

The Second International: A Reexamination

by Andrew Arato

1. Introduction

The history of the Marxism of the Second International is not over and done with. There is the classical version of the theory: no politically significant Marxism, such as Bolshevism, Trotskyism or Maoism, departed from them on the most general questions of philosophy and social theory. Only an investigation that is both social and intellectual history could fully show how and why a version of the theory that hardly exhausts, and in part falsifies, the theoretical project of Karl Marx managed to express the immediate interests of the industrial working class—the social stratum to which all political Marxisms have been inevitably drawn—and why the philosophy of praxis that projected a link between the objective possibilities of the present and a liberated future almost always has been politically irrelevant. Only a new social theory, signs of which are already present, could show under what conditions the philosophy of praxis could contribute to its own political relevance. The aim of this study is far less global. I believe that liberation from the past presupposes its understanding, that the renaissance of Marxism demands the isolation and analysis of its false, misleading or misdirected interpretations. Here, I will try to examine only one very crucial part of the past of socialism that must be understood before it can be finally “destroyed,” preserving all of its dimensions that can help us concretely, either as a way of showing what to avoid when we try to reconstruct the dialectical theory of society or as a more positive clue that helps to clarify the foundation of our own Marxism. After all, the philosophy of praxis can stand only on the foundation of the self-critique of Marxism, and fifty years after the publication of *History and Class Consciousness* we are still, for good historical reasons, in a sorry position where the self-critique of Marxism still must be a critique of objectivism, determinism, of the mechanical interpretation of the dialectic, of reductionism, of substantialism, of evolutionism, and of a dogmatic social theory whose concepts have lost all relationship to the world we live in. My procedure will be the following. I will first go through the development of the social theory of German Social Democracy from the linear, deterministic, and increasingly gradualistically matured theory of the founders (Engels, Kautsky, etc.) to the empiricist dissolution of both determinism and revolution by Bernstein, and especially to Rosa Luxemburg’s implicit rediscovery of the dual (antinomic) ontology that

* This project heavily draws on a joint project with Jean Cohen during the summer of 1972.

Marx himself never completely overcame. While on the level of social theory Luxemburg came closer to Marx's intentions than anyone before her, on the level of philosophy she shared the worst aspects of the determinism of social democracy. Hence, she could not even see beyond the rigid juxtaposition of freedom and necessity, subject and object, in her social theory. The question of the dialectic implicitly arises from this problem. Thus, secondly I will consider the fate of the dialectic in the philosophies of the Second International, moving between a voluntarism and a determinism, both of which (and even their antinomic combination by Max Adler) exclude precisely the dialectic.

2. *The Social Theory of German Social Democracy*

The Erfurt Program of 1891 was the seed from which the basic elements of the internal controversies of German Social Democracy for the next twenty years could be unfolded.¹ It is traditional to point to the rupture between the theoretical first part of the program, outlining both the development of capitalism toward collapse and the necessity of an increasingly oppressed working class to take power and effect socialist transformation, and the practical second part, outlining a program of democratic reforms, apparently within the framework of the existing social-political order.² Nevertheless, there were two fundamental links between these parts. The ground of the first link was the social-political reality of the German Empire, a country where there never was a successful bourgeois revolution, where (in spite of the vast success of industrialization) the industrial bourgeoisie did not hold political power, where democratic parliamentarism was a mere form from the point of view of all classes, and where, given the power and intransigence of reaction, democracy was still a revolutionary slogan.³ To most German Social Democrats, the struggle for democracy was intimately related as a prerequisite (Kautsky), as a moment (Luxemburg), or as the same thing (Bernstein) to the struggle for socialism. However, there was also a second link between the two parts of the Erfurt Program, namely a deterministic social theory that ultimately expected a revolutionary conjuncture of the downward development of capitalism and the upward development of proletarian class consciousness. I will examine the fate primarily of this second link, although the problem of democracy will have to be one of the dimensions even of the basic theoretical problem.

German Social Democracy, i.e. the Erfurt Program, inherited its conception of the revolutionary process from the late Engels. In spite of a

1. Our analysis will focus on the theoretical conflicts, and it will presuppose Carl E. Schorske's masterly analysis of political developments in *German Social Democracy: 1905-1917* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1955).

2. Schorske, *German Social Democracy*, *op. cit.*, pp. 5-6; and George Lichtheim, *Marxism: An Historical and Critical Study* (New York: Praeger, 1961), p. 262.

3. Lichtheim shows quite nicely that it was the above link that enabled Engels to support the practical part of the Erfurt Program. Cf. *Marxism*, *op. cit.*, pp. 262-263.

crucial reinterpretation (and de-emphasis) of the concept of class struggle, there is a direct line between the *Communist Manifesto* and the *Anti-Dühring*. Engels, of course, believed that his later work represented an exposition of Marx's late critique of political economy, but from various points of view this exposition can be shown to be rather superficial. In spite of his utilization of many of the categories of the critique of political economy, the overall framework (the movement of the categories) of the section of the *Anti-Dühring* dealing with capitalist development is far more similar to the *Communist Manifesto*, written almost twenty years earlier than *Capital*. This is the case in spite of some fundamental differences between the *Manifesto* and *Anti-Dühring*. It is well known that the *Manifesto* stressed the constantly renewed and explosive antagonism between new forces of production and old relations of production (property relations, exchange relations), i.e. between forces of production and the totality of social relations which tend to become the fetters of these forces. At the same time, the *Manifesto* places the class struggle into the center of all previous history. During the period of capitalism, the apparent contradiction between the two perspectives is resolved by the externalization of the fundamental contradiction in terms of a process of development that implies a cycle of expansion and overproduction on the one hand, and on the other the total subjugation of the proletariat to the industrial apparatus at times of economic expansion and the danger of the physical destruction of many of its members in periods of crisis. According to the *Manifesto*, after each crisis there is an increase in the size (given the impoverishment and gradual proletarianization of other classes) and potential power of the proletariat, and a decrease in its possibilities of life. In this theoretical framework, capitalism tends toward its own destruction (because of its immanent contradiction), but its *actual* destruction depends on the strength and solidarity of the proletariat.⁴

From the point of view of the *Communist Manifesto*, the *Anti-Dühring* merely places a somewhat de-emphasized class struggle in the context of a more comprehensive theory of development. However, when compared to the only completely finished part of the unfinished critique of political economy of Marx, i.e. the first volume of *Capital*, the class struggle tends to be (it is not always) merely a descriptive element in Engel's framework. It is true that the *Anti-Dühring* repeats the statement of the *Manifesto* that "all past history is the history of class struggles"; but it immediately adds: "those warring classes of society are always the product of the conditions of production and exchange... of the *economic* conditions of their time."⁵

4. The works of Rosa Luxemburg and Lukács' theory of reification were the earliest attempts to formulate such viewpoints. A general re-examination of the critique of political economy fully integrating the *Grundrisse* and the *Theories of Surplus Value* would be (when accomplished) a more adequate attempt in the same direction.

5. Friedrich Engels, *Anti-Dühring*, trans. by Emile Burns (New York: International Publishers, 1939) p. 32.

One could explain away this *reduction* of the class struggle to economic development as a mere repetition of the ambiguity of the *Communist Manifesto*. But in its expanded form, the ambiguity looks rather different. This can be best seen if we first look at Marx's *Capital*, volume I. In *Capital*, Marx struggled to set up a dialectical relationship between the transformation of the structure of labor and the forms of appearance of this transformation in political economy (i.e. bourgeois society). His abstract categories are chosen in such a way as to correspond to a whole series of the actual economic forms of appearance of bourgeois society—commodity, exchange, abstract labor, etc. At the same time those categories do not stand for eternal, immutable contents: an act of commodity exchange under feudalism is hardly the same as an act of commodity exchange under capitalism. Furthermore, capitalism turns out, in *Capital*, and also in the long, unpublished introduction to *Toward a Critique of Political Economy*, to be the first society that tends to produce the pure forms of several important economic categories: pure commodity (in the context of general commodity exchange), pure abstract labor (in a system that really reduces labor to a common denominator), etc. But the essential basis of these *pure* economic manifestations is a historically transformed one; general commodity exchange (unlike accidental commodity exchange) rests not on simple commodity production but on modern cooperation and division of labor, and the system of abstract labor no longer rests on a system that still produces wealth (although it tends to so measure it) measurable by simple, average labor time.⁶ The economic categories thus become restrictive forms, not only of the growth of new forces of production in general, but specifically of a radically transformed structure of labor. Furthermore, the above transformation of the structure of labor is the basis of the solidarity and activity of the class within the wage labor-capital relationship. In turn, this is one of the dynamic factors pushing toward internal transformation of the categories themselves. The successful struggle over the length of the working day on the part of the proletariat is the basis of the logical movement of the category of absolute surplus value—a change expressing a fundamental transformation of the structure of capitalism. The resistance of skilled workers is one of the historical factors within manufacture pointing toward machine industry. Marx never completed his investigation of the dialectic of the concrete and abstract, of essence and appearance, of labor and development in *Capital*. And he never managed to fully clarify the relationship of the dialectic of categories and the historical dialectic. But Engels altogether abandoned the attempt. Where Marx hesitantly (and not without self-contradiction) moved toward the dialectic of history in the relationship of the transformation of labor and the immanent laws of the abstract categories of each stage of transformation, Engels flattened out the

6. Karl Marx, *Grundrisse der Kritik der politischen Oekonomie (Rohentwurf) 1857-1858* (Berlin: Dietz Verlag, 1953), pp. 592-593.

"anatomy" of history to deterministic laws of the abstract categories, of "appearances." As a result his representation of the overall structure of historical development became as deterministic as in the various schools of objectivistic naturalism. But, for someone who saw himself as the theoretician of a revolutionary proletarian party, objectivism presented a serious problem. Let us follow the fate of this problem in particular in the *Anti-Dühring* and in Kautsky's commentary on the Erfurt Program that was heavily dependent on Engels.

For the old Engels and for Kautsky, the mechanism of capitalist collapse seemed to depend of the "narrowing" spiral of the crisis of overproduction. It is not relevant here that one cannot really deduce general overproduction merely from disproportionalities in production resulting from the unplanned nature of production as a whole, as Kautsky believed.⁷ In a more general form the point seems valid enough: the markets of capitalism do not have the same capacity for expansion as does its productivity, presumably because of the latter's utilization of large scale cooperation, planning and technological innovation.⁸ In any case the general tendency of capitalism is overproduction, and each actual crisis of overproduction according to Engels results in the destruction of a part of the productive forces and the increasing concentration and monopolization of the industrial apparatus.⁹ After each crisis fewer and fewer monopolies control production, and finally the state becomes the only monopoly.¹⁰

In Kautsky's analysis we find roughly the same theory of capitalist development, with some additions rather randomly drawn from various parts of *Capital*. He supports the tendency toward monopolization e.g. with Marx's "law" (*Capital*, Volume III) of the falling profit rate which implies an always increasing quantity of initial capital expenditure for constant capital (machines, plant, etc.). But he was willing to draw even more clear cut and absolute consequences from this tendency toward monopolization than Marx and Engels in their late works. He saw monopolization culminating in a two class society where an insignificant non-working minority *owns* everything, and a working majority *owns* next to nothing (except their labor power). As we will see, this vast oversimplification easily opened the Erfurt synthesis to Bernstein's empiricist attack. Since both Engels and Kautsky saw capitalism primarily as a particular system of property relations, they saw the transition from many owners to few owners to one owner (the state) as a linear movement toward collective ownership.¹¹

7. Karl Kautsky, *The Class Struggle (Erfurt Program)* trans. by W. E. Bohn (New York: Norton, 1971) pp. 71ff; pp. 79ff.

8. Marx, unlike most of his followers, also stressed industrial despotism and hierarchy enforcing cooperation and creating the preconditions for planning. Cf. Karl Marx, *Das Kapital*, Vol. I., in Marx, Engels *Werke*, Vol. XXIII, (Berlin: Dietz Verlag, 1968) p. 370; p. 377, etc.

9. Engels, *Anti-Dühring*, *op. cit.*, pp. 301-302.

10. *Ibid.* p. 304.

11. *Ibid.*, pp. 303ff.

Kautsky could even draw the consequence that it was capitalism's own immanent law to destroy private ownership, by gradually decreasing the number of owners, by making the person of the capitalist totally superfluous, by transforming the whole productive apparatus into a single gigantic concern.¹² Elsewhere (very consistently and foreshadowing Lenin) he speaks of socialist society "as a single giant industrial concern,"¹³ a suggestion for which Marx had nothing but irony in *Capital*.¹⁴

Nevertheless, neither Engels nor Kautsky developed a totally linear view of history. Their treatment of the modern state and their insistence that the revolutionary class must eventually seize state power represent to a limited extent a dialectical remnant in their theory. Engels generally tended to see the modern state as "essentially a capitalist machine," as "the ideal collective body of all the capitalists." And even when the actual members of the capitalist class become superfluous from the point of view of production, and are replaced by bureaucrats, the modern state according to Engels will drive the wage labor-capital relation to a final extreme. Here Engels, following the *Communist Manifesto*, assigns the final task of the overthrow of capitalism to the proletariat that was necessarily growing in size, concentration, consciousness and solidarity during the whole course of development. Given the state assuming the function of the collective capitalist, the proletariat has one task only, a task both political and economic, to seize state power.¹⁵ Kautsky also recognized that the modern state, at least before the proletarian seizure of political power, would be a "superior exploiter of labor" than any private capitalist.¹⁶ Thus no linear immanent development of capitalism can replace revolutionary seizure of power. In fact, Kautsky did not expect the linear development of monopolization to reach its logical end; a proletarian revolution would have to decide the issue earlier.¹⁷ And conversely, in the absence of proletarian revolution, Kautsky saw (following the *Manifesto*) another choice for humanity, namely barbarism.¹⁸

But the above arguments do not substantially transform the linear, deterministic theory that Engels and Kautsky developed. At most, the line is cut into two segments, two stages. The first stage is that of capitalist development culminating in state capitalism. (In Kautsky this stage does not reach its end). In both Engels and Kautsky the first stage appears fully deterministic. The second stage is that of the proletarian conquest of power,

12. Kautsky, *The Class Struggle*, op. cit., p. 68.

13. *Ibid.*, p. 138.

14. Marx, *Werke*, XXIII, op. cit.

15. Engels, *Anti-Dühring*, op. cit., p. 306. This seizure of power, according to Engels, would first complete the nationalization of private property and thereby initiate a process that leads to the abolition of classes and the death of the state. The famous leap to the realm of freedom takes place *after* the seizure of power.

16. Kautsky, *The Class Struggle*, op. cit., p. 110.

17. *Ibid.*, p. 69.

18. *Ibid.*, p. 87 and p. 118.

which Engels understood as a leap from necessity to freedom, while Kautsky tended to understand it more deterministically. In both Engels and Kautsky the subjective factor (the proletariat) matures necessarily during the necessary course of development of the objective factor (growth of size, concentration, poverty, solidarity, consciousness), but Engels did not think he could completely derive the revolutionary act from these factors. In Kautsky we see two distinct levels of response to the same problem. On a first level, since he was an even better disciple of a Darwinian brand of deterministic naturalism than Engels, he could leave nothing to "will", "consciousness" or "leaps".¹⁹ But on a second level, and especially in his theoretical commentary on the Erfurt program, the requirements of practical politics forced him to introduce a host of pragmatic transitions between objective development and ("revolutionary") political action. On the deterministic level, Kautsky finds a double tendency of proletarian development. The objective development of capitalism degrades, fragments, demoralizes the proletariat but it also embitters it, concentrates it, enforces its internal cooperation, and tends to homogenize it (ultimately reducing differences between skilled "labor aristocracy" and the unskilled workers, workers of different backgrounds etc.). But the respective weight of these divergent tendencies depends on specific historical conditions, and the final victory of the elevating tendency depends on the political struggle of the class. While Kautsky rejects reform (especially reforms initiated not by the proletariat) as a way of social transformation, his commentary on the Erfurt program strongly stressed reformist, parliamentary activity as a way of strengthening the progressive historical tendency of proletarian development, as the best way of building class consciousness.²⁰ He argued that without the democratic struggle for parliamentary rule and for civil liberties the economic struggle would be seriously hampered. He did not see any possible separation between economic and political struggle: the economic struggle needs political rights and the political struggle is economic at the same time.²¹ But this very formulation hides the difficulty: the economic struggle if narrowly defined demands only a certain group of formal political rights and *not* a political struggle for the seizure of power. And political struggle, when narrowly defined, may have few economic consequences. Of course, given his optimistic view of the internal limits of capitalist development, and his justifiedly pessimistic view of German political possibilities, the argument works pretty well. But these very premises were open to attack. They were attacked theoretically by Bernstein, and their weakness was even more fundamentally exposed by the history of the German labor movement which involved the division of

19. For example, he derived consciousness from economic interest, and economic interest from economic laws.

20. *Ibid.*, p. 176-177 and pp. 185ff.

21. *Ibid.*, pp. 185-186.

the "class struggle" into the economic activity of the unions and the political activity of the party. We will have occasion to refer again to the Erfurt synthesis, but we have already said enough to conveniently introduce Bernstein's attack on the revolutionary theory incorporated in the synthesis.

The Erfurt program attempted to link revolutionary theory and reformist practice by a theory of capitalist development. Within the context of his theory of development, in 1892 at least, Kautsky tended to see the struggle for reform as a means toward the preparation of the militant proletariat. (This position was best formulated by Rose Luxemburg in her reply to Bernstein). Bernstein had no disagreement with the practical part of the Erfurt program. But he wanted to turn this practical part ("the movement is everything, the end is nothing") from a mere means to an end in itself, eliminating the ultimate end of the movement altogether. To do this, however, he had to dispute primarily not about tactics, but about a theory of development that did not permit a completely smooth transition into socialism or even democracy. Of course, as we have argued, the theory almost permitted such transition. Bernstein's job was made far easier by the fundamentally linear nature of the Engels-Kautsky social theory.²² Since in terms of overall development this theory had a minor role for the class struggle, Bernstein had little difficulty in completely dispensing with the class struggle, (which was an element of non-linearity). Since Kautsky and Engels reduced Marx's abstractions to mechanical components of a deterministic theory, they were indeed open to empirical falsification. Kautsky even helped Bernstein with his research. His pragmatic treatment of problems like expropriation, and his olive branches to the small capitalist, the petit bourgeois and the small peasant could easily be turned against a theory that also claimed a deterministic solution (i.e., general expropriation and proletarianization) for exactly the same reasons. But Bernstein was not satisfied to score only a few points. He wanted to completely free the reformist practice of the party from the whole of the theory that he believed was the Marxian theory of social development.

The Erfurt synthesis saw an objective development of capitalism toward disaster and collapse, and its revolutionary transformation into socialism at some later stage of this development by a proletariat prepared for this task by the same developmental process and by its own democratic, reformist struggle. Bernstein believed that no objective development of capitalism led toward collapse, and that a combination of capitalist development and

22. As far as Marx himself was concerned, Bernstein had to be content with a few pot-shots, using one misunderstood part of *Capital* against others, at times confronting a frozen category or two with contrary empirical evidence. His total lack of understanding for dialectical theory helped him in this endeavor. The same can be said of his American biographer, Peter Gay (*The Dilemma of Democratic Socialism*, New York: Columbia U. Press, 1952) who constantly uses neo-positivist criteria to falsify Marx's (non-existent) predictions. Both Bernstein and Gay are a better match for the Engels-Kautsky synthesis.

political reform pointed toward socialism. To make his case, he had to combat the Engels-Kautsky theory of development. Here, his attack on the "labor theory of value" and the "materialist theory of history" are only of subsidiary interest. Far more important is his claim that the immanent development of capitalism is not at all toward the concentration of all property in the hands of a few. As we have argued, the transformation of property relations played a very large role in the Engels-Kautsky theory of the movement of monopolization and concentration toward the self-abolition of capitalism. Bernstein took this stress on property one step further but, on the contrary, proceeded to investigate who in fact owns the means of production under advancing capitalism. His aim was twofold: he hoped to combat the theory of impoverishment that culminated in a crude two class model of a revolution of the hungry majority, and even more important in our context, the theory of linear and increasing monopolization. He carefully ran through statistics of share holding and of the size of enterprises to establish his case, and *on his own level* he succeeded in showing that there was statistically absolutely no polarization of economic holdings, no absolute impoverishment of the majority of the population, no proletarianization of the middle strata, no disappearance of small and medium enterprise etc.²³ The Kautsky-Engels model, its frozen categories, its deterministic schemes, its stress on property instead of the structure of labor, allowed this refutation. But Bernstein attacked the same objectives also from a somewhat more *theoretical* point of view. He tried to show that the Marxian crisis theory is true only in terms of its developmental tendencies (falling profit rate, disproportionality, overproduction), but that in their empirical manifestations these tendencies are counteracted by many factors. Of course (as Bernstein admits) Marx was the first to show this. But Bernstein believed that advanced capitalism found counteracting devices (vast sources of credit, control mechanism, cartel etc.) which would read empirical crises (not to speak of a collapse) out of existence. For Engels and Kautsky the crises create the monopolies. For Bernstein modern monopolies (though his argument works better for state regulated monopolies) tend to totally control crises.²⁴ Of course, Bernstein was not happy about this state of affairs. The persistence of the immanent tendency toward overproduction (even in the absence of actual crisis) is still equivalent to artificial scarcity, i.e., instead of periodic destruction of means of production, their controlled underutilization.²⁵ But the system, in spite of its injustice, is stable. It does not tend toward its own destruction.

Nor does it produce its own revolutionary gravediggers. Bernstein also

23. The above passage is a summary of Parts III b and c of Eduard Bernstein, *Die Voraussetzungen des Sozialismus und die Aufgaben der Sozialdemokratie*, new ed. of 1920 (Hamburg: Rowohlt, 1969).

24. Bernstein, *Voraussetzungen*, *op.cit.*, pp. 107-108.

25. *Ibid.*, pp. 109-110.

attempted to destroy the notion of impoverished but homogeneous proletariat of the Erfurt program, and even to discredit class analysis altogether (by restricting it to a merely descriptive function). First Bernstein argued, and this is mere repetition of the above, the proletariat is not growing in size relative to all other classes of society. The industrial working class is and will remain everywhere a minority of the population. Second, the increase of the rate of exploitation is not an argument against the growth of real wages. Marx himself was ambiguous on this point, but the theoretical framework of *Capital* (unlike the *Communist Manifesto*) does not prohibit a gradual rise of real wages (of course well within the expansion of productivity).²⁶ Thus, Bernstein could use Marx to battle the Erfurt doctrine of pauperization. Furthermore he could also point to a statistical stability (or rise) of real wages. But the proletariat is not only not pauperized, it does not even exist in any rigorous sense, according to Bernstein. This claim flowed from his definition of class analysis. When not operating within the terminological framework of Marxism, he tended to define class by life-style, by empirical wants and aspirations, by immediate (and immediately perceived) interest. Using this criteria, Bernstein found that the modern working class is more heterogeneous and stratified than "the people of 1789,"²⁷ and that most workers have no particular desire for a socialist system of production.²⁸

Once again, Engels' and Kautsky's inability to integrate the class struggle into their theory of development, to develop a class analysis closely related to the structural framework of the critique of political economy, permitted Bernstein to use empiricistic methods of refutation. His ability to dissolve the category of class into fragmented strata was in turn the basis for dissolving these strata into atomized men. In terms of capitalist development sociological strata as skilled workers, civil service employees, etc. have only descriptive importance. But atomized men, "citizens" (Bernstein proposed to use the noun *Bürger* for both bourgeois and proletarian alike) do become dynamically important if we are willing to depict the fundamental tendency of civil society as one toward general political democratization. This is precisely what Bernstein does. Having dissolved classes, he had no use for the notion of class state. Of course, he knew that imperial Germany was a class state resting on the compromise of the reactionary landowning class and the rising industrial bourgeoisie. But if this is only an empirical state of affairs, whereas democratization is the great tendency of the modern era, the political struggle for democratic re-

26. Cf. Joan Robinson, *Essay on Marxist Economics*, second edition (London: Macmillan, 1966), pp. 30-33. The three criteria worked out by Robinson were anticipated in a less rigorous fashion by Rosa Luxemburg.

27. Bernstein, *Voraussetzungen*, *op.cit.*, pp. 118ff. Since Bernstein insists on interpreting relationship to means of production in terms of ownership of property, it is not surprising that his society divides into an unstructured mixture of rich, poor, and those in between.

28. *Ibid.*, pp. 121-122.

form had history on its side. Only this struggle could realize social reforms. The tendency toward formal democracy does not in itself transform a society divided into rich and poor. But within the democratic institutions, the majority of the population can gradually fight for socialization. This would meet the economic struggle of the labor unions half way. Bernstein applauded union struggles as struggles toward socialization, and considered this politicization dangerous. This notion, of course, coincided with the position of the trade unions.²⁹ Bernstein argued that Social Democracy must define itself as a "democratic socialist party of reform" (what it already was as implied by the tactical part of the Erfurt program).

Having traced Bernstein's attack on the theory of the Erfurt synthesis, we must turn to the famous Bernstein debate. The first round of this debate involved the counterattack of the 'radicals' attempting to fully restore the Erfurt synthesis. We will focus on Rosa Luxemburg both because of the great power of her defense of "Marxism", and because she was the only one among the Marxists of the Second International who came to recognize the inadequacy of the ground she defended.

Rosa Luxemburg's *Social Reform or Revolution?* was an attempt to restore the Erfurt synthesis in the face of Bernstein's attack.³⁰ Nevertheless, this work did not accept the particular form of the Engels-Kautsky theory of capitalist development, and ultimately it tended to burst the framework of the Social Democratic theory and praxis. Of all Second International theoreticians, only Luxemburg had a grasp, if a more instinctive than systematic one, of the dialectical structure of Marxist social theory. As a result, she was in the best position to demolish Bernstein's simplistic use of the categories and yet at the same time to incorporate at least some of Bernstein's correct observations about the changing face of advancing capitalism. She very incisively demonstrated that Bernstein confused the concept of capital with the persons of capitalists, capital as a category of production with capital as property right, that instead of dealing with the dynamic structural relationships of wage labor and capital, Bernstein limited himself to the purely descriptive relationship of rich and poor.³¹ She argued forcefully that all of Bernstein's basic confusions can be summed up by the principle that he was able to look at capitalist society only from the viewpoint of the single capitalist and that the concept of collective capital remained closed to him. Having thus understood the shaky theoretical ground of Bernstein's statistically supported critique, she was not forced to disregard the latter's correct observation (contradicting the Engels-Kautsky theory) about the tendency of small and middle range enterprises. She brilliantly argued that the combined existence of small and

29. Schorske, *German Social Democracy*, *op. cit.*

30. Rosa Luxemburg, "Sozialreform oder Revolution," in *Gesammelte Werke*, Vol. III. ed. by Clara Zetkin, Adolf Warski and Paul Fröhlich (Berlin: 1925—Raubdruck reprint), p. 1, pp. 32ff and p. 62.

31. Luxemburg, "Sozialreform oder Revolution," *op.cit.*, pp. 43-44.

medium enterprises is extremely important for the development of capitalism from the point of view of technical innovation. Departing from Engels, she admitted no linear tendency toward monopolization.³² Nor did she admit Bernstein's linear tendency toward democratization. In this last context she was one of the very few Marxists to systematically and undogmatically consider the theoretical problems of the modern state.

If Bernstein tended to see the modern state (and the process of democratization) as largely independent of social-economic development, the orthodox Marxism of Social Democracy tended to reduce the state to a mere tool of class rule. It is true that Kautsky often excluded popular parliaments, for him the main arena of political class struggle, from such reductionist treatment.³³ But only Luxemburg was able to synthesize the two approaches creating a far more flexible theory of the modern capitalist state that was not compelled to falsify the facts of political history. Implicitly following some of Marx's earliest writings, she saw the modern state as having a double function. A century of democratic-liberal reform in most Western countries indeed resulted in political institutions that *formally* corresponded to general public interest. However, even within democratic institutional forms, the power of the economically ruling classes remained decisive. The class state is the *content* of the democratic state. Capitalism (i.e., free enterprise) not being a legally instituted (in the direct positive sense) system, no formal democracy can contradict the class character of the state. The increasing role of the state in economic life is thus formally a step toward socialism, but in its content this role is obviously a strengthening of the capitalist system. Social reform within the existing political order has the same double character. However, Luxemburg did not regard the democratic form as merely epiphenomenal within the system as a whole. She perceived a potential contradiction between the extension of democratic institutions and capitalist development. In particular, she pointed to protectionism, militarism, and navalism, which she regarded as economic necessities for advanced capitalism, both as tendencies restricting even formal democracy and as signs of its weakening. For capitalism, and the capitalist political parties, formal democracy is less important than the survival of the given social-economic system. As a result, argued Luxemburg, the growing strength of the SPD was itself an argument against the democratization of Prussia. Consequently (and given her understanding of capitalist development to which we must return) Rosa Luxemburg outlined powerful tendencies counteracting Bernstein's constant and linear tendency toward democratization. She had an easy time pointing to the vicissitudes of political democracy in most modern Western states. But more systematically, she argued that world politics dividing into

32. *Ibid.*, pp. 16ff.

33. Kautsky, *The Class Struggle*, *op. cit.*, pp. 186ff.

34. Luxemburg, "Sozialreform oder Revolution," *op. cit.*, pp. 26ff.

imperialism and militarism on the one hand, and internal politics dominated by the growth of the labor movement, force the bourgeoisie to severely limit and at times abandon formal democracy.³⁵

From the above argument (and here the contrast with her later works is important), Luxemburg deduced consequences corresponding to the Erfurt program. Social Democracy remains the only consistent defender of democracy, needing democracy (the political form of the future) for the political maturation of the proletariat. Hence, the politically reformist everyday struggle remains important. But this cannot be a substitute for revolution precisely because no political reform can challenge the class content of the state. She also rejected the notion that the everyday economic struggle of the unions challenges class rule. Realizing quite early that revisionist theory gained its strength not theoretically, but from the strength of the political trade unionist movement, both outside and inside the party,³⁶ she directed a large part of her attack on revisionism against the trade unions (which Bernstein stressed only slightly). The unions are merely defensive (i.e., they fight to realize the market value of labor power) and within the limits of the existing order they represent only the (often reactionary) immediate interests of the isolated workers. Thus, she argued that the union struggle must be subordinated to the political struggle of the Social Democratic Party whose principles unite all partial and limited struggles (economic and political) into a comprehensive struggle for socialism.³⁷

This leads to a central theoretical problem that runs through the life work of Rosa Luxemburg. In all her works she totally reversed Bernstein's emphasis and insisted on the centrality of the socialist goal (or: the goal of the socialist conquest of power) to the Social Democratic movement. She never tired of emphasizing that only the goal of the socialist seizure of power transforms everyday political and economic struggles into parts of something more comprehensive and significant.³⁸ And she very significantly argued that: "The secret of Marx's theory of value, of his analysis of money, his theory of capital, his theory of the rate of profit and consequently of the whole existing economic system is—the transitory nature of capitalist economy, its collapse: thus—and this is only another aspect of the same phenomenon—the final goal, socialism. And precisely because, a priori, Marx looked at capitalism from the socialist's viewpoint, that is from the historical viewpoint, he was enabled to decipher the hieroglyphics of capitalist economy."³⁹ A passage like this could indeed powerfully distinguish between Marx and Bernstein who, taking the point of view of the

35. *Ibid.*, pp. 60-61.

36. Cf. Schorske, *German Social Democracy*, *op. cit.*

37. Luxemburg, "Sozialreform oder Revolution," *op. cit.*, pp. 19-20ff.

38. Luxemburg, "Speeches to the Stuttgart Congress," (1898) trans. by John Heckman, in D. Howard ed., *Rosa Luxemburg, Selected Political Writings*, (New York: Monthly Review Press, 1971), pp. 38-39; pp. 41-43.

39. Luxemburg, "Sozialreform oder Revolution," *op. cit.*, p. 49.

individual capitalist, lost all comprehension of historicity. Having lost this notion of historicity and final goal, Bernstein was left with a one-dimensional vulgar empiricist analysis.⁴⁰ However, on its own ground, and in the context of Luxemburg's work as a whole, this passage and countless others present formidable difficulties. The reader is forced to ask, what is the *a priori* regulative principle of all socialist theory and praxis: the historicity of the necessary collapse of capitalism, proletarian seizure of power or the socialist future? Are we dealing with a completely deterministic or completely voluntaristic theory? It is fair to argue that Rosa Luxemburg never clarified these theoretical problems. In some contexts she clearly argued that *without a notion of the necessary collapse of capitalism*, the concept of the expropriation of the expropriators, the concept of the socialization of production, the materialist theory of history, the labor theory of value, the theory of class struggle and class analysis, and the socialist movement (in this order) *all become impossible*.⁴¹ On the other hand, Luxemburg was the first Marxist theoretician to strongly emphasize "the subjective factor", the revolutionary class in the class struggle, without whose active intervention socialism remains only a possibility. Already in 1899 in a debate on militia she stressed that "society's objective development merely gives the *preconditions* of a higher level of development", and that socialist transformation will never be realized "without our *conscious interference*, without the *political struggle* of the working class."⁴²

From a theoretical retrospect it is not so difficult to argue that Luxemburg wanted to avoid the opposite dangers of deriving socialism either as a product of free subjective will (Bernstein) or of necessary objective development (the orthodox account, Kautsky, et al.). We could then try to show that she attempted to work out a dialectic of objective possibility and subjective praxis, that she attempted to base historicity in a historical *dualism* that alternately appears as capitalist present and socialist future, and as the struggle of bourgeoisie and proletariat in the context of the possibilities of objective socio-economic development. But we would be departing from Rosa Luxemburg's self-understanding, which was generally monistic and deterministic. The dualism that usually crops up in her work is not the self-conscious dualism of subject-object in an alienated world, but a rigid antinomic juxtaposition of idealism and materialism, utopia and necessity,⁴³ and she places Marxism on the side of materialism and determinism.

Futhermore, determinism was hardly only a philosophical window

40. *Ibid.*, pp. 39-40.

41. *Ibid.*, pp. 73-75.

42. Luxemburg, "Militia and Militarism," trans. by J. Heckman in *Selected Political Writings*, *op. cit.*, p. 144.

43. Luxemburg, "Sozialreform oder Revolution," *op.cit.*, p. 5; p. 41, but compare to pp. 49-50 where she compares Marx's historical "dualism" to Bernstein's ahistorical "monism."

dressings of Luxemburg's theory. The debate with Bernstein already showed that determinism, and corresponding dogmatism often entered into her theory of capitalist crisis. Even here, however, she tried to insist on the merely heuristic meaning of the notion that socialist transformation will only depart from a "general and catastrophic crisis." But she insists that the fundamental idea behind this notion is that "as a result of its own inner contradictions, capitalism moves toward a point...when it will be simply impossible."⁴⁴ Thus, the very notion of the adaptability of capitalism must be totally discarded.

Luxemburg argues that in the past the basis and the forms of capitalist development were often reconstructed and renewed. She located the causes of past crises precisely in such violent transformations and renewals of capitalism. But she strongly believed that in her own period capitalism was nearing the end, and such reconstructions were no longer possible.⁴⁵ Foreshadowing her later *Accumulation of Capital*, she saw the potentialities of capitalist expansion in spatial terms, and she believed that "the space" available for further expansion was rapidly closing.⁴⁶ In this context, Bernstein's answer (although he hardly possessed the economic theory to support the claim) pointing to an important distinction between *extensive* and *intensive* development was far more creative.⁴⁷

Unlike Bernstein, Luxemburg was not as much interested in empirical crises (which, following Marx, she understood as temporary means of capitalist renewal), as in demonstrating the ultimate impossibility of capitalism. But in *Social Reform or Revolution?* she could base this impossibility on two principles only: on chronic overproduction rooted in the spatial limit of capitalist expansion and on the impossibility of the artificial restriction of productivity.⁴⁸ Bernstein correctly disputed these assertions. Luxemburg could recognize of course that monopoly means underutilization, and underproduction (monopoly is thus equal to drawn out crises, stagnation), but she felt that the spatial limits of market expansion would ultimately destroy the cartel arrangements (through renewed competition for the remaining markets) on which such underutilization depended. Thus, already in 1899 her theory of capitalist development and collapse, markedly different from the Engels-Kautsky theory, tended to rest on the single criterion of the spatial impossibility of capitalist expansion. The argument assumed its historically characteristic form in her *Accumulation of Capital*. We should note, however, that before specifically discussing its theoretical and political status, the *Accumulation*

44. *Ibid.*, p. 2-3.

45. In her first edition of "Sozialreform oder Revolution," she even assigned periodic cyclical crises exclusively to the last period of capitalism. But under Bernstein's attack, she abandoned this position in the second edition. For both versions, cf. *ibid.*, pp. 14-15.

46. *Ibid.*, p. 10 and pp. 14-15.

47. Bernstein, *Voraussetzungen*, *op.cit.*, pp. 104-105.

48. Luxemburg, "Sozialreform oder Revolution," *op.cit.*, p. 15.

of *Capital* cannot be understood without Luxemburg's analysis of the mass strike. (To maintain the continuity of our exposition, I will first deal with the historically later work, the *Accumulation of Capital*.)

As Rosa Luxemburg's major economic treatise, the *Accumulation of Capital* (1911), rests on the fundamental insight that Marx's *Capital* was left a fragment and that the dynamic of capitalism cannot be understood within the level of abstraction of the first volume. Under the aegis of the Hegelian-Marxian category of totality, Luxemburg realized that the dynamic of the capitalist system lies on the level of concretion that focuses on total and not individual capital, on expanded reproduction: on a level that unites the production and realization of surplus value.⁴⁹ The consequences of this procedure pointed toward a theory of imperialism and militarism as the final forms of advanced capitalism.⁵⁰ Luxemburg's basic argument, as presented in the *Accumulation of Capital* and the *Anti-Kritik*,⁵¹ sees the Marxian schemata of expanded reproduction in the unfinished and fragmentary second volume of *Capital* as the starting point of her critique of Marx and of her own argument. Although Marx never said this and Tugan-Baranovski was the first to draw such a conclusion, according to Luxemburg, the schemata seem to imply that expanded reproduction, i.e. accumulation of capital, is a totally self-moving, self-balancing and unlimited process, in which the capitalists themselves (i.e. the aggregate capitalist composed of the capitalists who produce commodities—Department I, and the capitalists who produce means of production—Department II) represent the demand for higher volumes of commodities and means of production.⁵² The Marxian reproduction schemata, furthermore, presuppose (for the sake of methodological simplification) a universal capitalist economic system composed of only workers and capitalists.⁵³ According to Rosa Luxemburg, the whole discussion of expanded reproduction based on the above premises leads to a series of insoluble contradictions of different levels of analysis. She recalls first of all Marx's statements throughout his theoretical corpus which refer to the

49. Cf. Georg Lukács, "Rosa Luxemburg as Marxist," in *Geschichte und Klassenbewusstsein* (Berlin: Der Malik Verlag, 1923) pp. 41ff. and Herbert Marcuse, "The Concept of Essence," in *Negations*, trans. by Jeremy Shapiro (Boston: Beacon, 1968) pp. 85-86.

50. It is quite astonishing that Luxemburg's best biographer, Nettel, should make the claim that the *Accumulation of Capital*, trans. by Agnes Schwarzschild (London: Routledge, 1951) has little to do with imperialism. Luxemburg was obviously seeking the basic tendencies of imperialism in the problems of accumulation, and she believed she found them. Cf. Peter Nettel, *Rosa Luxemburg*, abridged edition (London: Oxford University Press, 1969), p. 166.

51. Rosa Luxemburg, *Anti-Kritik: The Accumulation of Capital or What the Epigones Have Done to Marxian Theory*, published in two parts by the National Caucus of Labor Committees, Winter 1971, Summer 1972. It would be dangerous to follow Luxemburg's argument from this extremely clear and compact text as does Sweezy in the *Theory of Capitalist Development* (New York: Monthly Review Press, 1942). The *Anti-Kritik* does not adequately present all sides of Luxemburg's argument.

52. Luxemburg, *The Accumulation of Capital*, op. cit., p. 330ff.

53. *Ibid.*, p. 331ff.; *Anti-Kritik*, p. 51.

contradiction between the unlimited expansive capacity of the productive forces and the limited expansive capacity of the social consumption (elsewhere: markets) under conditions of capitalist distribution. This was stated most clearly by Marx when he argues that "conditions of direct exploitation and those of the realization of surplus value are by no means identical. They are separated logically as well as in time and space."⁵⁴ Rosa Luxemburg repeatedly argues, however, that according to Marx's schemata of expanded reproduction the production and realization of surplus value are logically identical, and hence *there can be no* limitation on the expansion of consumption.

Thus, the first contradiction of Marx's equations is with other (for Luxemburg, more fundamental) parts of Marx's work.⁵⁵ Their second contradiction, she argued, is even more serious: it is a self-contradiction. On closer examination, this self-contradiction turns out to be a violation of Rosa Luxemburg's own definition of capitalist accumulation. Marx's schemata of accumulation exclude the possibility of any new demand, to justify accumulation. Workers can consume only their wages (V), which is one of the given components of the total value of commodities ($W = C + V + S$):⁵⁶ constant capital (C) which is allocated according to the internal capitalist exchange, represents also a given demand. But where does the demand come from for the surplus (S) component of total value (W) if the increasing consumption of capitalists can consume only a small part of the surplus? Luxemburg rejects the alternative that capitalists could be the source of this new demand, arguing that this solution leads to the expansion of commodity production for its own sake, an absurdity to the capitalists to whom accumulation means the "amassing of money capital." She repeatedly defines *capitalist* accumulation in terms of increasing "money profit," in terms of transforming "an increasing amount of commodities into money capital."⁵⁷ In this context, she is not simply falling into the error of psychologizing the total capitalist.⁵⁸ To be sure, she concretizes the argument (especially in the *Anti-Kritik*) in a misleading direction when she asks where does the money for new accumulation come from?⁵⁹ In point of fact, the methodological meaning of the argument lies in an entirely

54. Karl Marx, *Das Kapital*, Vol. III, in *Werke*, Vol. XXV, *op. cit.*, p. 254.

55. Bernstein was the first to draw this conclusion when he defended the crisis theory of Volume II of *Das Kapital* against that of Volume III. Cf. *Voraussetzungen*, *op. cit.*, pp. 96ff.

56. Paul Sweezy and Joan Robinson sharply criticize Luxemburg for not realizing that an increase in real wages is *potentially* both a result and a stimulus of the process of accumulation. Cf. Sweezy, *The Theory of Capitalist Development*, *op. cit.*, p. 204; Joan Robinson, "Introduction to Rosa Luxemburg's *Accumulation of Capital*," *op. cit.*, p. 23.

57. Luxemburg, *Anti-Kritik I*, *op. cit.*, p. 51 and p. 57.

58. This is Lucien Goldmann's critique of her argumentation. Cf. "Fragen zur kritischen Theorie der Oekonomie," in *Dialektische Untersuchungen* (Neuwied: Luchterhand Verlag, 1966), p. 278.

59. Cf. Sweezy's critique, which shows that if the problem were the source of money, non-capitalist consumers could make little difference. *Theory of Capitalist Development*, *op. cit.*, p. 205.

different direction, in an attempt to find the *differentia specifica* of capitalist accumulation. Let us recall Marx's argument against "Say's Law" (every supply produces its own demand) in volume I of *Capital* that shows the necessity of conversion to money terms as merely the other side of the logical, spatial and temporal separation under *conditions of commodity exchange* between production, selling and buying, supply and demand.⁶⁰ Capitalist accumulation occurs in the medium of commodity exchange. Even if we accept Marx's argument (apparently contradicting Luxemburg) that capitalism is the first fully dynamic economic system implying "production for the sake of production" and not just "production for the sake of immediate consumption,"⁶¹ we would still have to add the following qualification: capitalism is production for the sake of production in the *form* of production for exchange, and not in the *form* of production for needs. Rosa Luxemburg is focusing precisely on this qualification, i.e. production for exchange, for two reasons. First, to show the difference between capitalist and socialist accumulation;⁶² second, to concentrate on the factor that implies potential ruptures between production and consumption, supply and demand. But the abstract Marxian equations of expanded reproduction do not permit such ruptures. Luxemburg therefore attempts to show that if we translate these equations into money form (and under capitalism we must do so) violent breaks between the production and realization of surplus value become *possible*. But she immediately goes beyond her proof (especially in the *Anti-Kritik*) and argues that these breaks *necessarily* lead to the impossibility of capitalist accumulation in a society composed of only workers and capitalists.⁶³

Fortunately, in Luxemburg's analysis, the internal contradictions of Marx's framework of expanded reproduction are cancelled out by their being contradicted by the empirical world. There is no purely capitalist society anywhere composed of only workers and capitalists, and "the capitalist mode of production is only a fragment of total world production."⁶⁴ Luxemburg of course knows that empiricist objections would not in themselves affect the framework of Marx's analysis. The critique of political economy is not a description of the empirical surface,

60. Cf. Marx, *Das Kapital I* in *Werke* vol. XXIII, *op.cit.*, p. 127, and especially *Das Kapital II* in *Werke* vol. XXIV, *op.cit.*, pp. 355-358, where Marx makes the necessity of conversion into money the fundamental difference between capitalist and socialist accumulation.

61. Cf. Marx, *Das Kapital I*, *op.cit.*, p. 618; *Theories of Surplus Value Part II* (Moscow: Progress Publishers; 1968), pp. 117-118; *Grundrisse*, *op.cit.*, p. 213. We should notice that Luxemburg herself never tried to penetrate the meaning of these Marxian passages on "production for the sake of production." She was convinced that production for the sake of production was an absurdity and an impossibility under capitalism.

62. On this, cf. Marx, *Das Kapital II*, *op.cit.*, p. 358.

63. Luxemburg's argument turns out to be fallacious if we recall Sweezy's and Robinson's argument about the expansion of real wages within the growth of productivity, and Robinson's argument on the internal inducements to invest because of technological improvements. Cf. Robinson, *op.cit.*, p. 28.

64. Luxemburg, *The Accumulation of Capital*, *op.cit.*, p. 358; *Anti-Kritik*, *op.cit.*

but an analysis of the fundamental tendencies of capitalism. However, Marx's analysis of expanded reproduction, because of its internal contradictions, cannot refer to capitalist accumulation. As a result, Luxemburg feels justified to search for a new analysis of the inner tendency of capitalist accumulation in a primarily non-capitalist world, in a world where capitalism is empirically expanding at the expense of non-capitalist modes of production.⁶⁵

Luxemburg's own analysis hardly abandons the Marxian reproduction equations. But in her hands, the equations undergo an important functional change. Instead of describing the inner tendency of capitalist accumulation, they focus on the untenability of "pure capitalism," and especially on the non-self-sufficiency of the capitalist world within the totality of a non-capitalist world. The schemes imply, to Rosa Luxemburg, the need for non-capitalist consumers to guarantee the demand for new accumulation. In an age when the internal non-capitalist sector (peasantry, simple commodity producers) no longer serves this function, the schemes imply imperialism. However, even in the context of her original use of Marx's equations, Luxemburg introduces yet another important modification: the factor of the growth of productivity. From this perspective, even her arguments concerning the problem of money become more coherent. On the basis of Marx's arguments for the growing organic composition of capital (the ratio of constant capital to variable capital) she attempts to locate a tendency of Department II (commodity production) to overproduce relative to Department I (production of means of production). The argument is based on two implicit assumptions. First, improvements in the productivity of labor producing constant capital (producer's goods) cannot keep pace with the productivity of labor *using* constant capital to produce consumer's goods. Historically (though not logically), this was not an unfair assumption.⁶⁶ Secondly, capitalists in Department II cannot immediately reinvest their own surplus in Department I. The reason for this is that the material form of this surplus (i.e. commodities for consumption) would not permit its being used as a substitute for the relatively underproduced means of production.⁶⁷ Thus, from this point of view, trade with non-capitalist consumers is important for capitalism, not as a source of new money, but as a possibility to alter the material form of the surplus, according to the given

65. *Ibid.*

66. Robinson, *op.cit.*, p. 22.

67. Luxemburg, *The Accumulation of Capital*, *op.cit.*, pp. 335-339. Lucien Goldmann considers this argument to be the valid center of her analysis. Cf. *Dialektische Untersuchungen*, *op.cit.*, pp. 267ff. Joan Robinson, however, demonstrates that the argument suffers from several difficulties. First, increases of productivity could cheapen the value of means of production to neutralize effects of productivity altogether. Secondly, investments are not *in fact* restricted to the sector from which the given savings flow. In spite of these counterarguments, however, Robinson admits that historically (though certainly not logically) Luxemburg's claims are plausible.

needs of the two departments.⁶⁸

The uses of economic imperialism are not limited to altering the form of the surplus. To the extent that Luxemburg poses the psychologistic question about the inducements to investment, she can add the availability of cheap and rare raw materials, and cheap labor power in non-capitalist territories. Even the casual student of the history of Marxism knows these arguments from Lenin's pamphlet on imperialism. But Luxemburg seriously differs from Lenin and Lenin's economics teacher, Hilferding, in not deducing the phenomena of imperialism from a new, monopoly stage of capitalism. (She was never too sympathetic, as we have seen, to the Engels-Kautsky stress on monopolization.) In Luxemburg's analysis, imperialism is a specific historical form of the most fundamental tendencies of capitalism. Furthermore, in her analysis, the question of the historicity of capitalism is intrinsically tied to the further development of imperialism. Once again, the argument is structured according to iron logical necessity. The invasion of the non-capitalist world with cheap commodities, the terroristic exploitation of the labor power of the colonies, the destruction of natural communities, play the role of primitive accumulation and pave the way to full integration in the capitalist world. For Rosa Luxemburg, primitive accumulation is by no means confined to the distant past of capitalism. It is the tendency of the whole world to become capitalist through an original accumulation process enforced by the existing capitalist countries. But the culmination of this tendency is the impossibility of capitalist accumulation. This is the hidden meaning of the Marxian expanded reproduction schemes: the contradiction of the schemata becomes the "living mirror of the world course of capital—its fortune and its end." Instead of the anatomy of capitalist accumulation, *the equations represent capitalism's tendency to collapse*.⁶⁹ In her critique of Bernstein, Rosa Luxemburg had forcefully argued that without the regulative idea of the necessary collapse of capitalism, no socialist theory is possible. In her *Accumulation of Capital*, she attempted to articulate a theory based on this regulative idea. Yet, she was still highly ambiguous on the exact meaning of collapse. The interpretation of the Marxian *schemata* point to one of the difficulties. In several contexts, Luxemburg interprets Marx's equations as pointing to "some sort of more advanced organization than capitalist production and accumulation."⁷⁰ She states that even though Marx's schemata cannot represent capitalist accumulation, they are an adequate description of accumulation under a planned, socialist economy,⁷¹ where production of consumer goods would

68. Even Sweezy notices this possibility. He does not consider it relevant to Luxemburg's argument only because he traces her thesis almost exclusively from the *Anti-Kritik* (e.g., cf. part II, *op.cit.*, p. 33) where productivity is not even mentioned. Cf. *Theory of Capitalist Development*, *op.cit.*, p. 205.

69. Luxemburg, *Anti-Kritik*, *op.cit.*, part II, p. 51, p. 55.

70. Luxemburg, *Accumulation of Capital*, *op.cit.*, p. 351.

71. *Ibid.*, pp. 128-131.

be an end in itself, where accumulation *or* production for its own sake would be identical to the increasing satisfaction of human needs. However, Luxemburg does not deduce the necessity of socialism from this coincidence of the schemes for the collapse of capitalism and for socialist accumulation. Only the collapse of capitalism is used consistently as the regulative principle of her analysis.⁷²

In any case, Rosa Luxemburg presents us with a deterministic theory. Capitalist accumulation cannot proceed without increasingly making itself impossible. Of course, this stance raises the problem of the meaning of praxis. With only the slightest alteration of her deterministic account, Luxemburg argues that the survival of capitalism becomes historically precarious long before the system reaches its logical end. Already in 1899, Luxemburg pointed to militarism as a fundamental problem of advanced capitalism. She brought this fact to bear on Bernstein's superficial arguments on democratization. She also demonstrated the importance of militarization as a form of capitalist investment and as a stimulus to technical innovation under capitalism.⁷³ In the *Accumulation of Capital* and under the compulsion of a highly deterministic argument, with less sophistication than in 1899, she presented militarism as another safety valve for capitalist accumulation. In fact, something like a military-industrial complex was the only internal market expansion she could conceive. But the economic safety valve of militarism introduces a whole period of catastrophes when imperialism (the other safety valve) is limited by great power rivalry that diminishes possibilities of expansion in non-capitalist areas. It was in this context that Luxemburg expected the revolution of the international working class, the human victims of the whole history of capitalist development (and the *Accumulation of Capital*, unlike some of her other works, subscribes to some form of the pauperization thesis of the *Communist Manifesto*) to consciously intervene and to create a truly universal and more humane form of production. The end of capitalism may be *logically* necessary, but its *historical* end and the creation of socialism are thus related to *praxis*.⁷⁴

Luxemburg was hardly disturbed by a deterministic interpretation of her theory: indeed, she insisted on it. She explicitly argued that if socialist

72. None of Luxemburg's critics paid any attention to her overall theoretical framework. This is even true of Roman Rosdolsky who demonstrates that Rosa Luxemburg did not fully understand the meaning of Marx's categories and method within the overall framework of the critique of political economy. Rosdolsky, however, misses the important fact that for Luxemburg the meanings of the categories change partly because she confronts (unsuccessfully) a wholly new stage of capitalist development. Even the best Marxology cannot be the replacement for a critical reconstruction of the whole framework of Marx's critique. Cf. Roman Rosdolsky, *Zur Entstehungsgeschichte der Marxschen "Kapital"* (Frankfurt am Main: Europäische Verlaganstalt, 1968), pp. 86ff.

73. Luxemburg, "Militia and Militarism," *op.cit.*, pp. 141-142.

74. Luxemburg, *The Accumulation of Capital*, *op.cit.*, p. 467; *Anti-Kritik*, *op.cit.*, pp. 55-57.

analysis loses the regulative principle of capitalist collapse, as incorporated in her interpretation of Marx's equations of expanded reproduction (or if the equations are interpreted to mean in principle unlimited *possibilities* of capitalist accumulation), then capitalist crises, the class struggle and imperialism will all remain without theoretical foundation. The source of Luxemburg's insistence (noted by Joan Robinson) to structure historically plausible economic arguments according to tenuous logical necessities, is her belief that only a notion of necessary collapse can be the structuring, regulative principle of an analysis that seeks the historicity of capitalism and the dynamic of revolution. Thus, the *Accumulation of Capital* tends to deduce the class struggle most mechanically. However, this fact can be the basis of only a completely one-sided interpretation of Luxemburg's theory of revolution. We must turn to her theory of the subjective factor, to her theory of the mass strike, to understand the other side.

Up till now, I have generally followed not a historical but a logical exposition of Luxemburg's theoretical development. It was relatively easy to establish the notion of collapse as the transition between her two theories of capitalist development in *Social Reform or Revolution?* and the *Accumulation of Capital*. And yet we would have to misrepresent her personal development and the development of the radical wing of German Social Democracy if we argued for the smoothness of the transition between her imaginative defense of the Erfurt synthesis and her theory of imperialism. In between the two works Luxemburg came to reject the political implications of the Erfurt synthesis of revolutionary theory and reformist practice which in the end could hardly be distinguished from the political implications of revisionism.⁷⁵ In between the two works, and under the dual impact of successful mass actions in Russia and the *organizational* conservatism of party and unions in Germany, she composed a third: *Mass Strike, Party, and Trade Unions* (1906).

Historically, the problem of mass strike, the attack on organizational conservatism and the theory of imperialism are strongly related moments of the history of the radicals within Social Democracy. Luxemburg herself was one of the first to attack militarism and protectionism, two dimensions of imperial Germany's early imperialist posture, and she did this during the course of the Revisionism debates. However, in 1899, the issue of imperialism was related primarily to political and tactical revisionism. Kurt Eisner, a theoretical revisionist, became by 1900 one of the staunchest critics of militarism and imperialism. Kart Liebknecht, the other most consistent critic, was not a leading participant in the Bernstein debates. Significantly, Eisner and Liebknecht earned the enmity of the party executive sooner than any of the theoretical radicals. Furthermore, even before the 1907 electoral defeat, in which nationalistic arguments for

75. Indeed the politics of the executive, still under the aegis of the Erfurt program, were often to the right of Bernstein's.

imperialism were deliberately used to discredit Social Democracy, Bebel and the executive were sensitive to the fact that apparent lack of patriotism did not help the party in its electoral policy.⁷⁶ The most serious collision of the "anti-imperialist" Social Democrats with the executive was, however, almost identical in time (1905-1906) with Rosa Luxemburg's attack on the executive and the Erfurt Program, now appearing in the form of a theory of trade union and party equality. Where Liebknecht stressed the new tactical requirements of an age increasingly dominated by imperialism and militarism, Luxemburg stressed the revolutionary possibilities of an age characterized by a new level of mass struggle. Of course, already against Bernstein, Luxemburg showed that militarism counteracts democratization. This implied some doubt about reliance on democratic methods even in the everyday work of the party. But her theory of the *mass strike* moved beyond mere doubt in the direction of an entirely different program for Social Democracy. The dogmatic resistance of the executive to any alteration in the tactic of the Erfurt Program brought Luxemburg against the theoretical dimension of the program itself, in terms of her specific theory of imperialism.⁷⁷ Of course, a theory of imperialism did not have to contradict the Erfurt Program. Hilferding (and Lenin), deriving imperialism from a new monopoly stage of capitalism, only updated the theoretical part of the original program. Furthermore, a theory of imperialism certainly did not have to challenge the growth of centralization and bureaucratization in the party. Again the examples of Hilferding and Lenin are clear in this regard. And we should even admit that Luxemburg's theory of imperialism in the *Accumulation of Capital* abstractly, i.e. on its own, was compatible with a rather passive political posture.⁷⁸ However, this last interpretation (made only by the Stalinists in the 1930s) and the analogies of Hilferding and Lenin must be discarded if we come to understand Luxemburg's theory of imperialism as complementary to her theory of mass struggle and to her attack on the organizational conservatism of the SPD—if we understand the *Accumulation of Capital* as the *theoretical part* of a new, radical synthesis outlining a new level of capitalist development (that makes formally democratic political strategy rather senseless), corresponding to a *practical part* arguing for a new level of socialist praxis. In Luxemburg's synthesis, furthermore, at least as far as her political writings and activity were concerned, the moment of praxis had clear primacy. Let us therefore turn to her theory of praxis, her theory of the subjective factor.

Rosa Luxemburg was the first theoretician of Social Democracy to systematically consider the importance of the subjective factor. In *Social Reform or Revolution?* she stressed the building of the subjective factor

76. Schorske, *German Social Democracy*, *op. cit.*, pp. 69ff., pp. 72ff.

77. Nettl, *Rosa Luxemburg*, *op. cit.*, p. 160.

78. *Ibid.*, pp. 167-168, where Nettl discusses the attacks on Luxemburg's supposedly mechanical theory of spontaneity.

primarily in the sense of the Erfurt synthesis, i.e., parliamentary, reformist activity. In this area, defeats are the important dimensions of the education and preparation of the revolutionary subject, the proletariat. But even in this 1899 work, she went further than Kautsky in arguing that premature and unsuccessful attempts at the physical seizure of power (indeed, the first attempts must be premature, she says) will also be necessary for the self-creation of a class conscious and ultimately victorious proletariat.⁷⁹ However, in 1899, Rosa Luxemburg had no transitions to offer between these two types of "education" and "preparation." She believed she found these transitions in the history of the Russian mass strike movement culminating in the revolution of 1905. In her famous work of 1906, *Mass Strike, Party, and Trade Unions*, she presented a theory of revolution that stressed the rapid growth (in size, level of activity and consciousness) of the subjective factor, of the class conscious proletariat in a period of mass struggles, in a "period of revolution."

Rosa Luxemburg's theory of the subjective factor is not independent of her deterministic theory of capitalist development; the former presupposes at least an early version of the latter. She still tended to rigidly juxtapose voluntaristic subjectivism and deterministic objectivism, attacking (in fact quite justly) the anarchists, the German trade-unionists and party leadership for even discussing the question whether a general mass strike could be called or cancelled at will. Her own alternative, however, also leads to serious difficulties. She does not derive a revolutionary mass strike movement mechanically from the collapse of capitalism. This model would in any case have been totally inapplicable to the Russian situation. The necessary introduction of Russia into her analysis forced Luxemburg to push toward a theory of greater generality than merely a theory of capitalist development. She does not outline the relationship of objective development to class struggle but her implication is clear. She repeatedly emphasized that without the objective possibilities of social-economic development the mass strike is an anarchist dream. In Russia a system of tottering absolutism, on the verge of bourgeois transformation, offered the possibility of vast proletarian actions. But Luxemburg did not think that these actions could culminate in bypassing the bourgeois-capitalist stage of social history. In Germany, however, she believed that a fully developed capitalist system was nearing its collapse. Thus, in Germany the dictatorship of the proletariat was becoming objectively possible.⁸⁰

We have still not adequately represented the complexity of Luxemburg's theory. She argued that the mass strike is "the phenomenal form of the proletarian struggle in revolution." The argument rests first of all on the assumption of the historical continuity of revolutionary development in time

79. Luxemburg, "Sozialreform oder Revolution", *op. cit.*, p. 32, pp. 63ff., and pp. 69ff.

80. Rosa Luxemburg, "Massenstreik, Partei und Gewerkschaften" in *Gesammelte Werke*, ed. by Zetkin, Warski, Fröhlich (Berlin: 1925—Raubdruck reprint), pp. 75-76.

and space. Russia, one of the least developed European countries, is in a line of revolutionary development that must retrace the history of the French Revolution and its aftermath, but its proletariat (both because of very advanced sectoral industrialization *and* the European circulation of struggles) is activated by the explosive movement toward democratic bourgeois revolution to develop *forms* that are continuous with the proletarian revolution objectively possible only in advanced countries.⁸¹ What are these forms? Luxemburg's theory of revolution unfolds a complicated dialectic of essence and appearance, that is, she develops Marx's method in the first volume of *Capital* in the direction of a revolutionary theory. The mass strike, or rather its many fluid forms, are the modes of appearance of the period of proletarian revolution. The revolutionary process is the spontaneous, elemental power of the masses in motion, and this is externalized in terms of a series of mass strikes that move back and forth between political and economic actions, tending toward the unity of the political and the economic. These actions cannot be manipulated or predicted "from the outside": the most Social Democracy can do is to assume its political leadership by always representing the most advanced level of the struggle, by helping the circulation and mutual support of the various branches of the struggle.⁸² But the role of the leadership (and here she seriously disagreed with Lenin) is relatively minor. Social Democracy continues to have a role in mass education, but even here the struggle tends to displace it. Aside from the unity of the political and economic levels, the most important form of manifestation of the mass strike is its "great cultural work" of rapid enlightenment and politicization of hitherto unorganized masses.⁸³ The latter is the most important contribution of the mass strike form to the development of *active* class consciousness,⁸⁴ which would have its consequences in spite of defeat of a given mass strike movement. The development of the subjective factor turns out to be identical to the development of the revolutionary process which, however, moves through defeats as well as victories.

Luxemburg's *Mass Strike* represented a powerful attack on the leadership of German Social Democracy, and especially of the trade unions. The experience of the Russian Revolution was for her and other radicals strong proof that any subordination of the party to trade unions can have only conservative consequences.⁸⁵ Where the Russian mass strike movement represented the unity of the political and the economic, the division of the German labor movement into party and unions represented the opposite. Luxemburg was willing to understand this division as a form of manifestation

81. Luxemburg, "Massenstreik", *op. cit.*, pp. 71ff.

82. *Ibid.*, pp. 44-45.

83. *Ibid.*, pp. 64ff., 70ff.

84. *Ibid.*, pp. 65ff. Luxemburg believed that the class consciousness of even the most advanced workers in Germany, due to the long non-revolutionary period, was only latent.

85. Cf. Schorske, *German Social Democracy, op.cit.*, pp. 36ff.

of a fundamentally non-revolutionary period when everyday economic and political (i.e. parliamentary) struggles must predominate. In the overall revolutionary perspective reformist everyday struggles relate to the final goal as parts to the whole. But only the Marxist Social Democratic Party could incorporate the political final goal of the movement and as a result the unions must relate to the party as a part to the whole.⁸⁶ According to Luxemburg, the arguments to the contrary (which already predominated at least in the party executive and union leadership) rest on the *illusion* created by a "normal" "peaceful" period of capitalism. However, she feared that the organizational framework, the bureaucracies created around these illusions, would seriously endanger the unification of the economic and the political, even in the revolutionary period when the objective possibility of mass strike existed. She was one of the first Marxists to seriously attack the bureaucratization, the specialization, and the anti-theoretical, anti-intellectual pragmatism of the party and trade union organizations.⁸⁷ Her early attacks on Lenin were also motivated both by her understanding of the conservative and authoritarian implications of bureaucratic centralism and her faith in the revolutionary development of the proletarian masses. She refused to locate the revolutionary discipline of the proletariat in the discipline enforced by the modern factory, by modern bureaucracy, and by the modern military.⁸⁸

From *our* retrospect, in 1905 (not in 1918) Luxemburg was *right* in all the *fundamental* questions *against* Lenin. But her own theory of revolutionary subjectivity relied on an undemonstrated faith in the potentiality of the proletarian masses. To be more precise, she worked out two parallel theories of development, two theories of the destruction of capitalism. Her whole life she held the view that the objective collapse of capitalism is necessary. She thought she demonstrated this thesis in the *Accumulation of Capital*. But she also came to believe that the destruction of capitalism and the creation of socialism must be and will be the work of a revolutionary subject, the class conscious proletariat. She located the development of this subject in the historical continuity of revolution, and she did not succeed in truly meshing the forms of this continuity with the forms of appearance of capitalist development. Her analysis sought the historical dialectic of praxis but even in her important treatise on the class struggle, the *Mass Strike*, she did not resolve the rigid antinomy of freedom and necessity, subject and object, of class struggle and objective development. The final version of this antinomy appeared as two relatively independent concepts of development, the development of the collapse of capitalism (as formulated in the *Accumulation of Capital*) and the development of the revolutionary subject

86. Luxemburg, "Massenstreik," *op.cit.*, pp. 77ff.

87. *Ibid.*, pp. 86-87.

88. Luxemburg, "Organizational Question of Russian Social Democracy," in *Selected Political Writings*, *op.cit.*, pp. 291ff.

(as formulated in the *Mass Strike*). She could in no way theoretically ground the collapse of capitalism on her romantic faith in mass action, but she realized (even if not self-consciously) that she could not ground socialism, a qualitatively new human world order, in an automatic collapse of capitalism (Kautsky) or in the subjectivity of the bureaucratic centralized, vanguard party (Lenin). Thus, the antinomy that her theoretical synthesis culminated in was not any more adequate to the hope of the revolutionary creation of a new world, than was her heroic political activity. Though she always opposed the Kantians within Social Democracy, her own analysis as a whole amounted to a Kantian antinomy of freedom and necessity, expressing the failure (or merely the difficulties?) of mediation beyond the torn world of civil society.⁸⁹

3. *Dialectics and Philosophy in Engels*

Marxism, as a totally comprehensive world view, originates in the works of Friedrich Engels. The synthesis usually described as dialectical materialism that dominated the philosophical thinking of German Social Democracy and, even more, of Soviet Marxism was his accomplishment. The extent of Engels' influence has been often described,⁹⁰ and the objectivistic and scientific dimension of this influence has been justifiably criticized by most neo-Marxists. Recently, the theoretical roots of Engels' positivism have been located in the theory of history that Marx and Engels developed, i.e., historical materialism. Of course anti-Marxist (or non-Marxist) historiography has often pointed to the deterministic nature of Marxist theory as a whole. However, this general (and often superficial) criticism was refuted by Lukács, who succeeded to reconstruct the Marxist theory including the critique of political economy around a series of concepts that represented a powerful critique of all objectivism and scientism. The discovery of philosophical anthropology (*Paris Manuscripts*) of the young Marx and the fusion of anthropological concepts with the concepts of political economy (*Grundrisse*) tended to confirm the historical accuracy of Lukács' interpretation. However, recently it was possible for Jürgen Habermas and

89. When this paper was written (summer 1972) I had no chance to consult the fine article by Norman Geras, "Rosa Luxemburg: Barbarism and the Collapse of Capitalism," in *New Left Review*, no. 82, November-December 1973. The author's stress on the "Junius Pamphlet" represents a useful corrective to my essay. However, Geras' interpretation as a whole vacillates between two points of view—an antinomic, or dualistic formulation of the work of Luxemburg which is completely right and a more heuristic view (that follows Lukács' essay "Class Consciousness") which is half right and is forced to explain away other texts. (Cf. pp. 32-33.) One should, on the other hand, stress antinomy in the absence of dialectical self-reflection. After all, Lukács' interpretation of capitalist development remains fundamentally linear and deterministic even if a real choice "socialism or barbarism" is the end result of this development.

90. Cf. George Lichtheim, *Marxism, op.cit.*, pp. 234ff, and Hans-Joseph Steinberg, *Sozialismus und deutsche Sozialdemokratie. Zur Ideologie der Partei vor dem I. Weltkrieg*, 2. Auflage (Hanover: Verlag für Literatur und Zeitgeschichte, 1969), pp. 43ff.

Albrecht Wellmer to move a step beyond this interpretation, and locate one positivistic strand in texts such as the *German Ideology*: the implicit reduction of symbolic interaction to labor, that could be unfolded as a reductionist theory of historical materialism.⁹¹ Whatever the ultimate merits of this argument,⁹² the gradual dissolution of the concept of political alienation (a concept presented in "On the Jewish Question," "Critique of Hegel's Philosophy of the State," and even the *German Ideology*) in the concept of alienated labor was the first and the most significant sign of the emergence of a theory that would eventually assign politics, consciousness etc. to an immense superstructure the movement of which will passively (although with a lot of noise) follow the antagonistic development of forces and relations of production.⁹³

The above criticism of Marx is validated primarily by the self-understanding (or self-misunderstanding) of the old Marx (cf. his various *published* prefaces to his late works) and certainly in terms of development of Engels' Marxism that takes off from this self-understanding. However, it is undeniable that Engels added some naturalistic elements of his own to the theory. His famous modification of economic determinism by a theory of reciprocal causes or influences,⁹⁴ demonstrates his mechanical cause-effect interpretation of the theory of base and superstructure. Even as he restates the famous passage from Marx's *18 Brumaire* that points to a wholly different (non-causal or even interactionist) interpretation of the base, i.e., as the framework of objective possibilities within which men make their own history,⁹⁵ Engels feels compelled to reduce human action to the ultimately passive effect of objective forces.⁹⁶ However, to be fair to Engels, unlike many of his Social Democratic (and especially Stalinist) followers, he restricted his totally deterministic interpretation to "pre-history," to the "realm of necessity," to human history before socialism, before the conscious

91. Jürgen Habermas, *Knowledge and Human Interests*, *op. cit.*, pp. 28ff and all of chapter two; Albrecht Wellmer *Critical Theory of Society*, trans. by John Cumming (New York: Herder and Herder, 1971) pp. 70-71ff.

92. And Habermas and Wellmer must be criticized precisely for identifying too much of Marx's social theory with its positivistic dimension. Their reading (especially Wellmer's) of the *Grundrisse* and *Capital* is therefore unacceptable.

93. Vid. Karl Marx, "Preface" to *A Contribution to the Critique of Political Economy*, trans. by S.W. Ryazanskaya (Moscow: Progress Publishers, 1970), pp. 20-21.

94. Friedrich Engels, "Letters on Historical Materialism," in L.S. Feuer, ed., *Marx and Engels. Basic Writings on Politics and Philosophy* (New York: Doubleday, 1959), pp. 395-396; p. 398; p. 411.

95. We must grant that many of the reductionist statements of Marx himself cannot be interpreted in terms of a dialectic of freedom and necessity. However, Althusser has demonstrated throughout his works that it is closer to Marx's intentions to read base-superstructure relationship as the function of a single totality, rather than a cause-effect relationship. Cf. Louis Althusser, *For Marx*, trans. by Ben Brewster (New York: Random House, 1970), pp. 111-114; and the Appendix on pp. 117ff. Aside from this important point, Althusser's Marx interpretation remains unacceptable.

96. Engels, "Letters on Historical Materialism," *op.cit.*, p. 399; p. 411.

making of history "according to a collective plan."⁹⁷ Nevertheless, this very argument makes the transition from the realm of necessity to the realm of freedom utterly problematic, repeating the classical failure of the mechanical world picture to find a locus for freedom. Thus we should not be surprised that the rigidly deterministic and rationalistic Engels is forced in this context to speak of humanity's leap into the realm of freedom.⁹⁸ It was left to his follower Plekhanov to transform this "leap" into a special case of the deterministic dialectic of quantity and quality.⁹⁹

A deterministic theory of history represents an indirect elimination of the last traces of the free subjectivity of thought and action, since in the universe pictured by mechanical physics history was to be (from Vico on) freedom's last refuge. The inclusion of the materialist interpretation of history in a metaphysical dialectics of nature completes the reduction. In Hegel, the dialectic obtains between freedom and necessity, and the ultimate unity of the two is the self-consciousness of the Absolute in a contemplative philosophy. Paradoxically, Hegel described this unity as the knowledge of necessity that is equal to freedom. Engels and his followers accepted this notion of freedom. Of course, for a philosophy that culminates in absolute contemplation the concepts of freedom as knowledge of necessity is indeed meaningful. To the extent that he defined freedom as *total* self-determination,¹⁰⁰ Spinoza could locate *human* freedom *only* in the total identity and even dissolution of the individual in the absolute substance—an identity that is meaningful only when the mind grasps the whole necessary structure of the world in an act of ultimate contemplation. However, this notion of freedom ought to be closed to a Marxist who seeks the freedom of *social* action and self-determination. For Spinoza, even the best social laws meant that there is something *outside* causally determining us (i.e., the objects of the emotions which must be restrained by the laws) and the part of his *Ethics* or social ethics is entitled "Of Human Bondage." The recognition of knowledge of an external causal order is never freedom for Spinoza, unless this recognition becomes the sole content, the sole meaning of our mental existence, and therefore no longer an external necessity. Of course, a historical theory of the human species (Spinoza did not recognize any mediation between the individual and nature)¹⁰¹ could break through the closed circle of the Spinozian philosophy of substances. Therefore, it is doubly paradoxical that Engels implicitly and Plekhanov consciously turned history into deterministic "substance". Already from the point of view of

97. *Ibid.* This argument follows a central clue of Marx's *Warenfetischismus* chapter of *Das Kapital*.

98. Engels, *Anti-Dühring*, *op.cit.*, pp. 309-310.

99. Plekhanov, *Fundamental Problems of Marxism*, trans. by Julius Katzer (New York: International Publishers, 1969), pp. 45-46.

100. Benedict de Spinoza, *Ethics* (New York: Hafner, 1949), Part I, Def. VI.

101. See Agnes Heller, "Spinoza Etikája" ["The Ethics of Spinoza"] in *Érték es Történelem* [Value and History] (Budapest: Magvető, 1969), p. 170.

Hegel's *Phenomenology*¹⁰² (i.e., the project of comprehending substance as subject) the step to Spinoza represents a serious step backwards even if the Hegelian system itself in the end (but only in the end) returns to the contemplation of a historically unfolded substance. Engels prepared the way for this step backwards even though he had a strong inkling of the difference between Hegel's dialectic as method and as system. (He even argued that those Hegelians who tried to follow Hegel's method are almost without exception revolutionary, while those who accept the system are conservative.) For Engels the Hegelian method was the dissolution of everything stable and final into processes, and the Hegelian system was the movement from the self-alienation to the self-recognition of the Absolute, culminating in a dogmatic philosophy of Absolute Knowledge.¹⁰³ Given his criticism of the Hegelian system (and of its conservative implications) Engels' own notion of dialectics is totally paradoxical. Highly impressed by developments in the natural sciences (some of which pointed to the historical dimension in nature: Kant-Laplace theory of the cosmos, Darwinian evolution, etc.). Engels moved in two self-contradictory directions. On the one hand he banished philosophy from the study of history and nature, and swore by empirical special sciences. On the other hand, he "restricted" philosophy to the laws of thought: "logic" and "dialectics."¹⁰⁴ But this turns out to be no restriction at all since he already informed us earlier in the same text that dialectical philosophy is "nothing more than the reflection" of historical and natural processes in the brain.¹⁰⁵ Therefore, "dialectics reduces itself to the science of the general laws of motion, both of the external world and of human thought in two sets of laws that are identical in substance, but differ in their expression in so far as the human mind can apply them consciously, while in nature and also up to now for the most part in human history, these laws assert themselves unconsciously, in the form of external necessity..."¹⁰⁶ This revealing quotation yields three fundamental characteristics of Engels' Marxism: the triumph of speculative, metaphysical system-building, the triumph of nature over history, and the triumph of the object over the subject, or subjective praxis. The system triumphs because dialectics is defined as the general laws of motion of absolutely everything. Dialectics (as never in Marx himself) becomes a totally general *Weltanschauung*. The relationship of Engels'

102. From the point of view of the young Marx's critique of the "second nature" of alienation, (including political alienation) a Spinozian Marxism eternally confines mankind to the ground of *bürgerliche Gesellschaft* (to which Spinoza's social ethics or political philosophy already pointed) implying a rigid dualism between citizen (man *qua* rational and communal) and subject (egotistical and irrational man). For Marx's most important critique of political alienation, cf. a text known to the Marxists of Social Democracy, "Zur Judenfrage," Part I, in *Werke*, Vol. I, *op.cit.*, pp. 347ff.

103. Friedrich Engels, "Ludwig Feuerbach and the End of Classical German Philosophy," in Feuer, ed., *Marx and Engels, op.cit.*, pp. 201-203.

104. *Ibid.*, p. 241.

105. *Ibid.*, p. 200.

106. *Ibid.*, p. 226.

system to Hegel and Spinoza is full of important clues. The specific laws of motion of the world (transformation of quantity into quality, negation of the negation, etc.) are drawn from the first part of Hegel's *Logic*, the "Logic of Being." As Alfred Schmidt shows, Hegel could afford to outline an "ontological logic" and "pre-subjective" dialectic there because he would eventually *mediate* the one-sidedness by moving through the "Logic of Essence" and the "Logic of the Concept" which imply the transition of substance to subject, of nature to spirit.¹⁰⁷ Without this mediation, the Hegelian laws imply only a deterministic philosophy of substance, a return to Spinoza. And Engels' very terminology is strikingly Spinozian. He speaks of two sets of laws (i.e., of the external world and of human thought) that are "identical in substance." Spinoza clearly deduced all the implications of a philosophy of substance, and from the Marxian viewpoint one of these consequences is the impossibility of a social praxis going beyond civil (*bürgerliche*) society. Engels never seemed to understand this implication and this danger. Instead of using the concept of history to break out from the circle of Spinozian substance or Nature, Engels identified nature and history in terms of a common set of laws, unified in a single concept of "the external world." From our point of view it makes little difference that in the case of history he leaves open the possibility of consciously applying the laws, since in a philosophy of substance the externality of the laws is itself the source of unfreedom.¹⁰⁸ For Spinoza, as long as there remain laws outside us that we must apply we are split into reason and emotion, and (to use the terminology of the political philosophy of civil society) citizen and subject. The alienation of the self that characterizes "civil society" is, in this framework, eternalized. The triumph of nature or substance in Engels' scheme (that corresponds to the drive toward the physicalist unity of the sciences in the late 19th century scientism), the inability to distinguish between the "dialectic" of nature and that of history, has some clear political implications. The same is true of the implications of the triumph of the object in his system. The "copy theory" or the "naive realism" of the two sets of laws reflecting one another, has strongly and rigidly dualistic consequences, and perhaps this is what Engels, the materialist, tried to avoid by calling on Spinoza's substance. But again, he forgets to follow all the implications. In Spinoza's highly consistent theory thought can completely mirror the structure of the world *because* there is no interaction whatsoever between thought (as far as *adequate*, true ideas are concerned) and the world. Engels can locate all the interactions he wants in objective nature itself (thereby modifying the mechanical philosophies of 18th century materialism) but he

107. Alfred Schmidt, *The Concept of Nature in Marx*, trans. by Ben Fowkes (London: New Left Books, 1971), p. 59.

108. Within the social world, no conscious application can change the fact that the laws are external. For Spinoza internalization is gained only at the cost of the dissolution of the individual in the universal substance. There can be no Marxist alternative to this unless the Hegelian movement from substance to subject is introduced.

can show only a technological form of interaction (not a dialectic) between theory and practice, subject and object. If we add to this framework Engels' materialist premise of the absolute causal priority of the world of matter, the consistency of the theory may be violated (and the "truth" of all theory may be placed in doubt) but neither alternative, neither the philosophy of substance nor mechanical materialism, changes the contemplative and passive notion of subjectivity that emerges.

Engels' philosophy pointed to several different philosophical alternatives within Social Democracy. But characteristically, none of these alternatives seriously modified the deterministic social theory that is the implication of Engels' system (though not of his concrete historical investigations). We will consider the various philosophical alternatives to demonstrate the results of our analysis of Rosa Luxemburg (i.e., that in the absence of a theory of dialectics which is also a philosophy of praxis, a dialectical theory of society cannot be consistently worked out, and that a philosophy of *praxis* in fact did not exist in the Second International).

4. *Materialist Determinism in Plekhanov and Kautsky*

Engels' materialist world-view affected all Social Democratic tendencies, but it was generalized into an orthodoxy only by the theoreticians of the "Marxist center," Plekhanov and Kautsky. In the works of both we find the emergence of a highly deterministic and reductionist understanding of the philosophical foundations of social theory, and this fact unites them in spite of some differences. Kautsky reinterpreted Marx through Darwin, Plekhanov through Spinoza,¹⁰⁹ and this was to imply some divergence in their specific understanding of the material base to which everything is reduced, and even more important, in their notions of causality and teleology. The contrast is between technological determinism and biological determinism. However, far more than this contrast is their parallel destruction or reduction of the Marxian concept of social relations. No matter how reductionist we judge Marx and Engels, the fact remains that their notion of the base (i.e. "the anatomy of Hegel's civil society") to which other dimensions are reduced, is itself the (antagonistic) unity of two sets of relations: man to man (social relations of production) and man to nature (forces of production). In most of their works it is clear that neither element can be neglected or reduced to the other. As long as this relationship is maintained it remains possible in principle to develop a dialectical relationship between consciousness and reality, between politics and economics, since theoretical and everyday consciousness, and political structures and actions, can all be potentially factors in maintaining or transforming the given relations of man to man. As Lucio Colletti has convincingly shown,¹¹⁰ however, in Plekhanov's work the

109. Engels used both Darwin and Spinoza, in different contexts. Kautsky, however, was a Darwinian before he came to Marx in the first place. Cf. Steinberg, *Sozialismus*, *op. cit.*, p. 48.

110. Lucio Colletti, "The Marxism of the Second International", in *Telos*, no. 8, Summer 1971, p. 87.

economic base is identified with "a purely material sphere which does not contain interhuman relations." Production in this scheme is productive technique, or technology, and to this everything else is reduced. Plekhanov creates a whole hierarchy of causation linking technology ("forces of production") and ideology by three intermediate causal levels: (1) economic relations conditioned by technology; (2) social-political regime built upon a given economic base; (3) psychology of social men determined by the preceding two stages, that in turn is reflected by ideologies.¹¹¹ The hierarchy accomplishes two tasks: it ultimately reduces everything to technology, and it rigidly distinguishes between the social and the economic dimension. In Kautsky the separation of the social and the economic is perhaps less complete since they are both (but separately) reduced to a third, i.e., the biological foundation of human existence. The social dimension is reduced to a supposed social instinct or drive, that emerges during the struggle for survival.¹¹² Human technology, on the other hand, is simply another factor that is traced to this struggle, as an aspect of the increasingly better adaptation to nature of the human species. While Kautsky indeed states that "technical progress forms... the foundation of the entire development of man,"¹¹³ he refuses to commit himself on the absolute priority of either technology or what he calls economic life. In some contexts, he even explicitly refuses to replace economic determinism by technological determinism.¹¹⁴ But his distinction between technology and economics does not imply that social relations are contained in Kautsky's concept of the economic. As already indicated, Kautsky (occasionally) injected a generous dose of technological determinism and derived human society from a different biological instinct than either economy or technology. Thus, he argues that in human society development (which is *faster* than the evolutionary development of animal species) is *rooted* in technological development: "every society is modelled by the technical apparatus at its command."¹¹⁵ Thus in Kautsky's case we do not have a neat hierarchy of reduction as in Plekhanov, and furthermore he discerns reciprocal influences on every level.¹¹⁶ For example, he realizes that human technology cannot be completely independent of forms of consciousness, since the inheritance of new skills depends on the latter (e.g., on language). But, once again, human consciousness is reduced to yet another aspect of the evolutionary struggle of

111. Plekhanov, *Fundamental Problems*, *op. cit.*, p. 80. It is interesting to note Engels rejected the separation of the social and the economic. cf. a letter to Kautsky quoted by Colletti, *op. cit.*

112. Karl Kautsky, *Ethics and the Materialist Conception of History*, trans. by John B. Askew, Third and revised ed. (Chicago: Charles Kerr, 1909) pp. 89ff.

113. *Ibid.*, pp. 122-123.

114. *Ibid.*, p. 165.

115. *Ibid.*, p. 133.

116. This much even Plekhanov is forced to concede because of Engels' famous letters to Bloch, Starkenburg etc. Yet, Plekhanov certainly had no doubts about the *ultimate* priority of the technological level.

the species. Instead of a hierarchy we have in the end reduction of all aspects of human existence to the biological level. For Plekhanov the material base ultimately implies technology, for Kautsky biology. This distinction does not affect the separation of social and economic categories in the least. The most significant difference between Kautsky and Plekhanov lies in an entirely different theoretical area. In their respective characterization of historical necessity, biological and technological determinism do have somewhat different consequences.

The difference between Kautsky's and Plekhanov's solutions to the general philosophical problem of freedom and necessity is not immediately evident. Both seem to be champions of extreme determinism. However, if we return to the roots of their thoughts, a significant difference emerges relating to their attitude to teleology. The teleological dimension of Marx's conception of praxis ("Theses on Feuerbach") and of labor (*Capital*) is well known. The contrast between the worst architect and the most advanced bee points to human goals inverting the natural order of causality.¹¹⁷ Plekhanov does not even consider it necessary to dispute this argument. Returning to Spinoza,¹¹⁸ he is ready to admit that human consciousness *seems to* pose goals on which it acts. However, all final goals are illusory within the order of nature as a whole (just as the secondary qualities of sense experience). Plekhanov, in fact, prefers to refer to "savages" (and children) to show that "the goals" that they pose and the freedom that they feel can be explained from the point of view of modern sociology and biology as necessarily caused by their physiology, geographical situation and technological level. Real freedom lies, in fact, not in the positing of goals but in the recognition of (and adaptation to) a natural, causal order.¹¹⁹ We won't repeat our objections to this notion of freedom understood as necessity. It is clear, however, that Plekhanov's concept of socialism, derived entirely as the result of a highly deterministic general sociology, turned the Marxian notion of praxis into social technology or social engineering, and it excluded the moral dimension of the theory altogether.¹²⁰ As a result, Plekhanov's Marxism was especially open to the objections of the Neo-Kantian Marxists, i.e., why should anyone fight for a socialism which, although necessary, is presented as morally neutral. Such a Marxism did not and could not incorporate a moment of "Sittlichkeit" or "ethical life," and was the most open to the attacks of a Marxism that attempted to recover a moral dimension. In this context, Kautsky's Marxism was somewhat less vulnerable. He originally came to socialism through a somewhat teleological interpretation of Darwin's theory of evolution. His Darwinism incorporated a generous dose of the enlightenment belief in progress. The process implied by the struggle for

117. Cf. Colletti, "The Marxism of the Second International," *op.cit.*, p. 85.

118. Spinoza *Ethics*, *op. cit.*, pp. 72ff.

119. Plekhanov, *Fundamental Problems*, *op. cit.*, pp. 94ff.

120. Goldmann, *Dialektische Untersuchungen*, *op. cit.*, p. 215.

existence had, for Kautsky, a natural teleology toward the formation of higher and higher modes of animal existence. "Species Solidarity," the "social instinct," etc., were the immanent products of animal evolution. The young Kautsky, hardly acquainted with Marx, based only utopian speculation on this natural *telos*. But even in his own later analyses, his study of Marx modified his Darwinism *only* in two ways. First of all, he realized that the human struggle for existence is not among individuals but groups and, secondly, he came to believe that in society the artificial organs of man (i.e. technology) qualitatively transform development.¹²¹ The outcome of his Marxist modification of Darwin can be easily summed up: the natural *telos* of solidarity remains but the notion of linear development toward it must be abandoned. Human development implies categories like property, war, and competition, each of which represents *relative* steps away from even animal solidarity. However, in the *end* the animal *goal* survives. Christianity, and capitalism both represent steps toward the increasing universality, i.e., internationalization of the species, though they also incorporate contradictory moments (e.g. religious hatred, economic competition etc.) away from the goal. Within the world of capitalism the goal of the human species is located in the struggle of the class conscious internationalist proletariat.¹²² Thus far, Kautsky's Darwinian-Marxism enabled him to distinguish between the necessary laws of historical development and the ultimate (biological) goal of this development. However, in the end his biological determinism did not permit him to ground this goal in anything other than extreme necessity. He explicitly denied the freedom of the will, and reduced human will to a biological instinct: the will to live.¹²³ The human correlate, or human agent of the final goal is sociologically located as the proletariat. In Kautsky, however, this agent is not characterized by free self-determination and self-transformation, but by actions mechanically motivated by *instinct* and *self-interest*.¹²⁴ The goals of this class are indeed presented (and *must* be presented) as *moral ideals* but, as all previous moral ideals, they would be *only* weapons of class warfare except for the fact that historical materialism scientifically demonstrates the absolute economic necessity of the actual realization of this ideal in a classless society.¹²⁵

If, in the end, necessity triumphs in Kautsky's ethics, we should also note that he made some concessions to a moral philosophy. First of all, even though he historicizes the content of the various forms of morality (making them a function of social needs and class rule) he refuses to give up the absolute validity of at least one dimension of all morality, i.e., the so-called social instinct implying universality and solidarity. Secondly, he is forced to

121. Steinberg, *Sozialismus*, *op. cit.*, pp. 49-50; Kautsky, *Ethics*, *op. cit.*, pp. 120ff.

122. Kautsky, *Ethics*, *op. cit.*, pp. 158-160.

123. *Ibid.*, pp. 203-206.

124. Kautsky, *The Road to Power*, in A. Fried, R. Sanders, eds., *Socialist Thought* (New York: Doubleday, 1964), pp. 441-43.

125. *Ibid.*, pp. 436-437.

admit that Social Democracy, as a practical political movement, needs moral ideals and that Marx's own works incorporate moral ideals. However, Kautsky insisted on a rigid separation between science and morality, fact and value in Marx and in general, and as a result his conclusions have a somewhat dualistic flavor.¹²⁶ Both the concession to moral philosophy and the dualism reveal the impact of a Kantian challenge within Social Democracy.

5. *Marxism and Ethics: Kant and Marx*

The neo-Kantian critique of naturalistic "dialectical materialism" had two obvious starting points: the first two of Kant's critiques. Indeed, the orthodoxy of Plekhanov and Kautsky suffered from both the absence of an adequate moral dimension and the presence of highly dogmatic epistemological (or rather metaphysical) foundations. Vorländer, Woltmann, Tugan-Baranowsky and others attacked materialist determinism primarily from the viewpoint of a socialist theory erected on moral foundations. Bernstein belonged to this group of thinkers, with some reservations on both sides. On the other hand, the group called Austro-Marxists (Max Adler, Otto Bauer and to a lesser extent Rudolf Hilferding) wanted to re-constitute the whole content of historical materialism (which, unlike the first group, they in no way challenged) on the foundations of a critical epistemology. However, they also could not derive socialist politics (as opposed to socialist science) from the foundation of a theory of society constituted under the category of causality, and in the end had to make some concessions to Kantian ethics. Nevertheless, they remained more orthodox in their theory and their politics than the group led by Vorländer and Woltmann who tended toward revisionist theory and practice.

In this cultural context, the notion of an ethical foundation for socialism first appeared in the works of F. A. Lange and Hermann Cohen. The latter is more important because several Social Democrats were his followers. The founder of the famous Marburg school, Cohen believed that Kant's categorical imperative, the maxim never to treat another as a means or as a thing, represented a demand for the creation of socialist community. Cohen also believed that a socialism morally founded could have nothing to do with any kind of materialism, and therefore Marxism. His followers, Staudinger, Vorländer and Woltmann, however, would never go this far. They realized that even the best ideal of Socialism would remain a mere dream if it did not confront the economic and political given.¹²⁷ On the other hand, they insisted that the socialist ideal can never be realized as a result of objective historical necessity. Ludwig Woltmann, relying on Bernstein, argued in 1900 in his book *Der Historische Materialismus* that

126. Goldmann, *Dialektische Untersuchungen*, op. cit., pp. 219-220.

127. Steinberg, *Sozialismus*, op. cit., pp. 98-99.

the historical collapse of capitalism was highly unlikely since the economic prerequisites required by Marxian theory were absent, and perhaps increasingly absent. Thus, Woltmann continued, the possibility of socialism can depend only on the moral will of the masses and on the socialist movement responding to the injustices of capitalism.¹²⁸ In a similar vein, Tugan-Baranowsky, who worked out far more systematic reasons than Bernstein for the impossibility of the purely economic collapse of capitalism, insisted in 1905 in his *Theoretical Foundations of Marxism* that the real contradiction of capitalism is moral and not economic. Socialism, therefore, can only be the result of the conscious moral activity of men.¹²⁹ It is well known that Bernstein had drawn similar conclusions, although the neo-Kantians could justly point out that, not understanding Kantian ethics, his moral ideal was purely utilitarian.¹³⁰ From an orthodox Kantian viewpoint, Woltmann's argument against a deterministic theory of socialism was the most penetrating. He insisted that even if capitalism collapsed as the necessary result of either the class struggle or economic crisis, the creation of a socialist society would not necessarily follow. Objective nature-like development can perhaps lead to a *Formwechsel der Knechtschaft* but never to the *Abschaffung der Klassenherrschaft*. Only the free moral action of the proletariat consciously representing humanity can create the higher community demanded by Kantian ethics. And since the proletariat is not yet ready for this freedom, the task of the socialist movement must be primarily that of moral education and enlightenment. Economic development and its possibilities cannot be disregarded according to Woltmann, but only a parallel moral development of men can turn economic raw material into genuine human progress.¹³¹

As Vorländer points out, Woltmann's argument becomes the most consistent formulation for a reformist political program.¹³² Unlike Bernstein, most reformist neo-Kantians managed to clarify their relationship to Marxist theory as a whole. Where Bernstein tended to implicitly substitute his own evolutionary determinism for a revolutionary one, Vorländer, Staudinger and Woltmann came up with a consistent formulation of the problem of causality and freedom. Indeed, they argued that reality can be looked upon from the viewpoint of causality, but causal analysis will not yield socialism. Fortunately for Marx, he did not completely rely on causal analysis, and Vorländer, e.g. finds a great deal of moral language and exhortation in the young Marx, but also in *Capital*.¹³³

128. Ludwig Woltmann, *Der historische Materialismus* (1900), in Iring Fetscher, ed., *Der Marxismus. Seine Geschichte in Dokumenten* (Munich: Piper, 1967), pp. 255-257.

129. Michael Tugan-Baranowsky, *Theoretische Grundlagen des Marxismus* (1905), in Fetscher, ed., *Der Marxismus, op.cit.*, pp. 253-254.

130. Karl Vorländer, *Kant und Marx. Ein Beitrag zur Philosophie des Sozialismus* (Tübingen: J.C.B. Mohr, 1911), p. 189.

131. Woltmann, *Der historische Materialismus, op.cit.*, p. 257.

132. Vorländer, *Kant und Marx, op.cit.*, p. 178.

133. Cf. Vorländer's original 1905 lecture, "Kant und Marx," cited by Goldmann,

However, there was obviously trouble with Marx's self-understanding, i.e. he constantly argued against moral interpretations of his work. Therefore, Vorländer, Staudinger,¹³⁴ and many other neo-Kantians (though by no means all of them within Social Democracy) consciously undertook not to revise Marx here and there (à la Bernstein) but to revise the theory as whole, by reconstructing it around the categorical imperative in order to save Marx from his own self-understanding. They succeeded so well as to force the great Karl Kautsky himself (whose political actions were of course hardly different from theirs) to incorporate a moral dimension of sorts into his somewhat dualistic framework.¹³⁵ Given the theoretical context of Social Democracy, the revisionist neo-Kantians could be successfully (or at least *more* successfully) challenged only by those orthodox Marxists who were themselves followers of Kant: the Austro-Marxists. Max Adler, who was without question one of the most sophisticated exponents of this group before the Russian Revolution, will be primarily dealt with below.

Max Adler did not believe that Marx had to be corrected by Kant because he maintained that the "sociology" of Marx represented the culmination of the German Classical Philosophy that Kant himself founded.¹³⁶ In 1904, he argued that the Marxian critique of political economy is a *critique* in Kant's sense of the term. It contains the Kantian *Erkenntniskritik* and does not have to be supplemented by the latter. The basic concepts of Marx's critique (value, commodity, abstract labor, etc.) are *Denkmittel* through which the infinite complexity of events can be grasped in their lawfulness. The vast realm of phenomena cannot be approached by any combination of induction and deduction: what is needed is the precise analysis of the *a priori* isolated economic "cell forms" of *bürgerliche Gesellschaft*. Of course, Adler could not disregard the history of the concept of category from Kant to Marx. He interpreted this history as that of the concept of the *social a priori*. Adler tended to emphasize the subjective side of Kant's "transcendental deduction," stressing the presence of the categories in a transhistorical contemplative consciousness as such. According to Adler, Fichte introduced praxis into this consciousness and Hegel introduced historicity. But only in Marx did consciousness in general or consciousness as such, become fully social and historical, pointing

Dialektische Untersuchungen, op.cit., pp. 216-217.

134. Franz Staudinger, "Antonio Labriola und die Ethik," in Fetscher, ed., *Der Marxismus*, op.cit., p. 249.

135. Cf. his famous work, *Kausalität und Teleologie im Streit um die Wissenschaft* (Vienna: Marx-Studien I, 1904), pp. 361ff; and "Das Verhältnis von Marx zur Erkenntniskritik" (1904), in Fetscher, ed., *Der Marxismus*, op.cit., pp. 212ff. (Also, cf. Lichtheim, *Marxism*, op.cit., pp. 305-306, and Vorländer, *Kant und Marx*, op.cit., pp. 254ff, for other details of Adler's early works.)

136. For a reconstruction of this argument, vid. Goldmann, *Dialektische Untersuchungen*, op.cit., p. 224. Adler's inability or unwillingness to see anything more than historical difference of content (and not function) between the Kantian and Marxian meanings of category is in itself a step toward interpreting critique as sociology.

through its newly won categories to the social laws of a given period of history. It is in this context that Adler calls Marx the culmination of German Classical Philosophy. However, almost in the same breath, he also identifies Marxism as a deterministic science of society: sociology. Thus, the difficulties of a scientific Marxism reappear, at the worst possible moment thus ruining an analysis of some promise. Adler simply could not make up his mind whether Marx is the Kant or the Newton of the social world. A transcendental-empirical ambiguity that is possible to locate in the historically oriented part of the neo-Kantian tradition reappears in his work.

Subsequently, in his polemics with Plekhanov and Kautsky on the one side, and Vorländer on the other, Adler insisted that Marxism was a strictly deterministic science of society and that Marx (rather than Comte) was the founder of this science, i.e., sociology. In this context, he changed his conception of the relationship of Marx to the "critique of knowledge." Marx's sociology now becomes a continuation of the scientific revolution of the 17th century, its extension into the social world: Marx becomes the Newton of social phenomena. Given this devaluation of Marx, the Kantian notion of critique itself receives a less ambitious presentation. The critique of knowledge becomes a methodological aid to Marxism forcing the clarification of the concepts and the investigation of the meaning and the limits of the "instruments" of sociology. The critique of knowledge, something completely distinct from Marxism, still does not correct or improve the latter,¹³⁷ but can at best imply its more consistent and thorough future development.

While it is true that there is almost a ten year gap between Adler's movement from his stress on Marxism as critique to an ultimately scientific definition of Marxism, the elements of both interpretations are present in all his works. It is curious, therefore, that interpreters of Adler such as Vorländer, Goldmann and Lichtheim mention his two distinct ways of linking Kant and Marx without seeing the serious difficulty. Let us, however, be clear: critique and science cannot be the same either from a Kantian or a sophisticated Marxist viewpoint. The distinction between critique and science, however, is obliterated by any psychologistic interpretation of Kant on the one hand, and by "scientific socialism" on the other. The fact that Adler cannot see a clear distinction here is an important clue to his continuity with vulgar Marxism.¹³⁸

137. Max Adler, *Marxistische Probleme* (Stuttgart: Dietz Verlag, 1913), pp. 64-65. On the above point, Adler is hardly consistent. In other contexts he also speaks of Kantian theory as an epistemological foundation and philosophical complement of Marxism. He always has the Kant-Newton relationship in mind, but at times Marx appears as Kant and at other times as Newton. Cf. *op.cit.*, pp. 138-139.

138. In an article heavily dependent on the young Lukács, "Tranzendentaler Marxismus?" *Die Gesellschaft* VIII (Berlin, 1931), pp. 304ff, reprinted in *Kritische Theorie der Gesellschaft*, Vol. IV (Frankfurt/M: Raubdruck, n.d.), the young Herbert Marcuse decisively demonstrated

It is not as if Adler did not undertake a critique of the materialist orthodoxy of Kautsky and Plekhanov. He consistently argued that Marxism can have nothing to do with a materialist worldview or metaphysics. Marxism, according to Adler, needs the foundation of no comprehensive world-view, and least of all a materialist one. Materialism represents an answer to an ontological question about the essence of the world—an answer that dogmatically states that the world is made of physical matter, the matter of natural science. It is a consistent but closed worldview that reduces everything to matter in motion.¹³⁹ But, Adler argues, the so-called materialist theory of history has an entirely different concept of matter: speaking of the material conditions of life, historical materialism always speaks of human and therefore *geistige* conditions.¹⁴⁰ According to Adler, Marx takes from the natural sciences not their concept of matter but their methodological positivism and their stress on causality and law. As a result, Adler maintains that Marx's theory of history should be reconceived and renamed as a social-economic determinism. The new name promises little good, but Adler tries to use it to present a different conception of the *geistige* and the *psychische* than the reductionist views of the orthodox. Already on the level of *epistemology* (being a Kantian) he feels obliged to demolish purely passive theories of consciousness. He shows first of all that while a copy theory of knowledge can be consistently presented by Spinoza, a materialist like Plekhanov cannot call on this much needed support. He correctly stresses that in Spinoza there can be no inter-relation between mind and matter, and indeed this is a precondition for a consistent copy theory of truth. Any philosophical materialism must however speak of a causal or functional reduction of mind to matter, and since the reduction yields a passive epiphenomenal "mind," the ability of this mind to reflect the true arrangement of matter becomes totally mysterious. Materialism and Spinozism are two dogmatic worldviews, according to Adler, whose mixture must be self-contradictory.¹⁴¹ The Engelsian copy theory, which rests on this mixture, must therefore be discarded. But what about the famous materialist premise about the determination of thought by being? Adler is willing to admit that, as a maxim of investigation, this will facilitate causal explanations of social phenomena by, e.g., linking ideology and economics. But he calls any epistemological extension of the premise an almost archaic form of epistemological naiveté.¹⁴² Given his Kantian viewpoint, this assertion does not even call for a demonstration. Yet, his

the scientific character of Adler's Marxism *and* Kantianism. From the point of view of the dialectical theory of Lukács, Korsch and the early Marcuse this was just criticism. But we must follow a rather different approach to Adler in the context of the Second International. Marcuse by the way is the only interpreter who grasps the ambiguity of the Kant-Marx link.

139. Adler, *Marxistische Probleme*, *op. cit.*, pp. 66-67.

140. *Ibid.*, p. 4.

141. *Ibid.*, p. 70.

142. *Ibid.*, pp. 82-83.

arguments dealing with social psychology and anthropology clearly imply that the materialist premise has in fact only a carefully limited importance for even the theory of society.

Of all the Marxists, only Adler was sophisticated enough to be able to participate in the famous *Methodenstreit* of the German academic world. In this context, he opposed the Heidelberg Neo-Kantians and Simmel, and argued for the unity of all of the sciences—a unity based on causal natural science. Social science may have human goals and human values among its objects, but this in no way modifies the causal, nomological treatment of these objects.¹⁴³ Behind Adler's decision in favor of an outright naturalism lies his acceptance of psychology as the fundamental science of society. For Adler, all social facts, whether political, economic or cultural, were considered psychic. He feared the hypostatization of "society" and considered the socialized individual to be the only agent [*Träger*] of social life. Of course, he realized the problems that an individualistic psychology presented to a Marxist. As a result, he postulated a fundamental anthropological characteristic of man, i.e., to value, and to act according to norms and goals. The most basic of these values and norms is that of social life (based on the recognition of others as men) i.e., unity with other men. Social values, however, lead to a basic antagonism between the individual and the social, because the historical forms of appearance of the drive to unity (e.g., the desire for happiness) implies conflicts and struggle¹⁴⁴ with other men. So far, there is considerable structural similarity between Kautsky's biological view of human nature (antagonism between social instinct and history) and Adler's psychological-anthropological view (antagonism between social values and history). However, at this juncture, Adler's solution reveals a somewhat greater sophistication. While the formal creation of the social lies in the dimension of *Normmässigkeit*, its actual creation is a function of teleological [*zweckbewusste*] labor. Through labor and praxis in general, the laws of inner life become external causality and lead to the realization of values. Thus, causality in social life is not blind, but is guided by ideas and goals.¹⁴⁵ On the other hand, according to Adler, the external causality of economic relations cannot be disregarded. The possibility of value realizations depends on freedom of movement provided by the objective development (although this objective development is itself human) of economic life and institutions. Adler emphatically argues that on its own, economic development realizes no values, creates nothing, destroys nothing, changes nothing. But it determines (and here is the limited validity of historical materialism) the limits of the developmental possibilities of social life, and provides means for the realization of these possibilities. The process of production is the machine of social life, but teleological activity is

143. Vorländer, *Kant und Marx*, op. cit., p. 253.

144. Adler, *Marxistische Probleme*, op. cit., pp. 9-11.

145. *Ibid.*, pp. 12-13.

the motor, lending the machine energy and direction. This is Adler's quite ambiguous interpretation of the Marxian statement that we make our history, but not under self-chosen circumstances. Thus, in this context, he comes very close to rediscovering the Marxian notion of *praxis*. Yet, the fact that he ultimately identified the "Marxian" meaning of consciousness as such (the notion of critique) with a deterministic science of society greatly interferes with his analysis. Instead of uncovering the trans-individual subject of praxis, with theory being a moment of this praxis, he is left with individual and particularized subjects and a deterministic science. Thus, he is forced to interpret his goal-conscious human as a being that causes only when it itself is caused, acts when it is acted on.¹⁴⁶ Thus, he locates teleology into a tight system of causality. The result is a series of eloquent statements on *praxis* beginning with Marx's third thesis on Feuerbach and culminating in the unity of science and politics in an *applied science* [*angewandte Wissenschaft*] based on the *consciousness of the necessity of the social process*.¹⁴⁷ For Adler, teleology represented the viewpoint of the individual actor, causality the viewpoint of sociology, and the technology of society or social *engineering* the unity of theory and praxis.¹⁴⁸ His interpretation of the problem of Marxism and ethics must be understood in this context.

Max Adler's overall philosophical viewpoint was consistently dualistic, implying a sharp antinomy between teleology and causality, ethics and science, *Sollen* and *Sein*. Adler resisted both the primacy of the practical *and* the primacy of the theoretical, both the ethical foundation of socialist theory *and* the causal reduction of socialist ethics. He considered his position especially flexible because he was able to integrate ethics itself into his concept of a social science without abandoning dualism. For Adler ethical life, valuation and moral will were immanent causal factors of human history. To this extent, a rigorous causal sociology can consider the ethics of individuals (and the ethics of individuals united in groups) as major historical forces. Indeed, this was the only difference between the causality of sociology and that of physics. On the other hand, no sociology can *evaluate* the contents of values and norms—this is the task of the practical and normative discipline of ethics. Of course, after the evaluation has taken place and actions (in the external world) follow, once again we enter the province of sociology.¹⁴⁹ As a result, Adler vigorously combats the notion (of Hermann Cohen and Vorländer, and even Woltmann to a lesser extent) that socialism can be erected on ethical foundations. Indeed,

146. *Ibid.*, pp. 58ff. The German text in fact states that man is a being "auf das nur gewirkt werden kann, indem es selber wirkt." But what is important for us is that here teleology is encapsulated in an individual otherwise caught in an inescapable chain of causality. In the end, *teleology* is almost as illusory in Adler as in Spinoza or Plekhanov.

147. *Ibid.*, pp. 57-58.

148. Vid. Goldmann, *Dialektische Untersuchungen*, *op.cit.*, p. 223.

149. Adler, *Marxistische Probleme*, *op.cit.*, pp. 145-147.

there will never be socialism *without* individuals considering it a value. Even the recognition of the historical necessity of socialism will not make anyone fight for it. On the other hand, the moral will of individuals (acting causally) is only a necessary and not a sufficient cause of socialism: the causality of institutional and economic development cannot be disregarded. Furthermore, only when objective historical conditions necessitate the fusing of individual moral wills into a mass phenomenon, only then can *ethics* become historically causal, and only then can the *Sollen* be realized in the world, and become *Sein*. When speaking of revolution, Adler *seems* to go beyond the framework of his dualism. He does not in fact because, once again, the over-all question of this revolution is delegated to a causal sociology. The same causal sequence can be evaluated, of course, from the viewpoint of individual ethics (positively evaluated from the viewpoint of the categorical imperative), but this could be once again a totally distinct and separate way of "constituting the phenomena." Thus, Adler managed to develop a far more consistent Kant-Marx synthesis than those of Vorländer, Woltmann et al., who attempted to develop ethical foundations for the whole of socialist theory. Although he was not forced to discard the deterministic dimensions of Marx's thought, Adler managed to show the importance of ethics *within* theory and could even approach the Marxian problematic of theory and praxis. At the same time, he preserved an orthodox Kantian (more orthodox in fact than Kant himself) separation between the practical and the theoretical. This explicitly dualistic framework also served him well in the polemic that he and Otto Bauer waged against Kautsky's total subsumption of ethics within a deterministic theory.

Adler's critique of Kautsky was just the opposite of his critique of Vorländer. Where Vorländer wanted to base socialist theory (for Adler, necessarily the science of causal *Sein*) on moral foundation, on a theory of *Sollen*, Kautsky attempted to reduce all *Sollen* in a causal theory of *Sein*, i.e. a natural scientific materialism. A naturalistic ethics, according to Adler, can explain everything (we should recall that naturalistic ethics is integrated into Adler's sociology) including the historical sources of the *contents* of all ethics, but it cannot explain the binding power and validity of moral maxims, the very *form* of ethical propositions, the form of *Sollen*. To Adler, the *Sollen* implies reconstitution of things (first given in *causal experience*) from the viewpoint of our *subjectivity*: our evaluating activity. The *Sollen* is both the form of our moral sense (conscience) as well as of our moral ideal. For Adler, therefore, it is futile to causally derive either one from empirical self-interest or utility or instinct or struggle.¹⁵⁰ But Kautsky derived the moral sense from a social instinct and the moral ideal from the class struggle. In this context, Adler shows that even if one could causally

150. *Ibid.*, pp. 108-109.

derive morality ("the unknown") from social instinct ("something less known"), he would have derived only the factual presence of a moral sense and not its binding quality which can arise only from conscious reflection on this fact as something *valuable*.¹⁵¹ Conversely, even when we are *driven* to an action, we can reflect upon it as a negative value. If the source of condemnation of any other instinct is the social instinct, it remains unexplained why one instinct is *evaluated* over the other.

Adler further demonstrates that the relationship of the class struggle and the moral ideal, involving in Kautsky's case a historical rather than a biological reduction of ethics, is completely parallel to the above problem. No sociological class analysis can yield binding values and ideals. How are we to morally distinguish between the values of one class and those of another? If our answer is based on the harmony of the ideal with objectively understood historical development, then, according to Adler, we implicitly accept development to be unconditionally morally positive. But on what basis? Why should the moral necessity be the realizable? What Adler is driving at is that only on the basis of a *Sollen* can biological, sociological and historical facts be evaluated in the first place. His argument against Kautsky is supported by Otto Bauer who showed, in addition, that no individual could receive any moral clues from historical necessity.¹⁵² Here Kautsky's counter-objection, that in practice it is equally difficult to receive moral clues from the categorical imperative is well founded.¹⁵³ It is indeed a bit strange that Bauer and Adler, after demolishing Kautsky, tend to be satisfied with the reaffirmation of the principles and concepts of a completely formally interpreted Kantian ethics, *in spite* of the important critiques of Kant in Hegel and others. There is a dimension in Adler's social ethics, however, that seeks to go beyond a formally interpreted Kant. He was able to fuse the ethical dimension with his sociological theory, arguing the impossibility of deriving a *morally positive social* order from economic development alone. Arguing against Kautsky, he (and Bauer) come close to their other opponents Woltmann and Vorländer, demonstrating the possibility of different social systems on the foundations of a collapsing capitalism. On the old question of socialism and barbarism (Adler adds a new conception of industrial feudalism to the alternatives) only the moral decision of the proletariat *for socialism* can realize this particular alternative. In this context at least, Adler *seems* to give *socialism* a partially ethical foundation.¹⁵⁴ Nevertheless, when he reinterprets his argument, he returns to a rigid antinomy. He asks what can the materialist theory of history offer ethics, and answers "everything and nothing." And

151. *Ibid.*, p. 121.

152. Cf. Otto Bauer, "Marxismus und Ethik," in Fetscher, ed., *Der Marxismus*, *op.cit.*, pp. 262-263.

153. Kautsky, "Leben, Wissenschaft und Ethik," in Fetscher, ed., *Der Marxismus*, *op.cit.*, pp. 270-272.

154. Adler, *Marxistische Probleme*, *op.cit.*, p. 134.

this answer means that the dimension of ethics that enters into social causality is not ethics at all but a *part* of deterministic sociology (the latter being his interpretation of historical materialism). The moral dimension, however, can have nothing to do with any scientific causal explanation, of historical development or success. Only self-reflection, the critique of practical reason, i.e., Kantian ethics, can confront the moral dimension of individual will and conscience, which for Adler remains an irreducible fact of human existence.¹⁵⁵ Thus, Adler's philosophy consciously remains on the ground of the Kantian *antinomy* of theory (necessity) and practice (freedom). Although he was the only Social Democrat able to evaluate Hegel's contribution to social theory, Adler's understanding of dialectics did not permit him to move beyond the stark restatement of the antinomy.

6. *The Fate of the Dialectic in Social Democracy*

To ask about the fate of the dialectic is to ask about Hegel. In dealing with the relation between the Marxism of Social Democracy and Kant and Spinoza, we have had to deal with "substance" and "antinomies". In Hegel's *Phenomenology* the category of substance moves into that of subject, and that of antinomy unfolds in mediation. These dialectical transitions, however, appear in none of the tendencies of Social Democratic thought: indeed, most theoreticians of the Second International reveal a dismal ignorance of Hegel. Believing that Marx and modern science projected them beyond Hegel, they fell back to pre-Hegelian and at time pre-Kantian theoretical positions. As we have seen, Engels himself, who was able to do better, at times regressed to a naive epistemological realism, postulating two perfectly parallel sets of dialectical "laws" (laws of processes)—with the subjective set being the laws of a slightly (often very naively) historicized natural science. Kautsky's position (he never considered himself an expert in philosophy) was defined by Engels, except that he stressed the "science of evolution" more than his teacher. Vorländer (a revisionist, a Kant scholar and professor!) followed Kautsky's stress but argued that, given the natural scientific theory of evolution, the *only* rational core of Hegel was the dialectic: the rest could and should be discarded.¹⁵⁶ Furthermore, Vorländer denied that Hegel's concepts had much to do with *Capital*, in spite of Marx's claims to the contrary.¹⁵⁷ Along with most of his progressive contemporaries—Marxist, Neo-Kantian or positivist—Vorländer firmly believed that Hegel was a reactionary philosopher of the "restoration", guilty of the wildest philosophical speculations. But this was not all that poor Hegel had to suffer. Eduard Bernstein

155. *Ibid.*, pp. 136-137.

156. Steinberg, *Sozialismus*, *op.cit.*, p. 57; Iring Fetscher, "Das Verhältnis des Marxismus zu Hegel," in Fetscher, ed., *Marxismusstudien*, Dritte Folge (Tübingen: J.C.B. Mohr [Paul Siebeck], 1969), pp. 88ff.

157. Vorländer, *Kant und Marx*, *op.cit.*, p. 64.

(who was considered philosophically ignorant even by the philosophically ignorant) also associated him with the opposite error, the error of planting revolutionary illusions into the works of the unsuspecting Marx and Engels. Interpreting the Hegelian dialectic in the most vulgar possible manner, Bernstein argued that dialectic means the imposition of a structure of explosive, self-developing contradictions on a reality that develops, but develops very slowly. As a result, continued Bernstein, Marx and Engels tended to have revolutionary expectations in situations in which sober common sense would have certainly dissuaded them.¹⁵⁸ Bernstein also traced the self-deception of a revolutionary faith in a unified, homogeneous proletariat to the supposed Hegelian requirement of entrusting the dynamic of history to absolute contradiction—to the “negation of a negation.”¹⁵⁹ In the context of Engels’ natural scientific interpretation of the dialectic, Bernstein may have been correct in sensing the incompatibility of dialectical logic with the logic of empirical natural science, and, given the social theory of Marxist orthodoxy, he had a good justification to escape from artificial theoretical constructs to the safety of “presuppositionless” empirical investigation.¹⁶⁰ Nevertheless, it is clear from Bernstein’s remarks that his ignorance of Hegel’s work could not have been more complete. Within the whole spectrum of German Social Democracy, only two thinkers seem to escape the charge of “Hegel-Ignoranz”: Plekhanov, a Russian, and Adler, an Austrian.

In 1896 Kautsky wrote to Bernstein about Plekhanov: “he is our philosopher, indeed the only one among us who has studied Hegel.”¹⁶¹ Plekhanov may have studied Hegel, but it certainly did not prevent him from transforming the dialectic into a pre-Hegelian deterministic philosophy of substance. Generally, Plekhanov was willing to follow Engels’ lead. However, in spite of Engels’ stress on Hegel’s method as against his system (a stress that Engels himself generally violated) Plekhanov was primarily interested in utilizing the deterministic and reductionist aspects of the Hegelian system. In his 1891 study “Zu Hegel’s Sechzigste Todestag,” Plekhanov repeated Engels’ interpretation of the Hegelian dialectic based on the dissolution of everything stable to processes with one important reservation. This reservation consisted in the acceptance of the cornerstone of the Hegelian system, the notion of Absolute Spirit, which in Plekhanov’s eyes at least, was the unified and unchanging principle to which all changes and multiplicity are necessarily reduced. Naturally Plekhanov wanted to have nothing to do with “spirits” and proposed to substitute the necessary laws

158. Bernstein, *Voraussetzungen*, *op.cit.*, pp. 47-49.

159. *Ibid.*, The neo-Stalinist Althusser’s contemporary critique of Hegelian marxism makes the identical point, over and over. Cf. *For Marx*, especially chapter 3. Iring Fetscher has nicely demonstrated the similarities of Bernstein’s and Stalin’s critiques of Hegel. Cf. “Das Verhältnis des Marxismus zu Hegel,” *op.cit.*, pp. 92-93.

160. Cf. Fetscher, “Das Verhältnis,” *op.cit.*, p. 94.

161. Cited by Steinberg, cf. *Sozialismus*, *op.cit.*, p. 58. Steinberg himself seems to agree with this verdict on the basis of rather slim evidence.

of the economy (or economic evolution) for Hegel's Absolute.¹⁶² It is easy to see that, even as he was honoring Hegel, he was thinking of Spinoza. What he called absolute subject he should have called absolute substance. In Plekhanov's hands, the dialectic turned out to be merely another name for philosophical materialism conceived on a model analogous to Spinoza's philosophy of substance. His *Fundamental Problems of Marxism* (1908) which is a celebration of a completely deterministic philosophy, reveals an unparalleled vulgar materialist reinterpretation of dialectical categories. Thus, for Plekhanov, the "unity" of subject and object means that there is no thinking (subject) apart from body, and that while "I" am a subject for myself, the same "I" is an object for others.¹⁶³ This argument, aside from presenting a psychological (and in point of fact "illusory") and irrevocably atomistic concept of subjectivity, reveals an astonishing lack of knowledge of the whole subject-object problem in modern philosophy, i.e., the very *Problemstellung* presupposed by Spinoza and the materialists. When at his best, Plekhanov refers back to Spinoza by way of Engels' "two sets of laws . . . identical in substance" as equivalent to the doctrine of the unity of subject and object—and this is at least a respectable, though *superficially* non-dialectical position.

It is unnecessary here to present additional dimensions of Plekhanov's concept of the dialectic, especially since we have already presented its equivalent, his concept of materialism. There was definitely no revival of dialectical theory in Plekhanov's works. If he revived anything, he revived the worst pan-logistic aspects of the Hegelian system in the guise of a deterministic materialism or economism. The situation was more complicated and more interesting in the case of Max Adler who tried to salvage aspects of the dialectic in the context of a critique of its systematic or extensional interpretation by Engels, Plekhanov and, in advance, their Soviet followers.

We have already traced Max Adler's partial recovery and subsequent loss of the category of praxis in a deterministic or sharply antinomic metatheory of society (philosophy of social science). Earlier, we attempted to root the ultimate failure of Rosa Luxemburg's social theory in her inability to recover (or reconceptualize) the dialectical basis of Marxian theory. Luxemburg's theory as a whole also culminated in an antinomy: that of mass struggle and historical necessity. The antinomies of Luxemburg and Adler are in part parallel and in part complementary. Luxemburg attempted a dynamic reconstruction of a new Marxian theory for the twentieth century, and failed partially because of her desire to anchor this reconstruction in a historical determinism. Adler could not save the category of praxis because of his own attachment to determinism. On the other hand, he got close to at least partial recovery of the dialectic and

162. The whole argument is presented by Lucio Colletti, *op. cit.*, pp. 88-89.

163. Plekhanov, *Fundamental Problems*, *op. cit.*, p. 35; pp. 37-39.

failed primarily because he tended toward a flat, undynamic and naturalistic social theory anchored in a vague antagonism of individual and society. Both Adler and Luxemburg insisted on a deterministic social theory: this was the common root of their failure. But while Luxemburg approached the "objective possibility" of dialectical theory, Adler came close to recovering its "subjective possibility."

Max Adler was the first Marxist who undertook, in defense of dialectical theory, a critique of its "extensional" interpretation appearing under the names of dialectics of nature, and dialectical materialism. Adler was so serious about Engels' distinction of method and system in Hegel, that he applied it against Engels' own system. And indeed Hegel's ultimately objectivistic system based on the ontologizing of the concepts of dialectical "logic" had its obvious parallel (in spite of Marx's and Engels' critiques of Hegel's metaphysical pan-logism) in Engels' own objectivistic system. To Adler, Engels' dialectics of nature was a "materialistic" imitation of the Hegelian system, and his theory of knowledge was but an unsophisticated version of Hegel's "Absolute Knowledge". For Adler, the difference between so-called "Absolute Idealism" and Dialectical Materialism was only their rootedness in two different kinds of metaphysics. According to him, both are forms of the philosophy of identity, dogmatically (from the Kantian point of view) postulating the identity of thought and being.¹⁶⁴ Adler argues that the dialectic is highly ambiguous in both Hegel and Engels. As a method, it confronts the forms of thought, but as a metaphysics of identity it imposes the forms of thought on being (Hegel) or the forms of social existence on thought and ultimately on being as a whole (Engels). By stressing the methodological side, Adler hoped to escape the dogmatic philosophy of identity. The foundation of this critical reconstruction of the dialectic once again turned out to be the critical philosophy of Immanuel Kant.

To Adler, Hegel's great contribution to philosophy was his realization that the actual processes of thought and discovery do not follow the rules of formal logic. Kantian categories, of course, are deduced from the forms of proposition of Aristotelian logic. In this context, i.e., within the province of the critical self-reflection of thought, Adler considered Hegel to be a step beyond Kant. Hegel, he argues, understood that the actual flow of thought continually moves through oppositions, confronting and overcoming all self-imposed logical limitation and one-sidedness under the category of totality. In this context, Adler recovers the original Hegelian meaning of contradiction consisting not in abstract schematic negation (A/non-A), but in a determined negation (determination and negation) of the contents of the given—a preservation and a cancellation at the same time.¹⁶⁵ Thus,

164. Adler, *Marxistische Probleme*, *op. cit.*, pp. 20-21 on Hegel; pp. 37-39 on Engels.

165. *Ibid.*, pp. 23-25; 30-33. Adler interprets "thought" psychologically and not from a transcendental viewpoint.

Adler restores some sophistication to the concepts of totality and contradiction. His new understanding of these concepts, however, is emphatically confined to thought, and he prefers to sum up oppositions, conflicts and struggles in the social world under the heading of "antagonisms" (rather than deal with them dialectically). In the last analysis, Adler's concept of the "dialectic" preserves an antinomic structure between thought and being for the opposite reason than Engels' conception; it is a *Gedankendialektik* referring to the historicity of the *a priori* categories of thought as has been traced by Adler's own theory of the *social a priori*, and the logical movement of this *a priori* as a principle of research. Both the strengths and the weaknesses of his position are revealed in Adler's interpretation of Marx's method of political economy. By focusing on the concept of category Adler seeks Marx's understanding of the dialectic in an important text generally neglected by his contemporaries: "The Method of Political Economy,"¹⁶⁶ where Marx discusses the meaning of the economic categories. Adler considered this text to be the culmination of the development of the concept of the *social a priori*. And indeed Marx does speak of the investigation of the abstract categories as culminating in the synthesis of a *Gedankentotalität*, a *Gedankenkonkretum*.¹⁶⁷ Adler correctly understands this procedure as the breaking down of the reified illusions [*sachlichen Scheines*] of political economy, and the discovery of their "human-social" foundation.¹⁶⁸ On the other hand, Adler completely disregards parts of Marx's text that are not to his liking. Marx, for example, argues: "The concrete is concrete because it is the synthesis of many determinations, the unity of the manifold. In thought it appears therefore as the process of synthesis, as result not as the point of departure, although it is the real point of departure and therefore the point of departure also for contemplation and representation."¹⁶⁹ Of these two sentences Adler can focus only on the first to maintain a consistent interpretation. Perhaps he assumed that the second sentence is a remnant of a philosophy of identity. Only Lukács who knew the work of Adler, could eventually show that an entirely different interpretation (as against both Kantian and "realist" interpretations) can root the theory and praxis relationship in the critique of political economy.¹⁷⁰ What concerns us here is that Adler, noting that Marx criticizes Hegel for projecting the logical order of the synthesis of the mental concrete into the structure of being,

166. Vid. Marx, "Einleitung" to the *Grundrisse*—a text first published by Kautsky as an appendix to *Zur Kritik der politischen Oekonomie*.

167. Marx, *Grundrisse*, *op.cit.*, pp. 22. Cf. Adler, *Marxistische Probleme*, *op.cit.*, pp. 43ff.

168. Adler, *Marxistische Probleme*, *op.cit.*, p. 44.

169. Marx, *Grundrisse*, *op.cit.*, pp. 21-22.

170. On this problem, cf. our discussion in *Telos*, no. 11, Spring 1972, "Lukács' Theory of Reification" of the method of *Geschichte und Klassenbewusstsein*. The young Marx's discussions of the problem of the realization of philosophy in the world also point to the interpretation that will unfold only in Lukács (and Korsch). Cf. Marx, *Zur Kritik der Hegelschen Rechtsphilosophie. Einleitung*, in *Werke*, Vol. I, *op.cit.*, pp. 378ff.

retreats to a position where the concrete is *only* mental—a position that was impossible for Marx. The real trick would have been to interpret the mental synthesis of the concrete as a step toward the releasing of the synthetic possibilities of a reality already a *totality an sich*, but not yet a totality (e.g., a class for itself or *Gattungswesen*) *für sich*. Adler cannot do this partly because he did not have the Hegelian category of mediation, but primarily because he did not possess a social theory in which theory could really become a moment of Praxis and his theory was ultimately deterministic. As a result, his *social a priori* had to remain in a contemplative posture *vis à vis* social reality: it could lead to an understanding of social reality only in the same sense that the abstract, idealizing concepts of mathematical physics yield theory in the face of an infinitely complicated cosmos. For Adler Marx becomes the Newton of the social world and he even argues (given his understanding, consistently) that dialectic as *Gedankendialektik* applies equally to social and natural science!¹⁷¹

From the viewpoint of the historical dialectic, even Adler's connection of nature and dialectics represents a serious limitation.¹⁷² Even though Adler reveals a somewhat sophisticated use of dialectical concepts to confront the problems of historical development (e.g. the issue of reform and revolution), he tries to tie the dialectic of thought at least as a *Forschungsprinzip* to the study of the forms of social "antagonism," and he very much wants to move toward a theory of praxis, in the end his naturalistic and contemplative notion of theory defeats his projects. Historical development in his works is always historical determinism: under the category of causality, social antagonism is a special case of the anthropological opposition of individual and society, and praxis is identified as social-technology. Thus, three different concepts of nature (natural determinism, human nature, technology) defeated in Adler's work the unfolding of a dialectical theory of history.

Max Adler's case is particularly instructive for our treatment of German Social Democracy, because he was the only one within Marxism to undertake a serious philosophical critique of the excesses of naturalistic materialism in the areas of ethics, epistemology and dialectics. Nevertheless, but characteristically, he too succumbed to the charms of naturalistic and scientific theory. Within the historical framework of Social Democracy, no real breakthrough to a dialectical theory of historical subjectivity was possible. Marxist social theory (especially that of Luxemburg) indeed focused on some elements of social reality that could yield the foundation of

171. Adler, *Marxistische Probleme*, *op.cit.*, p. 36.

172. Kant, interestingly enough, never tried, and probably opposed, the interpretation of history through the categories under which "nature" is synthesized (causality, substance). Cf. his various writings on problems of history (collected in English trans. in a volume called *On History*, ed. by L.W. Beck [New York: LLA, 1963]). For his interpretation of the "transcendental dialectic" as a critique of naturalism, cf. *Prolegomena zu einer jeden künftigen Metaphysik*, Werke V (Frankfurt/M; Suhrkamp, 1958), par. 60, pp. 239-240.

dynamic subjectivity, but Marxist philosophy (even that of Adler) was highly successful in subsuming these elements within a smooth unsophisticated determinism. Only a new Marxism that learned some crucial lessons from the neo-idealist defense of subjectivity could *begin* to overcome this determinism, by recovering in the process the original philosophical foundations of Marxist theory itself. But this new Marxism could emerge only in a world-historical context in which Marx's conception of the subjectivity of a revolutionary class could again become plausible.

Here, we come up against the self-chosen limits of this primarily historical study, because the link between the new situation and the new interpretation of Marxism simply cannot be traced through the (in part inadequate) theoretical self-reflection of the old situation. What would be especially interesting to consider, and only a new analysis of the Russian Revolution and the origins of the Communist Parties could do this,¹⁷³ is why a movement that initially acted quite "philosophically" (cf. Bloch and Gramsci in this context) was irresistibly drawn toward just the theoretical and philosophical frameworks (i.e. the foundations laid by Engels, Kautsky and Plekhanov) that even the best of the Second International, Luxemburg and Adler managed to in part surpass. And an even more interesting topic of investigation would be the sources of the attraction of the "classical theory" in advanced capitalist countries for Marxist sects and mass parties.

173. Cf. in this context: K. Korsch, "The Present State of Marxism and Philosophy" in *Marxism and Philosophy*; H. Marcuse, *Soviet Marxism*; M. Merleau-Ponty, "Pravda," in *Telos*, no. 7, Spring 1971; Oskar Negt, "Marxismus als Legitimationswissenschaft," in *Kontroversen über Dialektischen und Mechanistischen Materialismus* (Suhrkamp; Frankfurt am Main, 1969); P. Breines, "Praxis and its Theorists: The Impact of Lukács and Korsch in the 1920s" in *Telos*, no. 11, Spring 1972; F. Fleron and L.J. Fleron, "Administration Theory as Repressive Political Theory: The Communist Experience" in *Telos*, no. 12, Summer 1972.

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