We must organize a systematic study of the Hegelian dialectic from a materialist standpoint.
Lenin, 1922
'On the Significance of Militant Materialism'

Until very recently, neither bourgeois nor Marxist thinkers had much appreciation of the fact that the relation between Marxism and philosophy might pose a very important theoretical and practical problem. For professors of philosophy, Marxism was at best a rather minor sub-section within the history of nineteenth-century philosophy, dismissed as 'The Decay of Hegelianism'.[1] But 'Marxists' as well tended not to

1. Thus Kuno Fischer in his nine-volume *Geschichte der neueren Philosophie* devotes only one page (p. 1170) of the double volume concerned with Hegelian philosophy to (Bismarckian) 'State Socialism' and to 'Communism'. Their respective founders he names as Ferdinand Lassalle and Karl Marx: the latter is dispatched in two lines. He only quotes Friedrich Engels in order indirectly to cast a little discredit on his professional colleagues. In Überweg's *Grundriss der Geschichte der Philosophie vom Beginn des XIX. Jahrhunderts bis auf die Gegenwart* (11th edition, Austria, 1916) there are *two* pages (pp. 208–9) devoted to the life and teachings of Marx and Engels; and there is also a mention of the materialist conception of history which in the space of a few lines is stated to be of importance for the history of philosophy, and is defined as 'the exact inversion of Hegel's idealist conception'. F. A. Lange in his *Geschichte des Materialismus* only mentions Marx in some historical footnotes where he is described as the 'greatest living expert on the *history of political economy*'; he takes no notice of Marx and Engels as theoreticians. This attitude is typical even of authors who devote monographs to the 'philosophical' content of Marxism. Cf. Benno Erdmann, 'The Philosophical Premisses of the Materialist Conception of History', *Jahrbuch für Gesetzgebung, Verwaltung und Volkswirtschaft,*

lay great stress on the 'philosophical side' of their theory, although for quite different reasons. Marx and Engels, it is true, often indicated with great pride that historically the German workers' movement had inherited the legacy of classical German philosophy in 'scientific socialism'.[2] But they did not mean by this that scientific socialism or communism were primarily 'philosophies'.[3] They rather saw the task of their 'scientific socialism' as that of definitively overcoming and superseding the form and content, not only of all previous bourgeois idealist philosophy, but thereby of philosophy altogether. Later I shall have to explain in more detail what, according to the original conception of Marx and Engels, the nature of this supersession was or was intended to be. For the moment I merely record that historically this issue simply ceased to be a problem as far as most later Marxists were concerned. The manner in which they dealt with the question of philosophy can best be described in the vivid terms in which Engels once described Feuerbach's attitude to Hegelian philosophy: Feuerbach simply 'shoved' it 'unceremoniously aside'.[4] In fact, very many later Marxists, apparently in highly orthodox compliance with the masters' instructions, dealt in exactly the same unceremonious way not only with Hegelian philosophy but with philosophy as a whole. Thus, for example,

XXXI (1916), pp. 919ff, especially pp. 970–2. Further examples are given later.

2. This is literally stated in the famous closing sentence of Engels's *Ludwig Feuerbach and the End of Classical German Philosophy*. Similar formulations are found in almost all the works of Marx and Engels, from the most varied periods of their lives, e.g. in the final sentence of the preface to the first edition of Engels's *Socialism: Utopian and Scientific*.

3. Cf. especially the polemics in the *Communist Manifesto* of 1847–8 against German or 'true' socialism, and the introductory statements of an article on German socialism which Engels published in *Almanach du Parti Ouvrier pour 1892*. Engels, apparently in complete agreement with the bourgeois philosophy of history, describes pre-1848 German socialism, which was 'dominated from the start by the name of Marx', as 'a theoretical movement that arose from the ruins of Hegel's philosophy'. He calls the followers of this trend 'ex-philosophers' and straightforwardly contrasts them to the 'workers' who according to him made up the other of the two trends which fused in 1848 to form German communism.

4. *Ludwig Feuerbach*, in Marx and Engels, *Selected Works*, vol. II, p. 368.

Franz Mehring more than once laconically described his own orthodox Marxist position on the question of philosophy by saying that he accepted 'the rejection of all philosophic fantasies' which was 'the precondition for the masters' (Marx and Engels) immortal accomplishments'.[5] This statement came from a man who could with justice say that he had 'concerned himself with the philosophical origins of Marx and Engels more thoroughly than anyone else', and it is extremely significant for the generally dominant position on all philosophical problems found among the Marxist theoreticians of the Second International (1889–1914). The prominent Marxist theoreticians of the period regarded concern with questions that were not even essentially philosophical in the narrower sense, but were only related to the general epistemological and methodological bases of Marxist theory, as at most an utter waste of time and effort. Of course, whether they liked it or not, they allowed discussion of such philosophical issues within the Marxist camp and in some circumstances they took part themselves. But when doing so they made it quite clear that the elucidation of such problems was totally irrelevant to the practice of proletarian class struggle, and would always have to remain so.[6] Such a conception was, however, only self-evident and

5. *Neue Zeit*, 28, I, p. 686. There are similar statements in the chapter on *The German Ideology* in Mehring's biography of Marx, *Karl Marx* (London, 1936), pp. 109ff. One can see how little Mehring has understood the meaning of these works of Marx and Engels (which unfortunately have still not been published in full), by comparing his statements with the corresponding sections of Gustav Mayer's biography of Engels, *Friedrich Engels* (1920), pp. 234–61. (*Translator's Note:* The 1936 English edition of Mayer's biography is a shortened and rewritten version of the German original, and does not contain the passages mentioned by Korsch.)

6. An interesting instance of this is a small clash whose traces can be found in *Neue Zeit* 26, I, pp. 695, 898. The editor (Karl Kautsky) had printed an introductory comment on an article he was publishing by Bogdanov on 'Ernst Mach and the Revolution'. In this comment the anonymous translator felt himself bound to censure Russian Social Democracy because the 'extremely serious *tactical* differences' between Bolsheviks and Mensheviks were 'exacerbated' by 'what we consider to be the *quite independent* question of whether Marxism is epistemologically in agreement with Spinoza and Holbach or with Mach and Avenarius'. The editorial board of the Russian Bolshevik *Proletary* (i.e. Lenin) was compelled to reply to this and to state that 'this philosophical conflict is in fact not an issue of inner party dispute and, in the

logically justified given the premiss that Marxism as a theory and practice was in essence totally unalterable and involved no specific position on any philosophical questions whatever. This meant that it was not regarded as impossible, for example, for a leading Marxist theoretician to be a follower of Arthur Schopenhauer in his private philosophical life.

During that period, therefore, however great the contradictions between Marxist and bourgeois theory were in all other respects, on this one point there was an apparent agreement between the two extremes. Bourgeois professors of philosophy reassured each other that Marxism had no philosophical content of its own – and thought they were saying something important *against* it. Orthodox Marxists also reassured each other that their Marxism by its very nature had nothing to do with philosophy – and thought they were saying something important *in favour* of it. There was yet a third trend that started from the same basic position; and throughout this period it was the only one to concern itself somewhat more thoroughly with the philosophical side of socialism. It consisted of those 'philosophizing socialists' of various kinds who saw their task as that of 'supplementing' the Marxist system with ideas from *Kulturphilosophie* or with notions from Kant, Dietzgen or Mach, or other philosophies. Yet precisely because they thought that the Marxist system needed philosophical supplements, they made it quite clear that in their eyes too Marxism in itself lacked philosophical content.'[7]

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opinion of the editors, it should not become so' ('Statement of the Editors of *Proletary*', Lenin, *Collected Works*, vol. 13, p. 447). It is however well known that the man who wrote this formal disclaimer, the great tactician Lenin, later in the same year published his philosophical work *Materialism and Empirio-Criticism*.

7. They attributed this to a weakness in Marxist theory and not, as the 'orthodox Marxists' did, to an advance registered by socialism in developing from a philosophy to a science; but this meant that they tried to rescue all or part of the remaining content of socialist theory. From the very start they were on the side of their bourgeois opponents in the battle between bourgeois and proletarian science. They merely tried to avoid the inevitable conclusion as long as was possible. But the events of crisis and war after 1914 made it impossible to continue to avoid the question of proletarian revolution, and the real character of *all kinds* of philosophizing socialism became as clear as could ever be

Nowadays it is rather easy to show that this purely *negative* conception of the relation between Marxism and philosophy, which we have shown to be held in apparent unanimity by bourgeois scholars as well as by orthodox Marxists, arose in both cases from a very superficial and incomplete analysis of historical and logical development. However, the conditions under which they both came to this conclusion *in part* diverge greatly, and so I want to describe them separately. It will then be clear that in spite of the great difference between the motives on either side, the two sets of causes do coincide in *one* crucial place. Among *bourgeois scholars* in the second half of the nineteenth century there was a total disregard of Hegel's philosophy, which coincided with a complete incomprehension of the relation of philosophy to reality, and of theory to practice, which constituted the living principle of all philosophy and science in Hegel's time. On the other hand *Marxists* simultaneously tended in exactly the same way increasingly to forget the original meaning of the dialectical principle. Yet it

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desired. It was not only such overtly anti-Marxist and un-Marxist philosophizing socialists as Bernstein and Koigen, but also most of the philosophizing Marxists (Kantian, Dietzgenian and Machian Marxists) who since then have shown, in word and deed, that they have not really passed the standpoint of bourgeois society. This applies not only to their philosophy, but by necessary extension also to their political theory and practice. There is no need to provide examples of the bourgeois-reformist character of Kantian Marxism, as it can hardly be doubted. As for the path along which Machian Marxism is bound to lead its followers (and has lead most of them already), this was clearly shown by Lenin in his 1908 dispute with empirio-criticism. Dietzgenian Marxism has already gone part of the way along the same road, and this is shown by a little pamphlet written by Dietzgen's son (1923). This rather naïve 'neo-Marxist' does not just congratulate his 'guarantor' Kautsky for having abandoned most 'antique Marxist' positions, he also expresses his regret that Kautsky, having relearnt so much, should still retain some traces of them (p. 2). But David Koigen is the best example of how sound Mehring's political instinct was when he rejected philosophy altogether in the face of philosophical fantasies *like these*. To realize this one need only read the highly considerate criticism Mehring made of Koigen's completely immature early philosophical writings ('Neo-Marxism', *Neue Zeit*, 20, I, pp. 385ff., and Marx-Engels, *Nachlass* II, p. 348), and then realize how rapidly this philosopher, under Bernstein's patronage in 1903, developed into the most superficial 'cultural socialist' and anti-Marxist, and finally ended up as one of the most confused and reactionary romantics. (On this last phase see, for example, Koigen's article in *Zeitschrift für Politik*, 1922, pp. 304ff.)

was this that the two young Hegelians Marx and Engels, when they were turning away from Hegel in the 1840s, had quite deliberately rescued from German idealist philosophy and transferred to the materialist conception of history and society.[8]

First I shall summarize the reasons why, since the middle of the nineteenth century, *bourgeois* philosophers and historians have progressively abandoned the dialectical conception of the history of philosophy; and why they have therefore been incapable of adequately analysing and presenting the independent essence of Marxist philosophy and its significance within the general development of nineteenth-century philosophy.

One could perhaps argue that there were much more immediate reasons for the disregard and misinterpretation of Marxist philosophy, and that there is therefore absolutely no need for us to explain its suppression by reference to the abandonment of the dialectic. It is true that in nineteenth-century writing on the history of philosophy, a conscious class instinct undeniably contributed to the perfunctory treatment of Marxism, and, what is more, to a similar treatment of such bourgeois 'atheists' and 'materialists' as David Friedrich Strauss, Bruno Bauer and Ludwig Feuerbach. But we would only have a very crude idea of what in reality constitutes a very complex situation if we simply accused bourgeois philosophers of having consciously subordinated their philosophy, or history of philosophy, to class interest. There are of course instances which do correspond to this crude thesis.[9] But in

8. Engels, *Anti-Dühring* (Moscow, 1959), p. 16 (preface to the second edition of 1885). Cf. similar statements by Marx at the end of his postscript to the second edition of *Capital*, 1873.

9. The best examples of this are the following statements by E. von Sydow in his *Der Gedanke des Idealreichs in der idealistischen Philosophie von Kant bis Hegel* (1914), pp. 2–3: 'In so far as the idea of the Ideal is historicized, it loses its explosive force, for it is the Ideal which, in German idealism, renders history logical and transforms it from a "chain of events" into a "series of concepts". If the Ideal is a logico-historical necessity, then it is premature and pointless to strive for it. This elucidation of the concept of the Ideal was the achievement of the absolute Idealists. It is they whom we must thank if the social and economic order we have today prevails into the foreseeable future. While the ruling classes freed themselves from the historical phantasmagoria of idealism and often converted their will to action into the courage to act, the proletariat still believes in the materialist débris derived from the idealist system. It is to be hoped that this felicitous situation will continue for a long time. It was Fichte who contributed most to this achievement, as in all other questions of principle.' Von Sydow remarks quite explicitly in a footnote that this fact 'could be invoked against those who claim more or less openly that *philosophy is politically unimportant*'.

general the relation of the philosophical representatives of a class to the class which they represent is a good deal more complex. In his *Eighteenth Brumaire* Marx deals specifically with interconnections of this kind. He says there that the class as a whole creates and forms 'an entire superstructure of distinct and peculiarly formed sentiments, illusions, modes of thought and views of life' out of its 'material foundations'. A part of the superstructure that is 'determined by class' in this way, yet is particularly remote from its 'material and economic foundation', is the philosophy of the class in question. This is most obvious as regards its content; but it also applies in the last instance to its formal aspects.[10] If we want to understand the complete incomprehension of the philosophical content of Marxism on the part of bourgeois historians of philosophy, and really to understand it in Marx's sense of the word – that is 'materialistically and therefore scientifically'[11] – we must not be content to explain this phenomenon directly and immediately by its 'earthly kernel' (namely class consciousness and the economic interests which it conceals 'in the last instance'). Our task is to show in detail the *mediations* of the process whereby even those bourgeois philosophers and historians who sincerely try to investigate 'pure' truth with

10. Cf. on this Marx, *The Eighteenth Brumaire of Louis Bonaparte* (Marx and Engels, *Selected Works*, vol. I) especially pp. 272, 275 (on the relationship of the ideological representatives of a class to the class as a whole which they represent); and Engels, *Ludwig Feuerbach* (*Selected Works*, vol. II), p. 397 – on philosophy. In this context one could also quote the remark in Marx's doctoral thesis which is a general critique of attempts to explain a philosopher's mistakes by 'questioning his individual consciousness' instead of objectively 'reconstructing his essential forms of consciousness, erecting them into a definite structure and meaning and thereby surpassing them' (*Nachlass*, vol. I, p. 114).

11. Cf. Marx, *Capital* (Moscow, 1961), vol. I, pp. 372–3n, where Marx, in discussing the history of religion, describes the method he advances as 'the only materialist and therefore scientific method'. More details on this will be given later.

the greatest 'objectivity' are bound completely to overlook the the philosophical content of Marxism or are only able to interpret it in an inadequate and superficial way. For our purposes the most important of these mediations is undoubtedly the fact that since the middle of the nineteenth century the whole of bourgeois philosophy, and especially, the bourgeois writing of the history of philosophy, has for socio-economic reasons abandoned Hegelian philosophy and the dialectical method. It has returned to a method of philosophy, and of writing the history of philosophy, which renders it almost impossible for it to make anything 'philosophical' out of a phenomenon like Marx's scientific socialism.

In the normal presentations of the history of the nineteenth-century philosophy which emanate from bourgeois authors, there is a gap at a specific point which can only be overcome in a highly artificial manner, if at all. These historians want to present the development of philosophical thought in a totally ideological and hopelessly undialectical way, as a pure process of the 'history of ideas'. It is therefore impossible to see how they can find a rational explanation for the fact that by the 1850s Hegel's grandiose philosophy had virtually no followers left in Germany and was totally misunderstood soon afterwards, whereas as late as the 1830s even its greatest enemies (Schopenhauer or Herbart) were unable to escape its overpowering intellectual influence. Most of them did not even try to provide such an explanation, but were instead content to note in their annals the disputes following Hegel's death under the utterly negative rubric of 'The Decay of Hegelianism'. Yet the content of these disputes was very significant and they were also, by today's standards, of an extremely high formal philosophical level. They took place between the various tendencies of Hegel's school, the Right, the Centre and the different tendencies of the Left, especially Strauss, Bauer, Feuerbach, Marx and Engels. To close this period, these historians of philosophy simply set a kind of absolute 'end' to the Hegelian philosophic movement. They then begin the 1860s with the return to Kant (Helmholtz, Zeller, Liebmann, Lange) which appears as a new epoch of philosophical development, without any direct connection to anything else. This kind of history of philosophy has three great

limitations, two of which can be revealed by a critical revision that itself remains more or less completely within the realm of the history of ideas. Indeed, in recent years more thorough philosophers, especially Dilthey and his school, have considerably expanded the limited perspective of normal histories of philosophy in these two respects. These two limits can therefore be regarded as having been overcome in principle, although in practice they have survived to this day and will presumably continue to do so for a very long time. The third limit, however, cannot in any way be surpassed from within the realm of the history of ideas; consequently it has not yet been overcome even in principle by contemporary bourgeois historians of philosophy.

The first of these three limits in the bourgeois history of philosophy during the second half of the nineteenth century can be characterized as a 'purely philosophical' one. The ideologues of the time did not see that the ideas contained in a philosophy can live on not only in philosophies, but equally well in positive sciences and social practice, and that this process precisely began on a large scale with Hegel's philosophy. The second limit is a 'local' one, and was most typical of German professors of philosophy in the second half of the last century: these worthy Germans ignored the fact that there were other 'philosophers' beyond the boundaries of Germany. Hence, with a few exceptions, they quite failed to see that the Hegelian system, although pronounced dead in Germany for decades, had continued to flourish in several foreign countries, not only in its content but also as a system and a method. In the development of the history of philosophy over recent decades, these first two limits to its perspective have in principle been overcome, and the picture painted above of the standard histories of philosophy since 1850 has of late undergone considerable improvement. However, bourgeois philosophers and historians are quite unable to overcome a third limitation on their historical outlook, because this would entail these 'bourgeois' philosophers and historians of philosophy abandoning the *bourgeois class standpoint* which constitutes the most essential *a priori* of their entire historical and philosophical science. For what appears as the purely 'ideal' development of philosophy in the nineteenth century can in

fact only be fully and essentially grasped by relating it to the concrete historical development of bourgeois society as a whole. It is precisely this relation that bourgeois historians of philosophy, at their present stage of development, are incapable of studying scrupulously and impartially.

This explains why right up to the present day certain phases of the general development of philosophy in the nineteenth century have had to remain 'transcendent' for these bourgeois historians of philosophy. It also explains why there are still certain curious 'blank patches' on the maps of contemporary bourgeois histories of philosophy (already described in connection with the 'end' of the Hegelian movement in the 1840s and the empty space after it, before the 'reawakening' of philosophy in the 1860s). It also becomes intelligible why bourgeois histories of philosophy today no longer have any coherent grasp even of a period of German philosophy whose concrete essence they previously had succeeded in understanding. In other words, neither the development of philosophical thought *after* Hegel, nor the preceding evolution of philosophy *from* Kant *to* Hegel, can be understood as a mere chain of ideas. Any attempt to understand the full nature and meaning of this whole later period – normally referred to in history books as the epoch of 'German idealism' – will fail hopelessly so long as certain connections that are vital for its whole form and course are not registered, or are registered only superficially or belatedly. These are the connections between the 'intellectual movement' of the period and the 'revolutionary movement' that was contemporary with it.

In Hegel's *History of Philosophy* and other works there are passages describing the nature of the philosophy of his immediate predecessors – Kant, Fichte, and Schelling – which are valid for the whole period of so-called 'German idealism' including its crowning 'conclusion', the Hegelian system itself. They are also applicable to the later conflicts in the 1840s between the various Hegelian tendencies. Hegel wrote that in the philosophic systems of this fundamentally revolutionary epoch, 'revolution was lodged and expressed as if in the very form of their thought'.[12] Hegel's accompanying statements

12. Hegel, *Lectures on the Philosophy of History* (London. 1896), vol. 3, p. 409.

make it quite clear that he was not talking of what contemporary bourgeois historians of philosophy like to call a revolution in thought – a nice, quiet process that takes place in the pure realm of the study and far away from the crude realm of real struggles. The greatest thinker produced by bourgeois society in its revolutionary period regarded a 'revolution in the form of thought' as an objective component of the total social process of a real revolution.[13] 'Only two peoples, the German and the French – despite or precisely because of their contrasts – took part in this great epoch of world history, whose deepest essence is grasped by the philosophy of history. Other nations took no inward part in it: their governments and peoples merely played a political role. This principle swept Germany as thought, spirit and concept; in France it was unleashed in effective reality. What reality there was in Germany, however, appeared as a violent result of external conditions and as a reaction to them.'[14] A few pages further on, when presenting the philosophy of Kant, Hegel returns to the same theme: 'Rousseau already placed the

13. Kant also likes to use the expression 'revolution' in the realm of pure thought, but one should say that he means something much more concrete than the bourgeois Kantians of today. It should be related to Kant's many statements in the *Conflict of the Faculties* and elsewhere, on the real occurrence of the revolution: 'The revolution of an intellectually gifted people, such as the one we are witnessing today, arouses all onlookers (who are not themselves directly involved) to sympathize with it, in a way that approaches enthusiasm.' 'Such a phenomenon in the history of mankind is never forgotten.' 'This occurrence is too great, too interwoven with the interests of mankind, and its influence spreads too widely across the world, for peoples not to be reminded of it and aroused to attempt it again when the circumstances are propitious.' These and similar statements by Kant are collected in vol. I of *Politische Literatur der Deutschen im 18. Jahrhundert*, (1847!) ed. Geismar, pp. 121ff.

14. Hegel, op. cit., p. 409. It is well enough known that Marx fully adopted and consciously developed this view of Hegel's on the division of roles between the Germans and the French within the general process of the bourgeois revolution. Cf. all his early writings which contain such formulations as: 'In politics the Germans have thought what other peoples have done', 'Germany has only shared the development of modern peoples through the abstract activity of thought', and therefore the fate of Germans in the real world has consisted in their 'sharing the restorations of modern peoples without participating in their revolutions' (all from the 'Introduction to the *Critique of Hegel's Philosophy of Right*,' in *On Religion*, pp. 49, 52, 43).

Absolute in Freedom; Kant possesses the same principle, only in a more theoretical version. The French regard it from the point of view of will, for they have a proverb '*Il a la tête pres du bonnet*' (He is hot-headed). France has a sense of reality, of accomplishment, because ideas there are translated more directly into action; consequently men there have applied themselves practically to reality. However much freedom in itself is concrete, in France it was applied to reality in an undeveloped and abstract form; and to establish abstraction in reality is to destroy that reality. The fanaticism of freedom, when the people took possession of it, became terrible. In Germany the same principle aroused the interest of consciousness but was only developed in a theoretical manner. We have all kinds of commotions within us and about us; but through them all the German head prefers to let its sleeping cap sit quietly where it is and silently carries on its operations beneath it – Immanuel Kant was born in Königsberg in 1724', and so on. These passages from Hegel affirm a principle which renders intelligible the innermost nature of this great period of world history: the dialectical relation between philosophy and reality. Elsewhere Hegel formulated this principle in a more general way, when he wrote that every philosophy can be nothing but '*its own epoch comprehended in thought.*'[15] Essential in any event for a real understanding of the development of philosophical thought, this axiom becomes even more relevant for a revolutionary period of social evolution. Indeed, it is exactly this that explains the fate which irresistibly overtook the further development of philosophy and the historical study of philosophy by the *bourgeois class* in the nineteenth century. In the middle of the nineteenth century this class ceased to be revolutionary in its social *practice*, and by an inner necessity it thereby also lost the ability to comprehend in *thought* the true dialectical interrelation of ideas and real historical developments, above all of philosophy and revolution. In social practice, the revolutionary development of the bourgeoisie declined and halted in the middle of the nineteenth century. This process found its ideological expression in the apparent decline and end of philosophical development, on which bourgeois historians dwell to this day. A typical example of this kind of thinking is the comment of Überweg and Heinze, who begin the relevant section of their book by saying that philosophy found itself at this time 'in a state of general exhaustion', and 'increasingly lost its influence on cultural activity'. According to Überweg, this sad occurrence was due primarily to 'tendencies of psychological revulsion', whereas all 'external moments' had only a 'secondary effect'. This famous bourgeois historian of philosophy 'explains' the character of these 'tendencies of psychological revulsion' to himself and his readers as follows: 'People became tired of both inflated idealism and of metaphysical speculation (!) and wanted spiritual nourishment that had more substance to it.' The philosophic developments of the nineteenth century appear at once in a totally different form (even from the standpoint of the history of ideas a more adequate one) if they are tackled resolutely and thoroughly with a dialectical method, even in the undeveloped and only partly conscious form in which Hegel used it – in other words in the form of Hegel's idealist dialectic as opposed to Marx's materialist dialectic.

15. Preface to the *Philosophy of Right* (Knox translation), p. 11.

Viewed in this perspective, the revolutionary movement in the realm of ideas, rather than abating and finally ceasing in the 1840s, merely underwent a deep and significant change of character. Instead of making an *exit*, classical German philosophy, the ideological expression of the revolutionary movement of the bourgeoisie, made a *transition* to a new science which henceforward appeared in the history of ideas as the general expression of the revolutionary movement of the proletariat: the theory of 'scientific socialism' first founded and formulated by Marx and Engels in the 1840s. Bourgeois historians of philosophy have hitherto either entirely ignored this essential and necessary relation between German idealism and Marxism, or they have only conceived and presented it inadequately and incoherently. To grasp it properly, it is necessary to abandon the normal abstract and ideological approach of modern historians of philosophy for an approach that need not be specifically Marxist but is just straightforwardly dialectical, in the Hegelian *and* Marxist sense. If we do this, we can see at once not only the interrelations between

German idealist philosophy and Marxism, but also their internal necessity. Since the Marxist system is the theoretical expression of the revolutionary movement of the proletariat, and German idealist philosophy is the theoretical expression of the revolutionary movement of the bourgeoisie, they must stand intelligently and historically (i.e. ideologically) in the same relation to each other as the revolutionary movement of the proletariat as a class stands to the revolutionary movement of the bourgeoisie, in the realm of social and political practice. There is one unified historical process of historical development in which an 'autonomous' proletarian class movement emerges from the revolutionary movement of the third estate, and the new materialist theory of Marxism 'autonomously' confronts bourgeois idealist philosophy. All these processes affect each other reciprocally. The emergence of Marxist theory is, in Hegelian-Marxist terms, only the 'other side' of the emergence of the real proletarian movement; it is both sides together that comprise the concrete totality of the historical process.

This dialectical approach enables us to grasp the four different trends we have mentioned – the revolutionary movement of the bourgeoisie, idealist philosophy from Kant to Hegel, the revolutionary class movement of the proletariat, and the materialist philosophy of Marxism – as four moments of a single historical process. This allows us to understand the real nature of the new science, theoretically formulated by Marx and Engels,[16] which forms the general expression of the independent revolutionary movement of the proletariat. This materialist philosophy emerged from the most advanced systems of revolutionary bourgeois idealism; and it is now intelligible why bourgeois histories of philosophy had either to ignore it completely or could only understand its nature in

16. See the famous passage in the *Communist Manifesto* which reformulates Hegel's conception of the dialectical interrelation of philosophy and reality; it is translated from the still somewhat mystified fashion in which it was expressed by Hegel (philosophy is its 'epoch comprehended in thought') into a rational form: 'The theoretical conclusions of the communists . . . are only general expressions of the real relations of an existing class struggle, of a historical movement that is going on before our eyes' (Marx and Engels, *Selected Works*, vol. I, p. 46).

a negative and – literally – inverted sense.[17] The essential practical aims of the proletarian movement cannot be realized within bourgeois society and the bourgeois State. Similarly, the philosophy of this bourgeois society is unable to understand the nature of the general propositions in which the revolutionary movement of the proletariat has found its independent and self-conscious expression. The bourgeois standpoint has to stop in theory where it has to stop in social practice – as long as it does not want to cease being a 'bourgeois' standpoint altogether, in other words supersede itself. Only when the history of philosophy surmounts this barrier does scientific socialism cease to be a transcendental Beyond and become a possible object of comprehension. The peculiarity, however, that greatly complicates any correct understanding of the problem of 'Marxism and philosophy' is this: it appears as if in the very act of surpassing the limits of a bourgeois position – an act indispensable to grasp the essentialy new philosophical content of Marxism – *Marxism itself is at once superseded and annihilated as a philosophical object.*

At the outset of this investigation we stated that Marx and Engels, the founders of scientific socialism, were far from

17. 'A product of the collapse of Hegelian philosophy' (the prevailing view). 'The fall of the Titans of German idealism' (Plenge). 'An outlook that is rooted in the denial of values' (Schulze-Gavernitz). This view sees Marxism as an evil spirit that has fallen from the heights of German idealism into the bottomless depths of its materialist hell. The absurdity of this view is shown particularly clearly by the fact that those very aspects of Marxism in which are seen the effects of its fall were already contained in the systems of idealist bourgeois philosophy and were adopted by Marx without any apparent alteration. For example, the concept of evil as necessary for the development of the human race (Kant, Hegel); the concept of the necessary interconnection of increasing wealth and increasing poverty in bourgeois society (Hegel, *Philosophy of Right*, sections 243–5). These are the very forms through which the *bourgeois* class at its most developed stage had already acquired a certain consciousness of the class contradictions contained within it. Bourgeois consciousness made these contradictions absolute and therefore saw them as theoretically and practically *insoluble*. Marx superseded it because he no longer saw the contradictions as natural and absolute, but as historical and relative. They were therefore *capable of being abolished* in practice and theory by a higher form of social organization. In ignoring this, these bourgeois philosophers still conceive of Marxism itself in a narrow, negative and falsified bourgeois form.

wanting to construct a new philosophy. In contrast to bourgeois thinkers, on the other hand, they were both fully aware of the close historical connection between their materialist theory and bourgeois idealist philosophy. According to Engels, socialism in its *content* is the product of *new* conceptions that necessarily arise at a definite stage of social development within the proletariat as a result of its material situation. But it created its own specific scientific *form* (which distinguishes it from utopian socialism) by its link with German idealism, especially the philosophical system of Hegel. Socialism, which developed from utopia to science, formally *emerged* from German idealist philosophy.[18] Naturally, this (formal) philosophical *origin* did not mean that socialism therefore had to remain a philosophy in its *independent form* and *further development*. From 1845 onwards, at the latest, Marx and Engels characterized their new materialist and scientific standpoint as no longer philosophical.[19] It should be remembered here that all philosophy was for them equivalent to bourgeois philosophy. But it is precisely the significance of this equation of all philosophy with bourgeois philosophy that needs to be stressed. For it involves much the same relationship as that of Marxism and the State. Marx and Engels not only combatted one specific historical form of the State, but historically and materialistically they equated the State as such with the bourgeois State and they therefore declared the abolition of the State to be the political aim of communism. Similarly, they were not just combatting specific philosophical systems – they wanted eventually to overcome and supersede

18. Cf. Engels, *Anti-Dühring*, pp. 27, 37ff. On the fact that classical German philosophy was even in theory not the *only* source of scientific socialism, see Engels's remark in the note added to the preface to the first edition of *Socialism: Utopian and Scientific*; see also his remarks on Fourier's fragment *On Trade* (*Nachlass*, II, pp. 407ff.).

19. Marx's *Theses on Feuerbach*, to be discussed later, date from this year. It was then too that Marx and Engels (see Marx's account in the 1859 Preface to the *Critique of Political Economy*) abandoned their 'previous' philosophical outlook by carrying out a critique of the whole of post-Hegelian philosophy (*The German Ideology*). From then on the purpose of their polemics on philosophical questions is only to enlighten or annihilate their opponents (such as Proudhon, Lassalle and Dühring); it is no longer intended to 'clarify their own position'.

philosophy altogether, by scientific socialism.[20] It is here that we find the major contradiction between the 'realistic' (i.e. dialectically materialist) conception of Marxism and the 'ideological humbug of jurists and others' (Marx) characteristic of Lassalleanism and all earlier and later versions of 'vulgar socialism'. The latter basically never surpassed the 'bourgeois level', i.e. the standpoint of 'bourgeois society'.[21]

Any thorough elucidation of the relationship between 'Marxism and philosophy' must start from the unambiguous statements of Marx and Engels themselves that a necessary result of their new dialectical-materialist standpoint was the supersession, not only of bourgeois idealist philosophy, but *simultaneously* of all philosophy *as such*.[22] It is essential not

20. See, first of all, the relevant passage from the *Communist Manifesto* (*Selected Works*, vol. I, pp. 52–3). '"Undoubtedly," it will be said, "religious, moral, philosophical and juridical ideas have been modified in the course of historical development. But religion, morality, philosophy, political, science, and law, constantly survived this change." "There are also eternal truths, such as freedom, justice, etc., that are common to all states of society. But communism abolishes eternal truths; it abolishes all religion, and all morality, instead of constituting them on a new basis. It therefore acts in contradiction to all past historical experience." What does this accusation reduce itself to? The history of all past society has consisted in the development of class antagonisms, antagonisms that assumed different forms at different epochs.

But whatever form they may have taken, one fact is common to all past ages: the exploitation of one part of society by the other. No wonder, then, that the social consciousness of past ages, despite all the multiplicity and variety it displaces, moves within certain common forms, in forms of consciousness which cannot completely disappear without the total disappearance of class antagonisms.

The communist revolution is the most radical rupture with traditional property relations; no wonder that its development involves the most radical rupture with traditional ideas.' The relationship of Marxism to philosophy or religion is thus basically similar to its relationship to the fundamental economic ideology of bourgeois society and the fetishism of commodities or value. Cf. – for the moment – *Capital*, vol. I, pp. 75ff., especially p. 80n. and p. 81n. and Marx's 1875 *Critique of the Gotha Programme* (Marx and Engels, *Selected Works*, vol. II, pp. 29ff. [value], pp. 31ff. [the state] and p. 35 [religion]).

21. See Marx's *Critique of the Gotha Programme* (*passim*).

22. See, e.g., Engels's point in *Ludwig Feuerbach* (*Selected Works*, vol. II, p. 365) which sounds somewhat ideological in the way it is expressed: 'At any rate, with Hegel philosophy comes to an end. On the one hand, because in his system he summed up its whole development in its most splendid fashion; and on the other, because, even

to obscure the fundamental significance of this Marxist attitude towards philosophy by regarding the whole dispute as a purely verbal one – implying that Engels simply bestowed a new name on certain epistemological principles known in Hegelian terminology as 'the philosophical aspect of sciences', which were, substantially preserved in the materialist transformation of the Hegelian dialectic.[23] There are, of course, some formulations in Marx and especially the later Engels[24] which appear to suggest this. But it is easy to see that philosophy itself is not abolished by a mere abolition of its name.[25]

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though unconsciously, he showed us the way out of the labyrinth of systems to real positive knowledge of the world.'

23. There really are bourgeois and even (vulgar) Marxist theoreticians who seriously imagine that when Marxist communists demand the abolition of *the State* (as distinct from opposition to specific historical forms of the State), there is only a terminological difference involved.

24. Cf. especially *Anti-Dühring*, pp. 34–40, and *Ludwig Feuerbach*, op. cit., pp. 400–1. The formulations in both passages have the same content, and the quotation here is from *Anti-Dühring*, pp. 39–40: 'In both cases (i.e. in relation to both history and nature) modern materialism is essentially dialectical, and no longer needs any philosophy standing above the other sciences. As soon as each individual science is bound to make clear its position in the great totality of things, a special science dealing with this totality is superfluous. That which still survives independently of all earlier philosophy is the science of thought and its laws – formal logic and dialectics. Everything else is subsumed in the positive science of nature and history.'

25. In the form in which they are quoted here, Engels's statements clearly contain no more than a change of name. There appears to be no fundamental difference between what Engels alleges are the consequences of the Marxist or materialist dialectics, and what follows anyway from Hegel's dialectics, and what Hegel has already stated to be the consequences of his dialectical idealist position. Even Hegel demands that every science make clear its place in a general context; he then continues along the following lines: it follows that every true science is necessarily philosophical. Verbally what this entails is the opposite of Engels's transformation of philosophy into science; but in essence they would both appear to mean the same thing. Both want to abolish the contradiction between individual sciences and a philosophy that stands above them. Hegel expresses this by incorporating individual sciences within philosophy; whereas Engels dissolves philosophy in the individual sciences. In both cases this would seem to have the same result: the individual sciences cease to be specific sciences, and at the same time philosophy ceases to be a special science standing above others. Later on, however, it will be shown that there is more behind what appears here to be a purely verbal difference between Hegel and Engels. This difference is not as clearly expressed in these statements of

Such purely terminological points must be dismissed in any serious examination of the relationship between Marxism and philosophy. The problem is rather how we should understand the abolition of philosophy of which Marx and Engels spoke – mainly in the 1840s, but on many later occasions as well. *How* should this process be accomplished, or has it already been accomplished? By what actions? At what speed? And for whom? Should this abolition of philosophy be regarded as accomplished so to speak once and for all by a single intellectual deed of Marx and Engels? Should it be regarded as accomplished only for Marxists, or for the whole proletariat, or for the whole of humanity?[26] Or should we see it (like the abolition of the State) as a very long and arduous revolutionary process which unfolds through the most diverse phases? If so, what is the relationship of Marxism to philosophy so long as this arduous process has not yet attained its final goal, the abolition of philosophy?

If the question of the relationship of Marxism to philosophy is posed like this, it becomes clear that we are not dealing with senseless and pointless reflections on issues that have long been resolved. On the contrary, the problem remains of the greatest theoretical and practical importance. Indeed, it is especially crucial in the present stage of the proletarian class struggle. Orthodox Marxists behaved for many decades as if no problem was involved at all, or at most only one which would always remain immaterial to the practice of the class

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Engels, and above all in his later formulations, as it is in the earlier works that Marx wrote alone or with Engels. What is important in this context is that although he is always avoiding 'positive science', Engels still wants to preserve the independence of a definite, limited area within 'philosophy' (the theory of thought and its laws – formal logic and dialectics). The important question this raises is, of course, what Marx and Engels really mean by the concept of science or positive science.

26. It will be shown later that even some excellent materialist thinkers have unfortunately come near to adopting this extremely ideological view. Moreover, the statement by Engels quoted above (note 24) can be interpreted to mean that in essence philosophy had already been intellectually overcome and superseded by Hegel himself, unconsciously, and was then consciously superseded with the discovery of the materialistic principle. However, we shall see that despite appearances *the way Engels expresses this* does not convey the real *meaning* of Marx's and Engels's conception.

struggle. It is now this position itself which appears highly dubious – all the more so in the light of the peculiar parallelism between the two problems of Marxism and Philosophy and Marxism and State. It is well known that the latter, as Lenin says in *State and Revolution*,[27] 'hardly concerned the major theoreticians and publicists of the Second International'. This raises the question: if there is a definite connection between the abolition of the State and the abolition of the philosophy, is there also a connection between the neglect of these two problems by the Marxists of the Second International? The problem can be posed more exactly. Lenin's bitter criticism of the debasement of Marxism by opportunism connects the neglect of the problem of the State by the Marxists of the Second International to a more general context. Is this context also operative in the case of Marxism and philosophy? In other words, is the neglect of the problem of philosophy by the Marxists of the Second International also related to the fact that '*problems of revolution in general hardly concerned them*'? To clarify the matter, we must make a more detailed analysis of the nature and causes of the greatest crisis that has yet occurred in the history of Marxist theory and which in the last decade has split Marxists into three hostile camps.

At the beginning of the twentieth century, the long period of purely evolutionary development of capitalism came to an end, and a new epoch of revolutionary struggle began. Because of this change in the practical conditions of class struggle, there were increasing signs that Marxist theory had entered a critical phase. It became obvious that the extraordinarily banal and rudimentary vulgar-marxism of the epigones had an extremely inadequate awareness of even the totality of its own problems, let alone any definite positions on a whole range of questions outside them. The crisis of Marxist theory showed itself most clearly in the problem of the attitude of social revolution towards the State. This major issue had never been seriously posed in practice since the defeat of the first proletarian revolutionary movement in 1848, and the repression of the revolt of the Commune of 1871. It was put concretely on the agenda once again by the

27. *State and Revolution*, Chapter 6, 'The Vulgarization of Marx by the Opportunists', Lenin, *Collected Works*, vol. 25.

World War, the first and second Russian Revolutions of 1917, and the collapse of the Central Powers in 1918. It now became clear that there was no unanimity whatever within the camp of Marxism on such major issues of transition and goal as the 'seizure of State power by the proletariat', the 'dictatorship of the proletariat', and the final 'withering away of the State' in communist society. On the contrary, no sooner were all these questions posed in a concrete and unavoidable manner, than there emerged at least three different theoretical positions on them, all of which claimed to be Marxist. Yet in the pre-war period, the most prominent representatives of these three tendencies – respectively Renner, Kautsky and Lenin – had not only been regarded as Marxists but as orthodox Marxists.[28] For some decades there had been an apparent crisis in the camp of the Social Democrat parties and trade unions of the Second International; this took the shape of a conflict between orthodox Marxism and revisionism.[29] But with the emergence of different socialist tendencies over these new questions, it became clear that this apparent crisis was only a provisional and illusory version of a much deeper rift that ran through the orthodox Marxist front itself. On one side of this rift, there appeared Marxist neo-reformism which soon more or less amalgamated with the earlier revisionism. On the other side, the theoretical representatives of a new revolutionary proletarian party unleashed a struggle against both the old reformism of the revisionists and the new reformism of the 'Centre', under the battle-cry of restoring pure or revolutionary Marxism.

This crisis erupted within the Marxist camp at the outbreak of the World War. But it would be an extremely superficial and undialectical conception of the historical process – thoroughly non-Marxist and non-materialist, indeed not even Hegeliano-idealist – to attribute it merely to the cowardice, or

28. For information on how these theories first conflicted with each other in the World War, see Renner, *Marxismus, Krieg und Internationale*; Kautsky's attack on Renner, *Kriegssozialismus* in *Marx-Studien*, Vienna, IV, 1; and Lenin's polemics against Renner, Kautsky and others, in *State and Revolution* and *Against the Stream*.

29. Cf. Kautsky, 'Three Crises in Marxism', in *Neue Zeit*, 21, I (1903) pp. 723ff.

deficient revolutionary convictions, of the theoreticians and publicists who were responsible for this impoverishment and reduction of Marxist theory to the orthodox vulgar-marxism of the Second International. Yet it would be equally superficial and undialectical to imagine that the great polemics between Lenin, Kautsky and other 'Marxists' were merely intended to restore Marxism, by faithfully re-establishing the Marxist doctrine.[30] Hitherto we have only used the dialectical method, which Hegel and Marx introduced into the study of history, to analyse the philosophy of German idealism and the Marxist theory that *emerged* from it. But the only really 'materialist and therefore scientific method' (Marx) of pursuing this analysis is to apply it to the *further development* of Marxism up to the present. This means that we must try to understand every change, development and revision of Marxist theory, since its original emergence from the philosophy of German Idealism, as a necessary product of its epoch

30. Those who approach Lenin's writings without a deeper understanding of their practical and theoretical context might think that Lenin had in fact adopted such a moralistic, psychological and ideological position of a bourgeois kind. What might mislead them is the extremely bitter and personal way in which Lenin (in this respect a faithful disciple of Marx) attacks 'vulgar-marxism' as well as the textual erudition and precision with which Lenin uses the writings of Marx and Engels. A careful reading shows quite clearly, however, that Lenin never invokes personal factors to explain the process that had been developing internationally for decades, and through which Marxist theory in the second half of the nineteenth century became gradually impoverished and degenerated into vulgar-marxism. He confines his use of this factor to explaining a few specific historical phenomena in the last period just before the World War, when the imminent political and social crisis was clear. It would also be a great distortion of Marxism to claim that Lenin thought that accidents and personal peculiarities were of no significance for the history of the world or for explaining specific historical phenomena (cf. Marx's famous letter to Kugelmann, 17 April 1871, in Marx and Engels, *Selected Correspondence*, Moscow, n.d., pp. 319–20) and the general point on the 'justification of accident' in the aphoristic final part of the 1857 Introduction to the *Critique of Political Economy*, English translation, Chicago, 1904, p. 309). On the other hand, according to Marxist theory, the personal factor must naturally play a less important explanatory role, the longer the periods which the explanation is supposed to cover. One can easily see that in all his writings Lenin always worked in this genuine 'materialist' way. But the preface and first page of *State and Revolution* prove that he was also just as far from considering the main purpose of this theoretical work to be the ideological 're-establishment' of true Marxist doctrine.

(Hegel). More precisely, we should seek to understand their determination by the totality of the historico-social process of which they are a general expression (Marx). We will then be able to grasp the real origins of the degeneration of Marxist theory into vulgar-marxism. We may also discern the meaning of the passionate yet apparently 'ideological' efforts of the Marxist theorists of the Third International today to restore 'Marx's genuine doctrine'.

If we thus apply Marx's principle of dialectical materialism to the whole history of Marxism, we can distinguish three major stages of development through which Marxist theory has passed *since* its birth – inevitably so in the context of the concrete social development of this epoch. The first phase begins around 1843, and corresponds in the history of ideas to the *Critique of Hegel's Philosophy of Right*. It ends with the Revolution of 1848 – corresponding to the *Communist Manifesto*. The second phase begins with the bloody suppression of the Parisian proletariat in the battle of June 1848 and the resultant crushing of all the working class's organizations and dreams of emancipation 'in a period of feverish industrial activity, moral degeneration and political reaction', as Marx masterfully describes it in his *Inaugural Address* of 1864. We are not concerned here with the social history of the working-class as a whole, but only with the internal development of Marxist theory in its relation to the general class history of the proletariat. Hence the second period may be said to last approximately to the end of the century, leaving out all the less important divisions (the foundation and collapse of the First International; the interlude of the Commune; the struggle between Marxists and Lassalleaner; the Anti-socialist laws in Germany; trade unions; the founding of the Second International). The third phase extends from the start of this century to the present and into an indefinite future.

Arranged in this way, the historical development of Marxist theory presents the following picture. The first manifestation of it naturally remained essentially unchanged in the minds of Marx and Engels themselves throughout the later period, although in their *writings* it did not stay entirely unaltered. In spite of all their denials of philosophy, this first version of the theory is permeated through and through with philosophical

thought. It is a theory of *social development* seen and comprehended as a living totality; or, more precisely, it is a theory of *social revolution* comprehended and practised as a living totality. At this stage there is no question whatever of dividing the economic, political and intellectual moments of this totality into separate branches of knowledge, even while every concrete peculiarity of each separate moment is comprehended analysed and criticized with historical fidelity. Of course, it is not only economics, politics and ideology, but also the historical process and conscious social action that continue to make up the living unity of 'revolutionary practice' (*Theses on Feuerbach*). The best example of this early and youthful form of Marxist theory as the theory of social revolution is obviously the *Communist Manifesto*.[31]

It is wholly understandable from the viewpoint of the materialist dialectic that this original form of Marxist theory could not subsist unaltered throughout the long years of the second half of the nineteenth century (which was in practice quite unrevolutionary). Marx's remark in the *Preface to the Critique of Political Economy* on mankind as a whole is necessarily also true for the working class, which was then slowly and antagonistically maturing towards its own liberation: 'It always sets itself only such problems as it can solve; since, looking at the matter more closely it will always be found that the problem itself arises only when the material conditions for its solution are already present or are at least understood to be in the process of emergence'. This dictum is not affected by the fact that a problem which supersedes present relations may have been formulated in an anterior epoch. To accord theory an autonomous existence outside the objective movement of history would obviously be neither materialist, nor dialectical in the Hegelian sense; it would simply be an idealist metaphysic. A dialectical conception comprehends every form without exception in terms of the flow of this movement, and it necessarily follows from it that Marx's and Engels's theory of social revolution inevitably underwent considerable changes in the course of its further development. When Marx

31. But later writings such as *The Class Struggles in France* and *The Eighteenth Brumaire of Louis Bonaparte* also belong historically to this phase.

in 1864 drafted the *Inuagural Address* and the *Statutes of the First International* he was perfectly conscious of the fact that 'time was needed for the reawakened movement to permit the old audacity of language'.[32] This is of course true not only for language but for all the other components of the theory of the movement. Therefore the scientific socialism of the *Capital* of 1867–94 and the other later writings of Marx and Engels represent an expression of the general theory of Marxism, which is in many ways a different and more developed one than that of the direct revolutionary communism of the *Manifesto* of 1847–8 – or for that matter, *The Poverty of Philosophy*, *The Class Struggles in France* and *The Eighteenth Brumaire*. Nevertheless, the central characteristic of Marxist theory remains essentially unaltered even in the later writings of Marx and Engels. For in its later version, as scientific socialism, the Marxism of Marx and Engels remains the inclusive whole of a theory of social revolution. The difference is only that in the later phase the various components of this whole, its economic, political and ideological elements, scientific theory and social practice, are further separated out. We can use an expression of Marx's and say that the umbilical cord of its natural combination has been broken. In Marx and Engels, however, this never produces a multiplicity of independent elements instead of the whole. It is merely that another combination of the components of the system emerges developed with greater scientific precision and built on the infrastructure of the critique of political economy. In the writings of its creators, the Marxist system itself never dissolves into a sum of separate branches of knowledge, in spite of a practical and outward employment of its results that suggests such a conclusion. For example, many bourgeois interpreters of Marx and some later Marxists thought they were able to distinguish between the historical and the

32. Marx and Engels, *Selected Correspondence*, p. 182 [4 November 1864]. This passage is of great importance for a concrete interpretation of the *Inaugural Address*, yet it is significantly omitted by Kautsky when he quotes large parts of the letter in the preface to his 1922 edition of the *Briefwechsel* (pp. 4–5). Having thus toned down the 1864 *Inaugural Address* he is able (ibid. p. 11ff.) to play it off against the fiery style of the 1847–8 *Communist Manifesto*, and against the 'illegal agents of the Third International'.

theoretico-economic material in Marx's major work *Capital*; but all they proved by this is that they understood nothing of the real method of Marx's critique of political economy. For it is one of the essential signs of his dialectical materialist method that this distinction does not exist for it; it is indeed precisely a theoretical comprehension of history. Moreover, the unbreakable interconnection of theory and practice, which formed the most characteristic sign of the first communist version of Marx's materialism, was in no way abolished in the later form of his system. It is only to the superficial glance that a pure theory of thought seems to have displaced the practice of the revolutionary will. This revolutionary will is latent, yet present, in every sentence of Marx's work and erupts again and again in every decisive passage, especially in the first volume of *Capital*. One need only think of the famous seventh section of Chapter 24 on the historical tendency of capital accumulation.[33]

On the other hand, it has to be said that the supporters and followers of Marx, despite all their theoretical and methodological avowals of historical materialism, in fact divided the theory of social revolution into fragments. The correct materialist conception of history, understood theoretically in a dialectical way and practically in a revolutionary way, is incompatible with separate branches of knowledge that are isolated and autonomous, and with purely theoretical investigations that are scientifically objective in dissociation from revolutionary practice. Yet later Marxists came to regard scientific socialism more and more as a set of purely scientific observations, without any *immediate* connection to the political or other practices of class struggle. Sufficient proof of this is one writer's account of the relation between Marxist science and politics, who was in the best sense a representative Marx-

33. There are other good examples of this at the end of Chapter 8, on the Working Day (*Capital*, vol. 1, Moscow, 1961, p. 302): 'For protection against the serpent of their agonies, the labourers must put their heads together, and, as a class, compel the passing of a law.' See also the famous passage (*Capital*, vol. 3, part II) where Marx returns to this theme. There are so many other similar places in *Capital* that there is no need to refer to such directly revolutionary writings of the later period as the Address to the General Council of the First International on the revolt of the Paris Commune (*The Civil War in France*, 1871).

ist theoretician of the Second International. In December 1909, Rudolph Hilferding published his *Finance Capital* which attempts to 'understand scientifically' the economic aspects of the most recent development of capitalism 'by inserting these phenomena into the theoretical system of classical political economy'. In the introduction he wrote: 'Here it need only be said that for Marxism the study of politics itself aims only at the discovery of causal connections. Knowledge of the laws governing a society of commodity production reveals at once the determinants of the will of the classes of this society. For a Marxist, the task of scientific politics – a politics which describes causal connections – is to discover these determinants of the will of classes. Marxist politics, like Marxist theory, is free of value-judgements. It is therefore false simply to identify Marxism with socialism, although it is very common for Marxists and non-Marxists to do so. Logically Marxism, seen only as a scientific system and therefore apart from its historical effects, is only a theory of the laws of motion of society, which the Marxist conception of history formulated in general, while Marxist economics has applied it to the age of commodity production. The advent of socialism is a result of tendencies that develop in a society that produces commodities. But insight into the correctness of Marxism, which includes insight into the necessity of socialism, is in no way a result of value judgements and has no implications for practical behaviour. It is one thing to acknowledge a necessity and quite another to place oneself at the service of this necessity. It is more than possible that a man may be convinced of the final victory of socialism, and yet decides to fight against it. The insight into the laws of motion of society provided by Marxism ensures superiority to whoever has mastered them. The most dangerous opponents of socialism are undoubtedly those who have profited most from its experience.' According to Hilferding, Marxism is a theory which is logically 'a scientific, objective and free science, without value judgements'. He has no difficulty in explaining the remarkable fact that people so often identify it with the struggle for socialism by invoking the 'insuperable reluctance of the ruling class to accept the results of Marxism' and therefore to take the 'trouble' to study such a 'complicated

system'. 'Only in this sense is it the science of the proletariat and the opponent of bourgeois economics, since it otherwise holds unflinchingly to the claim made by every science of the objective and general validity of its conclusions'.[34] Thus the materialist conception of history, which in Marx and Engels was essentially a dialectical one, eventually become something quite undialectical in their epigones. For one tendency, it has changed into a kind of heuristic principle of specialized theoretical investigation. For another, the fluid methodology of Marx's materialist dialectic freezes into a number of theoretical formulations about the causal interconnection of historical phenomena in different areas of society – in other words it became something that could best be described as a general systematic sociology. The former school treated Marx's materialist principle as merely a 'subjective basis for reflective judgement'[35] in Kant's sense, while the latter dog-

34. Up to 1914 or 1918 a proletarian reader might have thought that Hilferding and other orthodox Marxists who said such things, and who claimed that their writings had objective and universal validity (i.e. independent of any class basis), had done so out of practical and tactical considerations in the interests of the working class. But their subsequent practice has demonstrated beyond any doubt the error of this interpretation. The example of Marxists like Paul Lensch shows that this kind of 'scientific knowledge' can be used 'perfectly well' *against* socialism. In this connection one can also mention that Hilferding's distinction between Marxism and Socialism, criticized here, is taken to its most absurd conclusions by Simkhovitch, a bourgeois critic of Marx, in his *Marxism against Socialism* (London, 1913). The book is original and interesting for this reason alone; it was comprehensively reviewed by M. Rubinov, 'Marx's Prophecies in the Light of Modern Statistics' in Grünberg's *Archiv für die Geschichte des Sozialismus und der Arbeiterbewegung*, VI, pp. 129–56.

35. Cf. *Critique of Judgement* (Barnard translation 1914; section 75, pp. 309–10). In the same passage Kant describes this maxim as a 'guiding thread for the study of nature'; similarly Marx in the Preface to the *Critique of Political Economy* describes the passage which lays out his materialist conception as a 'guiding thread' for further study, which is derived from his philosophical and scientific investigations. One could then claim that Marx had referred to his materialist principle as a mere guide for studying society, in the way that Kant's critical philosophy was a guide. One could also cite as further examples all the statements in which Marx defends himself against critics who claim that his *Critique of Political Economy* contained *a priori* elements or a theory that was abstract, supra-historical and influenced by the philosophy of history. (See the postscript to the second German edition of *Capital*-1873, op. cit., vol. I, pp. 17–18, and the well-known letter to Mikhailovsky of November 1877, *Selected Correspondence*, pp. 376ff.) However, it has already been made clear in my early work, *Kernpunkte der materialistischen Geschichtsauffassung* (Berlin, 1922), why it is inadequate to regard Marx's materialist principle as a purely heuristic one (Cf. especially pp. 16ff. and the first two appendices).

matically regarded the teachings of Marxist 'sociology' primarily as an economic system, or even a geographical and biological one.[36] All these deformations and a row of other less important ones were inflicted on Marxism by its epigones in the second phase of its development, and they can be summarized in one all-inclusive formulation: a unified general theory of social revolution was changed into criticisms of the bourgeois economic order, of the bourgeois State, of the bourgeois system of education, of bourgeois religion, art, science and culture. These criticisms no longer necessarily develop by their very nature into revolutionary practice;[37] they can equally well develop, into all kinds of attempts at *reform*, which fundamentally remain within the limits of bourgeois society and the bourgeois State, and in actual practice usually did so. This distortion of the revolutionary doctrine of Marxism itself – into a purely theoretical critique that no longer leads to practical revolutionary action, or does so only haphazardly – is very clear if one compares the *Communist Manifesto* or even the 1864 *Statutes of the First International* drawn up by Marx, to the programmes of the Socialist Parties of Central and Western Europe in the second half of the nineteenth century, and especially to that of the German Social Democratic Party. It is well known how bitterly critical

36. See in particular the preface to my *Kernpunkte* and the criticisms there of Ludwig Woltmann, pp. 18ff. There are some modern Marxist theoreticians who belong in practice to revolutionary communism, but who come near to equating the Marxist conception of history with a 'general sociology'. Cf. Bukharin, *Historical Materialism* (Ann Arbor Paperback, 1969), pp. 13–14, and K. Wittfogel, *Die Wissenschaft der bürgerlichen Gesellschaft* (1922), p. 50.

37. Cf. Marx, 'Introduction to the *Critique of Hegel's Philosophy of Right*', in Marx and Engels, *On Religion*, pp. 5off., where Marx says that criticism of the modern State, of the reality that is related to it, and of all previous German political and legal consciousness should debouch into a practice '*à la hauteur des principes*' – i.e. in a revolution, and not a 'partial, merely political revolution', but a revolution by the proletariat, which emancipates not only political man but the whole of social man.

Marx and Engels were of the fact that German Social Democracy made almost entirely *reformist* demands in the political as well as cultural and ideological fields in their Gotha (1875) and Erfurt (1891) programmes. These documents contained not a whiff of the genuine materialist and revolutionary principle in Marxism.[38] Indeed, towards the end of the century this situation led to the assaults of revisionism on orthodox Marxism. Eventually, at the start of the twentieth century, the first signs of the approaching storm heralded a new period of conflicts and revolutionary battles, and thereby led to the decisive crisis of Marxism in which we still find ourselves today.

Both processes may be seen as necessary phases of a total ideological and material development – once it is understood that the decline of the original Marxist theory of social revolution into a theoretical critique of society without any revolutionary consequences is for dialectical materialism a necessary expression of parallel changes in the social practice of the proletarian struggle. Revisionism appears as an attempt to express in the form of a coherent theory the reformist character acquired by the economic struggles of the trade unions and the political struggles of the working class parties, under the influence of altered historical conditions. The so-called orthodox Marxism of this period (now a mere vulgar-marxism) appears largely as an attempt by theoreticians, weighed down by tradition, to maintain the theory of social revolution which formed the first version of Marxism, in the shape of pure theory. This theory was wholly abstract and had no practical consequences – it merely sought to reject the new reformist theories, in which the real character of the historical movement was then expressed as un-Marxist. This is precisely why, in a new revolutionary period, it was the orthodox Marxists of the Second International who were inevitably the least able to cope with such questions as the relation between the State and proletarian revolution. The revisionists at least possessed a theory of the relationship of

38. See the statements by Marx and Engels on the Gotha Programme collected in my edition of Marx's *Critique of the Gotha Programme* (Berlin, 1922; also in Marx and Engels *Selected Works*, vol. II, pp. 13ff.) and also Engels's 'Notes on the Erfurt Programme', *Neue Zeit*, 20, I, pp. 5ff.

the 'working people' to the State, although this theory was in no way a Marxist one. Their theory and practice had long since substituted political, social and cultural reforms within the bourgeois State for a social revolution that would seize, smash and replace it by the dictatorship of the proletariat. The orthodox Marxists were content to reject this solution to the problems of the transitional period as a violation of the principles of Marxism. Yet with all their orthodox obsession with the abstract letter of Marxist theory they were unable to preserve its original revolutionary character. Their scientific socialism itself had inevitably ceased to be a theory of social revolution. Over a long period, when Marxism was slowly spreading throughout Europe, it had in fact no practical revolutionary task to accomplish. Therefore problems of revolution had ceased, even in theory, to exist as problems of the real world for the great majority of Marxists, orthodox as well as revisionist. As far as the reformists were concerned, these problems had disappeared completely. But even for the orthodox Marxists they had wholly lost the immediacy with which the authors of the *Manifesto* had confronted them, and receded into a distant and eventually quite transcendental *future*.[39] In this period people became used to pursuing here and now policies of which revisionism may be seen as the theoretical expression. Officially condemned by party congresses, this revisionism was in the end accepted no less officially by the trade unions. At the beginning of the century, a new period of development put the question of social revolution back on the agenda as a realistic and terrestrial question in all its vital dimensions. Therewith purely theoretical orthodox Marxism – till the outbreak of the World War the officially established version of Marxism in the Second International – collapsed completely and disintegrated. This was, of course, an inevitable result of its long internal decay.[40] It is

39. Cf. the passage from Kautsky's attack on Bernstein, *Bernstein und das Sozialdemokratische Programm*, p. 172, which Lenin criticized in *State and Revolution* (*Collected Works*, vol. 25): 'We can just as well *postpone to a future date* any decision on the problem of the dictatorship of the proletariat.'

40. Cf. the 'alteration' of Marx's theory of the dictatorship, contained in Kautsky's latest work, *Die proletarische Revolution und ihr Programm*, 1922 (*Translator's Note*: published in English under the

in this epoch that we can see in many countries the beginnings of *third period of development*, above all represented by Russian Marxists, and often described by its major representatives as a 'restoration' of Marxism.

This transformation and development of Marxist theory has been effected under the peculiar ideological guise of a return to the pure teaching of original or true Marxism. Yet it is easy to understand both the reasons for this guise and the real character of the process which is concealed by it. What theoreticians like Rosa Luxemburg in Germany and Lenin in Russia have done, and are doing, in the field of Marxist theory is to liberate it from the inhibiting traditions of the Social Democracy of the second period. They thereby answer the practical needs of the new revolutionary stage of proletarian class struggle, for these traditions weighed 'like a nightmare' on the brain of the working masses whose objectively revolutionary socio-economic position no longer corresponded to these evolutionary doctrines.[41] The apparent revival of original Marxist theory in the Third International is simply a result of the fact that in a new revolutionary period not only the workers' movement itself, but the theoretical conceptions of communists which express it, must assume an explicitly revolutionary form. This is why large sections of the Marxist system, which seemed virtually forgotten in the final decades of the nineteenth century, have now come to life again. It also explains why the leader of the Russian Revolution could write a book a few months before October in which he stated that

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title *The Labour Revolution*, 1926): 'In his famous article criticizing the Social Democratic Party's programme Marx says: "*Between capitalist and communist society, there lies the period of the revolutionary transformation of the one into the other. Corresponding to this is a period of political transition in which the state can be nothing but the revolutionary dictatorship of the proletariat.*" Given our experiences over the last few years we can now *alter* this passage on the kind of government we want, and say: "*Between the period of a purely bourgeois state and a purely proletarian state, there lies a period of the transformation of one into the other. Corresponding to this there is also a period of political transition, in which the state will usually take the form of a coalition government*" ' (*The Labour Revolution*, pp. 53–4).

41. Marx, *The Eighteenth Brumaire*, *Selected Works*, vol. I, pp. 247ff.

his aim was 'in the first place to *restore* the correct Marxist theory of the State'. Events themselves placed the question of the dictatorship of the proletariat on the agenda as a practical problem. When Lenin placed the same question theoretically on the agenda at a decisive moment, this was an early indication that the internal connection of theory and practice within revolutionary Marxism had been consciously re-established.[42]

A fresh examination of the problem of Marxism and philosophy would also seem to be an important part of this restoration. A negative judgement is clear from the start. The minimization of philosophical problems by most Marxist theoreticians of the Second International was only a *partial expression* of the loss of the practical, revolutionary character of the Marxist movement which found its *general expression* in the simultaneous decay of the living principles of dialectical materialism in the vulgar-marxism of the epigones. We have already mentioned that Marx and Engels themselves always denied that scientific socialism was any longer a philosophy. But it is easy to show irrefutably, by reference to the sources, that what the revolutionary dialecticians Marx and Engels meant by the opposite of philosophy was something very different from what it meant to later vulgar-marxism. Nothing was further from them than the claim to impartial, pure, theoretical study, above class differences, made by Hilferding and most of the other Marxists of the Second International.[43] The scientific socialism of Marx and Engels, correctly understood, stands in far greater contrast to these pure sciences of

42. The dialectical interrelationship of Lenin's theory and practice is most clearly shown in a few words from his Afterword to *State and Revolution*, written 30 November 1917 in Petrograd (Lenin, *Collected Works*, vol. 25, p. 492): 'The second part of the book, devoted to the lessons of the Russian Revolutions of 1905 and 1917, will probably have to be put off for a long time. It is more pleasant and more useful *to live through* a revolution than *to write about* it.'

43. Cf. for the moment Marx's comments in his *Poverty of Philosophy* (Moscow, p. 120), on the way in which the theoreticians of the proletariat, the socialists and communists, are related to the different schools of the economists, who are the scientific representatives of the bourgeois class – as well as what he says about the character of scientific socialism, as opposed to doctrinaire and utopian socialism and communism: 'From this moment, science, which is a product of the movement of history, has associated itself consciously with it, has ceased to be doctrinaire and has become revolutionary.'

bourgeois society (economics, history or sociology) than it does to the philosophy in which the revolutionary movement of the Third Estate once found its highest theoretical expression.[44] Consequently, one can only wonder at the insight of more recent Marxists who have been misled by a few of Marx's well-known expressions and by a few of the later Engels, into interpreting the Marxist abolition of philosophy as the replacement of this philosophy by a system of abstract and undialectical positive sciences. The real contradiction between Marx's scientific socialism and all bourgeois philosophy *and sciences* consists entirely in the fact that scientific socialism is the theoretical expression of a revolutionary process, which will end with the total abolition of these bourgeois philosophies and sciences, together with the abolition of the material relations that find their ideological expression in them.[45]

A re-examination of the problem of Marxism and philosophy is therefore very necessary, even on the theoretical level, in order to restore the correct and full sense of Marx's theory, denatured and banalized by the epigones. However, just as in the case of Marxism and the State, this theoretical task really arises from the needs and pressures of revolution-

44. Cf. my *Kernpunkte*, pp. 7ff.

45. It will be proved later that this is really all that Marx and Engels mean by the expression 'positive science'. Meanwhile those Marxists who hold the view discussed above may see the catastrophic error they have committed, by reading a bourgeois scholar on Marx. *Marx und Hegel* (Jena, 1922), by the Swedish author Sven Helander, is an extremely superficial work and full of elementary mistakes; but it goes much further towards an understanding of the philosophical side of Marxism (what it calls the social-democratic conception of the world) than do other bourgeois critics of Marx, or standard vulgar-marxism. The book gives some convincing evidence (pp. 25ff.) to show that one can only talk of 'scientific socialism' in the sense in which Hegel 'criticizes the critics of society, and advises them to study science and to learn to see the necessity and justice of the State, because this would keep them from critical carping'. This passage is typical of the positive and negative sides of Helander's book. He does not give the source of these statements of Hegel's; in fact they come from the Preface to the *Philosophy of Right*. But Hegel is speaking here not of science, but of philosophy. For Marx, science is important not for the reason that philosophy is important for Hegel, because it reconciles man to reality, but rather because it overthrows this reality (see the passage from *The Poverty of Philosophy* quoted above, note 43).

ary practice. In the period of revolutionary transition, after its seizure of power, the proletariat must accomplish definite revolutionary tasks in the ideological field, no less than in the political and economic fields – tasks which constantly interact with each other. The scientific theory of Marxism must become again what it was for the authors of the *Communist Manifesto* – not as a simple *return* but as a *dialectical development*: a theory of social revolution that comprises all areas of society as a totality. Therefore we must solve in a dialectically materialist fashion not only 'the question of the relationship of the State to social revolution and of social revolution to the State' (Lenin), but also the 'question of the relationship of ideology to social revolution and of social revolution to ideology'. To avoid these questions in the period before the proletarian revolution leads to opportunism and creates a crisis within Marxism, just as avoidance of the problem of State and revolution in the Second International led to opportunism and indeed provoked a crisis in the camp of Marxism. To evade a definite stand on these ideological problems of the transition can have disastrous political results in the period after the proletarian seizure of State power, because theoretical vagueness and disarray can seriously impede a prompt and energetic approach to problems that then arise in the ideological field. The major issue of the relation of the proletarian revolution to *ideology* was no less neglected by Social Democrat theoreticians than the political problem of the revolutionary dictatorship of the proletariat. Consequently in this new revolutionary period of struggle it must be posed anew and the correct – dialectical and revolutionary – conception of original Marxism must be restored. This task can only be resolved by first investigating the problem which led Marx and Engels to the question of ideology: how is *philosophy* related to the social revolution of the proletariat and how is the social revolution of the proletariat related to philosophy? An answer to this question is indicated by Marx and Engels themselves and may be deduced from Marx's materialist dialectics. It will lead us on to a larger question: how is Marxist materialism related to *ideology* in general?

What is the relation of the scientific socialism of Marx and Engels to philosophy? 'None,' replies vulgar-marxism. In this

perspective it is precisely the new materialist and scientific standpoint of Marxism which has refuted and superseded the old idealist philosophical standpoint. All philosophical ideas and speculations are thereby shown to be unreal – vacuous fantasies which still haunt a few minds as a kind of superstition, which the ruling class has a concrete material interest in preserving. Once capitalism is overthrown the remains of these fantasies will disappear at once.

One has only to reflect on this approach to philosophy in all its shallowness, as we have tried to do, to realize at once that such a solution to the problem of philosophy has nothing in common with the spirit of Marx's modern dialectical materialism. It belongs to the age in which that 'genius of bourgeois stupidity', Jeremy Bentham, explained 'Religion' in his Encyclopedia with the rubric '*vide* superstitious opinions'.[46] It is part of an atmosphere which was created in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, and which inspired Eugen Dühring to write that in a future society, constructed according to his plans, there would be no religious cults; for a correctly understood system of sociability would *suppress* all the apparatus needed for spiritual sorcery, and with it all the essential components of these cults.[47] The outlook with which modern or dialectical materialism – the new and *only* scientific view of the world according to Marx and Engels – confronts these questions is in complete contrast to this shallow, rationalist and negative approach to ideological phenomena such as religion and philosophy. To present this contrast in all its bluntness one can say: it is essential for modern dialectical materialism to grasp philosophies and other ideological systems in theory as realities, and to treat them in practice as such. In their early period Marx and Engels began their whole revolutionary activity by struggling against the reality of philosophy; and it will be shown that, although later they did radically alter their view of how philosophical ideology was related to other forms within ideology as a whole, they always treated ideologies – including philosophy – as concrete realities and not as empty fantasies.

46. Cf. Marx's remarks about Bentham, *Capital*, vol. I, pp. 609–11.

47. Cf. Engels' bitter witticisms on this subject in *Anti-Dühring*, pp. 434ff.

In the 1840s Marx and Engels began the revolutionary struggle – initially on a theoretical and philosophical plane – for the emancipation of the class which stands 'not in partial opposition to the consequences, but in total opposition to the premisses' of existing society as a whole.[48] They were convinced that they were thereby attacking an extremely important part of the existing social order. In the editorial of the *Kölnische Zeitung* in 1842, Marx had already stated that 'philosophy does not stand outside the world, just as the brain does not stand outside man merely because it is not in his stomach'.[49] He repeats this later in the Introduction to the *Critique of Hegel's Philosophy of Right*: 'Previous philosophy itself belongs to this world and is its, albeit idealist, elaboration.'[50] This is the work of which fifteen years later, in the Preface to the *Critique of Political Economy*, Marx said that in it he definitively accomplished the transition to his later materialist position. Precisely when Marx, the dialectician, effected this transition from the idealist to the materialist conception, he made it quite explicit that the practically oriented political party in Germany at the time, which *rejected* all philosophy, was making as big a mistake as the theoretically oriented political party, which *failed to condemn* philosophy as such. The latter believed that it could combat the reality of the German world from a purely philosophical standpoint, that is, with propositions that were derived in one way or another from philosophy (much as Lassalle was later to do by invoking Fichte). It forgot that the philosophical standpoint itself was part of this dominant German world. But the practically oriented political party was basically trapped by the same limitation because it believed that the negation of philosophy 'can be accomplished by turning one's back on philosophy, looking in the opposite direction and mumbling some irritable and banal remarks about it'. It too did not regard 'philosophy as part of German reality'. The theoretically oriented party erroneously believed that 'it could realize

48. Cf. 'Introduction to the *Critique of Hegel's Philosophy of Right*', in Marx and Engels, *On Religion*, pp. 56–7.

49. 'The Leading Article of no. 179 of the *Kölnische Zeitung*', ibid., p. 30.

50. 'Introduction to the *Critique of Hegel's Philosophy of Right*', ibid., p. 49.

philosophy in practice without superseding it in theory'. The practically oriented party made a comparable mistake by trying to supersede philosophy in practice without realizing it in theory – in other words, without grasping it as a reality.[51]

It is clear in what sense Marx (and Engels who underwent an identical development at the same time – as he and Marx often later explained)[52] had now really surpassed the merely philosophical standpoint of his student days; but one can also see how this process itself still had a philosophical character. There are three reasons why we can speak of a surpassal of the philosophical standpoint. First, Marx's theoretical standpoint here is not just partially opposed to the consequences of all existing German philosophy, but is in total opposition to its premisses; (for both Marx and Engels this philosophy was always more than sufficiently represented by Hegel). Second, Marx is opposed not just to philosophy, which is only the head or ideal elaboration of the existing world, but to this world as a totality. Third, and most importantly, this opposition is not just theoretical but is also practical and active. 'The philosophers have only interpreted the world, our task is to change it', announces the last of the *Theses on Feuerbach*. Nevertheless, this general surpassal of the purely philosophical standpoint still incorporates a philosophical character. This becomes clear, once one realizes how little this new proletarian science differs from previous philosophy in its theoretical character, even though Marx substitutes it for bourgeois idealist philosophy as a system radically distinct in its orientation and aims. German idealism had constantly tended, *even on the theoretical level*, to be more than just a theory or philosophy. This is comprehensible in the light of its relation to the revolutionary movement of the bourgeoisie (discussed above), and will be studied further in a later work. This tendency was typical of Hegel's predecessors – Kant, Schelling and especially Fichte. Although Hegel himself to all appearances reversed it, he too in fact allotted philosophy a task that went beyond the realm of theory and became in a certain sense practical. This task was not of course to change

51. ibid., pp. 48–9.

52. Cf. Marx's remark in the Preface to the *Critique of Political Economy* (1859), *Selected Works*, vol. I, p. 364.

the world, as it was for Marx, but rather to reconcile Reason as a self-conscious Spirit with Reason as an actual Reality, by means of concepts and comprehension.[53] German idealism from Kant to Hegel did not cease to be philosophical when it affirmed this universal role (which is anyway what is colloquially thought to be the essence of *any* philosophy). Similarly it is incorrect to say that Marx's materialist theory is no longer philosophical merely because it has an aim that is not simply theoretical but is also a practical and revolutionary goal. On the contrary, the dialectical materialism of Marx and Engels is by its very nature a philosophy through and through, as formulated in the eleventh thesis on Feuerbach and in other published and unpublished writings of the period.[54] It is a

53. See the Preface to the *Philosophy of Right*, p. 12, and also the remarks on Helander, note 45 above.

54. Apart from the *Critique of Hegel's Philosophy of Right*, which has been frequently mentioned already, this includes the critique of Bauer's *The Jewish Question* (1843–4), *The Holy Family* and, most important of all, the great settling of their accounts with post-Hegelian philosophy which Marx and Engels carried out together in *The German Ideology* of 1845. The importance of this work for the present discussion is indicated by the remark in the Preface to *The Holy Family*, in which the authors state that their next works will present their own positive conception of, and hence their positive relationship to, 'more recent philosophical and social doctrines'. This text is of the greatest importance for a comprehensive textual study of the problem of Marxism and philosophy, but regrettably it has not yet been published in full. However, even those parts that have already been published (especially *St Max* and *The Leipzig Council*), as well as Gustav Mayer's extremely interesting remarks on the unpublished parts of the manuscript in his biography of Engels, *Friedrich Engels* (German ed. pp. 239–60), enable one to see that it is here that a comprehensive exposition of the dialectical-materialist principle can be found. This cannot be said of the *Communist Manifesto* or of the *Critique of Political Economy*, which present the materialist principle in a largely one-sided way: either stressing its practical and revolutionary side, or its theoretical, economic and historical side. The famous sentences in the Preface to the *Critique of Political Economy* on the materialist conception of history are only intended to provide the reader with 'the guiding thread for the study of society', which Marx has used in his analysis of political economy. Hence Marx did *not intend* this passage to express in full *the whole* of his new principle of dialectical materialism. This is often overlooked, although it is perfectly clear from both the content of these remarks, and from their very tone. For example, Marx states that in a period of social revolution men become conscious of the conflict that has broken out and they participate in it; humanity adopts certain tasks only under certain conditions; and the period of revolution itself has a

revolutionary philosophy whose task is to participate in the revolutionary struggles waged in all spheres of society against the whole of the existing order, by fighting in one specific area – philosophy. Eventually, it aims at the concrete abolition of philosophy as part of the abolition of bourgeois social reality as a whole, of which it is an ideal component. In Marx's words: 'Philosophy cannot be abolished without being realized.' Thus just when Marx and Engels were progressing from Hegel's dialectical idealism to dialectical materialism, it is clear that the abolition of philosophy did not mean for them its simple rejection. Even when their later positions are under consideration, it is essential to take it as a constant starting point that Marx and Engels were dialecticians before they were materialists. The sense of their materialism is distorted in a disastrous and irreparable manner if one forgets that Marxist materialism was dialectical from the very beginning. It always remained a historical and dialectical materialism, in contrast to Feuerbach's abstract-scientific materialism and all other abstract materialisms, whether earlier or later, bourgeois or vulgar-marxist. In other words, it was a materialism whose theory comprehended the totality of society and history, and whose practice overthrew it. It was therefore possible for philosophy to become a less central component of the socio-historical process for Marx and Engels, in the course of their development of materialism, than it had seemed at the start; this did in fact occur. But no really dialectical materialist conception of history (certainly not that of Marx and Engels) could cease to regard philosophical ideology, or ideology in general, as a material component of general socio-historical

specific consciousness. This makes it clear that there is absolutely no discussion here of the problem of the historical *subject* which accomplishes the real development of society with either a true or a false consciousness. Given all this, if one wants to see the dialectical-materialist principle as a whole, one must complement this description of the materialist conception by those found in the other works of Marx and Engels, especially on the writings of the first period already mentioned (as well as *Capital* and the shorter historical writings of the later period). A preliminary attempt at doing this was made in my little book, published last year (1922), *Kernpunkte der materialistischen Geschichtsauffassung*.

reality – that is, a real part which had to be grasped in materialist theory and overthrown by materialist practice.

In his *Theses on Feuerbach* Marx contrasts his new materialism not only to philosophical idealism, but just as forcefully to every existing materialism. Similarly, *in all their later writings*, Marx and Engels emphasized the contrast between their dialectical materialism and the normal, abstract and undialectical version of materialism. They were especially conscious that this contrast was of great importance for any theoretical interpretation of so-called mental or ideological realities, and their treatment in practice. Discussing mental representations in general, and the method necessary for a concrete and critical history of religion in particular, Marx states: 'It is in fact much easier to uncover the earthly kernel within nebulous religious ideas, through analysis, than it is to do the opposite, to see how these heavenly forms develop out of actual concrete relations. The latter is the only materialist and therefore scientific method.'[55] A theoretical method which was content

55. *Capital*, vol. I, pp. 372–3n, and the fourth of the eleven *Theses on Feuerbach* which says exactly the same thing. It is easy to see that what Marx here calls the one materialist and therefore scientific method is none other than the method of dialectical materialism, as opposed to the inadequacy of abstract materialism. Cf. Engels' letter to Mehring, 14 July 1893 (*Selected Correspondence*, pp. 540ff.) discussing what is missing from Mehring's use of the materialist method in his *Lessing-Legende* and which 'Marx and I did not generally stress enough in our writings'. 'We all laid, and were bound to lay, the main emphasis on the fact that political, juridical and other ideological notions *are derived* from basic economic facts and that this also applied to actions mediated through these notions. We stressed the content and neglected the form, i.e. the ways and means by which these notions come about.' It will be shown later that this self-criticism Engels makes of his and Marx's writings applies only slightly to the method he and Marx in fact used. The partiality which he criticizes occurs infinitely less in Marx than in Engels himself; but it does not occur in Engels anything like as much as one might expect from his strong criticism of himself. Engels was afraid he had not given enough attention to this formal side and this led him in his later period to make the mistake of sometimes approaching it in an incorrect and undialectical way. This applies to all the passages in *Anti-Dühring* and *Ludwig Feuerbach*, and especially in Engels's later letters, which concern the 'area to which the materialist conception of history can validly be applied'; these letters were collected by Bernstein in *Dokumente des Sozialismus*, II, pp. 65ff. (*Selected Correspondence*, letters 214, 215, 232, 234, etc.). In them Engels tends to make the very mistake that Hegel describes in paragraph 156 of his *Encyclopaedia* (*The*

in good Feuerbachian fashion to reduce all ideological representations to their material and earthly kernel would be abstract and undialectical. A revolutionary practice confined to direct action against the terrestrial kernel of nebulous religious ideas, and unconcerned with overthrowing and superseding these ideologies themselves, would be no less so. When vulgar-marxism adopts this abstract and negative attitude to the reality of ideologies, it makes exactly the same mistake as those proletarian theoreticians, past and present, who use the Marxist thesis of the economic determination of legal relations, state forms and political action, to argue that the proletariat can and should confine itself to direct economic action alone.[56] It is well known that Marx strongly attacked tendencies of this kind in his polemics against Proudhon and others. In different phases of his life, wherever he came across views like this, which still survive in contemporary syndicalism, Marx always emphasized that this 'transcendental underestimation' of the State and political action was completely unmaterialist. It was therefore theoretically inadequate and practically dangerous.[57]

This dialectical conception of the relationship of economics

Logic of Hegel, Wallace translation, 1864, p. 242) as a 'really unintelligent procedure'. In Hegel's terms, he retreats from the height of the concept to its threshold, to the categories of reacting and mutual interaction, etc.

56. A highly typical example of this outmoded view can be found in Proudhon's famous letter of May 1846 in which he explained to Marx how he saw the problem at that time (*Nachlass*, vol. II, p. 336): 'To give back to society by means of an economic combination of wealth that which has been taken out of society by another combination; in other words, to convert the theory of property into political economy, to turn it against property and thereby to achieve what you German socialists call a community of goods.' Marx, on the other hand, although he had certainly not yet attained his mature dialectical-materialist position, had nevertheless come to see quite clearly the dialectical relationship whereby economic questions must also be posed and resolved on the political plane theoretically and practically. Cf. Marx's letter to Ruge, of September 1843, where he talks of those 'crass socialists' who regard political questions like the difference between the estate system and the representative system as 'beneath contempt'. Marx replies with the dialectical consideration that 'this question expresses in political form the difference between the domination of men and the domination of private property' (*Nachlass*, I, p. 382).

57. Cf. in particular the last pages of the *The Poverty of Philosophy*.

to politics became such an unalterable part of Marxist theory that even the vulgar-marxists of the Second International were unable to deny that the problem of the revolutionary transition existed, at least *in theory*, although they ignored the problem *in practice*. No orthodox Marxist could even in principle have claimed that a theoretical and practical concern with politics was unnecessary for Marxism. This was left to the syndicalists, some of whom invoke Marx, but none of whom have ever claimed to be orthodox Marxists. However, many good Marxists did adopt a theoretical and practical position on the reality of ideology which was identical to that of the syndicalists. These materialists are with Marx in condemning the syndicalist refusal of political action and in declaring that the social movement must include the political movement. They often argue against anarchists that even after the victorious proletarian revolution, and in spite of all the changes undergone by the bourgeois State, politics will long continue to be a reality. Yet these very people fall straight into the anarcho-syndicalist 'transcendental underestimation' of ideology when they are told that *intellectual* struggle in the ideological field cannot be replaced or eliminated by the social movement of the proletariat alone, or by its social and political movements combined. Even today most Marxist theoreticians conceive of the efficacy of so-called intellectual phenomena in a purely negative, abstract and undialectical sense, when they should analyse this domain of social reality with the materialist and scientific method moulded by Marx and Engels. Intellectual life should be conceived in union with social and political life, and social being and becoming (in the widest sense, as economics, politics or law) should be studied in union with social consciousness in its many different manifestations, as a real yet also ideal (or 'ideological') component of the historical process in general. Instead, all consciousness is approached with totally abstract and basically metaphysical dualism, and declared to be a reflection of the one really concrete and material developmental process, on which it is completely dependent (even if relatively independent, still dependent in the last instance).[58]

58. See note 55 for the extent to which the later Engels made concessions to this in the end.

Given this situation, any theoretical attempt to restore what Marx regarded as the only scientific, dialectical materialist conception and treatment of *ideological* realities, inevitably encounters even greater theoretical obstacles than an attempt to restore the correct Marxist theory of the State. The distortion of Marxism by the epigones in the question of the *State* and *politics* merely consisted in the fact that the most prominent theoreticians of the Second International never dealt concretely enough with the most vital political problems of the revolutionary transition. However, they at least agreed in abstract, and emphasized strongly in their long struggles against anarchists and syndicalists that, for materialism, not only the economic structure of society, which underlay all other socio-historical phenomena, but also the juridical and political superstructure of Law and the State were *realities*. Consequently, they could not be ignored or dismissed in an anarcho-syndicalist fashion: they had to be overthrown in reality by a political revolution. In spite of this, many vulgar-marxists to this day have never, even in theory, admitted that intellectual life and forms of social consciousness are comparable realities. Quoting certain statements by Marx and especially Engels they simply explain away the *intellectual (ideological) structures of society* as a mere *pseudo-reality* which only exists in the minds of ideologues – as error, imagination and illusion, devoid of a genuine object.[59] At any rate, this is supposed to be true for all the so-called 'higher' ideologies. For this conception, political and legal representatives may have an ideological and unreal character, but they are at least related to something real – the institutions of Law and the State, which comprise the superstructure of the society in question. On the other hand, the 'higher' ideological representations (men's religions, aesthetic and philosophical conceptions) correspond to no real object. This can be formulated concisely, with only a slight caricature, by saying that

59. Later in life Engels did once regrettably say of such 'realms of ideology that float still higher in the air' as religion of philosophy, that they contained a pre-historic element of 'primitive stupidity' (letter to Conrad Schmidt, 27 October 1890, *Selected Correspondence*, p. 505). In *Theories on Surplus Value* Marx also talks specifically of philosophy in a similar, *apparently* quite negative tone.

for vulgar-marxism there are *three degrees of reality*: (1) the economy, which in the last instance is the only objective and totally non-ideological reality; (2) Law and the State, which are already somewhat less real because clad in ideology, and (3) pure ideology which is objectless and totally unreal ('pure rubbish').

To restore a genuine dialectically materialist conception of intellectual reality, it is first necessary to make a few mainly terminological points. The key problem to settle here is how in general to approach the relationship of consciousness to its object. Terminologically, it must be said that it never occurred to Marx and Engels to describe social consciousness and intellectual life merely as ideology. Ideology is only a false consciousness, in particular one that mistakenly attributes an autonomous character to a partial phenomena of social life. Legal and political representations which conceive Law and the State to be independent forces above society are cases in point.[60] In the passage where Marx is most precise about his terminology,[61] he says explicitly that within the complex of material relations that Hegel called civil society, the social relations of production – the economic structure of society – forms the real foundation on which arise juridical and political superstructures and to which determinate forms of social consciousness correspond. In particular, these forms of social consciousness, which are no less real than Law and the State, include commodity fetishism, the concept of value, and other economic representations derived from them. Marx and Engels analysed these in their critique of political economy. What is strikingly characteristic of their treatment is that they never refer to this basic economic ideology of bourgeois

60. Cf. in particular Engels' remarks on the State in *Ludwig Feuerbach* (*Selected Works*, vol. 2, p. 396).

61. Cf. the Preface to the *Critique of Political Economy* (*Selected Works*, vol. II, p. 363). One can find a meticulous collection of all the philological and methodological material on this question in the work of a bourgeois scholar on Marx, Hammacher's *Das philosophisch-ökonomische System des Marxismus* (1909), pp. 190–206. Hammacher distinguishes himself from other bourgeois critics of Marx by the fact that, in attempting to solve this problem, he at least draws on all the textual material, while others, such as Tönnies and Barth, had based their interpretations on isolated phrases and passages of Marx.

society as an ideology. In their terminology only the legal, political, religious, aesthetic or philosophical forms of consciousness are ideological. Even these need not be so in all situations, but become so only under specific conditions which have already been stated. The special position now allotted to forms of economic consciousness marks the new conception of philosophy which distinguishes the fully matured dialectical materialism of the later period from its undeveloped earlier version. The theoretical and practical criticisms of philosophy is henceforward relegated to the second, third, fourth or even last but one place in their critique of society. The 'critical philosophy' which the Marx of the *Deutsch-Französische Jahrbücher* saw as his essential task[62] became a more radical critique of society, which went to the roots of it[63] through a critique of political economy. Marx once said that a critic could '*start from any form of philosophical and practical consciousness* and develop from the specific forms of existent reality, its true reality and final end'.[64] But he later became aware that no juridical relations, constitutional structures or forms of social consciousness can be understood in themselves or even in Hegelian or post-Hegelian terms of the general development of the human Spirit. For they are *rooted* in the material conditions of life that form 'the material basis and skeleton' of social organization as a whole.[65] A radical critique of bourgeois society can no longer start from 'any' form of theoretical or practical consciousness whatever, as Marx thought as late as 1843.[66] It must start from the particular

62. Marx to Ruge, September 1843, *Nachlass*, vol. 1, p. 383.

63. This is how Marx defines the word 'radical' in his 'Introduction to the *Critique of Hegel's Philosophy of Right*', *On Religion*, p. 50.

64. Marx to Ruge, September 1843, loc. cit., p. 381.

65. Introduction to the *Critique of Political Economy* (Chicago, 1904) p. 310; see also the Preface in ibid., and *Selected Works*, vol. I.

66. This was not a completely accurate account of Marx's real position, even in 1843. The words in the text come from Marx's letter to Ruge of September 1843, but a few lines later he says that the issues which preoccupy the representatives of the socialist principle concern the reality of true human nature. However, they also need to criticize the other side of this nature – man's theoretical existence in religion, science, etc. Marx's development can be summarized as follows. First, he criticized religion philosophically. Then he criticized religion and philosophy politically. Finally, he criticized religion, philosophy,

forms of consciousness which have found their scientific expression in the political economy of bourgeois society. Consequently the critique of political economy is theoretically and practically the first priority. Yet even this deeper and more radical version of Marx's revolutionary critique of society never ceases to be a critique of the *whole* of bourgeois society and so of *all* its forms of consciousness. It may seem as if Marx and Engels were later to criticize philosophy only in an occasional and haphazard manner. In fact, far from neglecting the subject, they actually developed their critique of it in a more profound and radical direction. For proof, it is only necessary to re-establish the full revolutionary meaning of Marx's critique of political economy, as against certain mistaken ideas about it which are common today. This may also serve to clarify both its place in the whole system of Marx's critique of society, and its relation to his critique of ideologies like philosophy.

It is generally accepted that the critique of political economy – the most important theoretical and practical component of the Marxist theory of society – includes not only a critique of the material relations of production of the capitalist epoch but also of its specific forms of social consciousness. Even the pure and impartial 'scientific science' of vulgar-marxism acknowledges this. Hilferding admits that scientific knowledge of

politics and all other ideologies economically. The milestones on this road are: 1. The remarks in the preface to his philosophical thesis (a philosophical critique of religion). 2. The remarks on Feuerbach in his letter to Ruge, dated 13 March 1843: 'There is only one thing wrong with Feuerbach's aphorisms. They lay too much stress on nature and not enough on politics. That is the one link by which contemporary philosophy can become true.' There is also the famous remark in the September 1843 letter to Ruge mentioned above, where he says that philosophy has 'secularized' itself and thereby 'philosophical consciousness itself has been drawn into the agony of struggle not only externally but also internally'. 3. The statement in the 'Introduction to the *Critique of Hegel's Philosophy of Right*' that 'the way industry and the world of wealth as a whole relate to the world of politics', is 'a major issue of modern times'. This problem has been posed by 'modern socio-political reality itself', but it stands outside the *status quo* of German legal and state philosophy, and even of its 'final, richest and most consistent' form in Hegel (*On Religion*, pp. 13–15; *Dokumente des Sozialismus*, I, pp. 396–7; *Nachlass*, I, p. 380; 'Introduction to the *Critique of Hegel's Philosophy of Right*', *On Religion*, pp. 47ff.).

the economic laws of a society is also a 'scientific politics' in so far as it shows 'the determinant factors which define the *will of the classes* in this society'. Despite this relation of economics to politics, however, in the totally abstract and undialectical conception of vulgar-marxism, the 'critique of political economy' has a purely theoretical role as a 'science'. Its function is to criticize the errors of bourgeois economics, classical or vulgar. By contrast, a proletarian political party uses the results of critical and scientific investigation for its practical ends – ultimately the overthrow of the real economic structure of capitalist society and of its relations of production. (On occasion, the results of this Marxism can also be used against the proletarian party itself, as by Simkhovitch or Paul Lensch.)

The major weakness of vulgar socialism is that, in Marxist terms, it clings quite 'unscientifically' to a naïve realism – in which both so-called common sense, which is the 'worst metaphysician', and the normal positivist science of bourgeois society, draw a sharp line of division between consciousness and its object. Neither are aware that this distinction had ceased to be completely valid even for the transcendental perspective of critical philosophy,[67] and has been completely superseded in dialectical philosophy.[68] At best, they imagine

67. Lask's remarks on this are particularly instructive (in the second section of his 'Philosophy of Right' in *Festgabe für Kuno Fischer*, II, pp. 28ff.).

68. An excellent illustration of this is Book II, chapter 3, of *On War* (Penguin Classics, pp. 201–03, 'Art or Science of War') by General von Clausewitz, a philosopher of war who was deeply influenced by the spirit and method of idealist philosophy. Clausewitz asks whether one should speak of the art of war or rather of the science of war, and he comes to the conclusion that 'it is more fitting to say the art of war than the science of war'. But this does not satisfy him. He goes on to say that, on closer inspection, war 'is neither an art nor a science in the real sense of the word' and neither is it in its modern form a 'handicraft' (as it used to be at the time of the *condottieri*). In fact war is far more 'part of human intercourse'. 'We say therefore that war belongs not to the realm of the arts and sciences, but to the realm of social life. It is a conflict of great interests which is settled by blood and only in that respect is it different from others. It would be better, instead of comparing it with any art, to liken it to trade, which is also a conflict of human interests and activities; and it is much more like politics, which in its turn may be looked upon as a kind of trade on a great scale. Besides, politics is the womb in which war is developed, in which its outlines lie hidden in a rudimentary state, like the qualities of living creatures in their germs.' Some modern positivist thinkers who are influenced by fixed metaphysical categories might well criticize this theory on the grounds that Clausewitz has confused the object of the science of war with the science itself. In fact, Clausewitz knew perfectly well what is usually and undialectically meant by 'science'. He expressly says that there cannot be a science 'in the real sense of the word' which has as its object what is normally called either the art of war or the science of war. This is because it does not deal with 'inanimate matter' as in the mechanical arts (and sciences), or with a 'living, but passive and submissive object' as in the ideal arts (and sciences): it deals with a 'living and *reacting*' object. Like every other non-transcendent object, it can be 'illuminated by an inquiring mind and its inner structure more or less clarified', and 'that alone is sufficient to justify the idea of a theory' (ibid., p. 203). Clausewitz's concept of theory is so like the concept of science in the scientific socialism of Marx and Engels that there is no need to say more about it. This is not at all surprising because both have the same source: Hegel's dialectical conception of philosophy and science. Moreover, the comments of Clausewitz's epigones on this aspect of their master's theory are very strikingly similar, in tone and content, to corresponding remarks by some modern scientific Marxists about Marx's theory. Here is a passage from Schlieffen's preface (p. 4) to his edition of Clausewitz: 'Clausewitz did not dispute that a sound theory is in itself valuable, but his book *On War* is permeated by an attempt to bring theory into harmony with the real world. This partly explains the predominance of a philosophizing way of approaching things which does not always appeal to a modern reader.' As one can see, it was not just Marxism that was vulgarized in the second half of the nineteenth century.

that something like this might be true of Hegel's idealist dialectic. It is precisely this, they think, that constitutes the 'mystification' which the dialectic, according to Marx, 'suffered at Hegel's hands'. It follows therefore for them that this mystification must be completely eliminated from the rational form of the dialectic: the materialist dialectic of Marx. In fact, we shall show, Marx and Engels were very far from having any such dualistic metaphysical conception of the relationship of consciousness to reality – not only in their first (philosophical) period but also in their second (positive-scientific) period. It never occurred to them that they could be misunderstood in this dangerous way. Precisely because of this, they sometimes did provide considerable pretexts for such misunderstandings in certain of their formulations (although these can easily be corrected by a hundred times as many other formulations). For the *coincidence of consciousness*

and reality characterizes every dialectic, including Marx's dialectical materialism. Its consequence is that the material relations of production of the capitalist epoch only are what they are in combination with the forms in which they are reflected in the pre-scientific and bourgeois-scientific consciousness of the period; and they could not subsist in reality without these forms of consciousness. Setting aside any philosophical considerations, it is therefore clear that *without this coincidence of consciousness and reality, a critique of political economy could never have become the major component of a theory of social revolution*. The converse follows. Those Marxist theoreticians for whom Marxism was no longer essentially a theory of social revolution could see no need for this dialectical conception of the coincidence of reality and consciousness: it was bound to appear to them as theoretically false and unscientific.[69]

In the different periods of their revolutionary activity, Marx and Engels speak of the relationship of consciousness to reality at the economic level, or the higher levels of politics and law, or on the highest levels of art, religion and philosophy. It is always necessary to ask in what direction these remarks are aimed (they are nearly always, above all in the late period, only remarks!). For their import is very different, depending on whether they are aimed at Hegel's idealist and speculative method or at 'the ordinary method, essentially Wolff's metaphysical method, which has become fashionable once again'. After Feuerbach had 'dispatched speculative

69. This relationship between a non-revolutionary spirit and a complete misinterpretation of the dialectical aspect of Marx's critique of political economy is particularly obvious in Eduard Bernstein. He concludes his exposition of different aspects of the theory of value (*Dokumente des Sozialismus*, 1905, p. 559) with a remark that contrasts curiously with the real meaning of Marx's theory of value: 'Today we [*sic*] investigate the laws of price formation in a more direct way than by going through the maze of that metaphysical object called "value".' Similarly, socialist idealists of the back-to-Kant variety and other tendencies separate fact from value. Cf. Helander's naïve criticism in *Marx und Hegel*, p. 26: 'Most men naturally tend to think in Kantian terms, i.e. to acknowledge a difference between "is" and "ought".' See also Marx's remarks about John Locke in *Critique of Political Economy*, p. 93, where he says that this penetrating bourgeois philosopher 'went so far as to prove in his own work that bourgeois reason is normal human reason'.

concepts', the latter re-emerged in the new natural-scientific materialism of Büchner, Vogt and Moleschott and 'even bourgeois economists wrote large rambling books' inspired by it.[70] From the outset, Marx and Engels had to clarify their position only with regard to the first, Hegelian method. They never doubted that they had issued from it. Their only problem was how to change the Hegelian dialectic from a method proper to a superficially idealist, but secretly materialist conception of the world, into the guiding principle of an explicitly materialist view of history and society.[71] Hegel had already taught that a philosophico-scientific method was not a mere form of thought which could be applied indiscriminately to any content. It was rather 'the structure of the whole presented in its pure essence'. Marx made the same point in an early writing: 'Form has no value if it is not the form of its content.'[72] As Marx and Engels said, it then became a – logical and methodological – question of 'stripping the dialectical method of its idealist shell and presenting it in the

70. The best account of the whole methodological situation is found in the second of two articles Engels wrote on Marx's *Critique of Political Economy*, which were published in August 1859 in *Das Volk*, a German magazine issued in London (Marx and Engels, *Selected Works*, vol. I, pp. 366ff.). The phrases quoted here, and many other similar ones, are found on pp. 371ff. ('It seemed as if the reign of the old metaphysics with its fixed categories had begun anew in science', at a 'time when the positive content of science once again prevailed over its formal aspect'; when natural sciences 'became fashionable' 'there was a recrudescence of the old metaphysical manner of thinking, including the extreme platitudes of Wolff'; 'they totally reproduced the narrow-minded philistine way of thinking of the pre-Kantian period'; 'the obstinate cart-horse of bourgeois common sense', etc., etc.)

71. For the way in which the relationship between the Hegelian and Marxist *conceptions of history* differed from the relationship between the Hegelian and Marxist *logical methods*, see Engels, ibid., p. 373.

72. Cf. *Nachlass*, I, p. 319, 'Proceedings of the Sixth Rhine Parliament. Debates on the Law to Prevent the Theft of Wood'. The phrase from Hegel (from the *Phenomenology of the Spirit*) is quoted at greater length in my *Kernpunkte*, pp. 38ff. The inability to comprehend this relationship of identity between form and content distinguishes the transcendental from the dialectical standpoint (whether idealist or materialist). The former regards content as empirical and historical, form as generally valid and necessary; the latter sees form as also subject to empirical and historical transcience and hence to the 'agony of the struggle'. This passage clearly illustrates how pure democracy and pure transcendental philosophy are related.

simple form in which it becomes the only correct form of intellectual development'.[73] Marx and Engels were confronted with the abstract speculative form in which Hegel bequeathed the dialectical method and which the different Hegelian schools had developed in an even more abstract and formal way. They therefore made vigorous counter-statements, such as: all thought is nothing but the 'transformation of perceptions and representations into concepts'; even the most general categories of thought are only 'abstract, unilateral relations of a living totality that is already given'; an object which thought comprehends as real 'remains as before, independent and external to the mind'.[74] Nevertheless, all their lives they rejected the undialectical approach which counterposes the thought, observation, perception and comprehension of an immediately given reality *to* this reality, as if the former were themselves also immediately given independent essences. This is best shown by a sentence from Engels' attack on Dühring, which is doubly conclusive because it is widely believed that the later Engels degenerated into a thoroughly naturalistic-materialist view of the world by contrast to Marx, his more philosophically literate companion. It is precisely in one of his last writings that Engels, in the same breath as he describes thought and consciousness as products of the human brain and man himself as a product of nature, also unambiguously protests against the wholly 'naturalistic' outlook which accepts consciousness and thought 'as something given, something straightforwardly opposed to Being and to Nature'.[75] The

73. Engels, op. cit., p. 373; he adds that the working out of this *method* in Marx's *Critique of Political Economy* is an achievement 'of hardly less importance than the *basic materialist conception*'. Cf. also Marx's own well-known statements in the afterword to the second edition of *Capital* (1873).

74. All these expressions are from the posthumously published Introduction to the *Critique of Political Economy*, which is the richest source for studying the real methodological position of Marx and Engels.

75. Engels, *Anti-Dühring* (Moscow), p. 55. A more thorough analysis of these statements of Engels in his later writings shows that he merely accentuated a tendency that was already present in Marx. Engels took all socio-historic phenomena (including socio-historic forms of consciousness) which were determined 'in the last instance' by the economy, and added to them yet another, even more final 'determination by nature'. This last twist of Engels develops and sustains his-

method of Marx and Engels is not that of an abstract materialism, but of a dialectical materialism: it is therefore the only scientific method. For Marxism, pre-scientific, extra-scientific and scientific consciousness[76] no longer exist over and against the natural and (above all) social-historical world. They exist within this world as a real and objective component of it, if also an 'ideal' one. This is the first specific difference between the materialist dialectic of Marx and Engels, and Hegel's idealist dialectic. Hegel said that the theoretical consciousness of an individual could not 'leap over' his own epoch, the world of his time. Nevertheless he inserted the world into philosophy far more than he did philosophy into the world. This first difference between the Hegelian and Marxist dialectic is very closely related to a second one. As early as 1844 Marx wrote in *The Holy Family*: 'Communist workers well know that property, capital, money, wage-labour and such-like, far from being idealist fantasies are highly practical and objective products of their own alienation; they must be transcended in a practical and objective way so that man can become man, not only in thought and in consciousness, but in his (social) Being and in his life.' This passage states with full materialist clarity that, given the unbreakable interconnection of all real phenomena in bourgeois society as a whole, its forms of consciousness cannot be abolished through thought alone. These forms can only be abolished in thought and consciousness by a simultaneous *practico-objective overthrow* of the material relations of production themselves, which have hitherto been comprehended through these forms. This is also true of the highest forms of social consciousness, such as religion, and of medium levels of social being and

torical materialism; but, as the quotation in the text shows quite clearly, it in no way alters the dialectical conception of the relationship between consciousness and reality.

76. The term 'pre-scientific conceptualization' is known to have been coined by the Kantian Rickert. The notion is naturally bound to turn up where either a transcendental or dialectical approach is applied to the social sciences (e.g. in Dilthey). Marx draws a sharp and precise distinction between 'intellectual appropriation of the world by the thinking mind' and 'the appropriation of the world by art, religion and the practical spirit' (*Critique of Political Economy*).

consciousness, such as the family.[77] This consequence of the new materialism is implied in the *Critique of Hegel's Philosophy of Right*, and is explicitly and comprehensively developed in the *Theses on Feuerbach* which Marx wrote in 1845 to clarify his own ideas. 'The question of whether objective truth corresponds to human thought is not a theoretical question but a practical one. Man must prove the truth – that is, the reality, the power, and the immanence of his thought, in practice. The dispute about the reality or unreality of thought – thought isolated from practice – is purely scholastic.' It would be a dangerous misunderstanding to think that this means that criticism in practice merely replaces criticism in theory. Such an idea merely replaces the philosophical abstraction of pure theory with an opposite anti-philosophical abstraction of an equally pure practice. It is not in 'human practice' alone, but only 'in human practice and in the comprehension of this practice' that Marx as a dialectical materialist locates the rational solution of all mysteries that 'lure theory into mysticism'. The translation of the dialectics from its mystification by Hegel to the 'rational form' of Marx's materialist dialectic essentially means that it has become the guiding principle of a single theoretical-practical and critical-revolutionary activity. It is a 'method that is by its very nature critical and revolutionary'.[78] Even in Hegel 'the theoretical was essentially contained in the practical'. 'One must not imagine that man thinks on the one hand and wills on the other, that he has Thought in one pocket and Will in another; this would be a vacuous notion'. For Hegel, the practical task of the Concept in its 'thinking activity' (in other words, philosophy) does not lie in the domain of ordinary 'practical human and sensuous activity' (Marx). It is rather 'to grasp what is, for that which is, is Reason'.[79] By contrast, Marx concludes the self-clarification of his own dialectical method with the eleventh *Thesis on*

77. For the consequences of the new materialist standpoint for religion and the family, see the fourth Thesis on Feuerbach, where they are first developed, and various parts of *Capital*.

78. Cf. the often-quoted sentences at the end of the postscript to the second edition of *Capital* (1873).

79. Cf. the supplementary passage in section 4 and the last paragraphs of the Preface to the *Philosophy of Right*.

Feuerbach: 'The philosophers have only *interpreted* the world, it is now a question of *changing* it.' This does not mean, as the epigones imagine, that all philosophy is shown to be mere fantasy. It only expresses a categorical rejection of all theory, philosophical or scientific, that is not *at the same time* practice – real, terrestrial, immanent, human and sensuous practice, and not the speculative activity of the philosophical idea that basically does nothing but comprehend itself. Theoretical criticism and practical overthrow are here inseparable activities, not in any abstract sense but as a concrete and real alteration of the concrete and real world of bourgeois society. Such is the most precise expression of the new materialist principle of the scientific socialism of Marx and Engels.

We have now shown the real consequences of the dialectical materialist principle for a Marxist conception of the relationship of consciousness to reality. By the same token, we have shown the error of all abstract and undialectical conceptions found among various kinds of vulgar-marxists in their theoretical and practical attitudes to so-called intellectual reality. Marx's dictum is true not just of forms of economic consciousness in the narrower sense, but *all* forms of social consciousness: they are not mere chimeras, but 'highly objective and highly practical' social realities and consequently 'must be abolished in a practical and objective manner'. The naïvely metaphysical standpoint of sound bourgeois common sense considers thought independent of being and defines truth as the correspondence of thought to an object that is external to it and 'mirrored' by it. It is only this outlook that can sustain the view that all forms of economic consciousness (the economic conceptions of a pre-scientific and unscientific consciousness, as well as scientific economics itself) have an objective meaning because they correspond to a reality (the material relations of production which they comprehend) – whereas all higher forms of representation are merely objectless fantasies which will automatically dissolve into their essential nullity after the overthrow of the economic structure of society, and the abolition of its juridical and political superstructure. Economic ideas themselves only *appear* to be related to the material relations of production of bourgeois society in the way an image is related to the object it reflects.

In fact they are related to them in the way that a specific, particularly defined part of a whole is related to the other parts of this whole. Bourgeois economics belongs with the material relations of production to bourgeois society as a totality. This totality also contains political and legal representations and their apparent objects, which bourgeois politicians and jurists – the 'ideologues of private property' (Marx) – treat in an ideologically inverted manner as autonomous essences. Finally, it also includes the higher ideologies of the art, religion and philosophy of bourgeois society. If it seems that there are no objects which these representations can reflect, correctly or incorrectly, this is because economic, political or legal representations do not have particular objects which exist independently either, isolated from the other phenomena of bourgeois society. To counterpose such objects to these representations is an abstract and ideological bourgeois procedure. They merely express bourgeois society as a totality in a particular way, just as do art, religion and philosophy. Their ensemble forms the *spiritual structure* of bourgeois society, which corresponds to its economic structure, just as its legal and political superstructure corresponds to this same basis. All these forms must be subjected to the revolutionary social criticism of scientific socialism, which embraces the whole of social reality. They must be criticized in theory and overthrown in practice, together with the economic, legal and political structures of society and at the same time as them.[80] Just as political action is not rendered unnecessary by the economic action of a revolutionary class, so intellectual action is not rendered unnecessary by either political or economic action. On the contrary it must be carried through to the end in theory and practice, as revolutionary scientific criticism and agitational work before the seizure of state power by the working class, and as scientific organization and ideological dictatorship after the seizure of state power. If this is valid for intellectual action against the forms of consciousness which define bourgeois society in general, it is especially true of philosophical action. Bourgeois consciousness necessarily sees itself as apart from the world and independent of it, as pure critical philosophy and impartial science, just as the bourgeois State and bourgeois Law appear to be above society. This consciousness must be philosophically fought by the revolutionary materialistic dialectic, which is the philosophy of the working class. This struggle will only end when the whole of existing society and its economic basis have been totally overthrown in practice, and this consciousness has been totally surpassed and abolished in theory. 'Philosophy cannot be abolished without being realized.'

80. Cf. especially Lenin's statements in his text 'On the Significance of Militant Materialism', *Collected Works*, vol. 33.

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