 and the Communist Manifesto*, 76–77.

17. Marx and Engels, "The German Ideology, Volume 1," 31–32.

18. Henry views nearly all of the history of Western thought as having over-looked the true nature of the subject. Apart from Marx, Descartes, Schopenhauer, Kierkegaard, Nietzsche, Freud, and Kandinsky figure among the rare few whose work at least offers us a fleeting, if still inadequate, glimpse of the true being of the subject.

19. Because of this, Henry insists that Marx's work is primarily philosophical in nature. See Tom Rockmore, "Preface," in *Marx: A Philosophy of Human Reality*, by Michel Henry (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1983), viii.

20. Henry also refers to this subjective body as the transcendental body, the living body, and the flesh. For more on Henry's account of this transcendental body, see his *Incarnation: A Philosophy of Flesh*, trans. Karl Hefty (Evanston, IL: Northwestern University Press, 2015), 148.

21. Especially in his later work, Henry argues that the finite life of the human subject is immanently engendered by an absolute and eternal life or God. However, as Andrew Sackin-Poll asks, "could not 'Life' simply be a secular experience of inner embodied life, without God? Could not such an immanent experience be closer to a Nietzschean conception of life (that is, after the 'death of God') than a Christian understanding of the living God? Could not the expression of life through suffering

articulate simply the profound bond riveting the self to itself in a profoundly passive relation to the *pathos* of life, like the early phenomenological works of Emmanuel Levinas?" Andrew Sackin-Poll, "Michel Henry and Metaphysics: An Expressive Ontology," *Open Theology* 5 (2019): 417. Henry's attempt to provide a phenomeno-logical proof for the existence of God fails to convince. We will not further address Henry's philosophy of religion within this chapter and will limit ourselves to an analysis of finite human life.

22. Rudolf Bernet makes this claim in "Christianity and Philosophy," *Continental Philosophy Review* 32, no. 3 (1999): 337. Cf. also Sébastien Laoureux, "Hyper-transcendentalism and Intentionality: On the Specificity of the 'Transcendental' in Material Phenomenology," *International Journal of Philosophical Studies* 17, no. 3 (2009): 389–400.

23. Since the immanent appearing of life is refractory to the ecstatic, visible appear-ing of the world, Henry maintains that it is invisible in that it can never appear within the light of the latter. In a strange twist of fate, then, life, on Henry's account, as the foundation and essence of all appearing, turns out to be radically invisible. Life can never be seen, only felt. Suffice it to say, this stands in marked contrast to the posi-tion of a thinker such as Husserl, who claims that the ultimate foundation of absolute consciousness can be perceived, even if only as an ideal possibility that can never be realized (i.e., as a regulative idea in the Kantian sense).

24. Michel Henry, *Seeing the Invisible: On Kandinsky*, trans. Scott Davidson (New York: Continuum, 2009), 43.

25. Michel Henry, *Marx: A Philosophy of Human Reality*, trans. Kathleen McLaughlin (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1983), 155.

26. Indeed, on Henry's account, it is the non-objectifying self-sensing of life, and not reflection or any objectifying act of consciousness, which provides the subject with an absolute knowledge of everything that is (i.e., oneself, others, the cosmos, even God).

27. This means, in part, that movement is not reducible to objective displacement in three-dimensional space. Renaud Barbaras provides a critique of Henry's account of the immanent movement of life in "The Essence of Life: Drive or Desire?" trans. Darian Meacham, in *Michel Henry: The Affects of Thought*, ed. Jeffrey Hanson and Michael R. Kelly (London: Bloomsbury, 2012).

28. Henry, *Seeing the Invisible*, 138.

29. Michel Henry, *From Communism to Capitalism: Theory of a Catastrophe*, trans. Scott Davidson (New York: Continuum, 2014), 116.

30. Henry also diverges here from Husserl, who holds that it is noetic acts of appre-hension (i.e., noetic sense-bestowal) that drive the acts of perceptual consciousness.

31. Michel Henry, *I Am the Truth: Toward a Philosophy of Christianity*, trans. Susan Emanuel (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2002), 232.

32. Michel Henry, *Barbarism*, trans. Scott Davidson (London: Continuum, 2012), 103.

33. Ibid., 105. As Henry goes on, "Men debased, humiliated, despised and despis-ing themselves, trained in school to despise themselves, to count for nothing—just particles and molecules; admiring everything lesser than themselves and execrating

everything that is greater than themselves. Everything worthy of love and adoration. Men reduced to simulacra, to idols that feel nothing, to automatons. And replaced by them—by computers and robots. Men chased out of their work and their homes, pushed into corners and gutters, huddled on subway benches, sleeping in cardboard boxes. Men replaced by abstractions, by economic entities, by profits and money. Men treated mathematically, digitally, statistically, counted like animals and counting for much less. . . . *Men* will want to die—but not *Life*." Henry, *I Am the Truth*, 275.

34. Henry, *Seeing the Invisible*, 19.

35. Henry, *Barbarism*, 126. Thus, similar to Nietzsche, there is a rapprochement between ethics and aesthetics in Henry. As Henry goes on, "everyone will . . . be able to distinguish between the body of a dancer, which is able to master its force and, it seems, increase it, and the body of an untrained and awkward person. Similar distinctions can be made for the diction of an actor, the breathing of a singer, etc." This is why, for Henry, culture is "not simply the use of powers that are defined once and for all but in fact their 'development.'" Ibid., 19.

36. Ibid., 102–3.

37. Christina M. Gschwandtner, "How Do We Become Fully Alive? The Role of Death in Henry's Phenomenology of Life," in *The Role of Death in Life: A Multidisciplinary Examination of the Relationship between Life and Death*, ed. John Behr and Conor Cunningham (Cambridge: James Clark, 2016), 72.

38. Michel Henry, *L'essence de la manifestation* (Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 1963), 607. Translation my own.

39. Frédéric Seyler, "From Life to Existence: A Reconsideration of the Question of Intentionality in Michel Henry's Ethics," *Journal of French and Francophone Philosophy—Revue de la philosophie française et de langue française* 20, no. 2 (2012): 110.

40. Ibid.

41. For Marx, the realization of this human essence is the true end or *telos* of human life.

42. Theodor Adorno speaks to this in his *Negative Dialectics*, trans. E. B. Ashton (New York: Continuum, 1990), 184–85.

43. Ibid. Cf. also Michelle Mawhinney, "Marx, Nature, and the Ethics of Nonidentity," *Rethinking Marxism* 12, no. 1 (2000): 54.

44. Louis Althusser, *Philosophy of the Encounter: Later Writings, 1978–87*, trans. G. M. Goshgarian (London: Verso, 2006), 236.

45. Ibid., 256.

46. Mawhinney, "Marx, Nature, and the Ethics of Nonidentity," 62.

47. Ibid.

48. Whether communism is another mode of production that may better fulfill life's need for self-growth must here remain an open question. Henry himself is as critical of communism as he is of capitalism, suggesting that they "are two faces of the same death"—namely, the death of the living individual. See Henry, *From Communism to Capitalism*, 108–12.

Chapter 9

Benjamin's Critical Marxist Phenomenology

Reification, Experience, and the Politics of the Crowd

Paul Mazzocchi

Discussing Walter Benjamin in the context of Marxism and phenomenology is a paradoxical endeavor. On the one hand, his Marxism is treated as idiosyncratic or contradictory given his purportedly confused attempt to fuse Marxism and theology.[1] On the other hand, while Benjamin scholars have often mentioned in passing the phenomenological nature of his work, it has been of negligible interest to phenomenologists, perhaps understandably so given that he eschews a detailed attention to phenomenology, including Hegelian phenomenology, the version closest to Marxism. Against these trends, I want to suggest that Benjamin's work presents a latent critical Marxist phenomenology. In describing the methodology of one essay, Benjamin invokes something akin to phenomenological description, stating, "[A]ll theory will be kept far from my presentation . . . I want to present the city of Moscow at the present moment in such a way that 'everything factual is already theory' . . . thereby refraining from all deductive abstraction, all prognosis, and even, within limits, all judgements."[2] This method led Adorno to accuse Benjamin of regressing into "magic and positivism."[3] This judgment has been echoed by later critics, who have suggested that Benjamin does not engage in "philosophy."[4] But, as Richard Wolin argues, Benjamin seeks to achieve new truths at the noumenal level by freeing phenomena from accepted and common sense understandings.[5] While this gestures toward a

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phenomenological method, it is intimately tied to Marxism, which Benjamin saw as redeeming "the object riddled with error, with doxa."[6] Such a redemption required understanding phenomena outside of their ideological embedding within the triumphant narratives of capitalist modernity.

In reading his work as a critical Marxist phenomenology, Benjamin can be seen as uniting phenomenology and Marxism so that each can correct problems in the other. Phenomenology was criticized by members of the Frankfurt School for taking ontic structures and treating them as ontological *a prioris*, ultimately naturalizing the particular characteristics of the existing lifeworld.[7] Consequently, it failed to account for historically specific social structures and power relations. A critical phenomenology needs to acknowledge or inquire into the "quasi-transcendental way" particular social structures shape experience.[8] Marxism unmasks the historical specificity of capitalist social structures, challenging the efforts of classical political economy to naturalize such structures by treating them as timeless modalities of human existence. Thus, Marxism takes up the project of a critical phenomenology in seeking to understand the quasi-transcendental structures of capitalism, exposing them to history and contingency. Yet Marxism poses its own problems. While Marx placed corporeality at the center of his critique of capitalist immiseration in *Capital*, Marxists have often reduced immiseration to the extraction of surplus value and to a matter of wages. This approach encounters problems in the face of rising wages and standards of living, particularly in the capitalist core.[9] Phenomenology's focus on the structures of experience and their relation to embodiment can help direct focus back to the features of corporeality and their immiseration under capitalism. This would allow for an expansion of Marx's own analysis of corporeal immiseration, which focuses largely on the direct and measurable scarring of the body, reducing it to a purely physical exploitation. Phenomenology's focus on the corporeal schema—the "I can" of the body or the conditions of possibility of sense and motility—drastically expands this toward the shaping of bodily agency and the immiseration of subjectivity and experience more generally.

In thinking through these aporias, this chapter explores Benjamin's account of the experience of capitalist modernity and its immiserating effects at both the individual and the collective level. In this light, and against Adorno's critique, Benjamin draws out more directly what his project aimed at: an account of the reification of bodily and perceptual capacities under the effects of capitalism. In exposing the seemingly ordinary to something akin to phenomenological description, he highlights the peculiarity and immiserated reality of life under capitalism, drawing on examples like the factory worker, the gambler, the *flâneur*, and the crowd. In these respects, he shows a phenomenological attention to the corporeal schema, but within the context of the specificity of capitalism's commodity structure. Ultimately, Benjamin

explores how capitalist reification comes to structure the "human sensorium" via the shift from an aesthetic to an anaesthetic system. One of the critiques of critical theory generally and Benjamin specifically is that they fail to offer a positive political optic, resigning subjects to the totality of domination that afflicts contemporary societies.[10] Yet, far from offering a theory of the extinction of the cognitive subject that afflicted it with political impotence as Adorno suggested,[11] Benjamin reconceptualizes the subjectivity of the crowd, offering a means of understanding the fascist and revolutionary directions that the capitalist crowd can take. In doing so, he offers a unique approach to revolutionary agency by opposing fascist compactness with a revolutionary loosening that reanimates the aesthetic capacities of the social body and, thus, the intersubjective world.

HISTORY, REIFICATION, AND REPRESSION

According to Benjamin, perception and experience must be understood through their relation to history and historical change. As he states, "The way in which human perception is organized—the medium in which it occurs—is conditioned not only by nature but by history."[12] This demand, and what Benjamin sees as a lack of attention to it in philosophical literature, emerges most forcefully in his critique of Henri Bergson in "On Some Motifs in Baudelaire." In exploring the declining reception of lyric poetry, like Baudelaire's, Benjamin turns to the changing structure of experience. While philosophy had tried to grasp this change, it had largely fallen back on vitalism, ignoring the social determination of the individual's experience. Against this, Benjamin holds up Bergson's *Matter and Memory* as "towering above" the philosophical literature insofar as it sought to connect empirical research and biology. More specifically, Bergson connected memory to the structure of experience, asserting the centrality of previous experiences that were retained at an unconscious level on both an individual and a collective basis. Yet, according to Benjamin, Bergson failed to historicize his own philosophy: "he rejects any historical determination of memory. He thus manages to stay clear of that experience from which his own philosophy evolved, or, rather, in reaction to which it arose. It was the alienating, blinding experience of the age of large-scale industrialism."[13] Ultimately, despite his insight, Bergson's notion of experience was "estranged from history"[14] and, more specifically, from the emergence of the industrial capitalism that was fundamentally remaking the social order.

To properly understand Benjamin's account of the effects of capitalism on experience, we need to turn to his key Marxist reference point, Georg Lukács's *History and Class Consciousness*. In "Reification and the Consciousness of

the Proletariat," Lukács explores the historically specific nature of modern capitalism, providing an original interpretation of Marx's concept of commodity fetishism. From this perspective, the quasi-transcendental structure shaping experience was the capitalist economy and its commodity structure. As the commodity becomes the "universal category of society as a whole," reification structures human experience. As Lukács explains reification, "Its basis is that a relation between people takes on the character of a thing and thus acquires a 'phantom objectivity,' an autonomy that seems so strictly rational and all-embracing as to conceal every trace of its fundamental nature: the relation between people."[15] Effectively, a relation between people takes on the appearance of a relationship between things. Because of its pervasive and penetrating effects, reification permeates "all the objective forms of bourgeois society together with all the subjective forms corresponding to them."[16] In objective terms, a world of commodity exchange (the circulation of things) springs into existence and operates such that subjects can only attempt to understand the "natural laws" that govern the movement of commodities. In subjective terms, human labor becomes a commodity subject to processes of exchange that have a phantom power.[17] Ultimately, reification effects a change in the human relationship to the world and others: by giving the appearance of a relationship between things, and subjecting humans to a thing-ness themselves, the socially mediated nature of reality is elided. This produces a spectatorial consciousness that is outside itself, with the subject becoming a passive spectator of its own experiences.

Anita Chari explains two central ways Lukács's understanding of reification and its phantom objectivity shape experience. The first is formalism. As she explains, "Formalism refers to the schematic character of experience in capitalist society."[18] Capitalist experiences are filtered through preestablished cognitive and experiential categories, fundamentally suppressing what is different or innovative. As Marx pointed out, commodity fetishism includes the reduction of use values to exchange values and thus of quality to quantity. Such formalism acts to reduce alterity to the order of the same, which produces an eternal return whereby every experience is schematically repeated insofar as it is recognized through predetermined categories.[19] The second way Chari argues reification shapes experience is through dissociation, which is rooted in the spectatorial consciousness that reification produces. By giving the world a phantom objectivity, capitalism's commodity structure divorces subjects from engagement with the world—the world operates outside of them and they are subject to it as they become "things" within its gravitational orbit. As a result, consciousness is detached from the world, both in the sense of lacking engaged involvement in it (i.e., falling into structured and habituated forms of behavior that lack agency) and in the sense of accepting this as an unalterable modality of life. This involves a subjective dissociation

from actual experiences as well as a dissociation from the affects or consequences of these experiences and one's own participation in them.

History and Class Consciousness was central to Benjamin's work,[20] informing his turn to Marxism to the extent that Benjamin only really turned to Marx's texts after already adopting key concepts from Lukács.[21] Reification provides the key to understanding Benjamin's account of experience: he wants to inquire into the nature of experience under the reign of the commodity structure of the economy, exploring the reifying effects that it has on capitalist subjects. This was the key project contained in his interest in the Paris arcades: there the reification of capitalist life emerged as a phantasmagoria, in which people and objects took on their reified face. But it is precisely Benjamin's understanding of reification that drew the ire of Adorno, who rebuked Benjamin: "The fetish character of the commodity is not a fact of consciousness, but is dialectical in the crucial sense that it produces consciousness."[22] Adorno charges Benjamin with turning reification into a subjective category, ignoring the objective character of the mode of production.[23] Critics have often followed Adorno's critique in deeming Benjamin insufficiently Marxist or in deeming his Marxism untenable. But, as David McNally argues, Adorno's criticism is, simultaneously, correct and ignorant of Benjamin's larger intentions. Reification is the result of an objective process, rooted in the commodity economy and the structure of alienated labor. Benjamin was aware of this, but he does not provide a singular focus on this side of it because of the political commitments underlying his work: the larger project of Western Marxism and the attempt to explain the failure of a revolutionary upheaval in Europe, which requires an explanation of the subjective forms that capitalism produces.[24]

Reading Benjamin through Lukács allows us to understand the more directly political elements of Benjamin's work and avoid seeing him as an enthusiastic advocate of modern capitalist culture. Specifically, he draws on and expands Lukács's account of how reification comes to shape the experience of workers under capitalism's commodity structure.[25] In doing so, Benjamin shows a phenomenological attention to the ways capitalist reification affects the sensory capacities of subjects and, thus, the corporeal being of the body, including beyond the factory. In "The Storyteller," he links the body to the shock experiences that capitalism subjects it to: "A generation that had gone to school on horse-drawn streetcars now stood under the open sky in a landscape where nothing remained unchanged but the clouds and, beneath those clouds, in a forcefield of destructive torrents and explosions, the tiny fragile human body."[26] With the changes wrought by capitalism, the body was subject to persistent experiential shocks that it had never experienced before. Shock constitutes the essence of capitalism as it subjects the body to

a sensory bombardment contained in everyday experiences. The subjective side of reification emerges as a result of this onslaught of shock experiences.

To explain this, Benjamin returns to the insight raised by Bergson—the centrality of memory to experience—but invokes Proust and Freud in linking reification to repression. In the famous story of the *madeleine*, the taste of the cake brought back memories of the past that Proust had effectively forgotten. Prior to eating the cake, he had been trapped in the vague and "indistinct" memories of "conscious attention," which he refers to as *mémoire volontaire* (voluntary memory). As Benjamin states, "Its signal characteristic is that the information it gives about the past retains no trace of that past."[27] The integrity of experience is kept at a distance and these memories fail to enter into "tradition." Instead, the past is contained in a *mémoire involontaire* (involuntary memory). As Benjamin explains, "Experience is indeed a matter of tradition, in collective existence as well as private life. It is the product less of facts firmly anchored in memory [*Erinnerung*] than of accumulated and frequently unconscious data that flow together in memory [*Gedachtnis*]."[28] Memory as *Erinnerung* corresponds to voluntary memory and isolated experience (*Erlebnis*), while memory as *Gedachtnis* corresponds to involuntary memory and the long experience (*Erfahrung*) it draws together. Voluntary memory and its isolated experience produce subjects as forgetful because they are always caught up in the now—the mere registering of a disconnected past or in the repetition of the same. Long experience requires the emergence of involuntary memory and the assimilation of events as part of the inventory of the subject's life.

Benjamin sees a correlation between these ideas and Freud's understanding of memory and consciousness. For Freud, the human organism possesses an internal energy that it must protect against the assault of the external world. Consciousness functions to protect against stimuli, which "is almost more important than the reception of stimuli."[29] Consequently, it attempts to "screen" potentially destructive shocks that come from the outside. In screening these experiences, they are not internalized as part of memory or long experience: they are subjected to the quasi-forgetting of isolated experience and voluntary memory. As a protective layer insulating the self from trauma, Benjamin argues that "the greater the shock factor in particular impressions, the more vigilant consciousness has to be in screening stimuli."[30] Defensive mechanisms aim to protect the organism from these shocks through reified responses to phenomena, which ultimately repress the integrity of the experience. This produces experience as mere isolated experience. As a result, subjects experience a constant sense of incompletion and futility. Moreover, the repetitive nature of isolated experience is a failure to acknowledge the traumatic experience, which continually recurs in new forms. Lest Benjamin's line of thinking be reduced to a mere matter of memory, we need

to understand repression and memory in terms of, and in relation to, embodiment and perception. The body, as the locus of perception, falls into crisis under modern, capitalist conditions. Benjamin argues that it is obvious that "the city dweller is overburdened with protective functions."[31] Repression is the attempt to alleviate the unpleasant shocks, screening out damaging experiences.

CAPITALIST PATHOLOGIES

Benjamin suggests that the process of screening results in pathological behaviors and turns to these in order to diagnose the reified behavior and defensive responses that emerge under the specificity of capitalism's commodity structure. In this direction, we can start with a central figure: the factory worker subject to the commodified labor process. Under forms of pre-capitalist craft production, Benjamin saw a connection between "soul, eye and hand": the body operated as a synesthetic harmony under which the artisan crafted their experience and their relationship to the world and others. This was rooted in practice as an engagement with the world, which creates the conditions of possibility of experience—i.e., the mediation of subject and object. With the onset of capitalist modernity, "[w]e are no longer familiar with this practice."[32] The body (as a corporeal entity) and consciousness (as the relation between self and body, self and world) are fragmented by the capitalist production process, which breaks down artisan crafts into a segmented division of labor. This type of labor is no longer informed by practice or experience, processes in which one learns through a dialectical engagement with the world. What emerges instead is training and habituation, which abstract from the first-person experiential matrix.

To begin with, the division of labor involves the repetition of a task for which the laborer is habituated via an external agency—namely, the will of the owner or the commodity economy's drive for cheaper products via the further division and simplification of labor. Consequently, workers' bodily actions become increasingly mechanized. As Benjamin quotes Marx, "In working with machines, workers learn to coordinate 'their own movements with the uniformly constant movements of an automaton.'"[33] The factory makes use of the worker, producing them as a machine and expelling practice from their actions. This involves a disengagement from the world, destroying experience as a dialectical relation. Moreover, the division of labor and the repetitive and mechanized motions that characterize factory work produce an incomplete and segmented relation to the objects of labor, whereby the worker never completes anything and is subject to the same unending and eternally fragmented process. Ultimately, the factory expresses the conditions

of voluntary memory and isolated experience: it does not affect or recall an experience that is assimilated but is rather an emptiness that comes with the inability to fulfill the potential for, or recall in its fullness, genuine experience. All of this betrays the formalistic and dissociated character of reified experience: the worker is produced as an object, and the factory embodies the relationship between objectified beings. Moreover, the worker's response to their work environment is not that of a conscious actor, but of a spectatorial consciousness dissociating itself from its own experience. Indeed, the process of repression becomes necessary to survive the corporeal damage and immiseration carried out during the process of commodity production.[34]

In understanding these types of pathological behaviors as going beyond the factory, Benjamin draws a parallel between the factory worker and the gambler. As he states, "[Gambling] certainly does not lack futility, emptiness, an inability to complete something—qualities inherent in the activity of the wage slave in a factory."[35] The gambler's automaton-like and reflexive actions are exhibited in the propensity to place bets at the last second via repetitive hand motions without regard for odds. Similarly, we find a repetitive and reflexive motion in the pulling of handles on slot machines. As with industrial production, these repetitive actions illustrate the principle of incompletion and "the process of continually starting all over again."[36] Ultimately, gambling is devoid of experience—starting over again negates the need for experience since each game is a new one divorced from the others. The gambler also exhibits reification's dissociative effects in their resignation to the phantom powers of fate: they place their bets regardless of odds, resigning themselves to the outcome of a dice roll or spinning wheel and place blame for losses "on chance, on the date of the month if it was the thirteenth, on the day of the week if it was Friday."[37]

If the factory laborer and the gambler exhibit pathologies already incorporated into capitalist modernity, the *flâneur* shows a more complicated relation to it. The *flâneur* is essentially a "man of letters"—a bohemian writer, whose trade is loitering. In their passion for loitering, they engaged in "looking around" or "demanding elbow room" and liked to walk through the arcades, often with pet turtles on leashes. While this involves walking against the grain, the *flâneur* shows the more basic elements of reification, whereby people take on the appearance of things and capitalism integrates what is different into the order of the same (i.e., its commodity structure). It is in the market—both as a market economy and as the space of the arcades—that people relate to each other not as beings but as commodities subject to valuation. The commodity's essence lies in its exchangeability—its price. But the *flâneur* as loiterer or wanderer has no inherent value or price. They have to make themselves "purchasable" and give themselves a value they can sell. Consequently, during their loitering, they wrote observations

on contemporary life that were often published in the *feuilleton* sections of newspapers. In effect, the *flâneur* loiters in order to write and writes in order to loiter. But in writing about the places of commodification, "the *flâneur* becomes attuned to the commodity; he emulates it entirely."[38] Originally, the *flâneur* went to the marketplace to marvel at the crowd and the mélange of commodities. But the *flâneur* becomes subject to the conditions of commodification: they go to the marketplace "ostensibly to look around, but in truth to find a buyer."[39] This results in the ultimate reification of the *flâneur*, when, under competitive pressures, they have to sell themselves more directly as they are reduced to the sandwichman—someone who carries around a sign in the marketplace advertising sandwiches for sale at local shops.[40]

The experience of the *flâneur* also discloses the pathological and colonizing behavior of the crowd. With the growth of urbanism and consumerism, large swaths of people took over the arcades, displacing the *flâneur* who had previously dominated them. But, to the *flâneur*, the modern crowd exhibits an "inhuman character" whose actions mirror those of the factory worker and the gambler. Benjamin cites a series of developments at the time—matches, telephones, photography, etc.—which symbolize a process of mechanized reactions such that "technology has subjected the human sensorium to a complex kind of training."[41] In responding to streetlights and other aspects of the urban environment, the crowd takes on the appearance of machines insofar as their actions are purely reflexive and devoid of agency or experience. Benjamin suggests that their mechanized actions are best explained in Edgar Allen Poe's "The Man of the Crowd," where the crowd encounters itself: "His pedestrians act as if they had adapted themselves to machines and could express themselves only automatically. Their behavior is a reaction to shocks. 'If jostled, they bowed profusely to the jostler.'"[42] Members of the crowd fail to exhibit any conscious recognition of the other who jostles, betraying only a reified reflex action. In the context of the *flâneur*'s attempt to walk against the grain, the crowd fails to produce the response the *flâneur* seeks to elicit, merely bowing as a cursory and reflexive apology and moving along. The *flâneur* as other is not registered, and the experience of alterity is denied any significance and reduced to the fleetingness of isolated experience and voluntary memory. Under these conditions, Benjamin invokes Baudelaire's description of "eyes that could be said to have lost the ability to look."[43]

FROM AESTHETICS TO ANAESTHETICS

In focusing on pathological behaviors, Benjamin shows a phenomenological concern with understanding the corporeal schema and its connection to

habituated modes of behavior. As a central concept in critical phenomenology, the corporeal schema resists the idea of an *eidos* or essence in subjecting the structures of experience to the history and contingency contained in quasi-transcendental structures.[44] But Benjamin connects this to Marxist modes of critique, particularly in the context of its attempt to de-naturalize capitalist modes of being and expose their immiserating effects.

In this direction, Susan Buck-Morss argues that Benjamin describes the transition from an aesthetic to an anaesthetic relation to the world. The original Greek terms for aesthetics (*aisthitikos* and *aisthisis*) referred to the sensory capacities of the body. The bodily sensorium encounters the world pre-linguistically. As Buck-Morss explains, "The senses are effects of the nervous system, composed of hundreds of billions of neurons extending from the body surfaces through the spinal cord, to the brain."[45] By virtue of this structure, the body is inherently in the world and oriented toward it, for "the external world must be included to complete the sensory circuits."[46] In its basic form, this aesthetic (or synaesthetic) system is "open": it opens onto the world and experience lies in the mediation of subject and object, body and world. But this mediation is also acculturated through capitalism's quasi-transcendental structures. The senses are "open" insofar as "their immediate purpose is to serve instinctual needs."[47] As Benjamin's reading of Freud suggests, these instinctual needs involve the survival of the organism via repression of potentially damaging phenomena. Under the conditions of capitalist shock and its sensory bombardment, "response to stimuli *without* thinking has become necessary for survival."[48] As Buck-Morss explains, stimuli are parried "to protect both the body from the trauma of accident and the psyche from the trauma of perceptual shock."[49] As a result, the corporeal schema takes on a particular form: "the [synaesthetic] system reverses its role. Its goal is to *numb* the organism, to deaden the senses, to repress memory: the cognitive system of synaesthetics has become, rather, one of anaesthetics."[50] The anaesthetic system represents a new incarnation of the corporeal schema, which is a response to the conditions of capitalism and its commodity structure.

While Buck-Morss does not mention reification, her account of the anaesthetic system is complementary to it: the corporeal schema becomes reified, closing itself off from the world and repressing experiences. Of course, this does not mean that capitalist subjects fail to have experiences at all—i.e., that there is an annihilation of the cognitive subject, particularly one that is irremediable. Rather, experience becomes reified, particularly in the senses of formalism and dissociation. In Benjamin's understanding, "consciousness" parries certain phenomena in order to protect the human sensorium against the damaging effects of this sensory overload. In terms of formalism, this involves reducing experience to repetitions of the same—i.e., to

a blocking of phenomena that are contrary to the reified functioning of the subject and to the treatment of all experiential phenomena through predetermined responses. As Benjamin states, "Sameness is a category of cognition; strictly speaking, it is not to be found in plain, sober-minded perception."[51] Sober-minded perception is tantamount to the open system, while sameness is rooted in the prejudgments that resist this openness in turning events into pre-digested experiences. To explain this, Benjamin uses the example of Don Quixote, who, because chivalrous romances have permeated his very being, reduces all phenomena (no matter how diverse) to "an adventure awaiting the knight errant."[52] Capitalist subjects exhibit this pathology as a form of embodied behavior (the mechanization and uniformity of their actions) as well as in the way in which everything is reduced to its commodity form or thing-ness. Baudelaire's sentiment that eyes had lost their ability to look meant that capitalist subjects could not see past what they already knew, thus eliding what might be a shock to the system. At the same time, the closed, anaesthetic system implies dissociative responses that not only remove the subject from experience via a regression into a spectatorial consciousness but also create a full dissociation of the experience from entering into memory in order to protect the organism from the trauma of the event. On the latter front, everything is treated through the same formalist modes of perception and cognition, which occludes the elements of the phenomena that involve difference or something new.

Ultimately, Benjamin asserts the necessity of understanding the particulars of the senses and behavior in the context of the Marxist critique of the commodity structures of the capitalist life world. At the same time, the phenomenological focus on the corporeal schema and structures of embodiment allows for an expansion of the contours of Marxist critique. In this context, as Buck-Morss argues, exploitation must be understood not only as an economic category but also a cognitive one that attacks the sensorial system.[53] Exploitation involves the expansion and impoverishment of the corporeal schema in response to the sensory bombardment of capitalist modernity. In the specific experience of factory labor, the extraction of surplus value necessitates expanding the body's capacities in terms of both increasing the amount of work it can do in a delimited time and increasing the amount of time it can work. As a malleable or adaptable entity, the body is capable of being subject to these expansions: it is capable of "adapting" via anaesthetic defense mechanisms that dull pain and drudgery and, therefore, minimize the damaging effects to the body. But it does so by an inhibiting affect and, thus, we would also need to describe immiseration as a cognitive and not merely economic category. That is, capitalism produces an inherently poor cognitive situation, whereby the senses are dulled and experience comes to be shaped more and more by the formalism and dissociation that are at the core of

reification. This also acknowledges the general immiseration that capitalist modernity produces, for it applies not merely to the process of production, but to the sensuous experiences of capitalism as a whole, as exhibited in the situation of the gambler, the *flâneur*, and the crowd. All have been immiserated to the extent that their experiences and their capacity for experience have been impoverished via their inhibited sensorial system.

THE CROWD: BETWEEN COMPACTNESS AND LOOSENING

As Lisa Guenther argues, while a critical phenomenology draws on first-person experiences, it also aims to avoid falling into "classical phenomenology's claim that the first-person singular is absolutely prior to intersubjectivity and to the complex textures of social life."[54] While critical phenomenology places a focus on intersubjectivity, this focus still requires understanding the constitution of intersubjectivity through quasi-transcendental structures. While Benjamin explores individual pathologies, his account of the *flâneur* and the crowd show that the same pathologies affect the intersubjective lifeworld in the context of capitalism's commodity structure. In this direction, his anaesthetic account of the corporeal system lays the groundwork for a phenomenology of crowds—a political phenomenology of the appearance of the crowd and the opening and closure of intersubjective space. Benjamin's concerns here are directly political: he aims to understand how fascism emerges out of the conditions constructed via capitalism, both of which compress intersubjective space. But both capitalism and fascism remain contingent, and the very purpose of unmasking their appearance lay in understanding the possibilities of transcending them. In this direction, he acknowledges that intersubjectivity is not merely a state of being, but something to be achieved as a mode of action.

Within the capitalist crowd, we find the immiseration of corporeal experience extended to the social body: intersubjective life is immiserated and subject to the formalism of reification. To begin with, Benjamin sees in the crowd an eradication of the trace of the individual. While the allure of the commodity drew people to the arcades in order to fulfill their own private interests, it acted to obliterate their individuality as well as their class identities: the leveling effect of the market reduces everyone—including the *flâneur*, who attempts to stand out—to the order of the same (namely, exchange value). As a result, the capitalist crowd is an amorphous and undifferentiated entity: "A street, a conflagration, or a traffic accident assembles people who are not defined along class lines. They present themselves as concrete gatherings, but socially they remain abstract—namely in their isolated private

concerns."[55] Ultimately, each individual is lost in the crowd, which is reduced to its machine-like reflex actions.

Benjamin argues that the leveling effect (or anonymity) of the crowd was the precondition for the emergence of fascism, which sought to organize the capitalist crowd into the fascist mass. As he states, "The increasing prole-tarianization of modern man and the increasing formation of masses are two sides of the same process. Fascism attempts to organize the newly proletari-anized masses while leaving intact the property relations which they strive to abolish."[56] To unravel this, we need to understand Benjamin's challenge to classical theories of the crowd. While proletarianization occurs as a result of the objective direction of the market, from the subjective perspective the capitalist crowd is stripped of its class basis by the market's leveling effects. Building on this, Benjamin distinguishes the capitalist "crowd" from the mass: the former is an amorphous and sporadic entity, lacking stability and solidity, while the latter is an organized and stable entity.[57] While Gustave Le Bon and others saw the mass as "an impenetrable, compact entity" com-posed of the increasingly powerful "popular classes," Benjamin argues that they were really theorizing the petty bourgeoisie, which he contends is not a class: it is a conglomeration that results from the opposing pressures of the bourgeoisie and proletariat, and it becomes more compact and closed the greater the pressure placed on it by these two opposed classes. Benjamin locates the reactionary, mass psychology that Le Bon and others decried only in this petty bourgeois compact mass, whose unmediated character emerges in spontaneous and panicked outbursts that give "vent to war fever, hatred of Jews, or the instinct for self-preservation."[58] Such actions represent a vent or explosion and reflect the reactionary and reflexive nature that emerges via the compression imposed upon the petty bourgeoisie.

Benjamin argues that fascism draws on the principle of compactness in order to organize the amorphous crowd into a fascist mass. Capitalism already begins to compress distance: the leveling effect of the market closes social distance, and the density and jostling of the crowd closes spatial dis-tance.[59] Fascism furthers this, making compactness its organizing principle. Compactness represents a unification without space—a compression that cre-ates or imposes extreme sameness and proximity. In the context of a critical phenomenology, such a compression would constitute a form of violence that effaces both the perspectival view of knowledge intrinsic to intersubjectivity and the realm of appearance or phenomenality.[60] Ultimately, compactness constricts political space so as to prevent emancipatory actions and agencies, reducing intersubjectivity's social being to a unitary totality.[61] As Andrea Cavalletti explains, "every fascism will produce its 'people,' masking this mere compression in the archaic and inseparable names of community, father-land, work, blood, leader."[62] Fascism collapses these terms and mythologizes

their unity as an originary lost community, with the capitalist market appearing as the "happy" coincidence that allows for the possibility of the reunification of the race. Subsequently, compactness is achieved through an expansion of the mass (i.e., its colonization or annihilation of all that is other), through a tightening of its composition (i.e., its refusal of a space between those who are caught in it), and through the repetition of its experience to better solidify its being. To achieve this, fascism makes "the concentration of [its] citizens permanent and obligatory for all [its] purposes" and gives "free rein to both the herd instinct and to reflexive action."[63] Of course, this would no longer be the unmediated and unshaped herd instinct and reflexive action of the capitalist crowd, with its polite bowing when jostled, or the petty bourgeois compact mass, with its spontaneous and episodic explosions. Rather, by compacting the mass into a closed entity, fascism aims to mediate and mobilize war fever, violence against Jews, and the instinct for self-preservation as permanent features of the compact mass and its mechanized behavior.

All of this brings us to Benjamin's well-known claim in "The Work of Art in the Age of Its Technological Reproducibility" that fascism aims to aestheticize politics. We need to distinguish this from a return to the open, aesthetic system and read the claim in the context of Lukács's understanding of the spectatorial and disengaged consciousness produced by reification. In Benjamin's account, the anaesthetization of corporeal being results from a defensive disengagement that aims to shelter the human sensorium from capitalist shocks. Fascism acts to aestheticize politics, but only as a continued and repressively directed form of spectatorship and disengagement—that is, it produces politics as an aesthetic pseudo-experience. The aesthetic capacities of the human sensorium are embraced, but only insofar as fascism offers the masses what Miguel Abensour refers to as "objects or scenes of substitution," which are divorced from the realm of social relations.[64] These scenes are substituted precisely to leave the class foundations of capitalist society intact, while mobilizing the masses toward fascist purposes. As Benjamin states, "[Fascism] sees its salvation in granting expression to the masses—but on no account granting them rights."[65] The masses gain expression in the form of "great ceremonial processions, giant rallies, and mass sporting events, and in war."[66] But these expressions place the masses under a spell—tantamount to the narcotic allure of commodities in the arcades—that directs their herd instinct and reflexive action via a heteronomous power. Ultimately, their being remains structured by the closure of intersubjective space: the compact mass is given life by the *Führer* and party as stand-ins for the nation and race, with the continued eradication of the trace of the individual. With the emergence of techniques of mechanical reproduction, which are important for propaganda purposes, the masses are produced as a compact mass and then reproduced as an aesthetic object of contemplation via film and photography.

The latter provides scenes of substitution in which the fascist mass marvels at itself. By viewing their own actions, they are depoliticized by the spectatorial consciousness that separates them from these actions and denies their autonomous subjectivity—that is, there is a continued reification and depoliticization of the masses via disengagement.

Benjamin ends the artwork essay with the cryptic and unexplored claim that communism responds to fascism's aestheticization of politics by politicizing art. While the artwork essay has largely been read through its third version, this version was significantly revised. Benjamin considered the second version to be the "*Ur*-text,"[67] and it includes a rarely commented on footnote that develops a conception of the revolutionary class that challenges the fascist mass. Benjamin continues his challenge to Le Bon and crowd theorists, differentiating the proletariat as revolutionary class from the compact mass and connecting this to a process of de-reification as a re-aestheticization of bodily capacities. He argues that "the class-conscious proletariat forms a compact mass only from the outside, in the minds of its oppressors."[68] This echoes Lukács's claim that class consciousness is not "mass-psychological"[69] and challenges Le Bon's claim that the crowd is compact, reactionary, and reflexive. Benjamin argues that "at the moment when [the class-conscious proletariat] takes up its struggle for liberation, this apparently compact mass has actually already begun to loosen."[70] This posits revolutionary agency as a resistance to compactness and the principles of identity that inform it. Loosening (*Auflockerung*) constitutes a dilation.[71] It aims to produce an aesthetic distance, reestablishing the social and spatial distance enclosed by capitalism and further compressed by fascism, allowing for intersubjectivity, as phenomena, to reemerge. At the same time, loosening is a recuperation of the aesthetic capacities of the body, breaking with the mechanized nature of bodily comportment. It entails a jostling free from the mechanized actions and relations that structure the experience of modernity—a literal and metaphorical relaxing of the muscles such that the realm of action and experience are reopened, as is the synaesthetic relationship to the world. This is the condition of possibility of the type of genuine experience Benjamin described in pre-capitalist craft labor: it involved agency as practice or the ability to act and experience through engagement with the world. As a result of loosening, the actions of the revolutionary class are no longer structured by reaction or heteronomy. Rather, they are autonomous and capable of new or innovative experiences.

All of this brings a potentially new meaning to Benjamin's concept of collective innervation, untying it from a purely technological reading and challenging the claim that his work possesses a chaotic, Dionysian conception of the body devoid of ethics.[72] Miriam Bratu Hansen argues that innervation represents the counterpoint or "antidote" to shock experience and the anaesthetic

system by establishing a mimetic relationship to the world that opens the sensorial system and the realm of imagination. As she explains, "This possibility would make the protective shield against stimuli, the precarious boundary or rind of the bodily ego, a bit less of a carapace or armor and a bit more of a matrix or medium—a porous interface between the organism and the world that would allow for a greater mobility and circulation of psychic energies."[73] Rather than reified experiences of eternal return with their doctrines of sameness and repetition, the sensorial system would reopen: the porosity of the body would allow for receptivity to new experiences and their entrance into the aesthetic system, challenging the formalism and dissociation emblematic of reification. Thus, innervation would allow for "the transition to action"[74] as a return of the repressed aesthetic sensorial system.

Such an innervation would allow for the reappearance of intersubjective space. As Benjamin states, "The loosening of the proletarian masses is the work of solidarity. In the solidarity of the proletarian class struggle, the undialectical opposition between individual and mass is abolished; for the comrade, it does not exist."[75] Compactness collapses the individual-mass distinction via the creation of the mass or nation in the image of the leader as a compression of these distinct terms. Against this, solidarity involves a dialectical relation between individual and mass such that, against Baudelaire's lament, eyes regain their ability to see and the other is not reduced to the same as a colonization or annihilation of their alterity or as a formalist recurrence of the same experience. In this direction, loosening reopens space as a resistance to compactness in two senses: it opens a space of subjectivity or agency not subject to mechanized behavior and heteronomy; it opens a space of intersubjectivity not subject to compression and identity. These are the conditions of possibility of new experiences and new relations of the mass to itself, such that the mechanical bowing when jostled gives way to a collective innervation as a discharge that facilitates the possibility of a collective agency. Consequently, collective innervation would be a revolutionary discharge that brings the collective body into being—that gives it life via a return of its repressed aesthetic capacities. Loosening enables the mass "to become aware of itself as an association of class-conscious cadres"[76] and collective innervation denotes the emergence of the collective and connective tissues between these cadres, with solidarity denoting a reversible transversing of the space of difference or distance between subjects.

CRITICAL PHENOMENOLOGY,
EXPERIENCE, AND POLITICS

In its attempts to develop a "science" of revolution, Marxism has often been accused of high-altitude thinking, turning itself into a system that abstracts from the real experiences of subjects. As Dick Howard summarizes this critique, "the idea of experience dominates over the experience itself, making way for a dogmatism which justifies itself as being the movement of the concrete itself, the expression of the truth of History."[77] Benjamin's focus on experience constitutes a "phenomenological hermeneutics of the profane world"[78] that attempts to rescue Marxism from such abstractions. Indeed, he places a primacy on the realm of experience, providing a phenomenological description intent on unmasking the immiseration done to the corporeal schema and, in liberating it from naturalism, to discern the possibilities of reversing its immiseration. Such a move is redemptive insofar as it aims to return the critical edge to Marxism by unmasking the immiserating features of capitalism at the level of experience rather than at the level of economic theory. Given the anti-systematic nature of Benjamin's work, the centrality of a critical phenomenological account of experience comes to constitute a dialectical moment that constantly circles back to itself in order to deny his own thought coming to take on a systematic nature divorced from the realities of experience. Indeed, a critical phenomenology must embrace the relationship between one's own situation and the modalities of history and politics,[79] acknowledging the fundamental incompletion of any account of experience, which necessitates "the unending activity of reduction, bracketing and desedimentation."[80]

Such a critical phenomenological reflexivity rescues Benjamin's own work from its apparent pitfalls. Indeed, his work has been criticized for containing a messianism that aims to recuperate a lost community or lost unity.[81] His account of compactness and loosening offers a more complex reflection on politics and experience, accounting for the appearance and disappearance of intersubjectivity—its essential phenomenality. The return to any "originary" community or unity would reproduce compactness. As the body is capable of shifting between the polarities of an open, aesthetic and closed, anaesthetic system, the crowd is subject to the opposed pressures of compactness and loosening. Thus, we should understand compactness and loosening as an antagonistic and dynamic pairing seeking to organize the crowd according to two different matrixes: on the one hand, a mode of reified and spectatorial subjectivity, which creates a group only by compressing and effacing a space of difference; on the other hand, an emancipatory intersubjectivity, structured by the appearance of a mode of aesthetic engagement with the world and

others. While the latter seeks to end the conditions that make the formation of the compact mass possible, seeing this as establishing a *telos* ignores that Benjamin explicitly rejects identity thinking. The dialectic of emancipation necessitates an understanding of the dynamic and antagonistic interplay of loosening and compactness—their persistent reappearance and conflict and, thus, the permanence of a realm of phenomenality.

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56. Benjamin, "Work of Art (Third Version)," 4:269.

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Contradictory Colonial Locations

An Outline for a Theory through Marxism and Phenomenology

Jérôme Melançon

The present chapter emerges out of an attempt to provide a conceptual framework for understanding how certain groups in settler colonial states, and particularly in Canada, can at the same time suffer and benefit from colonialism. I argue that there exist a number of contradictory colonial locations, defined by contradictions that lead the people who occupy them to lend support to colonialism despite the weight it places upon them. In so doing, I question the polarized approach that focuses on the settler-Indigenous opposition and suggest that other colonial locations are possible within each of these wider positions as well as outside of them.[1]

I situate myself at the intersection of three currents of thought: my argument here revolves around Marxism and phenomenology, but it is also informed by new critical theories—intersectional feminism, critical race theory, and settler colonial studies. Within Marxism my main point of reference will be Erik Olin Wright, whose concept of contradictory class locations is tied to an understanding of the middle classes that moves away from a strictly polarized class structure pitting capitalists against workers. The central intuitions in Wright's work will then receive further meaning and development from phenomenology. Here I will rely principally on Frantz Fanon, who offers a dialectical and action-oriented overview of classes in the colonial context. In order to account for the structural aspect of colonialism in relation to capitalism, I will also turn to Merleau-Ponty's phenomenology of politics. And

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to account for the lived experience of colonial locations, I will borrow from Iris Marion Young's adaptation of Sartre's concepts of series and groups. In relation to Merleau-Ponty and Young, rather than an attempt to begin from lived experience, I will highlight the work done in phenomenology to under-stand structures as lived, enacted realities that remain open to a measure of transformation.

THE CONCEPT OF CONTRADICTORY
CLASS LOCATIONS

Through successive re-elaborations, Erik Olin Wright presents the concept of contradictory class locations as an attempt to account for the existence of new middle classes that cannot be said to belong to either the working class or the capitalist class. He thus provides criteria for comparing the locations of large groups relative to one another and for unveiling forces of change among these groups.

Wright's concept supposes a shift from a focus on the means of produc-tion to a focus on a wider set of assets that make exploitation possible. There are numerous reasons for this shift. Changes in ownership structure mean that many workers own various corporations through their pension fund, and sometimes even shares in their own. The growth in size of corporations means that most of their shareholders have no say in the decisions made by their boards or even in the choice of who sits on them. The growth in the ter-tiary sector means that service is at least as important as industrial production. While a great deal of this sector is an extension of industrial and agricultural production (distribution and sales are part of the production-consumption nexus), other activities, generally classified as "creative" but not solely so, defy the classic distinction between workers and peasants, and between them and the petty bourgeoisie. Home designers and architects, life coaches, physical trainers and therapists, and accountants and financial planners can be self-employed or work for large conglomerates. And perhaps most impor-tant, there has been a growing number of individuals who are not workers, in the sense that they own more than their labor: they have education and so had in some way the capital to pursue it. But neither are they capitalists, as they do not own the means of production or, properly speaking, control them. Similarly, the number of managers within business and state bureaucracies has grown since the period of formation of classical Marxism. The existence of these intermediary categories is the main motivation for Wright's work, and must be taken seriously as a challenge to the polarization between work-ers and capitalists.

These questions are relevant to the understanding of colonialism, which is often understood through the polarization between colonizers, often identified as settlers, and colonized, or Indigenous peoples. While Wright asks, "How should we deal with the numerous cases of people who did not really seem to be either bourgeois or proletarian?"[2] we can ask about people who are neither clearly nor solely colonizers or colonized in the framework of the settler colony—Black immigrants, people of color whose ancestors immigrated several generations ago, Francophones in minority settings—or even those workers who were seen as colonizers by the Indigenous population of Algeria, but represented a subordinated category among the *pieds-noirs*.

Wright understands class location as the micro-level part of the structural positions that individuals occupy. Locations can be found within class relations, which themselves compose structures at the macro level.[3] Relations define locations by subjecting individuals to the same life chances and by determining their interests. We cannot talk about locations without also talking about relations: "To talk about a 'location' within a class relation, then, is to situate individuals within such structured patterns of interaction."[4] Knowing about locations is not sufficient if we are to understand the realities that are lived and the possibilities that are open to members of a category. We need to know about relations and interactions among categories.

And, indeed, locations are categories, not social groups with boundaries: there are no insiders and outsiders, no membership, only "a collection of separate, individual people with a common property."[5] Locations do not indicate collective existence. This distinction between categories and social groups is at the heart of the distinction between series and groups, which Young borrows from Sartre's class analysis in order to apply it to gender. She aims to understand gender as a category, in order to give it the same weight as class, but above all to highlight the reality of categories, against the ontology of liberal individualism. After all, without collectives, there is no systemic oppression, suffering becomes a merely individual, isolated matter. Her understanding of gender as a relational concept means that characteristics only really emerge from comparisons. She redefines categories as referring to series: "a series is a social collective whose members are unified passively by the objects their actions are oriented around and/or by the objectified results of the material effects of the actions of the others."[6] Though the members of a series play a somewhat active role in taking on these determinations as they struggle to adapt to them, their activity works through passivity and mostly repeats their material and symbolic conditions—their activity is secondary to what structures impose upon them through relations.

Seriality is an impersonal experience of the self as part of an amorphous collective, itself shaped by a variety of individual pursuits and by the actions of the past and the structures they have created. They are united without

identifying with each other or engaging in the same collective. Seriality is nonetheless a collectivity created by limits and constraints, which can become the object of observation and discussion, where it becomes possible to discover that one another's places are interchangeable. Seriality is inter-changeability and depersonalization. The members of a series "understand themselves as constituted as a collective, as serialized, by the objects and practices through which they aim to accomplish their individual purposes."[7]

Young explains that for Sartre, being a member of a class means that an individual lives mostly with others within that class, sharing objects, prac-tices, work, exchange, and consumption; it means that lives are lived against the same background of machines, history, buildings, neighborhoods, and the tasks assigned or decided upon in these contexts. From these series, groups are formed; these groups, in the short or long term, fall back into these series or contribute to the creation of new series. I would add that group forma-tion is a moment when intentionality shifts from an adaptation to external determinations, toward a selection of elements in what is shared and acts as a background, making creation possible. This moment is, in Merleau-Pontian terms, a reinstitution rather than an adaptation where subjects simply draw on existing institutions; it is a moment when meanings are created and new actions take place through a radical transformation of available, sedimented meanings and practices, as opposed to the day-to-day ordinary adaptation of these meanings and practices.[8] Here passivity becomes a foundation for activ-ity, where action becomes primary over the structures that continue their work and both determine and limit that action.

Young thus explains that groups are formed when persons recognize what they share with others, and undertake action together in order to transform the conditions of their seriality and mutually acknowledge their participation in this shared, collective project. Strictly speaking, a group is "the self-con-sciously mutually acknowledging collective with a self-conscious purpose."[9] Women constitute a series—as workers and capitalists constitute distinct series. Since cross-class and cross-race relations also condition the experi-ences of women, they are part of several series at once. On the basis of their self and mutual understanding as members of these series, they can form groups as they act in mutual support, or turn toward social transformation. They can also form diverse alliances and coalitions with other groups and belong to several groups at once.[10]

Group formation of this type resembles what Wright calls class formation, which takes place against the background of class structuration. Structuration takes place through class relations and has to do with mobility, patterns of marriage and friendship formation, neighborhoods, schooling, all processes that create the relations to members of the same class and other classes—elements that relate to seriality, in Young's terms, and lend themselves to a

phenomenological description as much as a statistical analysis. Class formation is the process of individuals within categories gaining a collective existence; it "refers to the formation of organized collectivities within that class structure on the basis of the interests shaped by that class structure."[11] These collectivities can change without changing the structure. A collective existence is developed in relation to both structuration and formation, when individuals act on the basis of their class through action that can be local and informal. In some cases class actors create organizations, and in the most extreme cases they engage in struggle.

Throughout the long elaboration of this theory and the inclusion of insights and tools from other theories, and above all from Weberian sociology to which he remains indebted, Wright attempts to remain faithful to "the Marxist concept of class [which] is built around four basic structural properties: classes are *relational*; those relations are *antagonistic*; those antagonisms are rooted in *exploitation*; and exploitation is based on the social relations of *production*."[12] Exploitation comes to play a central role in Wright's theory in order to set aside any focus on domination. It "includes both economic oppression and the appropriation of the fruits of the labour of one class by another (which is equivalent to a transfer of the surplus from one class to another)."[13] Both exploitation and domination suppose that the exploiters or dominators and exploited or dominated cooperate and need each other, where the former control the latter in some way, deriving an advantage from this control. In this sense, the conditions and the activities of the exploiters and exploited are interrelated. Relations of exploitation give power to the exploiters but also give a form of power to the exploited, because of this situation of interaction and interdependence. The exploited thus maintain a measure of control over their labor, or can seek to heighten it in order to resist, especially since not all exploiters have the means to meet the costs of surveillance and repression. Non-exploitative economic oppression is nonetheless possible, for instance, where there is simply exclusion from resources. There, where actions deprive others of access to resources (for instance, through hiring and firing), as in appropriation where there is control over the labor of others, or alongside exploitation, we can find domination—that is, "the social relations within which one person's activities are directed and controlled by another."[14]

While class locations within the binary schema of exploiter and exploited, or capitalists and workers, might seem straightforward, not all class locations are clearly situated in a relation of exploitation of others or by others. Wright rejects the assumption that class locations need fall only within one class, that all class locations have a coherent class character. Many locations are indeed contradictory. Here contradiction refers not to the contradictions proper to the class structure—in that sense all locations are contradictory to others—but rather to contradictions within the location itself. As Wright explains, "the

basic class relation of capitalism generates objectively contradictory *interests* for workers and capitalists, interests which are intrinsically (rather than just contingently) opposed to each other. Contradictory locations are contradictory precisely in the sense that they partake of both sides of these inherently contradictory interests."[15] Contradictory locations are tied to contradictions within the contradiction. It is a matter of a contradiction that is internal to the location, derived from the larger contradictions inherent in capitalism. In Young's terms, individuals in contradictory locations cannot clearly see within which series they find themselves, and depending on framing and discourses, may see themselves as within either class, in which case they may take part in group formation and class struggle, or indeed outside of both altogether, in which case they may be indifferent to class struggle, or seek to advance other interests altogether.

Just as, conceptually, class locations resemble Young's series and classes resemble groups, it is important to note that, for Wright, class locations are not classes: they are a different analytical tool. Depending on the analysis that is needed, there will be a greater or lesser number of locations in any given analysis. Class locations may thus exist within two classes, or outside of the two main classes in societies where a middle class exists. On the whole, Wright seems to leave aside the question of the articulation of locations and classes, except to say that classes are formed through actions and on the basis of preexisting locations.

What it means for a class location to be contradictory is found in the interests of individuals and in the role exploitation plays in defining their condition. Contradictory locations entail that an individual is at once exploited by some and exploits others, and that their interests counteract each other. We could say that individuals in contradictory locations live the antagonism of class relations within themselves. A number of causes can lead to such a situation. Partners living together can have locations within different classes; an individual can hold two jobs, or expect to progress through jobs over the course of a career. Adult children can benefit from their parents' class locations—or the other way around. Or, most important for Wright's theory, an individual may have access to different kinds of assets. In other words, "a given person may be both an exploiter (because she controls a given asset) and exploited (because she does not control another asset)."[16] Assets are equivalent to resources and to factors of production. Some rights and powers are in a sense passed down from above, transferred or delegated: the right to reprimand or congratulate workers and make recommendations, but not to fire them; the right to hire and fire workers, but not to buy or sell capital. Some rights and powers are granted in exchange for putting to use skills and credentials, and so come with knowledge and expertise.

More broadly, Wright's typology of assets rests on a distinction between ownership and control. Ownership is a property right that entails the ability to sell, dispose of, and give an asset. Control means deciding on the use of an asset. Only capitalists own the means of production, but managers and experts will control some of their aspects. Exploitation as "the acquisition of economic benefits from the laboring activity of those who are dominated"[17] is a matter of exclusion or preventing others' access to assets, which leads to inverse welfare outcomes and thus antagonisms, which then together make it possible for exploiters to appropriate the labor of the exploited.[18] Yet exploitation need not be direct. Simply receiving more assets than what is relevant per capita places an individual in a position of exploitation toward others. The traditional middle class is made up of those who are neither exploiters nor exploited, which means that they have the relevant amount of assets across all types of assets. The new middle classes in comparison are lacking in some assets and have more than they should of other assets—generally more organizational control or skills than the workers, who only have some control and/or some skills, and mostly only own their labor power. These managers and especially these experts receive further assets indirectly rather than from their own appropriation of the work of others. Those in such contradictory class locations may have interests in common with workers, mostly as a result of being excluded from ownership of the means of production, and have interests in common with capitalists, because they own skill assets (in the case of experts) or have developed organization assets (in the case of managers) that make them valuable as well as potentially threatening to capitalists and place them in a relationship of greater mutual dependence, their careers being integrated to the goals of capitalists. While they generally choose to ally themselves with the dominant class, they can also seek to enter it outright by acquiring means of production, or they can seek an alliance with the principal exploited class, a strategy that is more attractive in moments of "'degradation'—deskilling, proletarianization, routinization of authority, etc."[19]

STRUCTURE, ACTION, AND PHENOMENOLOGY

As will be the case with Fanon, much of this exposition of Wright's theory of contradictory class locations deals with the question of structure, which can seem opposed to the phenomenological approach.[20] Indeed, phenomenology is often—rightly—understood as focusing on lived experience. However, there is a phenomenological method at play in the study of politics that instead focuses on the interplay of subjectivity and objectivity. Such work, as can be found in Young and Merleau-Ponty, relies on an understanding of structures that, rather than leading to an objectivist (or structuralist)

account of behavior, opens onto the meaning and motivations that are at play both knowingly and unknowingly in our actions. In *Humanism and Terror*, Merleau-Ponty speaks of the ghost that comes to replace any person as soon as they begin acting. In the earlier essay "The War Has Taken Place,"[21] this ghost also appears as a simple result of the categorizations that take place in their coexistence with others. Ideology and mystification—antisemitism, for instance—mean that we treat others through what we are taught to see of them. We take on these mystifications, which make up part of our social perception, and we have exchanges, debate, trade blows with ghosts, and harm actual people with whom we barely interact. Merleau-Ponty's study of the Moscow Trials in *Humanism and Terror*—show trials where leaders opposed to Stalin or representing threats to his emerging leadership were accused of and often made to confess to crimes they could not possibly have committed, most often treason—focuses on this interplay of subjectivity and objectivity that results from political action. In politics we become what our actions make of us, we are defined by those with whom we align and ally ourselves, those whom our actions serve, we will be seen and judged on the basis of the consequences of our actions—hence the idea of the ghost or phantom, which comes to replace us in the eyes of others.[22] And so Merleau-Ponty explains Nikolai Bukharin's perplexing confession that he did commit the crimes he was accused of in light of his refusal to see them as treasonous: objectively they served the cause of internal and external enemy powers, but they did not arise from interactions with them or collusion and, subjectively, they came out of intentions to further the revolutionary cause before events had set its course.

This reality of social and political interaction is a more radical instance and formulation of the phenomenon, which Sartre described in *Being and Nothingness* as the gaze of the other. Indeed, Merleau-Ponty goes beyond the dialectic of the for-itself and for-another to turn toward structures. Structures and events can tell us about the meaning of our behavior and action: they frame them for others. The attempt to achieve phenomenological clarity about social and political life thus demands that we go deeper into the first-person perspective and its embodiment, deeper into the face-to-face relationship between these perspectives and bodies, to also include the structural aspects of this perspective and embodiment—the structures we come to embody.

We can see these two aspects of phenomenology at play in Fanon's work. *Black Skin, White Masks* and much of *The Wretched of the Earth* offer a view of racism and colonialism that is anchored in the first-person perspective, including striking passages where Fanon discovers his own ghostly stand-in, going much further than Merleau-Ponty could in his attempt to account for antisemitism. While a few studies of Fanon's relationship to phenomenology exist, they tend to focus on *Black Skin, White Masks*.[23] Lewis Gordon offers a

strong case for the idea that in both books "Fanon's phenomenology of racism is also a phenomenology of colonialism"[24] and correspondingly highlights the question of the colonial natural attitude and the "phenomenological commitments in his [Fanon's] response to colonialism."[25]

Yet *A Dying Colonialism* and *The Wretched of the Earth* also include analyses of classes in relation to the process of decolonization. Here Fanon struggles with the Marxist account of class, which is not sufficient to account for locations within a colonial system.[26] In this case we find different kinds of ghosts, which are tied to the seriality of colonizers and colonized, where people disappear behind their colonial location. But we also find an array of motivations that escape the person's explicit intentionality, and indeed shape it. For example, Fanon's concern, notably in "The European Minority in Algeria," is to move beyond the ghost and the categorizations that are part of the psychology of racism to create human and democratic relationships, thus answering the two aspects of Merleau-Ponty's analysis of the conflict between subjectivity and objectivity in social and political life. Political action in common is Fanon's instrument of choice to overcome these contradictions—and in thus focusing on action, Fanon remains true to the Marxist view of classes as created through class struggle, even when turning to the study of colonial rather than capitalist antagonisms.

Fanon thus offers categorizations based on the objective meanings of social existence and action in his attempt to address structures and the potential they hold for different relationships and actions. Strategically, the matter is to find the parts of the population—Indigenous and non-Indigenous to Algeria—who are likely to cooperate to bring an end to colonialism; those who are likely to be pulled in as supporters of these changes, or at least pulled away from their resistance; and those who must be isolated from the rest and fought directly. Phenomenologically, Fanon seeks to understand the differences between social categories and the motives behind revolutionary action. His question might be phrased as: Who is likely to take part in radical social transformation, in revolution—and why? And a phenomenological approach to structures brings part of the answer to a question that is tied less to personal motives and existence and more to the shared aspect of social and political existence, which in turn create personal motives, possibilities that may or may not be developed and adopted in each person owing to a series of other motives, personal history, and habits. Fanon's sensibility to the distance between structure and person can be seen in his repeated use of the word "many" when speaking of the actions of members of any category: his statements remain specific and recognize a range of possibilities. And, indeed, his efforts go to complexifying relations among categories and destroying myths.[27]

While Fanon's concern for structure and locations within capitalism and colonialism brings him closer at least in appearance to a more objectivist

kind of Marxism, his accompanying concern for the existential and political
meaning of class categorization bring him closer to the kind of phenomeno-
logical Marxism developed early on by Merleau-Ponty and, later, by Sartre
in the *Critique of Dialectical Reason*. This is what Sekyi-Otu names a "phe-
nomenological account of social positions and relations"[28] that emerge out
of the actions of subjects. Thus what sets Fanon apart from Wright may be
above all that

> Fanon's account of social being would always resonate with the suggestion that
> "class" describes not so much a structural mediation of relations of production
> as an intentional mediation of relations of domination and subordination; not so
> much an objective determination as a mode of subjectivity, more or less inau-
> thentic, heteronomous, and above all lacking in the cognitive and moral capaci-
> ties required to forge universalist ends out of particular interests.[29]

Here Sekyi-Otu obliterates the "objective" and "structural" aspects of
Fanon's work in his attempt to escape certain deterministic tendencies he sees
in his ideas. He indeed points out a nativist fallacy, a voluntarism and a deter-
minism that may contradict one another, and a focus on national purpose, all
of which open onto essentialism. There is no clear antagonism between the
bourgeoisie and proletariat in colonized countries because their positions are
not tied to relations of production and conflict with each other. Instead, they
have to do with reproducing and participating in the colonizer's hierarchy.
Antagonisms under this reading are mechanical and contingent, just as racism
leads to a mechanical solidarity. Colonial classes would then be doomed to
never achieve coherence or any kind of capacity.

However, by *also* focusing on how decolonial struggle does take place,
Fanon in fact avoids the dangers that Sekyi-Otu sees as realized. He shifts
the ground of his analysis from capitalism to colonialism, and seeks capaci-
ties for struggle and action where they do exist and lead to the formation of
what Young would call groups (and, indeed, Fanon draws as Young does on
Sartre's *Critique of Dialectical Reason*). In so doing, and in privileging the
role of the peasantry in the (decolonial, and also anticapitalist) revolution,
Fanon describes how through the *Front de Libération Nationale* anticolonial
and decolonial struggle are indeed possible and capacities are in fact devel-
oped. Thus it may be the dynamic between the subjective and the objective,
the personal and the structural, that marks Fanon's work as phenomenologi-
cal, rather than the focus on first-person intentionality and lived experience.

Before I can move on to a reconceptualization of Fanon's account as pre-
senting contradictory colonial locations, another methodological problem
must thus be considered. Indeed, Wright's theory of contradictory class loca-
tions cannot simply be applied analogically to colonialism. Instead, it would

be necessary to rely on the dialectics at play in the relationship between capitalism and colonialism. My method begins with two presuppositions, which will need to be developed elsewhere: that they are the same kind of phenomenon, systems among other systems, and that the relationship among systems, structures, series, and individuals is similar in both cases (leaving aside the question of regimes).

The mediation between system and individual takes place at the level of collectivities: through class for capitalism; through race for colonialism. Indeed, what is experienced and described by Angela Davis, bell hooks, and Cornel West, for instance,[30] is class and not capitalism, race and not colonialism, gender and not patriarchy. A full investigation of the relationship between colonialism and capitalism would be intentional, which is to say that it would look at origins—the history of a situation and of a subject, providing sedimented meanings and examples of activities and action—and geneses—the here and now in its ambiguity and adversity, as it motivates the search for activities, actions, and their renewal. Elements of such an investigation can be found notably in the work of a Marxist historian, Gerald Horne,[31] and of a Marxist sociologist, Himani Bannerji,[32] both of whom also contribute to the theoretical linking of colonialism to race.

In seeking to understand structure, in relation to both system and person, a warning from Bannerji must be heeded. What we conceptually divide is lived all at once, inseparably.[33] In tying race to colonialism, as well as to capitalism, the priority she gives to lived experience highlights that neither capitalism nor colonialism is simply economic or cultural. Young offers a similar warning. Relying on other feminist thinkers, she explains that gender cannot be isolated from other identities, and the attempt to do so creates a universal category of gender and leads to seeking oppression *a priori*, thus missing the here and now of gender oppression. It also creates a universal subject of gender on whose behalf it becomes possible to speak, at the price of reifying gender and obscuring practices and institutions. These dangers are also present in relation to class and race. Yet, as Fanon's analyses show, systems remain distinct to a degree: locations within capitalism do not mirror locations within colonialism.

We will see below that Fanon treats questions having to do with colonial locations differently than those having to do with class locations and classes, even as he links racism to colonialism as an effect to a cause or a symptom to a disease. However, we will also see that Fanon describes colonial locations for entire classes and discusses the possibility for individual members of classes to change colonial locations, the contradiction being found within colonialism rather than within capitalism—hence the need for a distinction within the interplay of institutions. Colonial locations will consequently

appear as determined as much by the potential for domination and appropriation that is created by colonialism as by racism or by class locations.

CONTRADICTORY LOCATIONS
WITHIN COLONIALISM

The relevance of Fanon's approach to categories created by colonialism to the question of contradictory locations is that it functions differently than Wright's approach to categories created by capitalism and can help develop the concepts of contradictory class and colonial locations further than Wright has in relation to class. Indeed, Wright adopts the methods and approach of game theory: he begins with hypothetical scenarios, where actors are simply variables, and where variables are controlled so that they can be clearly isolated—exactly that against which Bannerji warns us. Through variables and quantification, he works at a very high level of abstraction, where variables can presumably later be filled in with real-life cases. Yet these cases are not, in fact, brought forward. We never know who struggles, or why; we never know why, or how, actors might struggle or come to act—only what strategies present themselves to them. Like Husserl's imaginary variation, Wright thinks and argues through suppositions and thought experiments. The phenomenology we find in Fanon's work looks at specific cases, builds upon them, and returns to them or turns to others to test theories. There are sufficient numbers of actually lived experiences and accounts of such experiences to make invented thought experiments superfluous. These descriptions can be found in *A Dying Colonialism* as well as in *The Wretched of the Earth*, which are concerned with the anticolonial struggle and with decolonization.

A central insight presented in *A Dying Colonialism* finds its origin in the practice of the Front de Libération Nationale (FLN) in Algeria: Fanon rejects the idea "that the F.L.N. made no distinction among the different members of Algeria's European society."[34] And, indeed, neither Fanon nor the FLN as he presents it saw all European Algerians as colonizers. Quite to the contrary, Fanon shows how the FLN understands the distinctions that exist within the population, seeks to undo any perception of set blocs, and rejects all essentialism: "What we Algerians want is to discover the man behind the colonizer; this man, who is both the organizer and the victim of a system that had choked him and reduced him to silence."[35]

The reasons for this distinction among Europeans are found in practice, as oppression is felt through the very fact of European presence in Algeria in greater or smaller numbers, and through the silence and lack of action of these Europeans in relation to colonial violence. Distinctions are then made on the basis of actions and participation in the colonial struggle—and Fanon's

account clearly shows that colonial struggle, just as class struggle, does not begin with emancipatory, anticolonial and decolonial struggle, but rather with the ongoing colonization of the territory. Among non-Arab Algerians, then—non-Indigenous Algerians, we might say—we find the *ultras*, the activists in favor of colonialism who even colonize France itself in ensuring that no concessions are made; the European masses, who mostly keep silent and tacitly support colonialism; and those who are engaged and have won the respect of Indigenous Algerians and of the FLN. The FLN is open as to the risk these Europeans will face as a result of their actions and thus avoids treating them as pawns in the way the French authorities treat the Algerians who collaborate with them. Fanon calls these Europeans "democrats," while the European masses call them "Arabs" given their proximity to the Indigenous population. Fanon describes these democrats as living "within a set of values that their principles reject and condemn,"[36] which is to say that they find themselves in a contradictory position as far as their values are concerned. And while he uses the term "settlers" (*colons*) for the latter two groups, he refers to the former as "colonialists"—those actively engaged in colonization.

As we move on through the text, we find that the differences among these non-Arab *groups*—which are based on action—are tied to a disposition of the mind, itself defined by three factors where we find the makings of locations or series. The first is the presence or absence of close contacts with the Arab population, possibly including assimilation within it. Here past behavior and established relations are central: the members of the FLN know the settlers within rural agglomerations and know whom to contact and whom to avoid when support is needed.[37] The second factor is economic interests and privileges—that is, dependence on the colonial regime for an advantage or for status, or participation in activities that serve the Algerian revolution, and thus dependence on the FLN or its Armée de Libération Nationale (ALN), or more generally activities that create interdependence with the Arab population. The third factor is the set of mechanisms of racist psychology, which means that other racialized groups (Algerian Jews, for instance) can find themselves on either side, but while some will join those who humiliate them—that is, the settlers whose racism affects them on a daily basis—the racism present in behaviors and structures means that very few will join the colonialists.

It is important to note that throughout these passages, Fanon does not speak in terms of determinisms, but rather of possibilities and probabilities. Whether Europeans will be colonialists, settlers, or become Algerians despite not being Indigenous to the country, is a matter of relationships and of dependence—of their capacity to overcome the segregations created by colonialism and of the provenance of their assets. Contradictory locations will be found in that all Europeans receive legal protections and possibilities that are closed to the Indigenous population, and all are used by the French authorities to

maintain the regime in place, but some will also develop a coexistence and material exchanges with Arab Algerians, thus developing other assets and realizing the extent to which their own principles may clash with those of the colonizers. These factors will lead them to join one group or another as a way to resolve the antagonism within themselves. The groups he describes can come from the same colonial locations and often from the same families as youth break with their parents' silence or active support for the regime. And, indeed, Fanon hopes to show that what is probable is quite distant from the possibilities that France hopes to bring to reality: "We want to show in these pages that *colonialism has definitely lost in Algeria, while the Algerians, come what may, have definitely won.*"[38]

Indeed, taking stock of the advance of this struggle in Algeria and other African countries, Fanon offers, in *The Wretched of the Earth*, an account of the classes and racial divisions at the moment of independence. Here we see how capitalism and colonialism combine to create not only class locations but also colonial locations that are not limited to racial distinctions. Following the theoretical developments above, I will pay attention to the various locations Fanon identifies, without attempting to situate them on an axis or grid; to activities and the groups they benefit; to social relationships to what can act as assets or bases for power and development; and to mediations of collectives between persons and systems.

The Wretched of the Earth begins with the binary opposition between settlers and colonized. Decolonization, as a program for absolute dis-order, is feared by settlers and desired by the colonized; it is part of their consciousness. It is "the meeting of two congenitally antagonistic forces that draw their originality precisely from this kind of substantification that the colonial situation secretes and feeds."[39] The settler is defined by their coming from afar and by their lack of resemblance to the colonized. Their meeting took place, and continues to take place, in the open violence, exploitation, and domination of the settler over the colonized. But it also takes place in the compartmentalization and in the segregation of the colonial world where zones mutually exclude each other, where only one zone is possible in the long term, where each group desires to take the place of the other. Segregation is enforced spatially, through laws and force, but also morally, by presenting the colonized as morally bad, as animals. A confrontation is then inevitable. Another separation takes place here: "The oppressor, in his zone, gives existence to the movement, a movement of domination, of exploitation, of plunder. In the other zone, the colonized thing nestled, plundered, feeds as he can this movement, which goes without transition from the banks of the territory to the palace and to the docks of the 'metropolis.'"[40] Being, spatiality, and struggle thus divide settlers and colonized—but all emerge from a movement that begins with settlement.

Fanon quickly moves beyond this binary opposition between settlers and colonized. Among settlers, who are united in their distinction from those they colonize, the colonial bourgeoisie plays the central role. They see the colonized as an indistinct mass until a movement of decolonization emerges; they then seek interlocutors, an elite they can convince of its values so that domination may be enforced through culture. They create this elite, colonized intellectuals whom they convince to take up the discourse of the universalism of Western values. This local elite stand opposed to the colonized, to the people. Their creation of political parties, their focus on elections, on gaining rights within the context of the segregation of settlers and colonized make them partisans of order and displays their desire for power. They appeal to urban dwellers who take advantage of the colonial situation and have interests that are tied to it, and yet who in defending their individual interests compete with settlers—even as the colonized want to take the place of settlers.[41] The elite depend on settlers, on participating in political and economic institutions, on holding positions within nationalist parties in order to obtain more power on behalf of their nation: they are dependent on the colonial system. They instrumentalize the colonized without mobilizing them; they show their strength without using it and create dreams for the people. And the people, who identify with anyone who opposes the colonial regime, at once understand the game the elite play and take them at their word by asking them to make good on their threat of revolution—or, eventually, by believing them that its time has come, and leading it themselves. The people can back their elite, or turn against them, but will always be opposed to colonialism.

Here another category emerges: the elite and other urban dwellers are united in their difference from peasants. This difference is created by a dependence or lack thereof on the colonial system and by the difference in political movements, one reformist, and one truly revolutionary. Dependence and participation, as Fanon describes them, create contradictions for the urban colonized, for the elite. Without wealth, without participation, the people—that is, those who live outside the cities, whose occupation is not turned toward the colonial regime—can only want to replace the system. It is from this position that violence becomes ineluctable, as one means above all that are also necessary: experiencing only violence from colonization, they can only reject it, and respond through violence as needed to defend their cultural and political order. Fanon wants this distinction to be clear: "We do not find ourselves here in the presence of the classical opposition of town and country. This is the opposition between the colonized who are excluded from the advantages of colonialism and those who find ways to take advantage of colonial exploitation."[42] The elite are simply unable to reach the people of the countryside.

Here, again, another category emerges: for Fanon the urban proletariat, as limited as its existence might be, is the most favored, the most privileged part

of the people. Union leaders become candidates in political parties—unions are a conduit to the elite. The proletariat is thus still part of the people, not a part of the elite, but not entirely separate from them. They share with the elite a compromise with colonialism in which the peasantry does not partake—they are in a contradictory location within capitalism.

It should not be surprising then that for Fanon, the only way for intellectuals, or any colonized person, to decolonize themselves is to join the people, the peasantry, to put themselves in the hands of the people and not to lead them. Only then can they understand that their focus on the colonial regime has not served them and that this regime cannot be reformed.[43] Fanon here seems to be narrating his own trajectory.[44] But he also points to another collaboration, which opens the possibility for settlers to take part in the revolutionary struggle, and shows that the original binary division is a movement and a structure rather than an essence. There are settlers who do not participate in colonial hysteria, who condemn the colonial war, and who can choose to share the experiences and the violence endured by the colonized, by joining their movement. Only in struggle and in giving up those privileges that can be given up can segregations be overcome.

In summary, Fanon presents the following colonial locations—in addition to the metropolitan, the imperial power, in the metropolis, without direct contact with the colonized, who are absent from these developments, and its youth, the democrats, such as Claude Bourdet, Jean-Marie Domenach, and Pierre Cot, who are briefly discussed in *A Dying Colonialism*. First, we find colonizers, the occupying force, and then settlers, for whom neutrality and innocence are impossible. In *Toward the African Revolution* Fanon writes that "Every Frenchman in Algeria oppresses, despises, dominates."[45] Their relations, or lack thereof, and dependence upon Indigenous Algerians create different locations, some of them contradictory. Among the colonized, the elite and the proletariat form two interrelated but distinct categories, who stand apart from the peasants. Here only settlers and peasants can be said not to have interests dependent on colonialism, in that the former depend on it for land but remain in great part exploited, whereas the latter have nothing to gain from it. In Fanon's account, even colonized proletarians take advantage of colonialism and depend upon it. There is no community of interests, but rather different interests tied to the same system, different from those of the colonized peasantry.

After independence, under neo-colonialism, yet another location emerges: a national bourgeoisie, distinct from the metropolitan bourgeoisie, can now develop, as it orients itself toward production. This distinction follows from the fact that within colonialism, the elite cannot be a bourgeoisie, that it is not a capitalist category, that it is instead oriented toward the settler bourgeoisie, without a direct relation to the means of production or to labor. It is

an instrument of capital. After independence, the elite inherits the colonial system, takes up the tertiary sectors from settlers, and leads to the creation of a category of civil servants, managers who might take over the state, and to a national bourgeoisie, capitalists who control a part of the means of production, which mostly remain in the hands of the metropolitan bourgeoisie.[46] This is also when mutual racisms emerge, as Arabs and Black Africans compete for offices.[47]

What separates the colonized peasantry from the colonized proletariat is not their economic activity. Fanon does not consider peasants' relation to the means of production, nor the consciousness that arises from the work they do. Instead, he describes them as owing nothing to colonialism, and as maintaining a culture and traditions that urbanized populations have transformed in their taking up of Western culture and traditions, that the elite abandons in favor of a borrowed language and practices they are at pains to make their own. They maintain a relationship to the land developed by previous generations and develop new relationships to mountains that show them different ways of living. Their relationship to colonialism and to the state is one of distance, without dependence, and one of complete opposition. Although in this chapter there is not sufficient space to fully develop these insights, we can see that in his descriptions of the Algerian people, Fanon touches on culture, land, and state and system, all elements that can also be found in the work of contemporary Indigenous political philosophers and thinkers in North America. A fourth element also appears in their work, especially in light of residential schools and family services that take children away from Indigenous families to place them in settler families: social reproduction. These four elements stand in regard to colonialism in a similar manner to Wright's assets in regard to capitalism. They are matters of ownership and control, terms that will need to remain undefined here, taken only in their general meaning in the context of antagonisms between settlers and colonized peoples where one group or the other will be able to make decisions about them. They define the locations with regard to colonialism, the degree of dependence as well as the interests, which then become the basis for antagonisms and struggles through which peoples emerge. Having access to any of these elements and not to the others creates a contradiction, an adherence to what oppresses, a dependence upon it, a detachment from others who are oppressed. That also includes partial access, so that the leaders of nationalist parties will be stuck in a constant situation of contradiction, the best among them maintaining the trust that allows for negotiation and working with their people toward its own ends and values.

CONCLUSION

Despite different origins, a common insight is found in the work of Wright, as an explicit theme, and in that of Fanon, as a theme implicit to the study of decolonization. Capitalism and colonialism create contradictory locations outside of the polarization between capitalists and workers, settlers and colonized. Capitalism creates classes, which take on a different form once workers unite to actively engage in class struggle to counter the everyday violence of capitalism. Colonialism creates races—but also colonial locations (for lack of a better term), which in Fanon's work take on the form of a people and overcome distinctions of race and origins through common, local struggles. Yet, as Das remarks in his criticism of Wright,[48] these struggles are difficult to imagine where the interests of certain series are so closely aligned with capitalism or colonialism. Attention to these contradictory locations within or outside of series is then necessary both to a full understanding of the systems and to any strategy of struggle against them.

Much is left to understand in terms of what Wright names assets and Das names social relations,[49] and in what ways specific groups are exploited and exploiters, dominated and dominant—as well as of the relationship between capitalism and colonialism. This chapter only offers a conceptualization of contradictory colonial locations, which is meant to make further analysis possible—for instance, of French-speaking Canadians in minority settings (that is, outside Québec), or Cajuns who have been affected and targeted, among other series, by British, then Canadian or American colonialism, while still benefiting from whiteness and from access to land and a series of opportunities opened by the settler colonial state, and who can only be said to be settlers; or of Afro-Caribbean immigrants to these same countries, who may gain access to land and to some economic opportunities, but only while facing enormous discrimination, racism, and poverty, among other obstacles and beside recolonization, and so who cannot be said to be settlers but are also not colonized in the way Indigenous peoples are. By understanding such contradictory locations, we gain a better sense of the social forces as well as the dynamics of colonialism as it mobilizes even many of those who, to a lesser or great extent, suffer from it.

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NOTES

1. I am grateful to Philip Charrier for his comments on a very early version of the ideas presented here, as well as to Bryan Smyth and Richard Westerman for their in-depth comments and their suggestions.

2. Erik Olin Wright, *Classes* (London: Verso, 1997), 26.

3. Erik Olin Wright, *Understanding Class* (London: Verso, 2015), chap. 5, "The Raw Materials of Alternative Approaches to Class Analysis," Kindle.

4. Erik Olin Wright, "Foundations of a Neo-Marxist Class Analysis," in *Approaches to Class Analysis*, ed. Erik Olin Wright (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005), 9.

5. Wright, *Understanding Class*, chap. 5, "The Raw Materials of Alternative Approaches to Class Analysis," note 5.

6. Iris Marion Young, *Intersecting Voices: Dilemmas of Gender, Political Philosophy, and Policy* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1997), 23.

7. Young, *Intersecting Voices*, 24.

8. Maurice Merleau-Ponty, *Institution and Passivity: Course Notes from the Collège de France (1954–1955)* (Evanston, IL: Northwestern University Press, 2010).

9. Young, *Intersecting Voices*, 23.

10. Iris Marion Young, *Justice and the Politics of Difference* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1990).

11. Wright, *Classes*, 10.

12. Wright, *Classes*, 34.

13. Wright, *Classes*, 74.

14. Wright, "Foundations," 18.

15. Wright, *Classes*, 43–44.

16. Raju J. Das, *Marxist Class Theory for a Skeptical World* (Chicago: Haymarket Books, 2017), 23. Here the reference to Das is limited to his exposition of Wright's position. The further development of a theory of contradictory locations will entail the need to respond to Das's detailed and acute criticism of Wright, which seeks to defend a classical Marxist position—but also to account for contemporary material conditions.

17. Wright, *Understanding Class*, chap. 1, "Class as Exploitation and Domination."

18. Wright, "Foundations," 16–17.

19. Wright, *Classes*, 125–26.

20. My thanks go to Richard Westerman for pointing out this dynamic within an earlier version of this chapter.

21. Maurice Merleau-Ponty, *Sense and Non-Sense* (Evanston, IL: Northwestern University Press, 1964).

22. I develop these ideas at length in "Merleau-Ponty's Phenomenology of Politics: A Humanism in Extension," *Philosophy & Social Criticism* 36, no. 5 (2010): 623–34; and *La politique dans l'adversité: Merleau-Ponty aux marges de la philosophie* (Geneva: Métis Presses, 2018).

23. Robert Bernasconi, "Frantz Fanon's Engagement with Phenomenology: Unlocking the Temporal Architecture of *Black Skin, White Masks*," *Research in Phenomenology* 50, no. 3 (2020): 386–406; and Lou Turner, "Frantz Fanon's Phenomenology of Black Mind: Sources, Critique, Dialectic," *Philosophy Today* 45, supp. (2001): 99–104.

24. Lewis R. Gordon, *Fanon and the Crisis of European Man: An Essay on Philosophy and the Human Sciences* (London: Routledge, 1995), 60–61.

25. Gordon, *Fanon and the Crisis of European Man*, 6–62.

26. For a discussion of the relevance and proximity of Fanon's ideas to the Marxist tradition, see the insights presented in Alyson Escalante and Breht O'Shea, "The Wretched of the Earth—Frantz Fanon: On National Consciousness and National Culture," November 23, 2019, in *Red Menace*, podcast. https://redmenace. libsyn.com/the-wretched-of-the-earth-by-frantz-fanon-part-2. For a more genea-logical study of Fanon's ideas in relation to Marx's, see Nigel C. Gibson, "Fanon and Marx Revisited," *Journal of the British Society for Phenomenology* 51, no. 4 (2020): 320–36.

27. Frantz Fanon, *A Dying Colonialism* (New York: Grove Press, 1965), 156–57.

28. Ato Sekyi-Otu, *Fanon's Dialectic of Experience* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1996), 128.

29. Sekyi-Otu, *Fanon's Dialectic of Experience*, 128.

30. Angela Davis, *Women, Race & Class* (London: Penguin, 2019); bell hooks, *Where We Stand: Class Matters* (Hoboken, NJ: Taylor and Francis, 2012); Cornel West, *Race Matters* (Boston: Beacon, 2018).

31. Gerald Horne, *The Apocalypse of Settler Colonialism: The Roots of Slavery, White Supremacy, and Capitalism in Seventeenth-Century North America and the Caribbean* (New York: Monthly Review Press, 2018).

32. Himani Bannerji, *The Dark Side of the Nation: Essays on Multiculturalism, Nationalism and Gender* (Toronto: Canadian Scholars' Press, 2000).

33. Himani Bannerji, "Building from Marx: Reflections on Class and Race," *Social Justice* 32, no. 4 (2005): 144–45.

34. Fanon, *A Dying Colonialism*, 149.

35. Fanon, *A Dying Colonialism*, 32.

36. Fanon, *A Dying Colonialism*, 150, translation modified; *Oeuvres* (Paris: La Découverte, 2011), 382.

37. Close contacts entail emotional connections, which may be split among family and friends of different colonial locations. Emotional connections are also found in the case studies in *The Wretched of the Earth* and Fanon's psychological writings, where even those who live around torture, for instance, can develop contradictory feelings about their family and series, come to identify with other colonial locations, and even join anticolonial groups in their struggle.

38. Fanon, *A Dying Colonialism*, 31, translation modified; *Oeuvres*, 268.

39. Frantz Fanon, *The Wretched of the Earth* (New York: Grove Press, 1963), 36, translation modified; *Oeuvres*, 452.

40. Fanon, *The Wretched of the Earth*, 51, translation modified; *Oeuvres*, 463.

41. Fanon, *The Wretched of the Earth*, 60–61.

42. Fanon, *The Wretched of the Earth*, 112, translation modified; *Oeuvres*, 513.

43. Fanon, *The Wretched of the Earth*, 126.

44. This trajectory is detailed in David Macey, *Frantz Fanon. A Biography* (London: Verso, 2012).

45. Frantz Fanon, *Toward the African Revolution* (New York: Grove Press, 1967), 81.

46. Fanon, *The Wretched of the Earth*, 163–81.

47. Fanon, *The Wretched of the Earth*, 161–62.

48. Das, *Marxist Class Theory for a Skeptical World*, 134–38.

49. Das, *Marxist Class Theory for a Skeptical World*, 113.

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